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BA (HONS) INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT  
of Northumbria University

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DATE: .....

**ABSTRACT**

STUDENT NAME	Laura BLANCHARD
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DISSERTATION SUPERVISOR	Chris JEFFS
DISSERTATION TITLE	How does viral marketing spread the word on the Web?
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**ABSTRACT**

Viral marketing is part of the word-of-mouth process applied to marketing and advertising methods. In the last decade, the Internet has revolutionized the way companies and agencies create their marketing campaigns.

The Internet Era has also modified the way people communicate. The meeting point of marketers and individuals is what is called the Social Web. People exchange more and more information on the Web through social networks and blogs, and companies take advantage of this “word-of-mouth enhancer” to get more feedback and information about their product in order to target consumers best.

This project gives an insight to the way marketers create their viral campaign through social networks and blogs.

Thanks to the Social Web, marketers have access to consumers easily. From blogs, they can reach consumers with specified needs. And from social networks they can reach a large

amount of consumers. Moreover, to access those consumers, marketers use influencers in order to make the message spread online optimized and amplified.

The interview led during the study identifies different types of companies using viral marketing. Their goals can be to improve their brand image, to launch a product, to increase sales or even to increase public awareness of an issue.

This study aims also to understand how the evolution of communication medium and technology has allowed viral marketing to be created.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>Title page</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Declaration and Word Count</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>Contents Page</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>List of figures</b>	<b>IX</b>
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>CHAPTER1 INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1. Reasons for the choice of the topic	1
1.2. Academic objectives of dissertation	1
1.3. Outline of chapters	1
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
2.1. Introduction – Setting the Scene	3
2.2. The communication as the base of Advertising	5
2.2.1. The Basic Communication model	5
2.2.2. The theories of Mass and One-to-one communication	5
2.2.3. The importance of the content of the message	6
2.2.4. Word-of-mouth	7
2.3. Media landscape	9
2.3.1. Before the Internet: people are saturated with advertising	9
2.3.2. The appearance of the Internet: Peer-to-peer technologies	10
2.3.3. Impact on the companies strategies	14
2.4. Advertising Strategies	15
2.4.1. Appearance of the viral marketing	16
2.4.2. Viral-based marketing strategies efficiency	18
2.4.3. Viral marketing on the Web	20
2.4.4. Role and importance of the creativity in marketing campaigns.	21
2.5. Conclusion	22

**CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**

3.1.	Introduction	23
3.1.1.	Objective	23
3.1.2.	Hypotheses	23
3.1.3.	Research Questions	24
3.2.	Research Approach	24
3.2.1.	The Inductive / Deductive Method	24
3.2.2.	Research Type: Quantitative vs. Qualitative	25
3.2.3.	Interview and Case study	25
3.3.	Data Collection	26
3.3.1.	Secondary and Primary	26
3.3.2.	The interview technique	27
3.3.3.	The purpose of the interview	28
3.4.	Analysis of Data	29
3.5.	Limitations	29
3.6.	Ethical Issues	30
3.6.1.	Seeking access	30
3.6.2.	During the data collection step	30
3.6.3.	During the analysis	31
3.7.	Chapter Summary	31

**CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

4.1.	The Interview Analysis	32
4.2.	Theoretical Part	32
4.2.1.	Viral Marketing	32
4.2.2.	Techniques of Word-of-mouth	33
4.2.3.	Web tools	35
4.3.	Analysis of a previous campaign	36
4.3.1.	Main points of attention	36
4.3.2.	Applications and techniques	37
4.3.3.	The clients	38
4.4.	Literature discussion	39
4.4.1.	Viral Marketing	39
4.4.2.	Techniques of Word-of-mouth	40
4.4.3.	Social Web	41
4.5.	Conclusion	42

**CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION**

5.1. Concluding Statement	43
5.2. Limitations and Further researches	44
5.2.1. Improvement of research	44
5.2.2. Barriers	45
<b>References</b>	46
<b>Bibliography</b>	51
<b>Appendices A - Reflecting Statement</b>	52
<b>B - Interview Transcription</b>	53
<b>C - Case Studies</b>	59
<b>Last Page</b>	63

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Pages
<b>Figure 1:</b> The basic communication process. Guffey (2003)	5
<b>Figure 2:</b> “Illustrative Characteristics of Online and Offline Communities” board. Wind, Mahajan and Gunther (2002)	10
<b>Figure 3:</b> Network representation	12
<b>Figure 4 :</b> Graph of YouTube, MySpace and Facebook traffics comparison (www.alexa.com, 2009)	12
<b>Figure 5:</b> The Brown and Hayes’ (2008) Virtuous Cycle of Blogging.	13
<b>Figure 6:</b> Comparative board between the “Old Marketing” and the “New Marketing”.	14
<b>Figure 7:</b> Framework of the Advertising Communication Model. (Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells, 2006)	15
<b>Figure 8:</b> Comparative graph of the viral effect model and the real effect model. (www.viralmanager.co.uk, 2009)	18
<b>Figure 9:</b> Graph of the real viral effect analysis	19
<b>Figure 10:</b> Graph of the measurement of the effectiveness of Web viral methods (in percentages).	20

**GLOSSARY**

Etc.	et cetera
WOM	word of mouth
SME's	Small and Medium Enterprises
WOMMA	Word Of Mouth Marketing Association

## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Reason for the choice of the topic**

The new forms of marketing are a vast subject to discuss on, sometime controversial due to some unethical practices like undercover marketing. But it especially has been studied to and fro by marketers, sociologists, students, professional Web users. The writer's motivation for studying viral marketing concerns her professional plan for the future. As she wants to work in the field of marketing and communication, she decided to study a relevant subject to her future. Moreover, viral marketing is a new trend which is still evolving on the Web and worth interest. Marketers have such passion in this that it becomes interesting to understand their motives.

### **1.2. Academic objectives of dissertation**

In order to conduct this study, the writer has to settle objectives to ensure that she's going on the right way. Moreover, it enables the study to focus and to do not dwell on other subjects.

The four objectives defined by the writer are the following:

- To justify the use of social Web in the field of viral marketing in order to identify the main tools and techniques used by marketers.
- To analyse the roles of influencers in the word of mouth process with the intention of understanding which of their characteristics are useful to companies.
- To identify the companies that could use this type of advertising and their motives.
- To explain the role of Social Web for individuals and marketers in the view to appreciate and measure the power of those tools.

### **1.3. Outline of chapters**

#### **- Introduction Chapter**

This chapter outline the reasons of the choice of the dissertation topic and the objectives of the research project.

#### **- Literature Review Chapter**

This part describes theories gathered in three themes: communication theories as the roots of advertising, the development of media until the appearance of the Web and the viral strategies used by companies on the Web.

- **Methodology Chapter**

The Methodology chapter give details about the dissertation steps. This includes the research approach and the primary and secondary researches.

- **Findings and Analysis Chapter**

This component of the study aims to discuss and analyse the findings linked to the literature review.

- **Conclusion Chapter**

The last point of the study intends to examine the hypotheses and to conclude if they've been confirmed or infirmed.

## CHAPTER 2            LITERATURE REVIEW CHAPTER

### 2.1.    Introduction – Setting the Scene

#### -    **Aims of the chapter**

The literature review aims to examine and confront the most relevant theories about viral marketing on the Web. In this study, viral marketing concerns an advertising method to spread the word through social networks and blogs.

The first part will describes the way authors have developed communications theories. The objective is to introduce communication as the roots of advertising. The second part explains the development of media in order to identify how the Web became the ultimate advertising medium. The third part is centred on businesses advertising strategies and the use of viral marketing in those strategies. It aims to figure out the reasons why viral marketing has such an importance in the modern advertising campaigns.

#### -    **Evolution of Advertising**

Wilmshurst (1985) has explained the origin of “modern advertising” by listing the changes that create the context where advertising can develop itself: agricultural and industrial revolutions have increased the demand for jobs. The transport system has been improved. The freedom of the press has increased and the information is transferred as easily as goods.

Wells (2006) defines 6 stages of evolution of advertising from the 15<sup>th</sup> century until today.

- “Age of Print”: at this stage, the aim of advertising was to deliver a message to the mass.
- “Industrial Revolution and Emergence of Consumer Society”: the purpose of this advertising was “to devise an effective, efficient communication system that could sell products to a widely dispersed marketplace”.
- “Modern Advertising Era”: This era gathers two other eras: the “Agency Era”, which matches to the appearance of organizations dedicated to professional advertising, and the “Creative Era”, which reveals the emergence of creative and inventive practices.
- “Accountability Era”: This era correspond to the emergence of the focus on effectiveness. Clients want effective ads and the advertising industry is taking more place than before.

- **Role of communication**

Advertising methods are rooted from the communication model. A “sender” of a message, as a company, sends a message, as its ad, to a receiver, as an audience. The audience is supposed to react to this message whether the content is relevant. This theory will be developed in the first part of the literature review in opposing mass to one-to-one communication.

- **Role of the media**

Radio, TV, and billboards have been used as long as they were unable to transmit a message as effectively as the new technologies can. Today, the Internet revolution has permitted marketers to spread their messages quickly and cheap. But the Internet, as new as it is, still evolves and new communities are creating. This is called the Social Web (Weber, 2007). Its impact has been demonstrated to the extent that marketers see a new opportunity to advertise cheap and also to target easily their customers.

- **Appearance of viral marketing in marketing strategies**

Penenberg (April 11, 2008) stated that “Viral loops have emerged as perhaps the most significant business accelerant to hit Silicon Valley since the search engine.” The last part of the literature review aims to identify what is viral marketing, how did it emerges and its role in today’s advertising strategies. Supported by quantified results, the authors identify viral marketing as the new trend developed in the advertising industry.

## 2.2. The communication as the base of Advertising

### 2.2.1. The Basic Communication model

Heath and Bryant (1992) have identified issues concerning the definition of communication. Some authors defines it as a process, some as an act, some as a transmission of a message and some as an interaction between people. The building of communication theory has made emerge frameworks to make communication more real. The most common framework is the one presented by Guffey (2003):

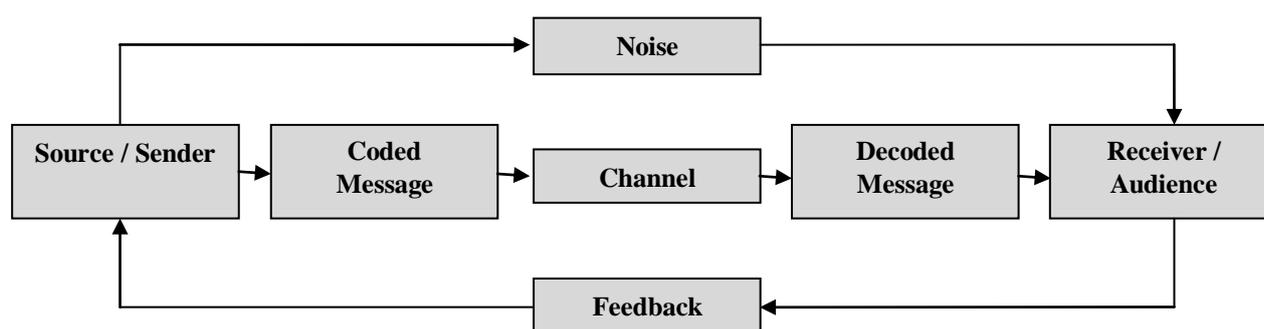


Figure 1: The basic communication process. Guffey (2003)

### 2.2.2. The theories of Mass communication and One-to-one communication

“Mass” and “One-to-one” communications are, by definition, the opposite. Those models are introduced by the writer as the most relevant models regarding to the purpose of the study. Indeed, as the writer will explain later in the literature review, social networks and blogs are mediums which respectively correspond to mass communication and one-to-one communication to reach consumers.

#### - Mass communication

Allen, Kania and Yaeckel (1998) definitions’ of mass communication is an information transfer with no specialisation of message or medium. This type of communication is addressed to a large audience.

With the early globalisation, companies used to introduce mass communication in their marketing strategies.

Blackwell (2004) thesis is that “mass communication defines democracy and helps meld the social character of the modern individual as a predictable, if not anticipated, participant in the discourse of society. “

Mass communication has an important role to do with the construction of the society, unless the new communication techniques may appear more efficient at the Internet era.

- **One to one communication**

One to one marketing allows companies to settle a real customer relationship management.

One to one communication relates to an individualized message designed for an individual or a small group of individuals with common interests. In one to one communication, the relationship between the consumer and the company is the centre of the attentions. Companies integrate this type of communication in their marketing strategies. Varey (2002) explains the basis of this relationship marketing:

- “Long term collaboration for mutual value creation”: relationship marketing operates in “win-win” collaborations.
- “Relational and service values”: traditional business values are unexploited in favour of “treating customers as differing exchangers of value”.
- “All parties recognized as active”: the relationship is co-managed by both parties.

**2.2.3. The importance of the content of the message**

A large part of the authors (Weber, 2007; Brown and Hayes 2008; Scott, 2009) agree on the fact that the most important in transmitting a message is the content, especially in viral marketing. To relate this to blogs, for example, a message, an idea or a video, will be transferred from someone to someone else only if the message is relevant to this person.

In an article from the journal USA Today (July 22, 2005), Kevork Djansezian interviews Jeff Hciks, the Chief Executive of Crispin Porter & bogusky:

“You have to create a content that is interesting, useful or entertaining enough to invite (the consumer). Viral is the ultimate invitation.”

## 2.2.4. Word-of-mouth

### - **Basic understanding**

The word of mouth marketing association (2009) defines the elements of word of mouth:

- “Encouraging communications
- Giving people something to talk about
- Creating communities and connecting people
- Working with influential communities
- Creating evangelist or advocate programs
- Researching and listening to customer feedback
- Engaging in transparent conversation
- Co creation and information sharing”.

“Word-of-mouth is finding ways to support satisfied customers and make it easier for them to talk to their friends“.

### - **Word-of-mouth as a weapon for businesses**

Today, theories about word-of-mouth explain how it can influence “decision-makers” (as people who take the decision to buy a product). The WOMMA defines word-of-mouth as “the act of consumers providing information to other consumers”. Moreover, Brown and Hayes (2008) stated that “WOM is the ideal replacement medium to combat the diminishing impact of the TV and print ads.”

Dwyer (2007) expresses the conceptual foundations of word-of-mouth communication:

“Traditional communications theory considers WOM as having a powerful influence on behaviour, especially on consumers’ information search, evaluation, and subsequent decision making”. “It is the credibility of WOM that, when combined with the premise that a receiver will be more involved in a WOM exchange than in an advertisement, lends itself to the formation of such higher order beliefs and cognitions. “

Scoble (2006, p.31) starts his explanation with the following sentence: “our friends influence us more than any advertising or marketing campaign could ever dream of doing. They directly impact what we watch, read, and wear; where we live; and where we travel.”

## - Influencers

Influencers have an important role in the WOM process. First of all, Brown and Hayes (2008) define what an influencer is:

It is a person who “has expertise and access to decision-makers”. This expertise comes from the influencer’s past, job or experience. The WOMMA defines it as “a person who has a greater than average reach or impact through word of mouth in a relevant marketplace”.

Brown and Hayes analysis (2008) lead to understand the role of influencers in the communication process: an influencer has two roles; he optimises the message, and he amplifies the message. He optimises it by “taking the message to decision-makers” and amplifies it because “the message is carried by someone with influence”.

The author’s theory about influencers is the following: WOM “only works on interested people”. This is why the message has to come from an influencer. If it doesn’t, the receiver won’t get the message right or won’t get it at all. In other words, the buyers and consumers will take the risk to buy a product because they receive the message from someone who has authority or power and because they have heard positive feedback about the product or the service from someone trustful.

Contrary to Brown and Hayes, Hill (2009) states different criteria to justify the influence of opinion leaders. He explains that a leader has influence because he enjoys a higher social status than a non-influencer.

The Viral Manager Website (2009) theory about this subject is the following: “People generally like to share content because it makes them feel more important. If you appear to be the first to find something of interest to your peers or others and then give that thing to them; it will gain you kudos and instil within you a subtle sense of increased social worth.”

Moreover, Clews (Feb 5, 2009) cites the agency “The Future Foundation” who stated:

"Modern consumers are so confident in themselves that the ultimate endorsement of a product comes from the lips and clicks of their friends. This is an environment in which brands can benefit greatly, but they will need to be more sensitive than ever before to the voice of the consuming public."

Brown and Hayes (2008) stated about influencers that “they like to influence”

## **2.3. Media landscape**

The evolution of communication medium has birth to the powerful World Wide Web.

### **2.3.1. Before the Internet: people are saturated with advertising**

The explanation of both Print Media and Broadcast media is based on Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells (2009) study.

#### **- Print Media**

This kind of media includes newspapers, brochures, magazines, posters and outdoor boards. Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells (2009, p.279) stated that it is the typically informative ad as it's an "information-rich environment, [...] print media are often used to generate cognitive responses".

They explain that the current trend in the newspaper industry is a declining of sales. The youth disinterests itself from it, the costs are increasing, and the company invests in Websites. Concerning magazines, the key is product placement. As newspapers, sales are suffering from the appearance of the Internet. The last point is out-of-home advertising. It gathers billboards, stickers, outdoor print ads, etc. This kind of advertising medium is especially used to provide targeted information and for brand reminders.

#### **- Broadcast Media**

By "broadcast media", the authors mean "discussing media forms that transmit sounds or images electronically" (Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells, 2009, p.302). This includes radio, television, movie-advertising, cell phones and all other videos.

The radio's main asset is the power of imagination and the use of humour in the short audio ads. Moreover, targeting appears to be easy as radios have different audiences. Today, the audio advertising has evolved to podcasting, a new generation of audio content support.

Concerning television, its appearance has been a revolution for populations but also for advertisers. Myers (1999) defines TV Ads as sponsorship, commercials, product placement but also "advertiser-controlled programming". As its impact on decisions-makers has decreased, TV channels have to develop multichannel platforms or to create their own Website with the news diffused online.

- **The saturation**

“Although most advertising expenditure goes on television and print, many of the people the ads are supposed to reach are not looking. Instead, they are playing video games, watching DVDs or, most popular of all, surfing the internet”. (The Economist, Mar 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005)

More than being saturated by ads, people also lose interest in billboards, TV Ads or flyers.

### 2.3.2. The appearance of the Internet: peer-to-peer technologies

By peer-to-peer technologies, the writer means technologies which help to develop interaction and exchange of information.

Armstrong (1997) gives details about the development of the Internet.

It was created by a US research agency in the 1960's. The Internet, as we know it now, is “a set of protocols that allows computers to talk to one another wherever they are and whatever they are”. Internet advertising is “a growing industry, [...] advertising on Websites has pulled in double-digit percentage gains” Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells (2009, p.335). This media offers advertising formats like banners ads, animations, but also e-mail advertising.

Wind, Mahajan and Gunther (2002) have built the “Illustrative characteristics of online and offline communities” board. This explains how online communities can offer more advantages than offline communities.

	<b>Offline</b>	<b>Online</b>
Geographical scope	Geographically bound	Boundless and global
Temporal scope	Specific meeting times	Anytime
Reachability	Expensive and complex	Cheap and simple
Speed of communication	Slow	Instantaneous
Ability to change	Difficult	Easy
Potential for engagement	Somewhat limited	Greater
Identity & Anonymity	More fixed	More fluid and anonymous
Experience	Face-to-face	Virtual

**Figure 2:** “Illustrative Characteristics of Online and Offline Communities” board.

Wind, Mahajan and Gunther (2002)

### - **Appearance of the Social Web**

More than entertainment, the evolution of advertising and communication techniques has brought new tools on the market. One of them is the transformation of the Web from a vast source of information to an extended “communication-enhancer” network called the “Social Web” (Weber, 2007).

Weber (2007) defines the social Web concept as “the online place where people with a common interest can gather to share thoughts, comments and opinions. It is a new world of unpaid media created by individuals or enterprises on the Web”.

The social Web “is mainly composed with search engines, blogs (Web logs), e-communities and social networks”.

The writer will focus on two of them: social networks and blogs. Indeed, the hypotheses developed in this study identify those tools as the most useful to develop a viral marketing campaign.

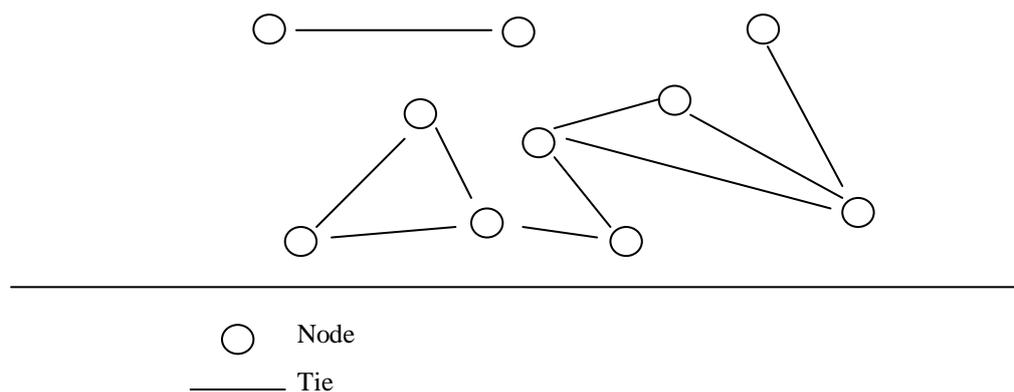
### - **Social Networks**

“Social Networks are places where people with a common interest or concern come together to meet people with similar interests, express themselves, and vent.” (Weber 2007, p.4)

Social networks have been deeply studied by marketers and sociologists. Dwyer (2007) catalogues four types of networks: social, informational, technological, and biological. He defines a social network as “a set of people or groups with some pattern of contact or interaction between them.”

Weber (2007, p.4) defines it as “places where people with a common interest or concern come together to meet people with similar interests, express themselves, and vent.”

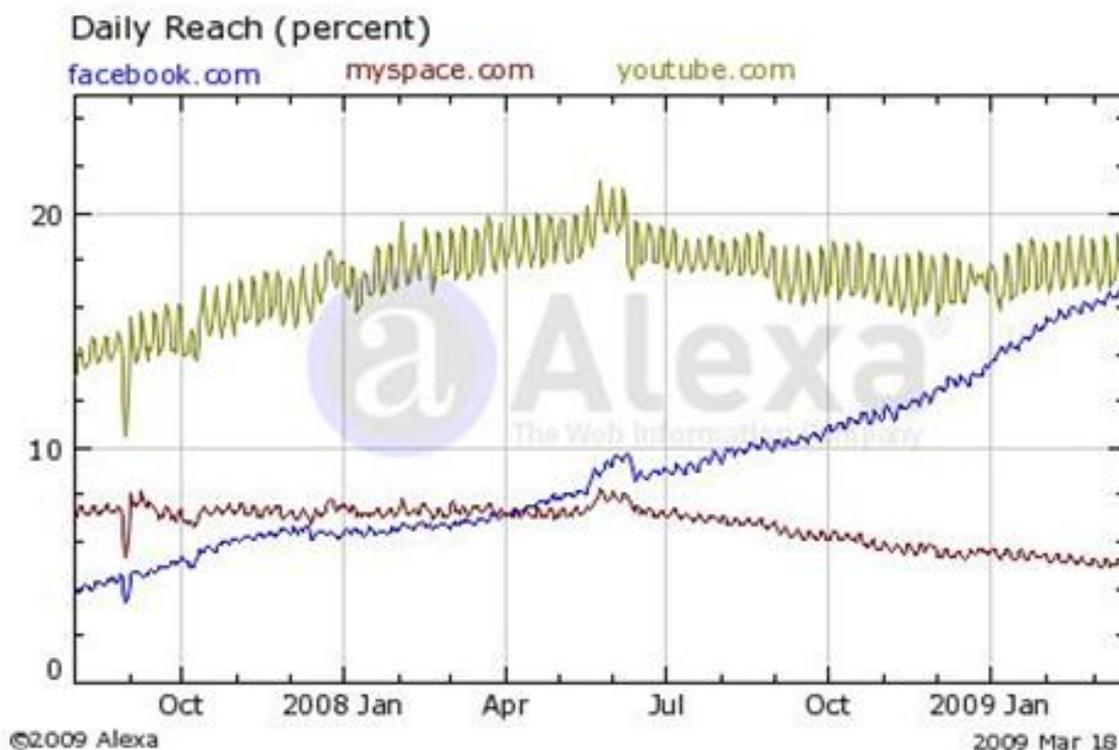
Barney (2004) explains that a network is composed of nodes, ties and flows. To make the explanation clear the writer has drawn an example of a Network:



**Figure 3:** Network representation

The flow is what passes between nodes through ties; it can be gossips, help, discussions, etc. The nodes are considered as person, firms, computers and Ties are Medias, technology, etc. This may explain why such people join internet social network. It facilitates contacts, meetings and discussions.

The Website Alexa (2009) gives statistics about social networking on the net. This graph is a Websites traffic comparison between YouTube MySpace and Facebook (the 3 most known social networks in the world according to Alexa's Top 500 Websites).



**Figure 4 :** Graph of YouTube, MySpace and Facebook traffics comparison  
(www.alexa.com, 2009)

This shows how some social networks, like those can generate a lot of flows.

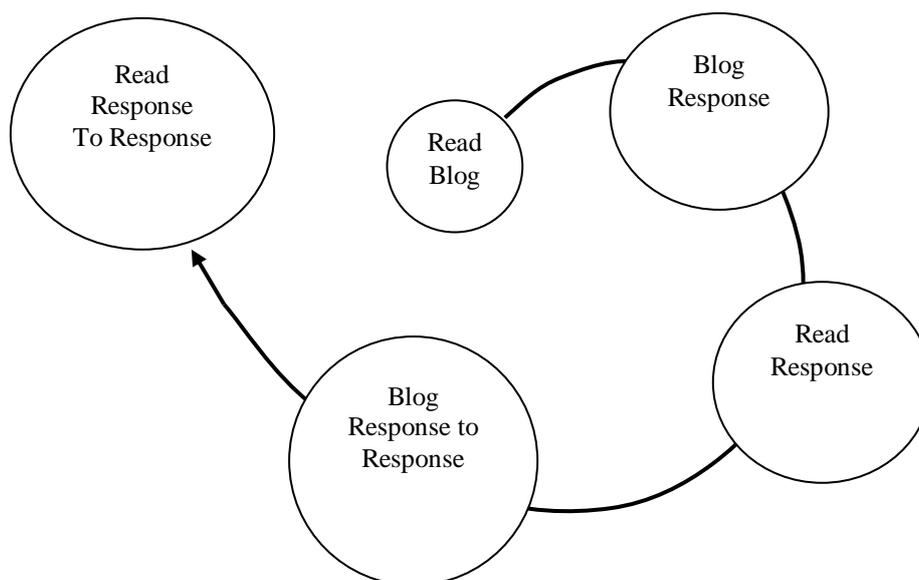
### - Blogs

A blog is a “user-generated Website on which the writers (bloggers) enter their remarks in journal style, which then appear in reverse chronological order.” (Weber 2007, p.168)

But, according to Scoble (2006, p44):

- “Blogging is one huge word-of-mouth engine.”
- “Blogging lets you listen to what people are saying about your product, company, or category and gives them the opportunity to respond.”
- “Blogs lets you feed the network at far lower cost and as more credible source”.

Brown and Hayes (2008) have built the “virtuous cycle of blogging”:



**Figure 5:** The Virtuous Cycle of Blogging.

This “feedback loop” represents the “oxygen” of blogs: they need provocative response. Without it, the blogger give up building his blog.

Nevertheless, even if blogging represents a massive opportunity to get feedbacks and precise information on customers, you can’t join them all: Web 2.0 is about “joining the conversation”. The problem identified by Brown and Hayes (2008) is that the multiplication of blogs ends in the impossibility to contribute to all the one people are interested in.

### 2.3.3. Impact on the companies strategies

Weber (2007) settled a summarizing framework about a comparison between the old and the new marketing in order to do the transition to the Social Web:

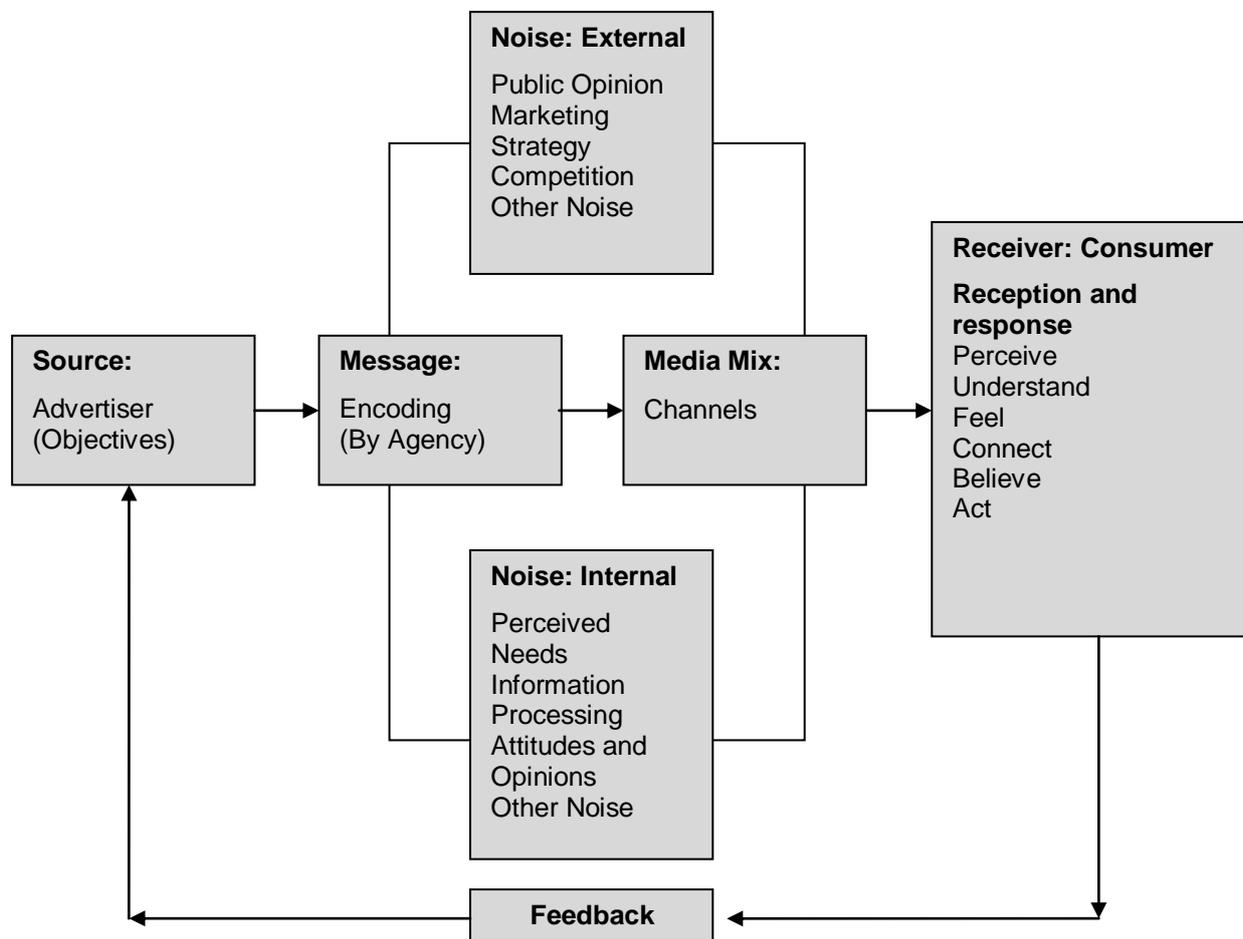
<b>Components</b>	<b>Old Marketing</b>	<b>New Marketing</b>
<b>Marketing mindset</b>	Use one-way, one-sided communication to tell brand story.	Nurture dialogue and relationships; be more transparent, earn trust, build credibility.
<b>Brand Equity</b>	Brand recall is holy grail.	Brand value is determined by customers: How likely are customers to highly recommend the good or service?
<b>Segmentation</b>	Group customers by demographics.	Group customers by behaviour, attitudes, and interests – what's important to them.
<b>Targeting</b>	Target by demographics, especially for media buying.	Target according to customer behaviour.
<b>Communication</b>	Broadcast style: create and push message out for customers to absorb.	Digital environment for interactive communication through search and query, customer comments, personal reviews, or dialogue.
<b>Content</b>	Professional content created and controlled by marketers.	Mix of professional and user-generated content, increasingly visual.
<b>Virality</b>	A nice feature but popularity too often driven by flash presentation rather than content.	Virality based on solid content about remarkable products or features that will get people talking and forwarding e-mail.

**Figure 6:** Comparative board between the “Old Marketing” and the “New Marketing”.

## 2.4. Advertising Strategies

Advertising is, first of all, a form of communication as it is “a message to a consumer about a product” (Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells, 2006). The authors’ theory about the communication role of advertising is the following:

Advertising is part of mass communication as there is no interaction between the sender and the receiver of the message. The main role of advertising is to connect buyers and sellers on the marketplace by transmitting a message which transform product into a brand image. As a mass communication tool, advertising’s “most important strengths derive from its ability to reach a large audience”. The authors have built an advertising communication model in order to understand how communication became advertising.



**Figure 7:** Framework of the Advertising Communication Model.

(Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells, 2006)

“To translate the communication model into advertising, consider that the source typically is the advertiser assisted by its agency. Together they determine the objectives for the message in term of the effects they want the message to have on the consumer audience (receiver). If the communication process fails to work and the consumer does not receive the message as intended by the advertiser then the communication effort is ineffective.”

#### **2.4.1. Appearance of the viral marketing**

##### **- Why is it of interest?**

With the appearance of Internet, a new marketing technique has grown: the viral marketing. Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells (2009, p.104) define viral marketing as “a practice designed to create a groundswell of demand for a product based on messages circulated in the Internet. Through viral marketing, consumers create buzz about a product or brand”.

In an article of the Website E-marketer called “The Viral Marketing Effect” (July 10, 2007), the author explains that according to a study, “the biggest goal of viral marketers was to increase brand awareness (71%). Half also expected to drive online sales, and 44% hoped to drive offline sales.”

Harris and Dennis (2008) develop their theory about viral marketing:

At the beginning the term was “network-enhanced word-of-mouth”. The goal of viral marketing is to transmit a message as fast as possible. This strategy relies on the multiplication to literally explode the message and spread it as widely as possible.

As seen before, transmitting a message efficiently especially works going through influencers. That is what viral marketing does: it focuses on opinion leaders and early adopters in the expectation that they will pass the message and encourage others to try the product. Thanks to peer-to-peer internet communications, such as blogs or social communities, people spread the word really easily.

Scott (2009) states that one of the most important point when launching a viral marketing campaign is the content of the message. Without worthy information, people won't get interested in it; “It is virtually impossible to create a Web marketing program that is guaranteed to go viral. “

Moreover, Kevork Djanseizan, in an article from the journal USA Today (July 22, 2005), stated that:

“Not only is the approach relatively inexpensive, but also it can sometimes be more believable than standard ads.”; “the key to the effective viral: create and execute an idea that’s intriguing enough to get consumers to interact”.

#### - **Advantages**

The professional Website Strategy Internet Marketing (2009) gives the reasons why viral marketing is so popular:

“It creates a platform where marketers can build a customer base at a very low effective acquisition cost. “

“The buzz marketing capability spreads the word about the Website or product/services to the furthest corners of the Web through republishing of articles, email communication being, and passed on, tagging, bookmarking sites and so on.”

“Viral marketing materials do not run the risk of being labelled as spam or email servers as users forward them personally to their friends and contacts.”

#### - **Disadvantages**

The Prof. W. Tim G. Richardson’s Website (Dec 2008) explains the main disadvantages of the viral marketing.

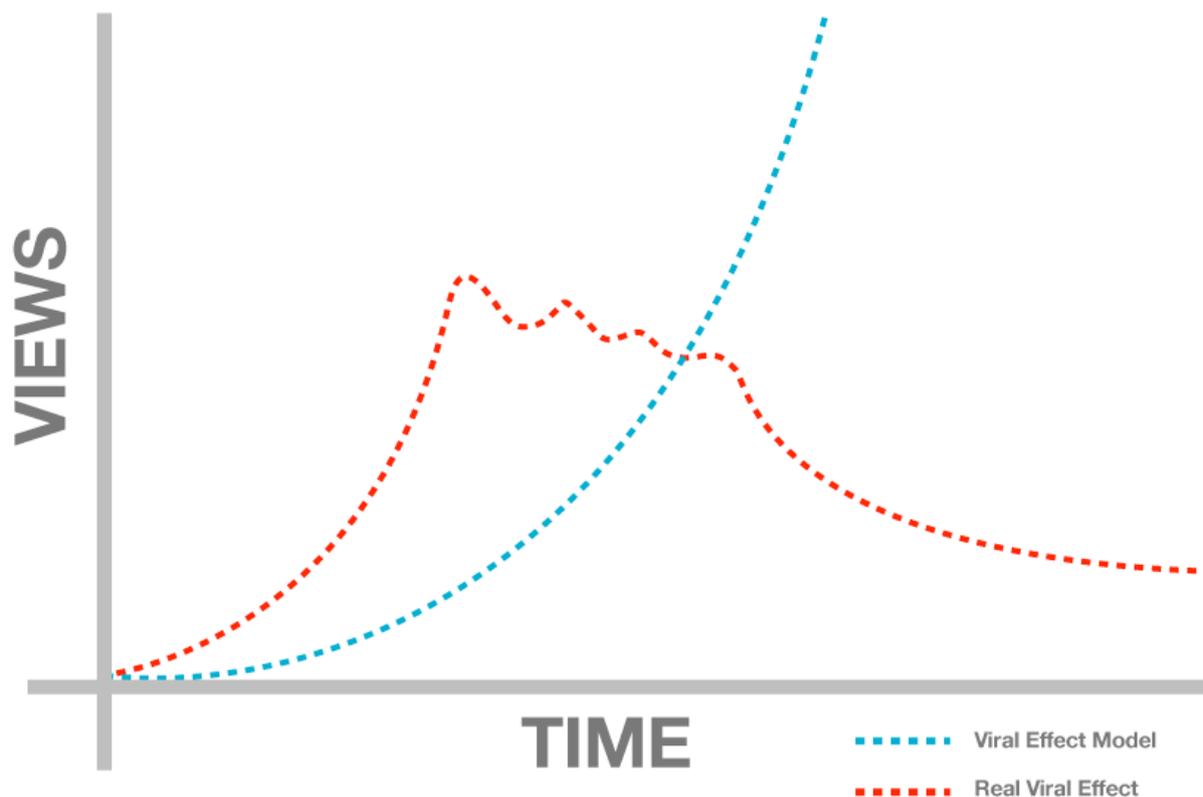
“Association with unknown groups”: A campaign starting to spread through non-influencers can never work. During the process of WOM, the message could go through someone you don’t want to be associated with.

“Spam threats”: spam issues can appear in a negative viral marketing campaign and can be a threat to the company who’s launched the campaign.

“Brand dilution”: The message spread has to be clear enough to do not be misunderstood.

### 2.4.2. Viral based strategies efficiency

The Website Viral Manager (2009) offers many explanations about how works a viral marketing strategy. It introduces the two following graphs of a comparison between viral effect model and reality:

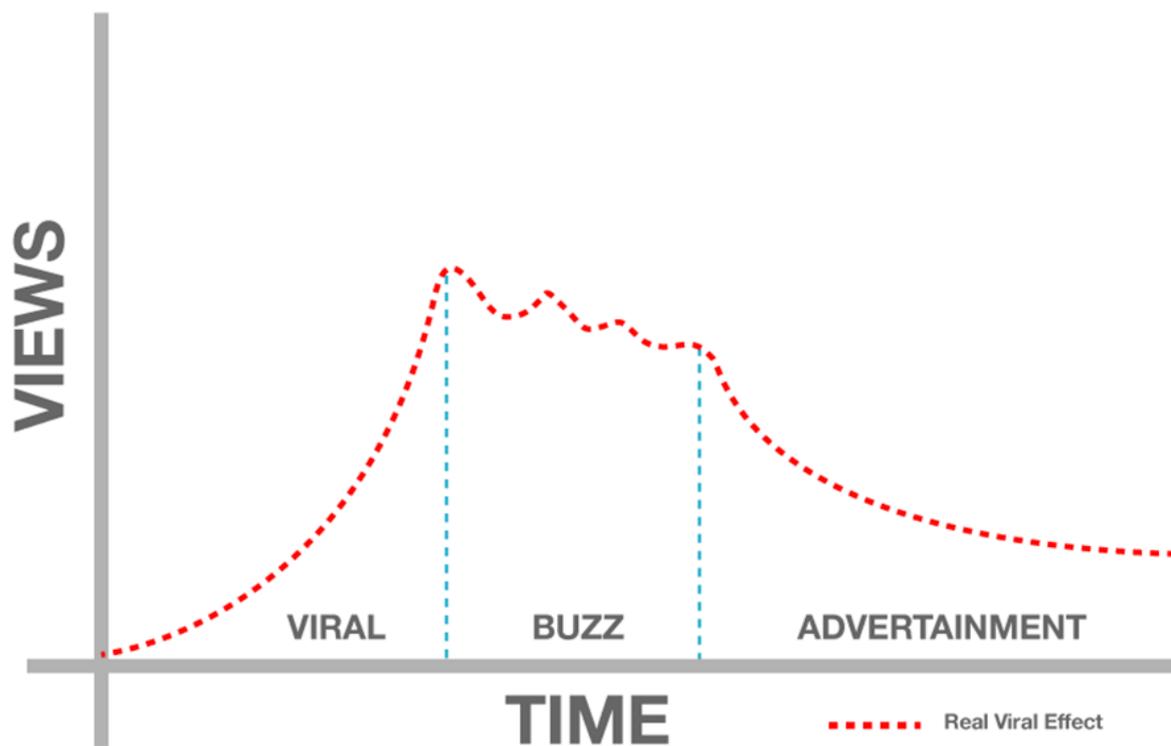


**Figure 8:** Comparative graph of the viral effect model and the real effect model.  
([www.viralmanager.co.uk](http://www.viralmanager.co.uk), 2009)

The analysis of the graph concludes by:

“The most interesting aspect of the real viral curve is the long tail, showing how viral campaigns continue to attract traffic and interest way beyond the initial viral launch period.”

This is the principle aspect of a viral marketing based campaign. The company also include the segmentation of the viral effect in three periods: viral, buzz and “advertainment”.

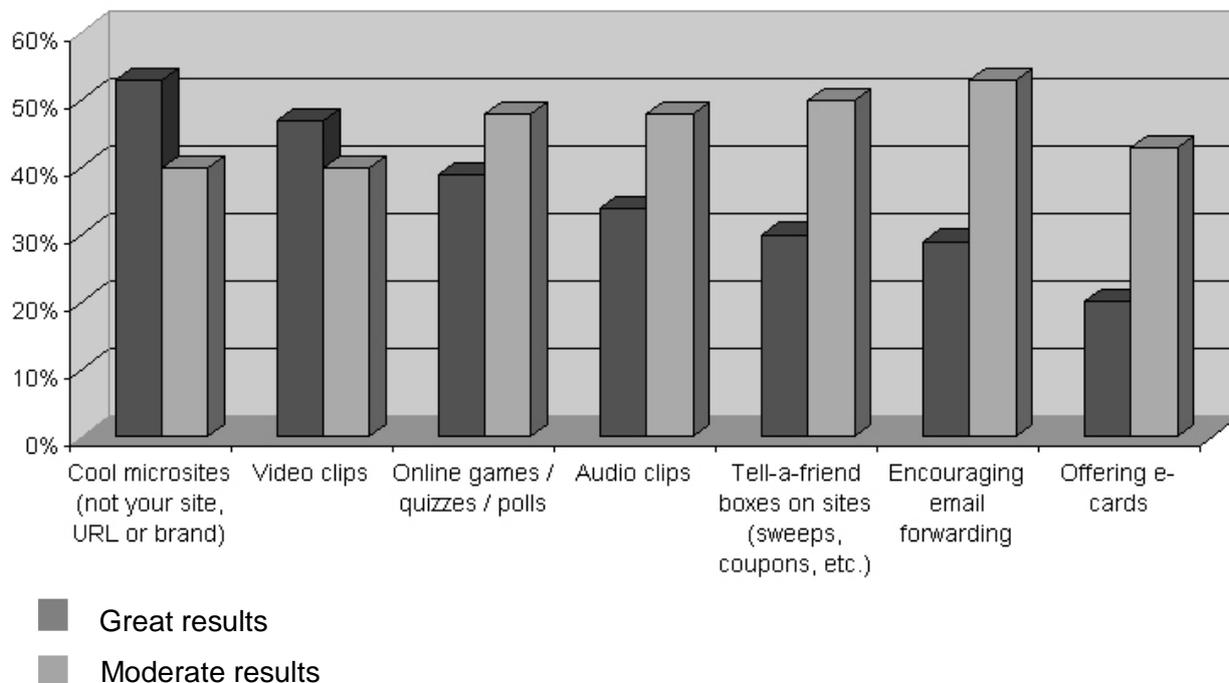


**Figure 9:** Graph of the real viral effect analysis

The analysis reveals 3 key areas of the viral curve: “the height of viral effect, the length of buzz, and the height of long tail effect”

### 2.4.3. Viral marketing on the Web

The Website Viral Manager (2009) also provides documents about the use of viral marketing in the companies' strategy. The following graph indicates the effectiveness of viral methods on the Web.



**Figure 10:** Graph of the measurement of the effectiveness of Web viral methods (in percentages).

	Great results	Moderate results
<b>Cool microsities (not your site, URL or brand)</b>	53%	40%
<b>Video clips</b>	47%	40%
<b>Online games / quizzes / polls</b>	39%	48%
<b>Audio clips</b>	34%	48%
<b>Tell-a-friend boxes on sites</b>	30%	50%
<b>Encouraging email forwarding</b>	29%	53%
<b>Offering e-cards</b>	20%	43%

The Website comments of this graph first indicate that:

“Traditionally in viral marketing “great results” has been related to numbers of visitors”, “but also the quality of that audience”.

Moreover, an article from the Economist (December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008) explains the following:

“Viral marketing moved into a new phase with the growth of online social networks such as YouTube and Facebook. On such networks information gets sucked out by the participants instead of being pushed out via e-mail. It gives the virus greater potential to multiply.”

“The idea really took off with the growth of the internet and e-commerce. Word-of-mouth has long been recognised as a powerful marketing tool; e-word of mouth seemed to have the potential to be so much more so.”

#### **2.4.4. Role and importance of the creativity in marketing campaigns.**

##### **- Appearance of creativity**

Lane, King and Russel (2005) established the factors that made appear creativity in advertising:

- During the twentieth century, competition between companies has increased and transformed “commodity products to branded goods”.
- Specialized professional such as innovative marketers and advertising agencies have appeared.
- Advertising was beginning to get closer to social science research and behaviour analysis in order to understand customers’ needs.
- The automobile industry pushed up products image from useful product to a way to show your social status.

Jef Richards stated (Altstiel and Grow, 2006, p.18) that “creativity without strategy is art. Creativity with strategy is advertising”.

Jewler (1995) explains that “Many great advertising campaigns succeed because they were able to make contact on an emotional level with the targeted consumer through an unexpected yet relevant approach to selling a product, service or idea.”

Creativity seems to be the essence of Advertising. Jewler (1995) theory about creativity is firstly base on entertainment as “things other than humour, such as shock value”.

## - Design

Krug (2005, p.61) states:

“The image exists to evoke momentary desire, emotion, or identification with impersonal, pass-produced, ideas and beliefs”

“The purpose of advertising image [...] is to structure emotional reactions that are related to our consuming the product.”

Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells (2009) define the effectiveness of visual communication in 6 points. Visuals:

- Grab attention better than words.
- Stick in memory because people remember message as key images.
- Visuals that demonstrate add credibility to the message.
- Entertain and interest.
- Communicate instantly comparing to words.
- Secure associations between the product and the image that the company wants about it.

## 2.5. Conclusion

It can be stated that the evolution of communication and advertising techniques, tools and habits have made emerge resourceful marketing techniques, and information tools.

The opinions and theories gathered in the literature review state that the new technologies available allow marketers to become more creative in order to offer relevant marketing campaigns and to reach concerned decisions-makers.

This chapter has allowed the writer to collect relevant theories concerning viral marketing on the Web. The opinions and information given by the different authors give clues about the development of marketing strategies for the future. Social networking and blogging are two different trends remaining to the same phenomenon: the use of a new tool (internet) by people still thirsty of information, advises and entertainment.

## CHAPTER 3            METHODOLOGY CHAPTER

### 3.1.    Introduction

This chapter aims to expose the way the writer has conducted her research to build the analysis. This will discuss the use of both primary and secondary research. The primary research carried by the writer concerns an interview built on a case studies observation. The secondary research consists into gathering all the relevant information and theories in order to build the literature review.

Those researches also help in understanding the subject in order to create a suitable study.

#### 3.1.1.    Objective

The dissertation's topic is the exploration of the use of the Social Web to spread the word. This will conduct to analyse the companies' use of the emergent trend of Social Networking and Blogging to carry out their viral marketing campaign.

#### 3.1.2.    Hypotheses

The inductive approach of the dissertation leads the writer to test her hypotheses. The following points outline those hypotheses:

- Social Networks and Blogs fit perfectly to viral marketing cause of their peer-to-peer information's exchange capacity.
- Marketers target influencer in their WOM campaign because the influencers' power will lead them to reach decisions maker without they would feel marketed.
- SME's and creative brands are the main users of viral marketing first, because of the costs and then because of the need of creative brand image.
- The Social Web allows people to satisfy their need of information about specific themes and allows marketers to reach easily their targets.

### **3.1.3. Research Questions**

Maxwell (2005) estimates that the research questions are the main important part of the research design: “they are the one component that directly links to all of the other components of the design”.

The difficulty of this part is not obvious. Holliday (2002, p.31) explains the difficulty of this task:

“When perhaps no more than the topic has been determined, the researcher’s thinking will already be very rich and difficult to reduce”.

Those questions of this dissertation will lead to test the hypotheses cited below in order to achieve the objectives of the research:

- To justify the use of social Web in the field of viral marketing.
- To analyse the roles of influencers in the word of mouth process.
- To identify the companies that could use this type of advertising and why.
- To explain the role of Social Web for individuals and marketers.

## **3.2. Research Approach**

### **3.2.1. The Inductive / Deductive Method**

Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2003) define the research approach as the way the theory will be developed within a research project. Two opposite theories: the inductive approach and the deductive approach. The authors explain the difference between the 2 approaches: the inductive approach consists into building a theory by testing reality whereas the deductive approach consists into testing a theory by gathering facts from the reality.

The purpose of the inductive theory is:

“To explore an idea, a feeling about what’s going on, to understand the issues and to analyses those in order to give the results of the study based on theory”.

In other words, it is the development of a theory from the observation of empirical reality (Gill & Johnson, 2002, p227). The inductive theory is building a theory by testing observations from the reality.

### **3.2.2. Research Type: Quantitative vs. Qualitative**

Burns and Bush (2003) define qualitative research as “collecting, analysing and interpreting data by observing what people do and say.” Concerning qualitative research, they describe it as a research involving the use of structured questions in which the response options have been predetermined and a large number of respondents are involved.

As well as the research approach is inductive, the primary data collection (that is an interview) has to be qualitative in order to give focused answers based on the respondent’s opinion.

### **3.2.3. Interview and Case study**

First of all, the writer has chosen to rely on two types of primary research as one will help the other. The cases study is the first step of the process and will lead to prepare the interview.

“A case study may be understood as the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part- to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population)” Gerring (2007).

The role of cases study is to have helped the writer to understand the subject and to create the questions for the interview. The case studies are articles from marketing agencies. They can be found in Appendix C. As part of the inductive and qualitative writer’s research approach, this first step will be used to test the writer’s hypotheses. Then, the interview will confirm or infirm them. This approach is due to the need of understanding the basic knowledge about interviewing techniques and tools.

### 3.3. Data Collection

#### 3.3.1. Secondary and Primary

Burns and Bush (2006, p. 146) define primary and secondary data by saying that:

“Primary data refers to information that is developed or gathered by the researcher specifically for the research project at hand.

Secondary data have previously been gathered by someone other than the researcher and/or for some purpose other than the research project at hand.”

The Website “Know This” (2008) describes the advantages and disadvantages of secondary and primary research:

##### - **Secondary Research**

Secondary research offers some advantages:

##### - Ease of Access:

Internet offers many conveniences as well as it gathers huge amount of information and data. Even if the Internet isn't a sure source of information it also offers the opportunities to gain time.

##### - Simplify Research steps:

Secondary research is often used to help the primary research stage. The information needed is available via secondary and so the researcher doesn't have to carry on its own primary research. Moreover, to realize its own primary research turn out to be expensive.

The main problem of secondary research is the quality of the research itself. To collect secondary data, the research needs to master some skills concerning how to use the tools: Internet, libraries, businesses reports... If the researcher doesn't know how to search, he will find incomplete information, sometime without any sources etc...

##### - **Primary Research**

The main advantages of Primary data collection are:

As the researcher designs, on his own, the data collection, it allows having specific answers about his subject. This differs far from secondary research where the researcher has to find a lot of sources in order to build up a deep explained report. This control expands also to the way the inquiry is implemented. Then, more than the qualities of answers, the researcher can decide the size of the data collection, the geographic area concerned, and the people

focused on to. Moreover, this represents a gain of time. Even if Internet has facilitated the secondary data collection, the primary data collection method enables the research to obtain directly the answers he needs.

So, to summarise, primary data enable to gain time during the process of data collection. But, the longest part is the design and preparation of this research. Deciding to implement a pilot study, a questionnaire or an interview needs to be well prepared and to settle boundaries. This part is the longest in the process.

#### - **Use of primary data collection**

Primary research can be carried on through many different methods: questionnaires, interviews, focus group, observation, case-studies... Each method corresponds to a specific need of specific answers. It means that interviews won't have the same objectives than questionnaires or case studies.

The Thames Valley University's Website explains the advantages and Disadvantages of personal interview:

In opposition to the questionnaire, the response rate will be very high. It's an immediate method where the interviewer controls and guides the interviewee. Moreover, this method can "investigate feelings and motives". This is the basis of the qualitative method where you can collect impressions, feedback and opinions easily.

### **3.3.2. The interview technique**

Maxwell (2005) explains that:

"Your interview questions are what you ask people in order to gain the understanding."

The triangulation of the different sources of information and the different data collection methods will lead to get information which isn't influenced by bias.

"Question wording is a crucial element in maximizing the validity of survey data obtained by a question-asking process." Bradburn, Sudman and Wansink (1982)

### **3.3.3. The purpose of the interview**

The writer has chosen the interview because it seemed to be the most relevant technique of primary data collection.

The person interviewed is Rob Palmer, The Web designer of Guerrilla Communications, a marketing Agency situated in the centre of Newcastle (Westgate Road). The interview was held at his office at a defined time. This place was chosen as it was the easiest way to conduct an interview in a quiet and familiar place for the interviewee. The interview was recorded on a Dictaphone and then the answers were transcript during the interview analysis. The whole interview can be found in Appendix B.

The interview was as semi-structured interview. This means it focused on asking defined questions but the interviewee can feel free to give further explanations or derive to another subject in order to give details about a more specific field.

The choice of interviewing only one person can be justified by the relevancy of the choice of this person. The marketing agency has been chosen as this company was used to use the new technologies and based their work on new marketing techniques (guerrilla, viral, buzz etc.) The first person contacted recommended this person to the writer as the one who will have more experience to tell about in this field. Moreover, as the Web Designer of the agency, he also has a lot of knowledge about the Web.

The interview contained 2 parts: the first was about the exploration of the main techniques used by marketers concerning viral marketing, WOM on the Web, and Web tools.

The second part consists in a case study of a viral marketing campaign realised by the interviewee and his opinion concerning famous viral campaigns. The themes addressed were the main points of attention during a campaign, the applications and techniques and the clients.

The objectives of the interview were:

- To have a professional opinion about viral marketing
  
- To define the main points of attention in a word of mouth campaign and the reasons of campaigns failures.
  
- To identify the main Web tool used by a marketing agency to promote a product to decision makers.

- To collect details about the techniques used by marketers in order to “spread the word” on the Internet.

Thanks to the information collected, the author will confront the information found in the literature review and the information coming from the interview.

### **3.4. Analysis of Data**

The analysis of data comes from the analysis of the interview. The first step is the transcription of the interview. Using a Dictaphone during the interview has made the interview easier to manage. The biggest part of the work is the analysis. By analysing, the writer means interpreting the information. Each answer has been interpreted in order to provide a structured analysis and result of the meeting.

The interpretation step corresponded to the linkage between the answers given by the respondent and the objectives of the interview. This has permitted to the writer to verify her hypotheses concerning the use of the social Web by marketers, the role of influencers in the word-of-mouth process and also the type of companies who use viral marketing.

### **3.5. Limitations**

Each step of the dissertation has its limitations:

The limitations encountered during the research step where the relevancy of the information and the reliability of the internet data. The writer had to judge if the information found on the Web, were reliable and trustful information from experts or Web-user opinions. A work on references has been done: the writer had to look for names on the Web to ensure their seriousness and relevancy.

Concerning the interview, the writer has identified two areas to watch out:

**Time management:** As the questions designed for the interview were numerous, the writer had to carefully examine how long time could she spend talking on each question. Moreover, as the interviewee had a lot of work in the agency, the writer couldn't be too demanding on the time spent for the interview.

**English language mastery:** as a foreign student, the interviewer needed to concentrate more than an English to ensure the questions were well understood by the interviewee and to

ensure to understand the answer. This has been especially true for the transcription of the interview.

Regarding the last limitation, the attention is focused on the objectivity of the writer during and after the interview. As the interviewer is facing the interviewee, he can influence the answers or embarrass the respondent. This problem of subjectivity can be also found in the interview transcription and analysis. The analysis of the interview could lead to interpret more than analyse the words. Some formula like “very well” had to be avoided in order to remain objective.

### **3.6. Ethical Issues**

Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2003) think that ethical issues can be anticipated by planning researches in line with ethical practices: “ethics refers to appropriateness of your behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work, or affected by it.”

#### **3.6.1. Seeking access**

First step, before any data collection, it's the “seeking access” step. Where the researcher try to find out how he'll collect information.

The use of Internet could cause the emergence of some ethical issues. The main problem is the reliability of the sources. As Internet is an Open Source available to everybody in the world from a computer, some information may be false. The researcher have to differentiate the sources in order to offer the most suitable and relevant information. And of course, to cite them right.

#### **3.6.2. During the data collection step**

First of all, the implementation of the interview would need to respect some codes concerning participant's rights. The person interview must be able to choose between anonymity and giving his name.

Zikmund (2003) defines privacy as” the issue of whether a respondent choose to answer a researcher's questions; a person may choose to protect their privacy by not answering”.

His privacy has to be respected but the writer has chosen to ask interviewee to be cited in the study. More than anonymity, the privacy issue concerns the way the respondent have been contacted and the way the writer has “discussed” about the details like, the date of the meeting, the subject, the questions, etc. In order to be sure that the respondent would be ready and sure about the interview subject, the questions have been sent to him before the interview.

This is a matter of trust. If the interviewee trusts the interviewer, he will be pleased to answer the questions and help the interviewer in his research process.

### **3.6.3. During the analysis**

According to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2003), “the maintenance of [your] objectivity will be vital during the analysis stage to make sure that you do not misrepresent the data collected.” A lack of objectify would alter the results of the data collection analysis.

## **3.7. Chapter Analysis**

In conclusion to this chapter, the information gathered through literature and from the different authors explains how a marketing research can be hard to manage. That’s why the writer has to inquiry step by step and do not spread top much in order to focus on the aim of its subject. Viral marketing has so many sources in secondary data that the primary research will help completing it by more specific information.

## **CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter aims to discuss the findings gathered from the primary data collection. These findings will be analysed and contrasted against the theories described in the literature review chapter.

The inductive approach aims to build theories from data collection then link it to literature review. The first part of this chapter will be the conclusive analysis of the interview. Then the writer will conduct the comparison between the findings of the interview and the literature review.

### **4.1. The Interview Analysis**

To analyse the interview, the writer has first transcript the interview from recording. Then, each question has been observed and analyse linked to this study.

### **4.2. Theoretical Part**

#### **4.2.1. Viral Marketing**

The first objective of the interview is to have a professional opinion about viral marketing. The theory of the author about the basis of viral marketing is the following: viral marketing is costs effective and provide an image of creative brand to the company who launch this kind of campaign.

The three questions asked about viral marketing were the following:

- Why do all marketers dream about viral marketing?
- Is there some disadvantages? Risks?
- How do you measure the effectiveness of viral marketing?

The interviewee (Rob Palmer) explained why there is such a passion about viral marketing.

- "It's mainly about costs".
- "You can use standard marketing but...not much cost, not much time, just throw it online and if it works, great!"
- "People kind of talk about it quite a wide".

Even if the first explanation may seem simplistic, his enthusiasm about the subject has shown how viral marketing is an opportunity to develop business on the Web fast.

Then, he gave explanations about the disadvantages of this technique. He thinks that the only downhill of viral marketing is “controlling it”.

“It is based on links being passed around through emails”.

“You can’t really measure word-of-mouth”.

The control seems to be the only disadvantage. Another problem is to measure the effectiveness of a campaign. The interviewee expressed the difficulty to measure it opposing viral marketing to mail drop or banners where you have respectively e-mails responses or “click-through checkers”.

#### **4.2.2. Techniques of Word-of-mouth**

The objective of this series of questions is to define the main points of attention in a word of mouth campaign and the reasons of campaigns failures.

The questions concerning this part were:

- Do you have some basic rules when you use WOM on the Web?
- How does WOM can become negative WOM? How do marketers can fail by using WOM on the Web?
- Is it the content the only thing that you can control?
- During the campaign, during, when they info are online, why could it fail?
- Do you think that the campaign is influenced by influencers?

Through these questions, the writer has identified the rules to reduce the risk of failure in online viral marketing campaign. The interviewee mentioned:

- To get a hook:

“It’s all about information between sites and without that it would be a failure.”

This means to find the creative idea that will make react and respond the internet users. He also insisted on the importance of the links passing through blogs, e-mails etc. The message must be easily transferable.

- To carry out good marketing research.

The research step appears to be the most important part in the marketing process:

“It’s all about getting right from the start”.

“If your demographics are wrong, if you push the wrong “button” it’s just have negative impact.”

- To make sure that features ties up:

“If that is brought through all the media, if the message is right, if the message is pulled to the correct audience, it will work, it will”.

During the interview he explained that having a Webpage on a famous Website is very useful unless the banner to access to it isn’t well targeted or doesn’t transmit the right message. Then, the target is confused and misunderstands the meaning of the ad.

- To use influencers well:

“They’re so up to date with trends and the way thing work and so on”.

“If you don’t get that message right, they won’t even link on it.”

The interviewee justified the point about the influence of these persons. He also explained that demographics are an important part to identify them and get them involved in the campaign. If the content of the message is wrong, it won’t spread, starting from the influencers.

- To take advantage of new trends:

“I think the word-of-mouth just can’t take off the trend of social networking those days”.

This last point will be developed later.

### 4.2.3. The Social Web

This last point, in the exploration of viral marketing techniques and tools, aims to identify the main Web tools used by a marketing agency to promote a product to decision-makers.

The hypothesis of the author about Web tools, and especially social networks and blogs, was that they fit perfectly to viral marketing cause of their peer-to-peer information's exchange capacity. Indeed, on all those platforms are presents chat rooms, space to comments the information given by the writer, etc. This allows people to talk and to exchange information.

The questions relative to this theme are the following:

- What are the advantages and Disadvantages of Social Networks and Blogs?
- Which one do you use the more for viral marketing in your campaign?
- Even if it's easy (through social networks), do you think that people aren't bored of advertising? Are they still reached? Is it still working?
- So, for someone who wants to launch marketing campaign, he just has to be creative?
- Is it expensive?

Relying on the interviewee answers, the writer has highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of social networks and blogs.

"People generally gets in touch and stay in touch with blogs when they're interested in specific topics and so on"

"With the social networking you might get a wider cover".

"Brands already can get stuff on social networks if we do viral campaign. It is just so easy to market something through that."

The blogs fits for a campaign which has specific targets and segments. You get more from people who are following blogs because they're expecting something from the blog author. They're reading about something they're interested in and will spread the word easily.

Concerning social networks, the advantage is the width of the possible reach. It allows transferring a massive amount of information to a lot of people. This is closer from the mass communication. Blogs are more like the one-to-one communication model. Moreover, it seems to be easier to market through social network than through blogs:

“It will certainly take off really quickly. Like I said, you can’t really control it, let it evolve and everything...”

The main disadvantage of social networks is the same problem than viral marketing: people have to talk about a product on a long time period in order to make it famous on the Web. Otherwise, it will just be another silly viral campaign about something that nobody will remember after the campaign:

“Banners and ads are on the downhill at the moment, because they’re not as popular as what they use to be”.

Moreover, the advertising on the Web has already evolved. The interviewee stated about the tools he used on the Web to promote its clients’ products. The emergence of new Web tools imposes marketers to be creative:

“People need to think in more depth”.

”If they get their attention, it has a really meaning behind and get more depth to it.”

Marketers have to take a look at what have been done in the past, and find creative ideas to reach their clients.

### **4.3. Analysis of a previous campaign**

To complete this first part of the analysis, the interviewee and the interviewer have discussed about a previous successful campaign done on the Web. In this part, the writer wants to collect more in-depth details about the marketing techniques at guerrilla communication.

#### **4.3.1. Main points of attention**

This first part is composed by two questions:

- Do you have some feedbacks of an old successful campaign?
- What are the steps?

It leads to the interviewer to understand how the agency works. The interviewee explained how the agency works step by step to realize an online viral campaign. He gave the example of a pharmacy chain who they created an online game for.

“We did some new tests on the product and we’ve had some ideas and we were looking to what the product already had: a brand, a name and so on. “

“We have to think how we can bring that online, how we can transfer that message online”.

After the first contact to the company, the agency has to find ideas in order to suggest something to the client. Once the basic ideas are confirmed, the agency is trying to know more about the company and the product. This allows the campaign to be targeted best.

During the next step, all the services of the agency sit up in order to melt ideas. The best way is often the brainstorming. This part is one of the most important after the research step. Here come the ideas and concepts from “creatives”. They handle the inventive part and then the project is transfer to the designers.

#### **4.3.2. Applications and techniques**

The questions relative to viral applications were:

- Do you think that games and videos are better than emails or just WOM?
- The main videos online are they controlled by companies or are they just posted by people?
- What is the best campaign you’ve ever seen?

“People love interaction, games can get people interested for hours, and sometime people are playing the game for couple of hours”

”It would only be appropriate if it would fit with the campaign”

“It just makes people aware that they’re not just playing a game but it’s also part of a product as well.”

Interactive tools appear to be a good way to reach a target. But it’s important to understand that every viral campaign can’t be based on games. It works because of a concept, not only because of a game.

“Those sorts of sites are for home videos, free using things like that”.

“YouTube’s just gotta be a point where those companies can’t control it (the video)”.

The interview has lead to understand the power of interactive Medias. According to the interviewee, there are two kinds of videos on the Web. The one hosted by Websites like

YouTube, The others, posted on those Websites to, are mainly controlled by the companies and are parts of viral campaigns.

He also gave the example of, according to him, the best viral campaign he's ever seen. This campaign was run by Diesel. These videos were supposed to introduce a series of parties all over the main capital cities of the world and were part of a whole viral campaign on the Web.

" They took porn movies but they cut out all the nasty words and lady basic images", "It was just absolutely fantastic. It was just brilliant!"

### **4.3.3. The clients**

During the interview, the clients of the agency were mentioned and the interviewer wanted to talk further about them. The agency has different types of clients: big companies, new businesses and also public companies (like NHS). The agency responds to different needs:

On one hand, some companies work regularly with the agency with service contracts, on the other hands there are shorts campaign where companies just use the agency quickly.

Concerning public sector companies, the interviewee expresses that the collaboration is quite difficult:

"You find that the creativity comes down because of the strict guidelines; it's quite hard to be extremely creative with their brands."

Concerning the new businesses, it is more or less the opposite:

"You get more feedback, it's easier but not as satisfying, and it's really hard."

Small companies are looking for brand building through those agencies. They need creativity but the difficulty lies in the fact that, as an unknown brand, you don't have results as effective as for big brands.

#### **4.4. Literature discussion**

To talk about the correlation between literature review and the findings, the writer will discuss the literature review according to 3 themes: viral marketing, techniques of word of mouth, and social Web. It appears that the findings and the literature review opinions are very close: the results of the interview have more specific information than the literature review.

##### **4.4.1. Viral Marketing**

Harris and Dennis (2008) consider viral marketing as a “net-work-enhanced word of mouth”. Their theory is that the spreading of messages on the Web has things in common with viruses. Actually, the basic model of viral marketing is spreading the word.

But to go further, the interviewee explained the importance of costs. Advertising on Websites like MSN or Yahoo through banners can become expensive but it’s measurable. However, creative viral marketing turns out to be more efficient through, for example, interactive Medias like videos.

The reality of viral techniques which are used by the interviewee mainly fit with the literature theories. Moreover, the Website Viral Manager (2009) survey reveals that online games, as powerful as they could be, aren’t the best weapon for viral marketing. The main is “cool microsites”. Actually, the interviewee isn’t “that far from the truth” as online games and video clips sit in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place of more efficient viral methods.

Actually, creativity is the essence of advertising. As Jef Richards stated (Altstiel and Grow, 2006, p.18) “Creativity without strategy is art. Creativity with strategy is advertising”.

Moreover, Jewler (1995) makes clear this point by explaining that creativity allows marketers to create an emotional contact with the customer.

#### 4.4.2. Techniques of Word-of-mouth

The WOMMA stated that:

“Word-of-mouth is finding ways to support satisfied customers and making it easier for them to talk to their friends“.

To create satisfied customers, companies need to have good product promoted by good message with relevant content.

Weber (2007), Scott (2009), Brown and Hayes (2008) have all the same opinion about the relevancy of the content of a message. When describing the steps of a viral campaign, the interviewee expresses the importance of making features fitting altogether: the right message to the right audience. A content, like a video or a game, would fit to a campaign dedicated to people concerned about it.

The only gap found by the writer between literature review and findings could be about the source of influencers' influence.

Hill (2009) explains that a leader enjoy a higher social status than non-leader. Moreover, the Viral Manager Website (2009) thinks that:

“People generally like to share content because it makes them feel more important”.

The interviewee has a different opinion concerning the reasons why influencers have influence: “They're so up to date with trends and the way thing work and so on”.

But, they both agree on the fact that influencers are important to spread the word effectively on the Web. Brown and Hayes analysis (2008) bring the ideas that an influencer optimise and amplify the message.

This explains the interviewee opinion:

“If the content of the message is wrong, it won't spread, starting from the influencers”.

Targeting the influencers as the first receiver of the message would offer positive feedback and noise to the other consumers.

### 4.4.3. Social Web

A main part of this study was concerning how social networks and blogs can be a good way to spread a viral message. The authors of the literature review expressed their opinion about how companies can speak on a customer-centred communication campaign and the interviewee gave explanations on the way companies can communicate through blogs and social networks.

The link between both is that mass communication is the form of communication applied to social networks and one-to-one communication is the form applied to blogs.

Relationship marketing, as the application of one-to-one communication, has 3 rules, or values, explained by Varey (2002): it is a win-win collaboration, co-managed by both parties where business values are customer-centred.

Blogs offer a process of feedback which appears to be crucial for companies. Scoble (2006) said that: "Blogging lets you listen to what people are saying about your product, company, or category and gives them the opportunity to respond."

Moreover, Brown and Hayes' (2008) "virtuous cycle of blogging" explains that blogs need provocative response in order to exist, like a win-win collaboration where companies got feedbacks, and customers got information.

Concerning mass communication, the connection with social networks is the width of the possible reach and the fact that marketers communicate to a very large audience with no specific message. Newman (2003) defines a social network as:

"A set of groups with some pattern of contact or interaction between them." The author also insists on the width of those groups.

Allen, Kania and Yaeckel (1998) definition's of mass communication is the transfer of information with no specialisation of message or medium. This process aims to target the largest amount of people possible.

Thanks to those two Web tools, mass and one-to-one communications can both be improved. The power of those tools is their capacity to exchange information fast. According to this analysis, blogs are better than social networks due to the feedback process companies can get.

#### **4.5. Chapter Summary**

To conclude, it can be stated that most of the findings coming from the interview fit with the theories explained in the literature review.

As the interviewee's profession is Web designer, he's a specialist of Websites and Web tools. The observation from this analysis can reveal how the interviewee pointed details on the technical part more than on the theoretical part. Thanks to the interviewee opinion, the writer has been able to explore the subject further.

Consequently, in order to write a relevant conclusion, the writer will have to explore the technical side of viral applications and also the need of and impact on companies themselves.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

### 5.1. Concluding Statement

This part is the main point of the work. The aim of this study is to test the writer's hypotheses and theories by looking for relevant theories and information from both primary and secondary researches. To conclude this study, the hypotheses will be examined and the writer will explain if they've been confirmed or infirmed.

- **First hypothesis:**

Social Networks and Blogs fit perfectly to viral marketing cause of their peer-to-peer information's exchange capacity.

The findings have shown that the peer-to-peer technology isn't the main point that makes the social Web fitting viral marketing techniques. The interviewee thinks that the main point is the importance of the possible reach. Apparently, the "peer-to-peer" capacity of the social Web can improve the speed of the message spread.

- **Second hypothesis:**

Marketers target influencer in their WOM campaign because the influencers' power will lead them to reach decisions maker without they would feel marketed.

This hypothesis has been confirmed by both authors and the interviewee. When the writer has analysed the role of influencers in the WOM process, she found out that they've two roles: to optimize and to amplify the message in order to spread it wisely and quickly. Their importance is obvious from the interviewee because they are up to date with the trends and can affect consumers' decisions to make them buy the product.

- **Third hypothesis:**

SME's and creative brands are the main users of viral marketing first, because of the costs and then because of the need of creative brand image.

This point hasn't been explored enough from theories to have critical answers. The interviewee explained that every companies need viral marketing but with different goals. New and small businesses need a creative brand, big companies use viral on quick campaigns to modify their image or increase sales, public companies are using viral marketing in order to do "social marketing" in order to affect people or make them react.

- **Fourth hypothesis:**

The Social Web allows people to satisfy their need of information about specific themes and allow marketers to reach easily their targets.

Concerning the goal of marketers when they use social networks and blogs, this hypothesis fits with theories and the interviewee opinion. It comes out that the appearance of this phenomena has change the face of marketing. It make viral easily workable. Blogs and social networks are two different tools in view of the fact that they're different medium in term of target, message and capacity.

## **5.2. Limitations and further research**

Discuss the limitations that you now realize you have as this shows your ability to critique your own work.

### **5.2.1. Improvement of research**

There is two points on which the writer should have improved and gone further in the researches:

- Interest of social network for people and individuals.

The subject of this study is the exploration of how marketers use the Social Web. Especially, to understand how doe social networks and blogs can improve the advertising message. To go through this, the writer had to appreciate the motivation, for individuals, to connect to those Websites. This point, should have been explore in more depth. It would have been useful, for the writer, in better understanding the subject before starting the study of it.

The second theme is about the companies which use viral marketing.

- Type of companies who're using viral marketing.

The interviewee has helped to identify the goals of companies to use viral marketing. But the writer should have improved the motivations' point. That's to say, understand why companies need to use viral marketing and especially what do they want to change, or to improve, in their image or product offer.

### **5.2.2. Restrictions**

- **Measurability of campaigns**

Moreover, some barriers have been encountered. Concerning the heart of the study, the measurability of campaigns has been a challenge. The information collected during the study about measurement was concerning the tools, but not about viral marketing itself. To collect right information, figures would have been useful, but as the interviewee explained, you can measure viral marketing with click-through on banners and number of visits on Websites but not word of mouth as the spreading of a rumor, video or opinions on products.

- **Relevancy of the interview**

Interviewing just one person might be "tricky" as the opinion of just one person isn't representative. The only argument in favour of a single interviewee is the suitability of the opinion of this person. As part of the new generation of marketers and Web designer, he is up to date with new trends. Moreover, the primary research was based on qualitative and not quantitative information.

The second point concerns the questions for the interview. In the first draft, the questions were more focused on theories. During the interview, the interviewer has had to change some questions and add some in order to fit with the interviewee answers. Maybe, more preparation would have help to offer more specific questions.

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## **APPENDIX A                    STATEMENT OF LEARNING**

This dissertation is the first I have ever done since I'm in high school and it taught me a lot. This has been a challenge for me in term of time management, research, and personal organisation, and English mastery.

The longest part has been the research step. During this stage, getting references, theories, or ideas have been a tough task. Actually, I don't know how a report could not be referenced anymore. The referencing system is now obvious, what wasn't before.

Then, to carry on researches, I had to contact people, decide appointment and behave professionally. This experience taught me how to reach unreachable people. The experience with the marketing agency has been gratifying. To contact them and to have a response have been a challenge as they're not easily available and reachable.

The step after was the analysis of data. I've improved my critical analysis by crossing the authors' opinions. This skill is one of the most important when working on observation project and analysis.

The whole writing up of the dissertation has especially been a tough task and this year has definitely improved my English language skills.

The last point is about time management and personal organisation. I planned deadlines for each parts, I've organized my work in order to fit with my lectures and seminar. I should have started this work early but working in a short term has been a challenge and the pressure remains a good motivation.

## **APPENDIX B            INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION**

### **PART 1: EXPLORATION OF THE VIRAL MARKETING ENVIRONMENT**

#### **1. Viral Marketing**

##### **- Why do all marketers dream about viral marketing?**

I think, well, It's mainly about costs, personally I think that, when you get viral marketing right it's such a low cost to how wide a coverage you can get . That's one of the main things, it's just such a good thing, and it is really cheap to do. Obviously, you have to get a concept right, to get a hook, and you got to get people interested and talking about it otherwise it just won't work.

You can use standard marketing but...not much cost, not much time, just throw it online and if it works, great! On the Web it's just one of those "no brain" has really to do especially with running online, a full online marketing campaign, it's something you should include.

##### **- Is there some disadvantages? Risks?**

I think, mainly, controlling it. Because, for example we've been through couple of stage where our viral marketing campaign we did was featured on YouTube. Somehow people getting in front of the campaign might have seen an inappropriate image and video and its nothing to control... I think that's the only down side, it's to be off to know where it will feature. Cause a lot of it is based on links being passed around through emails. So, control is really a disadvantage. Advantages are wide... easy and cheap, I think that the benefit of all of this is you get such a talk about product. Links as well, people kind of talk about it quite a wide; it's not just a couple of week campaign. It's just stick around.

##### **- How do you measure the effectiveness of viral marketing?**

I'm not sure about measuring it. I think, a lot of the research is done before handing of the campaign and then we were just followed that research through and for example on YouTube, obviously you can set keywords. But, I mean, measuring it, we've been using the click-through checkers and so we can judge how popular it's been. But, it's not like a mail drop where you can judge your contact through. You can't really measure WOM.

#### **2. Techniques of Word-of-mouth on the Web?**

- **Do you have some basic rules when you use WOM on the Web?**

Not really I think the word-of-mouth just can't take off the trend of social networking those days, and how big it is. You get the right sort of hook campaign like going on, people will talk about it, people will pass links on, "have you seen this, have you seen that?". It just happens.

- **How does WOM can become negative WOM? How do marketers can fail by using WOM on the Web?**

I think it's getting back to the research on the campaign and getting wrong from the start. I think, if your demographics are wrong, if you push the wrong "button" it's just have negative impact. Something just works and they just work through whomever. You just have to do better researches at the beginning of the campaign and make sure that everything ties up, everything fits. And then hopefully the risks will be reduced.

- **Is it the content the only thing that you can control?**

Yeah, if that is brought through all the media, if the message is right, if the message is pulled to the correct audience, it will work, it will. But again it's all about getting right from the start: having a good brainstorming session, making sure that the campaign that you're running isn't offended, won't make people think twice about it or get lost very quickly. Negatives can be positives as well, if it's not like a seriously negative feedback.

- **Do you have some advises for someone who would like to launch a viral marketing campaign on the Internet?**

Spend your time thinking about the actual message ,how you wanna see it, if you're happy with being out of control, if you want to keep it under control, you might have to think about the site you want it on. It's all about preparation, planning and make sure about the creative side of the campaign before you start.

- **During the campaign, during, when they info are online, why could it fail?**

We were lucky about the situation we found on YouTube being linked. We were looking core that quite quickly and cut off line but it was linking to that information you would immediately get bad vibes, bad feedback. You would immediately just stop working. The creatives would

be wrong from the start. If you target the wrong page on Websites, if you've got a health advice page on a big Website but your banner is just completely out ; it doesn't fit it's just out of that page then, it probably won't work.

You have to think about those entire things you did before you run a campaign. If you've got a product where nobody is gonna be around then it will fail, it won't work.

- **Do you think that the campaign is influenced by influencers?**

Yeah, I mean, I think because they're so up to date with trends and the way things work and so on, that's how demographics just help to solve, to get involved and it's a big part in making campaigns work because otherwise that is the massive voice that if you don't get that message right, they won't even link on it.

I run a blog and there is a lot of links coming in through a wage and without that, blogs wouldn't get passed through. So it's all about information between sites and without that it would be a failure. It is just so big at the moment that it would be a massive issue not to hit that.

### **3. Web tools**

- **What are the advantages and Disadvantages of Social Networks and Blogs?**

The main thing with blogs, people generally get in touch and stay in touch with blogs when they're interested in specific topics and so on. With the social networks, you get pass through information from anything, it can just be walk people interested on the day and you get the hits people to know even if they're not interested in the topic.

Whereas with blogs, it have to be following it, it has to be interested in it. But, on the advantage side of it, people who're following blog, would get more, would tell the people they know who would be interested in a specific topic. You can target more through blogs.

With the social networking you might get a wider cover.

- **Which one do you use the more for viral marketing in your campaign?**

I think that has more to do with the actual campaign itself, it's sort of suitable for social network. Brands already can get stuff on social networks if we do viral campaign. It is just so easy to market something through that. It will certainly take off really quickly. Like I said, you can't really control it, let it evolve and everything...

- **Even if it's easy (through Social Network) do you think that people aren't bored of advertising? Are they still reached? Is it still working?**

This is from a little bit of experience; we haven't really seen a big hit on it. It's basically from what I've been reading up as well, I think banners and ads are on the downhill at the moment, because they're not as popular as what they use to be. People are not getting many hits through them. But, I think, you just have to be clever with the social networking side. What's been done so many time from the past so, people don't get bored, and it's not just an ad on the side that people just ignore. It generally the crazy wacky stuff that people are talking about, it's not just a standard add, it's something that somebody will pull on and its friends will pull on and send links to and so on.

- **So, for someone who wants to launch marketing campaign, he just has to be creative?**

Oh yeah, completely. I think people need to think what I didn't realize: that people need to think in more depth. You can do that for 10p very quickly and mean nothing to someone, whereas if they get their attention, it has a really meaning behind and get more depth to it. I think people will remember it and will post it on their pages.

- **Is it expensive?**

It depends on the site you're talking about. If you're talking about sites like Msn or Yahoo yes, it's quite expensive. But, it's more of a time thing as well, because obviously you can't set your banner for a few months. It needs to be quick, an instant thing.

## **PART 2: CASE STUDY OF A VIRAL CAMPAIGN**

### **4. Main points of attention**

- **Do you have some feedbacks of an old successful campaign?**

We did a campaign well for a pharmacy chain. We did a viral add for that. We got some good feedback from that, and increasing sales. It was all positive, but to be fair, our experience here is basically only run as a signal of the Websites. In a lot of the campaign that I run through, another member of our team here dealt with only online marketing. From the field we've done, we've positive feedbacks on.

- **What are the steps?**

We did some new tests on the product and we've had some ideas and we were looking to what the product already had: a brand, a name and so on. We just kind of got the brief when we sat down together, we talked about how playing it and came out my ideas and we did a great job on the principal side of it and we looked at out the stores and in stores as well. It was just a strong brand through up a whole worldwide campaign. They actualise online, it was pull, and we did a game for them as well. It worked, people were interested, and people were getting hit. The stats on hit visits and so on we still getting hits visit now, even after the campaign is over. A lot of the ideas and concepts came on through the "creatives". We were just brought in the digital side. To think how we can bring that online, how we can transfer that message online, it was the main part. We were running like a weekly recipe guide, so if people get it and it worked they would come back to the site to see the next recipe. We try to get people to get back in.

**5. Applications and techniques**

- **Do you think that games and videos are better than emails or just WOM?**

I think they work well on the long side of those things. That only worked because of the concept I think. It would only be appropriate if it would fit with the campaign. I think, running a game for example. People love interaction, games can get people interested for hours, and sometime people are playing the game for couple of hours and not know what the message is so we hit a very short thing on the game. Somebody could repetitively replay it but every time they have to go to an information page to get information on the product before they could play again. At the end of the game a page comes and they would ask you if you want to replay the game but you've to read the info first before playing again. It just makes people aware that they're not just playing a game but it's also part of a product as well.

- **The main videos online are they controlled by companies or are they just posted by people?**

I think, those sorts of sites are for home videos, free using things like that. A lot of it is controlled by the companies. If it's got a product involved using the wrong way and I didn't get approval from the comp. I'm taking that risk when I put it online or I just even think about it. YouTube is just gotta be a point where those companies can't control it but its bringing the law involved. But I think it's mainly controlled.

- **What is the best campaign you've ever seen?**

There was a really good one ran by Diesel. They took porn movies but they cut out all the nasty words and lady basic images. The way they did it was just genius. I think you could tell what's going on, all you could tell was the fact that this women opening her top under the towel, and under the towel, there was a koala hiding her body. It was just absolutely fantastic. It was just brilliant.

## **6. The clients**

- **What type of companies are your clients?**

We range, we've got a couple of big clients, retaining clients, and they just stay with service contracts, regular works or short campaign and just use us quickly. We've got a lot of new businesses; we do a lot of work for public sector (NHS...). It's good to work on those types of clients but you find that the creativity comes down because of the strict guidelines; it's quite hard to be extremely creative with their brands.

- **It's easier to work with new businesses?**

You get more feedback, it's easier but not as satisfying, and it's really hard.

## APPENDIX C            CASE STUDIES

### CASE STUDY C.1.            interview of Mack Collier

“Social media consultant and author of the blog, The Viral Garden, Mack Collier, offered us his thoughts on social networking, viral marketing and blogging. Driven by the ‘community first’ approach to blogging and social media, Mack helps companies learn how to engage in social media.

A frequent contributor to the Website Marketing Profs, as well as the marketing blog Daily Fix, Mack has spoken about social media strategies to small and large companies such as Dell and Microsoft. He has also been referenced in publications and Websites such as *The Washington Post*, *CNET* and *The Boston Globe*.

**BB: What’s your favorite social network and why?**

**MC:** Honestly, I don’t spend a lot of time with the sites that most people think of as ‘social networks.’ If I had to pick one, I’d probably say LinkedIn, because I get some value from the Q&A section. I learn a lot, and I can see the networking value as well. But right now I get more of both from Twitter and Plurk.

**BB: What’s more important for viral marketing: Social networks or blogs?**

**MC:** I think it depends on where your network is, and where the people you want to reach are. And really, the spreading of ideas via either could be greatly enhanced by another platform, such as Twitter. Twitter still trumps anything I’ve seen in the social space as far as how quickly ideas can spread.

**BB: How will the dust settle on the increasingly competitive microblog marketplace (Twitter, Plurk, etc.)?**

**MC:** Twitter will still remain the dominant player in the microblogging space. This is why I laugh at the ‘Twitter vs. Plurk’ silliness, because Plurk’s emergence actually helps Twitter, IMO. Plurk has taken the 140-char microblogging format backbone that Twitter uses, and they’ve added their own quirky format and functionality. This opens the door for future competitors to do the same thing, bringing their own unique look and appeal to the microblogging space. But I think that because Plurk stuck with the (more or less) 140-char limit, that actually helps solidify that as being the key determinant of what a microblog is. And that helps give credibility to Twitter, since it was the first dominant player in the space.

I think Twitter’s userbase will continue to expand rapidly, and it could have close to mainstream appeal in the next couple of years. Plurk IMO is too quirky to appeal to the masses, but it will enjoy a very devoted niche following. Unless it really does take off with teens, as the founders were hoping for. But I still think that Plurk adding threaded conversations is huge, and will affect the microblogging space from this point forward.

**BB: What is the most important aspect of creating a viral campaign?**

**MC:** There HAS to be some sort of value built-in to your ad/video/whatever that the person can quickly and easily see. It can be something funny, something informative, something that makes me happy, whatever. But I have to see the value in it immediately, and I need to have a mechanism in place that makes it easy for me to quickly share that value with others.

**BB: Where do you seek inspiration for your blog posts?**

**MC:** Mainly by simply interacting with other people on blogs, Plurk, or Twitter. I also try to regularly scan my feeds, but what I've started doing is using Twitter to share interesting posts that I'll come across. Recently, many of my post ideas have come from conversations I've had on Plurk, or via email from someone I've met on Plurk. Did I mention that I like Plurk?

**BB: Do you anticipate all of this new media going the way of Prodigy and Compuserve?**

**MC:** It's funny that you ask that, because I was on both Prodigy and Compuserve, and loved both! And what I loved about both sites was how they let me connect with other people. So we've just been tweaking and changing how we connect with people online for the last 20 years. I used message boards on Prodigy, then message boards and chat rooms on Compuserve. Now it's blogs, Twitter and Plurk. As I keep saying, don't focus on the tools, but rather the connections that the tools make possible. We continue to gravitate toward tools that allow us to have more beneficial and valuable connections. But it all comes back to interacting and connecting with other people. That's a basic human desire that isn't going anywhere, and neither are the tools that allow us to connect and communicate.

**BB: What's next for Mack Collier?**

**MC:** I've got a couple of logs on the fire that I can't talk about yet ;) Right now I am just busy as usual with social media consulting work. Starting in September, I'll be speaking at several Fall events, including Small Business Marketing Unleashed in Ohio in September, and Marketing Profs Digital Marketing Mixer in Oct in Arizona. Really looking forward to these and the others as I love connecting with people that are curious about this space, and it's always great to catch up with friends. Hope to see you again soon as well!"

## **CASE STUDY C.2. "Flixster draws crowds to Orange BAFTAs"**

### **"The Challenge: Getting young people involved"**

Orange wanted to encourage a youth audience to become more actively engaged with this year's BAFTA Film Awards. This age group loves film and many film communities have developed online. One of the largest active communities in the UK to emerge is Flixster, a social network built around film with an audience of 1.2 million unique users in the UK

generating 18 million page impressions per month. This audience extends to 2.2 million overall, thanks to Flixster having one of the most popular applications within Facebook.

### **Our Strategy: Fitting in on Flixster and Facebook**

An Orange 'hub' was created on both Flixster.com and within the application on Facebook and provided the perfect platform to promote all three elements of Orange's sponsorship which included 60 Seconds of Fame, Star Award and live coverage of the Red Carpet with Myleene Klass. Users could choose to watch show reels of this year's Orange Rising Star nominees and vote for their favourite. They could take part in a quiz to win tickets to the BAFTAs. Or they could watch interviews on the red carpet. Integrated navigation buttons on all pages made it extremely easy to find the exclusive content and increased Orange's presence on both the Website and the application.

### **The results: And the award goes to...**

Over 220,000 unique users visited the Orange Hub over a period of six weeks. More than 50,000 people took part in the quiz inviting on average 21 of their Flixster or Facebook friends to compete against them and beat their score. In total, the activity drove 10% of the total traffic to the official Orange BAFTA Film Awards microsite."

## **CASE STUDY C.3. Branded apps on Facebook fail to attract users**

### **Many branded applications on Facebook have failed to take off as members of the social network choose not to install them.**

Recent applications from MTV, Warner Bros and Woolworths have received a lukewarm reception from Facebook users, achieving as little as five daily active users. These figures come despite, in some cases, having been live for months.

There are now over 22,000 applications on Facebook, including branded ones pushing anything from FMCGs to TV shows and album releases. NMA understands that they can cost anything between £2,000 and £30,000 to develop and promote.

An application from Boomerang promoting Fraggles Rock has just 31 daily active users, while applications for BBC Torchwood, iPlayer and BBC Weather have a disappointing combined average of 120 daily active users.

None of these companies were available for comment.

Some brands have, however, had a little more success. Coca-Cola, which at launch described its applications as "ground-breaking", has achieved 7,000 installations.

But there are no branded applications in the top 50 most popular on the social network. Media agencies have expressed deep concern over the failure of many applications to take off.

Alex Miller, head of Jam, the social media department at i-level, said user fatigue was damaging the effectiveness of applications.

“Clients want to get involved with social networks and Facebook seems the obvious choice, but users are becoming tired of the ad messages, they will move away from Facebook”

Tom Smith, research manager EMEA at Universal McCann, said: “The numbers aren’t great and applications aren’t on the way to replacing other types of online advertising.”

Jam’s Miller said that it was now advising clients to ‘piggyback’ on existing applications, rather than create new destinations. “We advise brands to jump on an application that’s already popular, something like Slide or SuperPoke.”

Slide’s senior director of advertising Sonya Chawla said, “In the US the shift from using branded applications to branding something like SuperPoke has already begun.”

**LAST PAGE**