

In search for virality

Today many researchers in many different disciplinary fields are in search for the “**magic recipe**” of virality.

This research involves big **multinational industries**, as well as **small and medium enterprises**, but also **university departments, newspapers, private research centers** and so on.

Why?

It is evident that thousands or – better – millions of visits to a web site imply **money** from the advertising world.

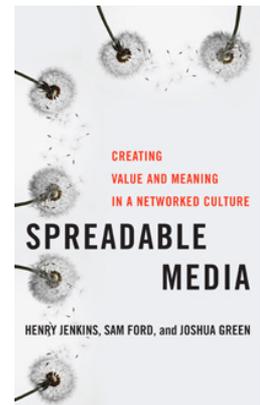
In search for virality

The most interesting insights on virality come from:

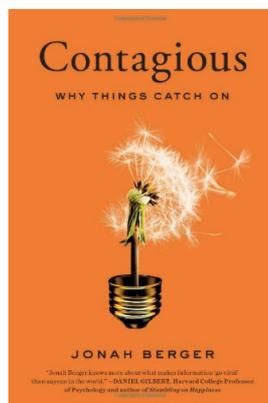
1. **Thales Teixeira**, assistant professor at Harvard Business School,
2. **Jonah Berger**, Associate Professor of Marketing at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania,
3. the research group of **Henry Jenkins**, who studied this topic within the **Convergence Culture Consortium** of the Comparative Media Studies at MIT (now **Futures of Entertainment**), where he worked for 20 years (from 2009 to present he teaches at the University of Southern California).

Resources

Spreadable Media 2013



Contagious 2013



First online resources

The blog of Henry Jenkins:

<http://henryjenkins.org/>

The web site of Harvard Business Review:

<http://hbr.org/>

What is a viral video?

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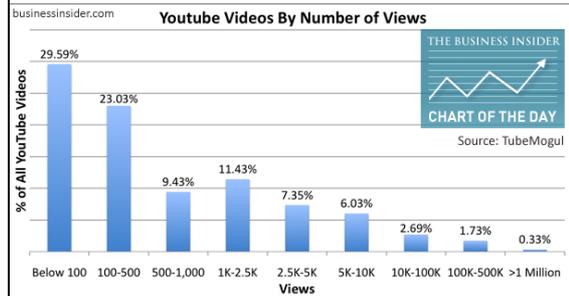
There's no universal definition of what constitutes a "viral video".

I have heard the expression "viral video" used to represent:

1. a threshold of **views**,
2. a rate of **growth**,
3. a threshold of **sharing**,
4. and occasionally an **aesthetic**.

Views

The numbers of YouTube



The numbers of YouTube

In 2009 some **53%** of YouTube's videos had **fewer than 500 views**.

About **30%** had **less than 100 views**.

Meanwhile, just **0.33%** has **more than 1 million views**.

The numbers of YouTube

This is a bit of a surprise to many who think about "viral" as being in the **millions**, but it should make you feel better about the video of your cat that hasn't gotten **1 million views** yet.
☺

Getting **10,000 views** on YouTube makes a video a good viral.

The numbers of YouTube

On **March 15, 2012**, YouTube changed its recommendation system to make **the time spent with a video** or channel a stronger indicator than a click in calculating the number of "views".

Before the change, YouTube tracked the length of views **up to 30 seconds**, primarily to make sure each click led to an actual view.

Now it's tracking across even **longer timeframes** to see if viewers watched. This means it may track **up to two or three minutes** of content.

The numbers of YouTube

There's a business reason at play.

Longer viewing means more opportunity to show viewers ads.

And engaged viewers are also thought to be in a **more receptive mind-set** for brand advertising.

Shares

Shares

Unruly Media's **viral video chart** ranks the top videos in terms of **sharing**. (Unruly Media is a company of Social Video, Social Video advertising and Video advertising experts, which is based in NY)

To make the top 100 list, a video has to get about **8,500 shares in 24 hours**. But this happens to **0.01%** videos.

So let's say that **1,000 shares** are acceptable for a good viral video.

<http://viralvideochart.unrulymedia.com/all>

What is a viral video?

Let us assume that to define a video "viral" it is sufficient the following performance of **views, sharing** and **growth** curve:

10,000+ views
and
1,000+ shares
in
24 hours.

What makes a video "viral"?

What makes a video “viral”?

Most analyses converge on the fact that most “viral” videos have some aspects in common with reference to:

- theme,
- structure.

Themes

Most “viral videos” fit into one (or more) of the following thematic categories, which I have tried to sort by people’s reactions:

- 1) **LOL, that’s so funny!** Parody of something popular and timely, or any content which makes people **smile** or **laugh** (at least to some degree) or stimulates people’s **sense of humour**.
- 2) **Cute!** Any content which makes people say: **“cute!”**: pets, puppies, young cats, and, of course, children.

Themes

- 3) **Hot!** Any content that more or less appeals to erotic sphere. Any soft sex content.
- 4) **Wow!** Any content which stimulates in us questions such as: “Did that just happen?” (it usually didn’t), “Is it true or false?”, “How is it possible?”. And the answer is not easy at all.
- 5) **Let’s do the same!** Any content which is easy enough to be repeated, remixed, imitated.

Structure

Now we meet a problem

Over the years on the Internet **attention span appears to be going down**, which means that the video needs to repeatedly earn the viewer throughout its duration.

What is attention span?

Attention span is the amount of **concentrated time** on a task without becoming distracted.

Most educators and psychologists agree that the ability to focus attention on a task is crucial for the achievement of one’s goals.

It’s no surprise that attention spans **have been decreasing** over the past decade due to the increase in external stimulation.

Attention span

Attention Span Statistics	Date
The average attention span in 2013	8 seconds
The average attention span in 2000	12 seconds
The average attention span of a goldfish	9 seconds
Percent of teens who forget major details of close friends and relatives	25 %
Percent of people who forget their own birthdays from time to time	7 %
Average number of times per hour an office worker checks their email inbox	30
Average length watched of a single internet video	2.7 minutes
Internet Browsing Statistics (Taken from 29,379 page views)	
Percent of page views that last less than 4 seconds	17 %
Percent of page views that lasted more than 10 minutes	4 %
Percent of words read on web pages with 111 words or less	49 %
Percent of words read on an average (583 words) web page	28 %
Users spend only 4.4 seconds more for each additional 100 words	

Source: Harald Weinreich, Hartmut Obendorf, Esico Herder, and Matthias Mayer: “Not Quite the Average: An Empirical Study of Web Use,” in the ACM Transactions on the Web, vol. 2, no. 1 (February 2008), article #5.

Source: <http://www.statisticbrain.com/attention-span-statistics/>

Structure

So, it seems crucial to capture attention in the **first 8 seconds**.

Which structure?

Let us listen to the voice of **some analysts** directly.

Not only do they speak about the **structure** that a video needs to have in order to become viral, but also they focus on other important ingredients of virality.

Why videos go viral

Kevin Allocca

Kevin Allocca is YouTube's trend manager.

"I admit, I have a pretty unusual job." – *Kevin Allocca on Socialtimes.com*

Film

A TED conference by Kevin Allocca.

November 2011.

Why videos go viral

Tastemakers.

Participation.

Unexpectedness.

Why videos go viral

Thales Teixeira

Thales Teixeira is an assistant professor in the Marketing Unit of **Harvard Business School** (HBS).

He holds a Ph.D. in marketing from the University of Michigan.

He earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and master's degree in statistics at the University of São Paulo, Brazil.

Why videos go viral

Thales Teixeira

His research domain comprises **advertising** and the **Economics of Attention**, particularly within TV and Internet videos.

He is also a proponent of using **eye-tracking** and **facial-tracking** technologies to engineer the design of video communications moment-to-moment in order to attract and retain viewer attention.

Film

Two interviews to Thales Teixeira.

March 2012.

June 2013.

Why videos go viral

According to Teixeira:

1. It is crucial to capture attention in the **first 5-8 seconds**.
2. It is crucial to induce **joy**, which amounts to **entertaining** people.
3. There's progression that **starts by surprising** the viewer, avoids interjecting much advertising, and takes the viewer on an **emotional roller coaster**.

Why video go viral

According to Teixeira:

4. People share for **self-interest reasons**: they want to appear **cool**, they want to become leader of a community and so on. So, **self-interest** overcomes interests in others.
5. This leads to the concept of **advertising symbiosis**, a **win-win relationship** between the brand and the consumers who sharer the brand's contents.

Let's go back to the problem of structure...

To sum up, some of the main ingredients of the **structure** focused on by the analysts are:

1. The ability to capture our attention in the **first 5-8 seconds** and to maintain it during the video.
2. The ability to tell a **story**.
3. The ability to induce **emotions**.

What about stories?

Procter & Gamble 2012 Case Study

The Best Job in the World

"The Best Job in the world" was launched on **April 18, 2012** by Procter & Gamble, sponsor of Olympic Games in London 2012.

It was directed by the film director **Alejandro González Iñárritu**.

It was shot in London, Rio de Janeiro, Los Angeles, Beijing.

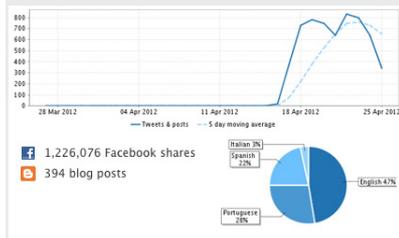
Agency: **Wieden+Kennedy**, Portland.

Music by **Ludovico Einaudi**.

1. P&G 'best job' by Wieden+Kennedy Portland

742,988 shares this week

All time: **1,226,470 shares**



Source: Unrulymedia.com April 27, 2012

The Best Job in the World

2,260,507 shares all time

2,167,417 Facebook shares

91,367 Twitter shares

1,723 blog posts

Source: Unrulymedia.com April 18, 2014

Always Kids

"Always Kids" was launched on **July 11, 2012** by Procter & Gamble, and was the second commercial of the campaign "Thank you Mom".

It was directed by British television commercial and music video director **Daniel Kleimann**.

It was shot in the USA and the UK and involved **245 kids** coming from 16 countries.

Agency: **Wieden+Kennedy**, Portland.

Pick Them Back Up

"Pick Them Back" was launched on **January 5, 2014** by Procter & Gamble, for the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, and was the third commercial of the campaign "Thank you Mom".

It was directed by American director of photography **Lance Acord**.

Agency: **Wieden+Kennedy**, Portland.

The spot reached **1.5 million views** in two days.

Music by **Ludovico Einaudi**.