

# Emotions and social currency as a basis for viral success a case study on online video advertising

International Business Communication  
Master's thesis  
Nina Rantalankila  
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Department of Management

Aalto University School of Business

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### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of the thesis is to find an updated understanding on what factors and components make online content go viral, especially online video advertisements. The emphasis of the study is on emotions and social currency as they have been found to have a constitutive effect on the viral success of online content.

### **Methodology**

The theoretical framework is based on previous literature about advertising, social media and the role of emotions in online success. The data was collected by conducting two group interviews, where two case advertisements were discussed. Additionally, the two advertisements were analysed using the Multimodal Analysis Video program.

### **Findings and Conclusions**

The findings of this study support previous literature on the topic. The advertisement should include content that the viewers can relate to. Additionally it should preferably make the viewers have positive emotions. The theoretical framework was found justified, as the results showed that emotions play a central role in how well an advertisement succeeds in online platforms. The interview participants also agreed on that the content of an advertisement needs to be funny in order for them to share it.

### **Key Words**

International business communication, advertising, social media, social currency, emotions, virality

## **Tunteet ja sosiaalinen pääoma viraalisuuden taustalla**

Tapaustutkimus internetissä julkaistuista videomainoksista

### **Tutkimuksen tavoitteet**

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tarjota päivitettyä tutkimustietoa siitä, mitkä ainekset ja tekijät vaikuttavat online-sisällön, erityisesti internetissä julkaistujen videomainosten, menestykseen ja mahdolliseen viraalisuuteen. Tutkimuksen pääpaino on tunteissa ja sosiaalisessa pääomassa, sillä niillä on jo aiemmin huomattu olevan perustavanlaatuinen merkitys siihen, menestyykö online-sisältö viraalisesti vai ei.

### **Tutkimusmenetelmät**

Tutkimuksen teorettinen viitekehys perustuu aiempaan kirjallisuuteen mainonnasta, sosiaalisesta mediasta sekä tunteiden roolista online-menestyksessä. Tutkimuksen aineisto on kerätty kahdella ryhmähaastattelulla sekä Multimodal Analysis Video-työkalulla. Näiden avulla käsiteltiin tämän tapaustutkimuksen aiheena olevaa kahta mainosta.

### **Tutkimuksen tulokset ja johtopäätökset**

Tutkimuksen tulokset tukevat aiempaa kirjallisuutta aiheeseen liittyen. Mainoksen sisällön tulee tarjota samaistumismahdollisuus sekä herättää katsojissa mieluummin positiivisia kuin negatiivisia tunteita. Tutkimuksen teorettinen viitekehys osoittautui aiheelliseksi, sillä tulosten mukaan tunteilla on keskeinen rooli mainoksen online-menestyksessä. Myös haastatellut henkilöt olivat sitä mieltä, että mainoksen sisällön tulisi olla ensisijaisesti hauska, jotta he jakaisivat mainosta eteenpäin.

### **Avainsanat**

Kansainvälinen yritysviestintä, mainonta, sosiaalinen media, sosiaalinen pääoma, tunteet, viraalisuus

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# 1 Introduction

Social media has become a permanent part of our every day life and because of its popularity it is also included in many companies' communication strategies. In Europe, people spent on average 6.7 hours per month per person on social media sites in 2012, outnumbering the screen time spent on e.g. services, entertainment and games (comScore 2013, Appendix A). Smart phones, tablet computers and laptops provide a way for us to be constantly online, connected to other people as well as companies and create user-generated content.

One of the most topical and discussed trends in online content creation is the use of video. The popularity of online video content is increasing rapidly among consumers, and in order to adapt to and respond to this trend in online advertising, more and more companies are using video as a way to reach their audiences. However, the amount of available online video material is overwhelming, and only a fraction of videos become so called viral hits.<sup>1</sup>

The increased possibilities for content creation and involvement with companies has brought the consumers much closer to the business environment. This thesis discusses the power that consumers have online and especially the way in which they react to online video advertisements. Emotions play an important role in the reactions and the online sharing process. This study understands online video advertising as advertisements in the form of a video that have been published in online platforms such as YouTube. However, the advertisements shown in the beginning of YouTube videos are not taken into consideration in this study. Rather, this study is interested in the advertisements that have been uploaded to YouTube as pieces of entertainment, not as paid advertisements.

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<sup>1</sup> This study understands "viral" as online content that is shared over and over again by the viewers. The content spreads continuously through online social networks, usually in a short period of time, and becomes widely popular.

## **1.1 Background information**

There are numerous platforms, applications and programs that allow people to connect online and share information. This change in the individuals' presence in the online world has happened rapidly and is on-going. New gadgets and applications are introduced continuously, and keeping up with the changes can be a challenge for companies. Ignoring the developments in technology can result in falling behind from competitors and also financial loss, and thus the possibilities that social media has to offer have also changed the tools and strategies of companies in recent years (Mangold and Faulds, 2009, p. 357). However, some of the platforms are still very new, and companies might still lack the knowledge to use them to the greatest possible extent (ibid, p. 358).

The novelty of social media, new technologies as well as online applications and platforms might generate difficulties for companies, but the people of the so-called Generation Z can be considered natives in these areas. These young people have been using the new technology their entire life, and are used to using it to e.g. discuss different products and services with others. Considering companies and their customer relationships, this is one of the most important parts of the online power that consumers have today (Mangold and Faulds, 2009, p. 360).

In addition to the possibility of connecting with each other and maintaining online discussion, consumers have the power to choose e.g. where and how they want to receive messages, read news or watch television (Pérez-Latre 2009, p. 36). Different devices make it easy for consumers to search for information in their own terms, but what is especially important regarding this study, is that they also make sharing, commenting and participating extremely easy. Consumers are more involved with the content creation than before, and this has started to change the way companies plan their advertising campaigns (ibid, p. 34-36). In order to benefit from the 'buzz' possibilities of online networks, companies should try to find ways to generate discussion and interaction among their customers (Dye 2000, p. 146).



There are also new media channels that people use – and thus a change in where the advertisements are present. Television has fewer viewers than before, so the interest in traditional 30-second spots during commercial breaks is diminishing among advertisers. However, some live events with high viewing rates such as the Super Bowl in the USA are very popular both among advertisers and the public. Advertisers can pay up to 3 million US dollars for a 30-second spot in the Super Bowl half time, and the advertisements usually get very high viewing rates on YouTube after the game day. (Pérez-Latre 2009, p. 38)

Because of these changes, advertisers are moving from offline to online. There are numerous different ways to advertise online, and the trendy habit of using video in order to reach wide online audiences is not an exception.

The popularity of online video advertisements is growing and the way people react to advertising is changing. As Elliott (2007) points out, online video advertising is increasingly seen as good-quality entertainment, whereas previously advertisements were considered as an interruption to the actual piece of entertainment (e.g. a television program). However, while *online* advertisements have become a piece of entertainment, there is simultaneously a growing trend to avoid *television* advertising by using digital video recorders that enable skipping advertisements (Elliott, 2007). Trends Magazine points out that people are also getting “immune” to a certain type of online advertising: banners and advertisements on e.g. Facebook. The magazine calls this phenomenon *banner blindness* (Trends Magazine 2013, p. 23).

The fact that online advertisements have increased their entertainment value has led to consumers using advertising beyond its marketing purposes: advertisements with interesting content can be shared to friends just as any other online videos. Emotions – and especially surprise – are what capture the interest of viewers, but the sharing process that possibly follows watching the advertisement is highly social. Finding an online advertisement that suits the ideology and mind-set of a specific social group and being the

first one to introduce that advertisement to the group enhances your social status among the group of people. This quest for *social currency* makes the viewing of advertisements more social than before (Kasapi 2009, pp. 121, 125).

The role of emotions in the success of an advertisement has been studied and discussed by several authors (e.g. Berger 2013, Kasapi 2009, Botha & Reyneke 2013, Berger & Milkman 2013), and emotions have been found to have an important role in the individual's decision process of whether or not an advertisement will be shared.

When a new commercial airs on television, movie theatres or online, it can almost always be found on social networks (such as YouTube) as well (Southgate et al., 2010, p. 351). This gives people the possibility to search for an advertisement they have seen and share it with their friends. The social aspect of sharing online content and the emotional series that precedes it is an essential point in this study.

## **1.2 Research problem**

Social media platforms are ideal places to share content, ideas and opinions with others. Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube provide different possibilities for everyone to discuss and share ideas on topics that they are interested in.

A special character of social media is that the discussion can take place between strangers as well as people who know each other in "real life". People with similar interests can easily find each other without having to be physically close to each other. Social media is a global network, and as such it also offers great opportunities for companies to reaching worldwide, but interest specific audiences. By targeting online videos to these specific interest groups, companies can gain more visibility through the willingness of the target group to share the video to their friends. While the aspect of targeting is lightly addressed in this study, it is not a central theme in it, as the study focuses on two commercials published on a global website: YouTube, a video platform owned by Google.

As online video content is increasing, companies have to pay attention to differentiation in order to stand out from others. It is difficult to predict which videos will become successful over others, but emotions have been found to play a central role in whether or not online content is shared (e.g. Berger 2013, Berger & Milkman 2013, Botha & Reyneke 2013, Dobele et al. 2007). The viewer has to find a personal (emotional) connection to the content of the video, and feel that his/her peers would appreciate him/her if he/she forwarded it to them. When an emotionally interesting video is shared with someone else, the feeling is also shared. This way the sharing of the video can help to reinforce the personal relationship or social connections, despite the fact that the sender and the receiver of the video might even be situated in different parts of the world (Berger 2013, p. 105). These findings are central for this thesis, as they form an informative base on why audiences tend to share content produced by companies.

Three areas of theoretical literature are central for this thesis: 1) advertising and especially online advertising, 2) virality and 3) the role of emotions in advertising. These will be discussed in Chapter 2, especially in Sections 2.1. and 2.2. Additionally, the findings of this study will reflect on crowd sourcing and the possibilities it has to offer for international companies.

There are many articles and studies published about the role of emotion in different marketing campaigns. Previous findings have shown that advertisements with emotional content (combined with novelty and the possibility to enhance the viewer's personal-image) are more likely to be passed on to others (e.g. Dobele et al. 2007, Berger & Milkman 2013). Dobele et al. (2007) studied the involvement of six primary emotions (surprise, fear, sadness, joy, disgust and anger) in nine viral marketing campaigns, and found that effective viral messages must contain an element of surprise in order to be successful. Additionally, the campaigns that were more likely to get passed on to others included at least one of the other emotions coupled with surprise.

Building on previous research on the role of emotion in videos and advertising, this thesis aims to specify the characters that have influenced the popularity of two specific online video advertisements in 2013. The available research is mostly focused on marketing campaigns, whereas this thesis will focus on the communicational aspect of online videos by including the aspect of sharing and crowd sourcing.

### **1.3 Research question**

The focus of this study is firstly on *online video advertisements* and secondly on *the most popular online video advertisements of 2013*. By answering the following research question, this thesis aims to find an updated understanding on how the content of an online video influences the audience's online sharing behaviour:

*RQ1: What is the connection between the content of an online video and its online success?*

By examining two case advertisements from 2013, this study aims to answer the following additional research question:

*RQ2: What do the most viewed online video advertisements (from 2013) have in common?*

The video server YouTube, which is owned by Google, was the most popular online video channel used by Europeans in 2012 (comScore 2013, Appendix B). Because of its worldwide popularity, this thesis focuses on YouTube, and more specifically on two online video advertisements that have been uploaded to YouTube during 2013 and become viral hits in a very short time.

The data of this thesis consists of two advertisements that gained the most views on YouTube during 2013. This information is available from *YouTube Rewind 2013, top trending videos of 2013* – a collection of the most successful YouTube videos of the year

(YouTube 2013). The list was published on December 11th 2013 and features ten most viewed videos on YouTube during 2013. The only two advertisements found on that list, Evian's *Baby&me* (ranking fifth on the list) and Volvo Trucks' *The Epic Split* (ranking sixth on the list) were chosen as case advertisements for this study.

### **Advertisement 1**

Evian: Baby&me

Published on YouTube: 19.4.2013

Views (31.12.2013): 69 266 933

### **Advertisement 2**

Volvo Trucks: The Epic Split feat. Van Damme

Published on YouTube: 13.11.2013

Views (31.12.2013): 66 059 537

The case advertisements are analysed selectively by using categorisation of themes and multimodal analysis. The computer program Multimodal Analysis Video is used to analyse the advertisements thoroughly. The findings of this study will be completed with two group interviews, where the two advertisements are further analysed on a personal level: how did the interviewees react to the advertisements and what kind of feelings did they experience in the process. The results found using the Multimodal Analysis Video tool will be compared with the interview participants' reactions to the advertisements.

Previous literature especially about the role of emotion and different types of video content in viral hits will be compared with the findings of this categorisation. The analysis aims to reach an updated understanding of what kind of characteristics an online video advertisement should include in order to be successful in social media platforms.

The studies and publications on why people might be emotionally interested in sharing online content are central for this study and provide a base for the analysis of the two

advertisements. Although e.g. Dobele et al. (2007) focus on viral marketing, and this study focuses on communication through online video advertising, their literature on the importance of emotions is central in this study.

#### **1.4 Position of the thesis within International Business Communication**

This section discusses the position of this thesis in the field of International Business Communication (IBC). The definition for corporate communication according to Joep Cornelissen (2008, p.5) can be held as a guiding definition for IBC as well:

“Corporate communication is a management function that offers a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favourable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organization is dependent.”

Expanding this definition to international companies and international operations will offer an understanding of what is meant by IBC.

As explained in Section 1.1, the technological development of recent years has made social media a central part in the field of communications: increasing the amount of discussion that takes place in social media sites. Customers and consumers use social media sites as platforms for private discussions and social life, but the sites are also channels to reach company representatives – and vice versa.

As the practices and customs of advertising are changing together with the new technologies, the communication strategies of companies are modified to meet the new trends and practices. Internet and digital media have initiated great changes in the advertising industry (Powell et al. 2009, p.8, Pérez-Latre 2009, p.36), and this thesis addresses one central communicational phenomenon of today, online video advertising. Additionally, the thesis will discuss the possibilities of crowd sourcing in social media.

The thesis focuses on online video advertising, and discusses two case advertisements in detail. Advertising is a central part of business communication, and the link between internationality and this study can be found in the case advertisements. The case advertisements have been published on YouTube, an international online platform especially for videos. The case advertisements have been made by two international companies, Evian and Volvo Trucks, and thus the case advertisements and the present study can be considered as representative for the field of IBC.

It can be argued that because of the current theme of this thesis, the analysis and findings of the present study are topical for the field of International Business Communication and important for companies, especially their communication departments.

## **1.5 Structure of the thesis**

This study consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 has introduced the topic, the research problem and the research questions and the case advertisements. Furthermore, the present chapter positioned the study within the field on International Business Communication and offered some background information about the current state of online advertising and sharing online content.

Chapter 2 will present a review on essential literature for this study and introduce the theoretical framework, which concludes the second chapter. The third chapter presents and justifies the methodological choices of the study, presents the data analysis and finally discusses the trustworthiness of the thesis. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study and chapter 5 discusses them in relation to the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 6 concludes the study by discussing the limitations of the study and offering possible points for future research.

## **2 Literature review**

This chapter focuses on the review of essential literature for the present study. This study aims to find the connection between the content of an advertisement and its online success. For this purpose, the present chapter will review literature on social media, online videos, sharing, emotions, social currency and crowd sourcing.

Social media and the changes it has brought to businesses will be discussed in Section 2.1, focusing on online videos and previous studies about their content in connection to their popularity. The role of emotions in online video advertising will be discussed in Section 2.2. Sharing and social currency will be discussed in Section 2.3, followed by presenting the possibilities and challenges of crowd sourcing in Section 2.4. Finally, Section 2.5 presents the categorisation of themes of the two case advertisements.

### **2.1 Advertising in social media and online videos**

Online videos are increasing in popularity, and it has become effortless to watch them regardless of the place and time. It is clear that the changes and development in technology, regulation, markets and audiences have influenced media and entertainment industries (Pérez-Latre, 34). The amount of online video content today is explicit evidence on the changing media environment. Advertising in e.g. YouTube is also very cost efficient for companies, since videos uploaded to YouTube may appear in online search engines more often than other advertising material (Nichols 2013).

In Europe people spent on average 6.7 hours per month per person on social media sites in 2012, outnumbering the screen time spent on e.g. services, entertainment and games (comScore 2013, Appendix A). As social media becomes more and more popular and a natural part of peoples' everyday life, companies pay increasing attention towards it and the possibilities it has to offer while trying to adapt to the changes in the industry. As Pérez-Latre (2009, p. 34) points out: "advertising follows audiences".



Being present in social media platforms is a necessity for companies today. Social media offers a unique way for companies to maintain discussion with their customers and a platform for customers to communicate with other customers about the company products and services (Mangold and Faulds, 2009, p. 359). This feature also enables customer involvement better than before.

Social media users sharing company content – crowd sourcing – is a valuable resource for the company. Sharing online content with others is very closely connected to word-of-mouth communication and follows similar patterns: a recommendation made by a friend is experienced more trustworthy than a message received directly from a third party (Berger 2013, pp. 7-9). Sharing online video content that is found essential on an emotional level is much like sharing a good joke with a friend face-to-face (Mitchell et al. 2007, p.204). If the shared content is found amusing or interesting enough, the sharing continues – exactly as in word-of-mouth communication.

In the online world, when something is shared over and over again, it can become *a viral* - it spreads in social media from one user to another in seconds. These viral hits can get millions of views, reads or shares in a very short time, and social media websites make the circulation very easy (Kasapi 2009, 120-121). Online content can also be linked with other parts of the same campaign in different media platforms, creating multimedia campaigns (Pérez-Latre 2009, 35). This way companies can offer interactive, virtual experiences for their target audiences, although it should be remembered that not everyone is active online and can thus be left outside of some parts of the campaign (ibid, 40).

Social media and previous literature about it is an essential part of the present study, because the focus of this study includes the online sharing behaviour on social media sites. RQ1 focuses on the online success of videos, so understanding social media and its current state is crucial for this study.

## 2.2 Emotions

This section focuses on the links between emotions, social currency and sharing online content. Emotions play an important role in how the viewer will experience the advertisement, which has been addressed by several different authors (e.g. Botha & Reyneke 2013, Dobele et al. 2007, Berger 2013, Berger & Milkman 2013, Hollis 2010). Understanding the importance of emotions and social currency in relation to sharing online content is crucial for this thesis, especially for RQ1.

Defining emotions can be challenging, and it can be found difficult to make a distinction between e.g. emotions and moods (du Plessis 2005, pp. 81-82). The following definition introduced by Oatley and Jenkins (1995, as described by du Plessis 2005, pp. 83-84) is relevant for this study:

1. “An emotion is usually caused by a person consciously or unconsciously evaluating an event as relevant to a concern (a goal) that is important; the emotion is felt as positive when a concern is advanced and negative when a concern is impeded.”
2. “The core of an emotion is readiness to act and the prompting of plans; an emotion gives priority to one or a few kinds of action to which it gives a sense of urgency – so it can interrupt, or compete with, alternative mental processes or actions. Different types of readiness create different outline relationships with others.”
3. “An emotion is usually experienced as a distinctive type of mental state, sometimes accompanied or followed by bodily changes, expressions, actions.”

This three-point definition is central for the present study, because it addresses the same questions as to which the study aims to find answers. The first point is about the nature of the emotion that the advertisements resonate in people, the second point about the actions

that the person watching an advertisement will take according to the emotion resonated in him, and the third point is about the physical signs that the emotion arouses in that person. All these factors are taken into consideration in the interviews conducted for this study.

Past experiences will determine whether the emotions that an advertisement will generate in a person are positive or negative, how much attention will be paid to the advertisement and how intense the emotional response will be (Hollis, 2010). The amount of online content is overwhelming and an advertisement can be easily forgotten if it does not get the viewer’s attention directly. For this reason immediate sharing is crucial. In order to make people share an online advertisement immediately after they have seen it for the first time, the content has to be emotionally strong (ibid.) and motivate the viewer to share the advertisement.

Emotions are categorized to be either positive or negative. Hatfield et al. (1995, p. 3) present a hierarchy of emotions, which has been included as a base for choosing the main emotions for this study. Table 1 presents the emotions organized hierarchically as proposed by Fischer et al. and presented by Hatfield et al. (1995, p. 3).

Table 1. An emotion hierarchy based on Hatfield et al. (1995, p. 3)

<b>EMOTIONS</b>						
Superordinate categories		<b>Positive</b>		<b>Negative</b>		
Basic categories		Love	Joy	Anger	Sadness	Fear
Subordinate categories		Fondness	Bliss	Annoyance	Agony	Horror
		Infatuation	Contentment	Contempt	Grief	Worry
			Pride	Hostility	Guilt	
				Jealousy	Loneliness	

As can be seen from Table 1, emotions are divided into either positive or negative emotions. Both superordinate categories have basic categories, which in turn have their own subordinate categories.

The study by Hatfield et al. concentrates on emotional contagion, a phenomenon where people will communicate their emotions to others. Others then tend to automatically mimic the emotional behaviour of the other person, a phenomenon that the authors focus on in their book. Emotional contagion is not a central subject for this study on its own. However, the fact that emotions can be seen as social (Botha & Reyneke 2013, pp. 162-163) is in connection to social currency, which is a central element in this study. Therefore, emotional contagion needs to be addressed in this context, as it is related to the social aspects of this study and can also have an affect on the viral success of a video.

One of the most underlined emotions in different virality studies and literature is *surprise*. Including a surprising twist to an advertisement can lead to successful results, because it will offer something that people did not expect. Berger (2013) calls this breaking a pattern, and Dobele et al. (2007) found that surprise works best when combined with at least one other emotion. Surprise is not included in the emotion hierarchy by Fischer et al., but because surprise is included in both of the advertisements analysed in this thesis, previous literature about it is central to this study.

Seeing an advertisement that somehow surprises you or gives you the feeling of awe is very closely connected to social currency. If people are surprised with what they see and find it somehow remarkable, there is a possibility that they will pass the advertisement on in order to give the same feeling of surprise to their social connections. Being the first to tell others about an advertisement of this type also makes the sender personally seem remarkable and adds to his level of social currency. (Berger 2013)

Some authors have pointed out that triggering negative emotions can include high risk regarding the success of the advertisement (e.g. Dobele et al. 2007, Berger & Milkman 2013). However, Dobele et al. suggest that sadness can be effective for advertisements made by charitable organizations, encouraging support (Dobele et al. 2007, p. 298). Berger and Milkman (2013, p. 20) point out that positive content is more likely to go viral than

negative content, but like Dobele et al., they also believe that negative emotions can work in certain circumstances: Berger continues by adding that *high-arousal emotions* like awe, anger, amusement and anxiety (whether positive or negative emotions) trigger action in people: in this case makes them take action in forwarding the advertisement or talking about it with others (Berger 2013).

Based on previous literature overviewed, the following emotions have been chosen for further discussion in the interviews: happiness, amusement, excitement, sadness, anger, boredom, surprise and awe. This is further addressed in Chapter 4, which presents the interview results.

### **2.3 Stories**

This section presents central literature about the relation between stories and successful online content. Both of the case advertisements have been designed in a story-like manner, so understanding the importance of stories is essential for this study.

Examining why certain ideas stick and others are forgotten, Chip and Dan Heath (2007) introduce six principles that should be included in a memorable or “sticky” idea: *simplicity, unexpectedness, concreteness, credibility, emotions* and *stories*. The same themes were highlighted already by Aaltonen & Heikkilä (2003). They underlined the importance of presenting the main substance of a company in the form of a credible story that customers can connect with emotionally. They highlight that the success of a brand is highly dependent on the experiences of the customers: the emotional connections they feel with the brand. (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 84-87)

A more recent division of successful ingredients was presented by Jonah Berger (2013): according to him, successful content should “*contain social currency and be triggered, emotional, public, practically valuable and wrapped into stories*”. Berger’s *principles of contagiousness* have many similarities to previously mentioned themes, but they are

completed with aspects that are important for the present study: social currency and publicity are central for the success of an online video advertisement.

Based on many mentions in advertising literature, emotions and stories are both included in the framework used in this study. Berger's principle of social currency will be discussed together with the other themes, and the importance of social currency in the success of an online video advertisement will be discussed in the interviews. The findings of the interviews will be presented in Chapter 4.

## 2.4 Multimodality

*"Use a picture. It's worth a thousand words."*

-Arthur Brisbane

The famous saying "a picture is worth a thousand words" dates as far back as 1911, when newspaper editor Arthur Brisbane used the abovementioned sentence in his instructional talk to the Syracuse Advertising Men's Club (phrases.org 2015). It is central for the multimodal aspect of this study, as it focuses on the different components of images and videos.

When the action of doing something is realized linguistically, we use action verbs. In visual realization these words can be defined as *vectors*, as explained by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p.46). Where an image presents a single situation and the vectors are still, a moving video image includes vectors in movement (ibid., p. 258). Together with the modern technology and effective use of frame sizes camera angles, the video has the possibility to capture the viewer's attention and interest in a powerful way. Additionally, the participants of the video have the possibility to move even if the camera itself is still. These factors in their part enable the moving image to create a more dynamic relationship with the audience (ibid., p. 261).

As mentioned before, language is a cultural concept. All that can be expressed linguistically and visually in some culture and a specific language might be possible to express only linguistically or visually in another (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, p.46). Furthermore, if an advertisement includes both visual and textual content, the visual can carry one meaning and the textual content another. (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006, pp. 2, 20, 163)

Yet, there is a fundamental difference between images and videos, which will be discussed in this section. The multimodality of images is an essential base for this study, but the focus will be on multimodal analysis for video: specifically the two case advertisement videos.

Visual design and the grammar of images is central for this study, because it helps with analysing what makes an online video advertisement successful. The importance of how images (both still and moving) communicate meaning has been discussed by several authors, but because of its similarities with the Multimodal Analysis Video tool, the work by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) is included in this study.

Because of the advanced technologies we have today, we cannot always assume that what we see in pictures is real. This *question of the reliability of messages* is also addressed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p.154, 163) and has been discussed by other authors mentioned in this study (e.g. Aaltonen & Heikkilä, 2003; Heath & Heath, 2007). Both of the case advertisements include image processing, so the question of reliability will be analysed in Chapter 4.

The similarities and differences between the two case advertisements were analysed by using categorisation of themes together with the Multimodal video analysis tool. The themes were chosen based on previous literature on advertising, emotions and online success. The styles used in the case advertisements will be presented in Section 3.5.2 where the results of the Multimodal Analysis Video will be presented. They will be further discussed in Chapter 4, together with the results of the interviews.

The components of the multimodal analysis together with the theoretical framework of this study are expected to offer valuable perspectives to RQ1, contributing to the understanding of why certain videos get shared more than others. As sharing an online video is understood to be linked to the content of the video and the emotions it triggers in the viewer, understanding the multimodal components of the case advertisements is essential.

## **2.5 Sharing and social currency**

Sharing lies in the heart of social networking. *Social currency* – as described by Jonah Berger (2013) – is a key point for companies publishing online videos. Berger explains that social currency is what people gain by building a positive image about themselves in their social circles. This section will discuss online sharing and the process of building social currency through it.

The concept of sharing creates a unique possibility for companies – if people are moved by a company advertisement and want to pass it on to their online social circles, they will act as ambassadors for the company, free or charge (Berger 2013, pp.7-8). Interesting content may result in people using the advertisement for social purposes, beyond its marketing goals and within wider audiences than originally planned (Kasapi, pp.121). This type of social influencing and crowd sourcing is very effective for companies, because word of mouth is found both persuasive and credible (Berger 2013, pp. 7-8).

By forwarding interesting offline or online content people can achieve positive impressions among their friends and enhance their social image (e.g. Kasapi, pp. 120-121; Berger 2013, p. 36). Because interesting content is shared more and gets more attention than other online content, it is important for companies to focus on the entertainment value and remarkability of their advertisement. Creating a “wow effect” that somehow differentiates the advertisement from others is crucial: it can trigger the will to share the advertisement to others (Leskelä & Murtomäki, p. 165).



In a study by Mitchell et al. (2007) a group of young male adults were interviewed about the social aspect of advertisements. The interviewees made several comments about different social situations where advertisements were discussed or otherwise included. They mentioned advertising taglines, which were in a common use among their friends as well as situations where someone had felt left out because he had not seen the advertisement that the others were discussing. (Mitchell et al. 2007, pp. 209-214) The study by Mitchell et al. shows that memorable content may lead to extensive social actions and generate a ‘buzz’ around the advertisement.

An advertisement with successful content does not necessarily have to have broad content. It does not have to please wide audiences at once. In fact a specific content may be more effective, as long as the content is good. With a more narrow content the advertisement reminds people of specific friends and makes it easier for them to forward the advertisement. They immediately think of a person that would find the advertisement as funny or interesting as they did, and the threshold to share the advertisement gets lower. In this way the advertisement might reach the intended audiences faster.

The advertisement by Volvo Trucks is a good example on this theory presented by Berger (2013, pp. 8-9); the advertisement is quite simple in content but it includes some very specific factors that people might be interested about: e.g. a specific actor, action stunts or trucks. Forwarding the advertisement to friends with similar interests gives the friends a new, mutually interesting topic to talk about and makes the sender look good in the eyes of the recipient.

The possibility to increase social currency is a factor that can actively trigger the will to share content in some viewers. The consumers’ willingness to share online content produced by a company is a great opportunity for the marketing and communication of companies.

## 2.6 Crowd sourcing

Crowd sourcing is not only a way to spread the advertisement generally, but also a way to get it seen by a very targeted audience. In search for higher social currency, people are likely to share the advertisement to the specific group of friends that they believe are interested in the content of the advertisement. This way the advertisement gets more views from more people in the company's target group, and if one group after another finds it socially valuable, they will continue sharing it.

Considering the case advertisements, both companies have reinforced their visibility possibilities through a recall technique and triggers (Berger 2013, pp. 61-93). Including familiar themes to the advertisements reminds people of what they have seen before and can also make them recognize the new advertisement faster and link it to the specific company. If sharing an advertisement from the Volvo Trucks Live Test campaign or a previous baby advertisement by Evian earned you social currency, you might be willing to share a new one when you first see it.

An additional aspect to the crowd sourcing involved in online video advertising is user-generated content around the advertisements. Anyone can create their own account on YouTube, film a video on their smart phone and upload it online in a very short period of time.

Advertisement 2 has generated a lot of user-generated content imitating the original advertisement. Filming and uploading such content to YouTube offers the audience a more profound way to engage with the advertisement than simply liking or sharing the advertisement (Chovanec 2015). These videos can be called *spin-offs* or *spoofs*, and many of them have reached high view rates as well. The most popular of them seems to be a video called *Jenko's Epic Split*, where an actor Channing Tatum tries to perform his version of *the Epic Split* between food carts instead of Volvo trucks. The video is shot in a set of one of Tatum's movies, and Jenko is the name of his character in the movie. Tatum's video

is shot in a similar way as the original advertisement, and also the voice-overs and texts in the video follow a similar pattern as the original advertisement. This video has gained over 15 million views on YouTube. (YouTube 2014)

Through this type of crowd activation and crowd sourcing the company behind the advertisement gets more visibility for their message. Even if the person that first sees the advertisement might not be a part of the target group for the company or for the product that is advertised, they might pass the video to right people: several others that represent the targeted audience and eventually become customers for the company (Viitamäki, p. 137).

Spin-offs will be further discussed in Chapter 4, where the results of the interviews will be presented.

## **2.7 Theoretical framework**

The research of this study is strongly based on relevant theories and findings. In order to facilitate the organizing and directing the data analysis of this study, a theoretical framework was created. This approach has been suggested by Yin (1994) as presented by Saunders et al. (2003, p. 388).

The theoretical framework presented in this section is based on previous literature on advertising, emotions, stories, online video and social currency. The literature was discussed in the previous chapters and this framework was built around the most important literature findings concerning this study.

Emotions and Berger's principle of social currency (Berger 2013) are the most important aspects of the framework, as they seem to have most influence on the viewers' behaviour after seeing an online video advertisement. Thus they are the central aspects for reaching the main objective of this study, which is to find the connection between the content of an online video advertisement and its online success.

Figure 1 is a visualisation of the theoretical framework designed for this study. It shows the connection between emotions, stories, social currency and the motivation to share online content. The framework is divided into four parts: attention, interest, motivation and sharing. Each part is further explained in this chapter.

Figure 1 presents the theoretical framework used in this study.

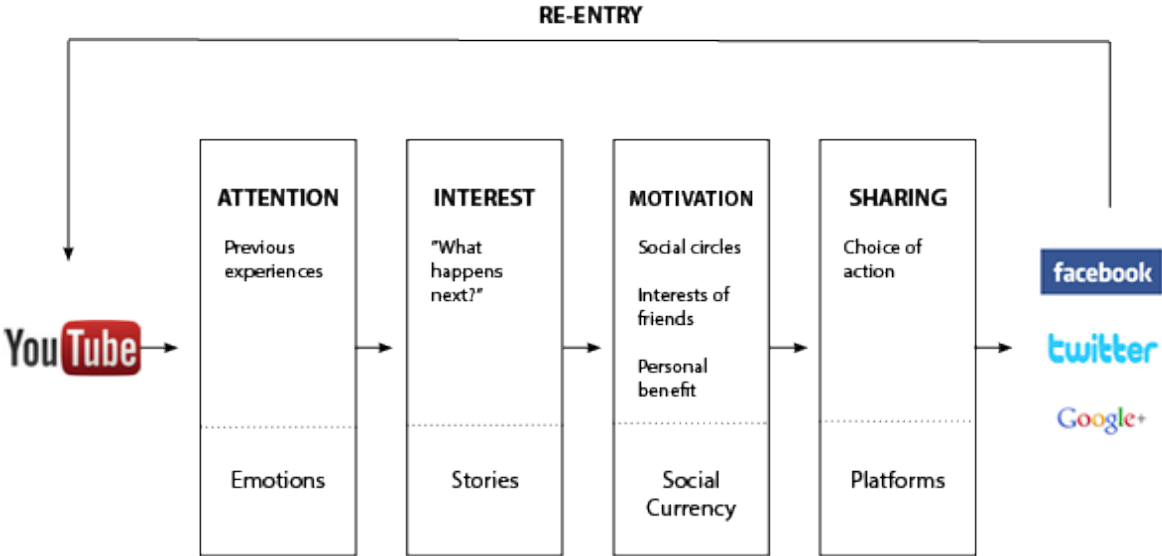


Figure 1. Theoretical framework for the present study

Figure 1 shows that there are three different stages that a viewer will go through before the decision to share online content is formed. The stages can take place simultaneously or in a chronological order, depending on the viewer and also the length and type of the advertisement. Especially the first, second and third part can easily happen simultaneously, if the advertisement is relatively short or the beginning of the advertisement succeeds to reach the goals of several different parts of the framework.

The first part of the process is *attention*: the video must get the viewer’s attention. Previous literature shows that emotions are important in gaining the viewer’s attention. As discussed in Section 2.2, some authors believe that any emotion, as long as it is strong enough, will

do (e.g. Berger, 2013, ). Others (e.g. McNeal, 2012) believe that positive emotions will result in higher engagement than negative ones. In both cases, *surprise*, *joy* and *awe* were found to be central emotions concerning attention engagement. The arrow from *attention* to *interest* shows that by addressing the right emotions, the viewer is likely to get interested in the advertisement and keep watching it (in contrast to stopping watching it and paying attention to something else).

The second part of the framework concerns *interest*. Now that the attention of the viewer has been captured through emotion, the advertisement has to keep the viewer engaged and interested. Stories have been proven to be important in business communication and especially in advertising, as discussed in Section 2.5. A truthful, interesting or exciting story will keep the viewer interested: they want to see what happens next. The arrow from *interest* to *motivation* shows that an interest in the video advertisement can lead to the motivation of sharing the content.

The third part of the framework is called *motivation*. This is a crucial part considering the online success of the advertisement, and thus the most important part of the framework for this study. The viewer has to be motivated to share the content to his social circles. Berger's principle of social currency addresses this specific point of the framework. As discussed in Section 2.3, the viewer might share the advertisement if the content of the advertisement is somehow relatable for the viewer and especially for his/her social circles. By sharing something that the viewer believes would be valuable for his social circles, he is simultaneously offering interesting content to his/her social circles and adding to his/her social currency.

Another possible reason for the motivation to share online content is more personal: sharing content for the purpose of getting more online attention, e.g. likes and/or followers. This type of objective is also connected to social currency, but in a slightly different way. Building a wide online audience in the form of many followers may help gaining social currency in the future, but it is not as immediate as in the situation where the content is

shared because it is considered interesting and value adding for existing members of the social circle.

The final arrow, from *motivation* to *sharing* shows the connection between motivation (social currency) and the actual sharing of the advertisement.

The final part of the framework, *sharing*, can take place in different online platforms. It is the physical act of somehow sending the advertisement to someone else and making them aware of the advertisement. This can be done by e.g. copying the online address of the video and posting it on an online platform (such as Facebook wall, a private discussion or an e-mail message etc.) or sharing the video by using the direct sharing tools provided by the video platform (YouTube). These tools enable the viewer to directly link the content to another service, such as Facebook, Twitter or Google+. The choice of how the sharing will be done depends on to whom the content will be shared to and what the actual content is.

After the advertisement is shared, the person receiving the shared content will go through the stages of this framework again.

The framework shows the process that takes places if an online video advertisement will eventually be shared. It is possible, of course, that at some point of the framework the viewer feels that the advertisement fails to meet the requirements of that specific part of the framework, in which case the viewer would be likely to stop watching the advertisement and it would not be shared. The framework is discussed in relation to the case advertisements in Chapter 4, where the results will be presented.

This chapter has presented essential literature for this study as well as the theoretical framework. The following chapter will present the case advertisements, the methodology, data collection, data analysis and trustworthiness of the present study.

### **3 Data & Methodology**

This chapter begins with presenting the case advertisements, and continues with the presentation and justification of the research method, research strategy and data analysis methods chosen for this thesis. The chosen research method will be discussed in Section 3.1, and Section 3.2 presents the research strategy. The data collection process is presented in Section 3.3, followed by Section 3.4 with the data analysis of this thesis, including the categorisation of themes as well as the interviews. Finally, Section 3.5 discusses the trustworthiness of this thesis.

#### **3.1 Case advertisements**

This study focuses on two online video advertisements published in 2013. The choice of the advertisements was made based on their success on the worldwide video website YouTube. These videos were the only two advertisements present in a list of ten most watched YouTube videos of the year 2013: *YouTube Rewind 2013 – Top trending videos of 2013* (YouTube 2013).

##### **Advertisement 1**

*Baby & me* by Evian was published on YouTube 19.4.2013. By the end of the year it had reached 69 266 933 views in total (Evian 2013).

The video starts with a view of a city skyline, followed by a man walking in the city. The man soon notices his reflection on a bus door, but to his surprise the reflection shows himself as a baby. He moves to watch his reflection on a store window and starts to dance in awe of the unusual reflection. Soon others join him and they all dance in front of the window in child-like amusement of their baby reflections. The advertisement ends with a picture of two Evian bottles and the written text *Evian – drink pure and natural* followed by the slogan *Evian – live young*, which is read out by a female voice. (Evian 2013)

The company logo is shown on the top corner of the screen through out the video. Apart from this, the brand name or logo is not visible until at the very end of the advertisement, when the two bottles are shown. The ending of Advertisement 1 connects the story of the video with the brand Evian.

Music is present throughout the advertisement, but the slogan at the end of the video is the only spoken line included in the advertisement. There are lyrics in the background song, and the beat of the music accelerates in relation to the reactions of the people in the video. The presence of music is further discussed in Section 2.5, where the categorisation of themes is presented.

## **Advertisement 2**

*The Epic Split feat. Van Damme* by Volvo Trucks was first published on YouTube 13.11.2013. By the end of the year it had gained a total of 66 059 537 views (Volvo Trucks 2013 A).

The video starts with a close up frame of a man with his eyes closed and calm music playing in the background. When he opens his eyes, he looks relaxed and concentrated. The man is looking straight to the camera, which gives an impression that the speech is addressed personally to the viewer. His voice comes on as a narrative, as the camera starts to move away from his face and shows two large trucks: *I've had my ups and downs, my fair share of bumpy roads and heavy winds. That's what made me what I am today. Now I stand here before you. What you see is a body crafted to perfection. A pair of legs engineered to defy the laws of physics, and a mind set to master the most epic of splits.*

As the camera moves further away from the man, the viewer soon notices that the man is standing on the side mirrors of the trucks, one leg on each truck's mirror. One of the trucks starts to slowly move away from the other while they both drive backwards, and the man performs a split in between them. Finally the camera shows the whole scene with both of



the trucks and the man, and a text appears on the screen: *This test was set to demonstrate the stability and precision of Volvo Dynamic Steering. It was carried out by professionals in a closed-off area.* (Volvo Trucks 2013 A)

The company logo is present quite early in the advertisement, because it is shown on the top corner of the screen, and is visible in both of the trucks. However, the brand name Volvo Trucks is included only at the end of the advertisement, when the text describing the test is shown.

### 3.1.1 Virality of the case advertisements

This subsection will address the virality of the two case advertisements. Their viral success will be discussed in turn as well as in relation to each other.

Advertisement 2 is a part of an advertising campaign *Live Tests* by Volvo Trucks. It is the last of six advertisements published between 15.8.2012 and 13.11.2013. The length of the advertisements varies between 0:44 – 3:22, the first one being the longest. The fact that this advertisement was published as a part of a campaign and it had five similar videos preceding it is likely to have increased its view rates on YouTube: people familiar with the campaign knew what to expect. In addition, Volvo published a teaser of the advertisement two days before the actual advertisement (11.11.2013) announcing that a new video would be published 14.11.2013. The teaser introduced the upcoming stunt as well as the actor Jean-Claude Van Damme, who is starring the actual advertisement as well (Volvo Trucks 2013 B).

Volvo Trucks created a very successful, award-winning campaign (Forsman & Bodenfors 2014) with these advertisements, and Advertisement 2 rapidly became a viral hit. According to a post on *visiblemeasures.com* it is the most viral auto campaign ever with a true reach of over 100, 000, 000 views (Visible Measures 2013). It has also been noted as one of the top advertisements of the year by different web sites (e.g. Adweek 2013, Resumé 2014).

Table 2 presents the main figures of the Volvo Trucks Live Tests campaign.

Table 2. The Volvo Trucks Live Tests campaign.

<b>Advertisement</b>	<b>Published</b>	<b>No. of views 15.7.2014</b>	<b>No. of likes 15.7.2014</b>	<b>No. of dislikes 15.7.2014</b>	<b>Percentage of likes / dislikes</b>
The Ballerina Stunt (Live Test 1)	15.8.2012	9 786 892	23 632	1 429	94,3 / 5,7
The Hamster Stunt (Live Test 2)	11.9.2013	6 344 588	12 049	939	92,8 / 7,2
The Chase (Live Test 3)	9.10.2013	2 382 128	4 806	347	93,3 / 6,7
The Hook (Live Test 4)	1.9.2013	3 125 480	11 127	146	98,7 / 1,3
The Technician (Live Test 5)	1.9.2013	1 034 246	3 501	70	98,0 / 2,0
<i>Teaser Live Test 6</i>	11.11.2013	4 421 188	14 068	286	98,0 / 2,0
The Epic Split feat. Van Damme (Live Test 6)	13.11.2013	73 936 836	438 965	7 279	98,4 / 1,6

As can be seen from Table 2, advertisement 2 had more success after its publication, because at the end of the year it had reached almost as high view rates as Advertisement 1, even though it had been online for only a month. Advertisement 1 had gained only about 3 million views more and had been online for seven months. As mentioned above, Advertisement 2 is a part of an advertising campaign, which is likely to have increased its popularity. However, it has the highest number of views and one of the highest like-rate of all the six advertisements in the series, so it can be considered the most popular of the advertisements in the campaign.

The fourth advertisement in the Volvo Trucks Live Tests campaign has the highest like rate, but it has a notably lower number of views than *The Epic Split*. This has not been

taken into consideration in the present study, because the case advertisements were chosen based on their ranking on a list of most viewed videos (and not e.g. their like rates).

Evian’s advertisement was not a part of a campaign, but this was not the first time Evian used babies in its advertising. The company has previously published advertisements featuring babies already in 1998 and later in 2009. The latest Evian advertisement with babies was released on YouTube 1.4.2014 and it promotes not only Evian but also a movie *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*. The advertisement is called *evian Spider-Man – The Amazing Baby & me 2* (Evian 2014). Its storyline is very similar to Advertisement 1 and it even includes the same song. The most notable difference is that the man playing with his reflection is Spider-Man.

Both of the case advertisements are featured in the Mashable Global Ads Chart “top 20 ads of all time”, advertisement 1 ranking seventh on the list and advertisement 2 following it on rank 10. The chart is published by a marketing technology company Unruly and Mashable (a website focusing on news about social and digital media), and it ranks “brands’ social videos worldwide based on the number of times content has been shared on Facebook, Twitter and in the blogosphere” (Unruly 2015).

Table 3 presents figures about how many times the case advertisements have been shared on Facebook, Twitter and online blogs.

Table 3. Viral Video Chart (Unruly 2015 B, Unruly 2015 C)

	<b>Number of shares 21.1.2015</b>	<b>Number of Facebook shares 21.1.2015</b>	<b>Number of Twitter shares 21.1.2015</b>	<b>Number od blog posts 21.1.2015</b>
<b>Advertisement 1</b>	3,930,140	3,846,493	83,070	577
<b>Advertisement 2</b>	3,244,067	3,161,200	82,268	599

Table 3 shows the sharing rates for the case advertisements by 21.1.2015. Although the chart is based on shares in blogs and just two specific online platforms, Facebook and Twitter, it can be considered as relevant information for this study. Reaching these rankings on an all time international list can be considered as essential proof of the virality of the two case advertisements.

### **3.2 Research method**

The purpose of this thesis is firstly to examine the connection between the content of video advertisements and their online success, and secondly to find the similarities and differences between the two case advertisements (the case advertisements were presented in chapter 3.1). In this thesis, the online success of the videos is understood as a combination of view times and virality of the video.

To gain information on what causes a video to 'go viral', an understanding on what people see as good advertisements or good video content is crucial. To reach this understanding, information about how people feel about the case advertisements and what type of feelings the advertisements woke in them needed to be collected.

Qualitative methods are often used for interpretation and understanding (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, p. 5), and case studies offer answers to "why?" "what?" and "how?" questions (Saunders et al. 2003, p.93). For these reasons a qualitative case study approach was logical for this thesis.

Quantitative research methods would have been more suitable if the aim of the research was to analyse empirical data, but since the emphasis of this study is to understand the personal, emotional reactions to specific advertisements, a qualitative approach (in the form of two group interviews) was chosen as more appropriate.

However, a quantitative method was included on a small scale, when the preliminary questionnaire was implemented. The meaning of the questionnaire was to find participants

for the group interviews that shared similar habits and behaviour concerning the usage of online videos. (Appendix C) As in the present study, a multi-method approach combining different research strategies is quite usual especially for single studies (Saunders et al. 2003, p. 99).

### **3.3 Research strategy**

The research strategy chosen for this thesis is a case study, focusing on two online video advertisements. Although the study focuses on two advertisements, it cannot be considered as extensive case study research, but rather a research of two separate single-case studies. Both advertisements were analysed separately, but compared with each other in order to find an answer to the presented research questions.

Case studies are a popular way to present complex issues in a more understandable way. This feature has also focused some critique towards case studies, arguing that they lack scientific thoroughness (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, p. 116). However, the descriptive style of the interview questions (Appendix E) makes case study a suitable approach for the present study (Yin 2012, p. 5). In order to reach an understanding on the emotional responses that people experience after watching advertisements, a case study is a reasonable choice for this study. It offers the possibility to observe people when they watch the advertisements and to interview them about their emotions after they have seen the videos. Eskola and Suoranta argue that all qualitative studies are actually case studies, because unlike in quantitative studies, they are not used for conclusions that are empirically generalizing (1999, p. 66).

The two case advertisements are analysed and studied in an identical manner, and the purpose of their examination is to find differences and similarities in the interviewees' reactions in order to successfully answer the research questions. The literature (see Chapter 2) shows that emotions play a significant role in how the viewer will respond to and react to the commercials, and the findings of the interviews will either attest to the validity of this or propose an opposite perspective.

### **3.4 Data collection**

This section will present the method for data collection that was chosen for this thesis. It includes a preliminary online questionnaire, two group interviews and a multimodal analysis on the two case advertisements. The questionnaire and the interviews were carried out in order to gain up-to-date information about how viewers felt after seeing the case advertisements and how the emotions they felt affected their willingness to share the advertisements.

Qualitative interviews can be used to gain empirical material for research purposes, and they are a popular method for data collection in qualitative research. The interview questions should be designed to help the researcher answer his research question through analysing the material provided by the interviewee. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, pp. 78-79)

When a researcher needs to gain an understanding of specific decisions, opinions and/or attitudes of the research participants, a qualitative interview is a necessity (Saunders et al. 2003, p. 250). Because the aim of this study includes understanding the viewers' feelings, emotions and reactions after watching the case advertisements, a qualitative interview was a natural choice for the present study.

There are different ways to build an interview, varying the role of the interviewer, the structure of the questions and the number of people participating in the interview. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, p. 79)

This study included two group interviews with five participants in each interview. This approach was chosen, because a group interview offered the possibility for an active discussion among people with different backgrounds and opinions. Two preliminary one-on-one interviews were conducted before the preliminary questionnaire and the final interviews. The purpose of these test interviews was to test the interview topics and

questions. The test interviews showed that the interviewees were likely to discuss the advertisements quite easily and in a sufficient depth.

The five participants for each of the group interviews were chosen based on an online survey about the habits of watching online videos (Appendix C). The survey gained 61 individual answers, which are presented in detail in Appendix F. The persons that spent the most time on video sites such as YouTube and/or reported to share online video content on a regular basis, were invited to participate in the group interviews. With 53 individual mentions, YouTube was clearly the most popular online channel for watching videos, followed by Facebook with only 8 mentions (Appendix F). The questionnaire results are further presented in Chapter 4.

The initial meaning was to invite more than five people to each interview, but the test interviews and the first group interview proved that five people was a very convenient amount of participants per group. More people might have resulted in a situation where the most active and outgoing participants would have been the only ones contributing to the interview, as others would have had the possibility to stay silent and let the other participants make all the comments. As the number of participants was as low as five, the situation was intimate enough and everyone seemed to feel relaxed enough to speak their opinions aloud.

The interview questions and discussion themes were planned and structured so that they would support the research questions. To facilitate the interview situations and to help the interviewer, the questions and themes were organised in the form of an interview guide (Appendix D) and tested in the preliminary test interviews.

The group interviews were guided and semi-structured, which made it possible to ask both 'what' and 'how' questions and to change the wordings and order of questions (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, pp. 80-82). This made the interview situations more relaxed. The interview questionnaires focused on reactions to the case advertisements (Appendix D), but

the interview situation included discussion about online videos in general and the online sharing habits of the participants (Appendix D, Appendix E).

The interview situation included watching both of the case advertisements, collecting written feedback on the advertisements and discussing the immediate reactions and feelings they woke in the participants. The discussion was mainly built around open questions to enable the interviewees to express their ideas and emotions freely.

In order to facilitate the participation, the interviews were held in Finnish, and the quotations presented in Chapter 4 have been translated into English by the researcher. Both interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. The recording ensured that all comments were properly noted and a reliable transcription was made of both interviews. Additionally, this facilitated the interview situation, as the researcher was able to concentrate on the discussion and did not have to take as many notes as would have been necessary without the recording. The recordings were transcribed a few hours after the interview.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

The data analysis of this study was two-fold. Firstly, the case advertisements were analysed by using the Multimodal Analysis Video tool (Multimodal Analysis Company 2015). Secondly, the interviews were analysed using the categorisation of themes and the theoretical framework as guidelines.

The purpose of the interviews was to gain an in-depth understanding of the emotions the advertisements woke in the participants and the actions they would take after seeing the advertisements. It was essential that the participants of the interviews would have the habit of watching online videos and sharing them. In order to find participants with this type of online behaviour, an online questionnaire was carried out before the actual interviews were organised.



Each of these steps and the data collected by using them are individually explained in this section: beginning with categorisation of themes, followed by the multimodal video analysis and finally concluding with the group interviews.

**3.5.1 Categorisation of themes**

The categorisation of themes was carried out in order to find similarities and differences between the two advertisements. These similarities and differences were further used in designing of the interview questions. The categorisation also facilitated finding the focus for the analysis of the interviews.

The two case advertisements represent two companies operating in very different fields of business: Evian is a brand selling bottled water and Volvo Trucks is a truck manufacturer. Although the case advertisements represent different styles and advertise very different products (bottled water and trucks), they have some similarities. Both advertisements are exactly 1:16 minutes long, which facilitates their comparison. They use story telling as a tool for keeping the audience interested, and the company name or brand is not emphasized in either of the videos.

Table 4 shows seven themes: story, emotions, surprise, actors, celebrities, music and frame. All of these themes are present in both of the advertisements, except for celebrities, a theme that was present only in Advertisement 2.

Table 4. The categorisation of themes

	<b>Story</b>	<b>Suprise</b>	<b>Emotions</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Celebrities</b>	<b>Music</b>	<b>Frame</b>
<b>Advertisement 1</b>	Yes	Yes	Positive	Several	No	Lyrics	Multiple
<b>Advertisement 2</b>	Yes	Yes	Positive	One	Yes	No lyrics	Several

The themes presented in Table 4 will each be discussed in turn. Their affects on the viewer are discussed in Chapter 4, where the interviews are presented.

### **Story**

Both advertisements are built around a story. However, the stories are very different from each other. Advertisement 1 uses lively and energetic story telling, which makes the viewer excited. All the actors in the advertisement are experiencing the same story at the same time, there are many things happening and many stories to follow.

Advertisement 2 includes a more intense and thrilling story, but includes only one person. The story is much more personal and connects the viewer with the one actor that is featured in the advertisement.

### **Surprise and emotions**

Both story lines offer a surprise for the viewer: something unexpected that could not be predicted in the beginning of the advertisement. The fact that both advertisements have surprising and (positive) emotional content and only little emphasis on brand presence is supported by the findings of Karen Nelson-Field. She found that brand presence does not affect the amount of shares an online video will gain. According to her findings discussed in an article by Marguerite McNeal (2012), stimulating content is more important, and brand presence does not prevent people from sharing a video if they find the content interesting (McNeal 2012, pp. 13-14). The emotions are discussed in more detail in Section 4.1.

The surprise factor makes people pay attention to the advertisement (Dobele et al. 2007, Southgate et al. 2010, Heath & Heath 2007). After the viewer's attention has been captured by a surprising twist, something interesting needs to be introduced in order to keep their attention, as explained by Chip and Dan Heath (2007, p. 65). Both of the advertisements manage to do this, but in different ways (presented in Section 3.1). The aspect of keeping the viewer's attention is further analysed in Chapter 4.

In addition to the above-mentioned similarities there are also some considerable differences between the case advertisements.

### **Actors and celebrities**

Advertisement 1 is built around a group of people, whereas Advertisement 2 shows only one person. Additionally, the person featured in the advertisement by Volvo Trucks is actor Jean-Claude Van Damme, a celebrity whose name is also included in the title of the video. This might add some of the viewers' interest in the video and make the video appear in search engines more often. Actually – searching for “Volvo Trucks” on Google does not result in the advertisement *The Epic Split*, but when searching for “Van Damme” the advertisement is one of the top results. The popularity of the Volvo Trucks advertisement may have had an influence on this high search result, but Powell (2009) points out that the use of celebrities in advertisements can be beneficial for both the brand and the celebrity as well the consumer, when the celebrity supports the creative idea of the advertisement (Powell 2009, p. 108).

### **Music**

Another difference is found in the use of music and words. The choice of music is one of the factors building the ambience of the advertisement. Both advertisements use music as a tool for setting the appropriate ambience: the song in the background of Advertisement 1 is cheerful, happy and catchy, which connects it well with the feel-good, energetic pace of the story. The music in Advertisement 2 is more mysterious and calm, which is suitable for the ambience of the advertisement and the lines spoken by the actor. Both choices of music are likely to have been carefully chosen, and their affects on the viewing experience are further discussed in chapter 4, where interview results will be presented.

### **Frames**

The advertisements have been shot in a different way, and their setting is very different from one another. Advertisement 1 uses multiple different camera angles and frame sizes

throughout the advertisement. This seems convenient for the style of the specific advertisement. The changes in frame sizes and angles are suitable for the energetic style of the advertisement.

Advertisement 2 uses frames as a powerful effect: the advertisement begins with a close-up frame and as the story evolves, the frame size gets bigger and the audience can see the entire setting. The representation styles and visual differences between the advertisements will be discussed in the following section.

### **3.5.2 Multimodal video analysis**

The two case advertisements were analysed based on previous literature on multimodality. The base of the analysis was built around the work by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and the Multimodal Analysis Video program (Multimodal Analysis Company 2015).

The multimodality program enables a detailed analysis on video content. As the focus of this thesis is to gain an understanding on the emotional response to video content, the analysis was conducted using only some of the analysis tools. The analysis is presented in Chapter 4.

In addition to the multimodal analysis, two group interviews were conducted to gain an in-depth understanding on what kind of feelings the case advertisement awoke in viewers.

### **3.5.3 Interviews**

In order to gain up to date information on how people perceive the case advertisement and how watching the advertisement makes them feel, two group interviews were carried out. Moreover, the interviews offered a possibility to connect the theoretical framework and the multimodal analysis with the opinions and feelings of the interview participants.

Based on the results of the online questionnaire, ten people were chosen to take part in a group interview. The division between the two groups was made based on the average time spent on an online video site per week and the average time of shares made by that person. The characteristics of the two groups are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The characteristics of the interview groups

	<b>Average time spent on an online video site per week</b>	<b>Sharing habit</b>
<b>Group A</b>	Less than 1h to 3h	At least 25% of the time
<b>Group B</b>	At least 3-5h	25% of the time

As presented in Table 5, Group A represented a habit of spending less than 3 hours per week on an online video site, but sharing online video content about 25% of the time or more often. Group B represented a habit of spending more than 3 hours per week on an online video site, and still only sharing the content about 25% of the time. They were more likely to normally see more videos than group A, but they still had as low sharing habits as the participants of group A.

Five people representing each group were invited to take part in the interviews. Group A was interviewed as one group and group B as another. Both interviews followed the same set of questions (Appendix D, Appendix E). However, the participants were allowed to take the discussion in the direction they wanted, which resulted in somewhat different discussion topics between the two groups.

The interviewer made some direct observations in the interview situations. The observations included actions such as changes in facial expressions and sounds like laugh, sigh or loss of interest. These observations and their interpretations are further discussed in Chapter 4.

Section 3.5 has presented the data and methods used in this study. The trustworthiness of the presented data will be analysed next in Section 3.6.

### **3.6 Trustworthiness**

This section focuses on the trustworthiness and reliability of the present study. It takes into consideration the nature of the research and the research methods chosen. Earlier literature on research trustworthiness has been examined in order to form a valid statement of the trustworthiness of the study.

The extent of data does not have an immediate influence on the success of a qualitative research. The meaning of qualitative research is to gain perspective about the data that is theoretically strong. Eskola and Suoranta (1999, pp. 62-63) argue that the amount of answers needed for a qualitative research is highly research-specific, and that when new cases do not produce any new information relative to the research problem, the research has reached its saturation point and there is enough data.

This thesis focused on two case advertisements, which were analysed in two ways: using Multimodal Analysis Video tool and conducting group interviews. Before the actual interviews were carried out, two preliminary interviews were conducted to test the interview questions and find the most suitable way to carry out the interview situation.

Five participants in each group offered enough varying data for the research, and thus no more interviews were carried out. The meaning of the interviews was not to gain generalizable results, but to understand the personal and emotional reasons behind the sharing decisions made by the participants and about the specific case advertisements. Because of the specific nature of the interviews, the amount of data was measured to be enough when the participants had reached a point in their discussion where no one had anything to add.

The results of the interviews present the opinions and attitudes of ten specific participants (and on two specific advertisements), and the results are not therefore repeatable as such (Saunders et al. 2003, p. 253). The participants of the interviews were selected on the basis of their answers to the preliminary questionnaire. 61 people answered to the online questionnaire.

The online questionnaire included the possibility for a *participant error* (Saunders et al. 2003, p. 101). The term *online video* was not explained to the participants, which lead some of the participants to slightly misinterpret the term. These respondents understood that the term included online TV-shows and movies, which was not the intention. However, the possibility for such misinterpretation was acknowledged beforehand. The term was not explained, because it might have influenced the thoughts and responses. The respondents who misunderstood the term represent a small minority in the results, and these respondents were not chosen to take part in the group interviews. Overall, the questionnaire can be seen as successful.

The analysis in this thesis is based on the theoretical framework, and multimodal video analysis, which were presented in Chapter 2. The framework draws from previous literature on advertising, emotions, sharing and crowd sourcing. The multimodal video analysis was carried out using a computer program specifically designed for analysing the multimodality of videos. The meaning of the multimodal analysis was to analyse the structure of the case advertisements and see which parts of the advertisements the audience pays attention to. The analysis in this thesis can thus be seen as suitable and supportive for the research questions.

This chapter has introduced the two case advertisements, which are studied in this thesis. It has also presented the research method, research strategy and data analysis methods chosen for this study and discussed the trustworthiness of the thesis. The results of the online questionnaire as well as the interviews are further presented in Chapter 4.

## 4 Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the present study. It begins with Section 4.1 presenting the findings of the multimodal video analysis and continues by following the structure of the theoretical framework. Each part of the framework will be discussed in turn: 4.2 sums the interview discussion about *attention*, 4.3 continues with themes concerning *interest*, 4.4 presents the results concerning *motivation*, and finally 4.5 concentrates on the findings about *sharing*.

The results of each section will be discussed in relation to the present research questions:

*RQ1: What is the connection between the content of an online video and its online success?*

*RQ2: What do the most viewed online video advertisements (from 2013) have in common?*

In order to maintain anonymity, the participants of the interviews are referred to in Sections 4.2 – 4.5 as participants A1 – A5 and participants B1 – B5, the letter indicating the interview group they represent and the number indicating them individually. The researcher is referred to as “R”.

The aim of this study has been to find the connection between the content of an online video and its online success. In order to find the answer to this question, two of the most viewed online video advertisements of 2013 were further analysed. The analysis included multimodal video analysis and the results of two group interviews. A theoretical framework was introduced to facilitate the data analysis. The framework was presented in Section 2.6 and it shows the chain of actions of a viewer, starting from the point of seeing the video for the first time and ending with the decision to share (or not to share) the video.



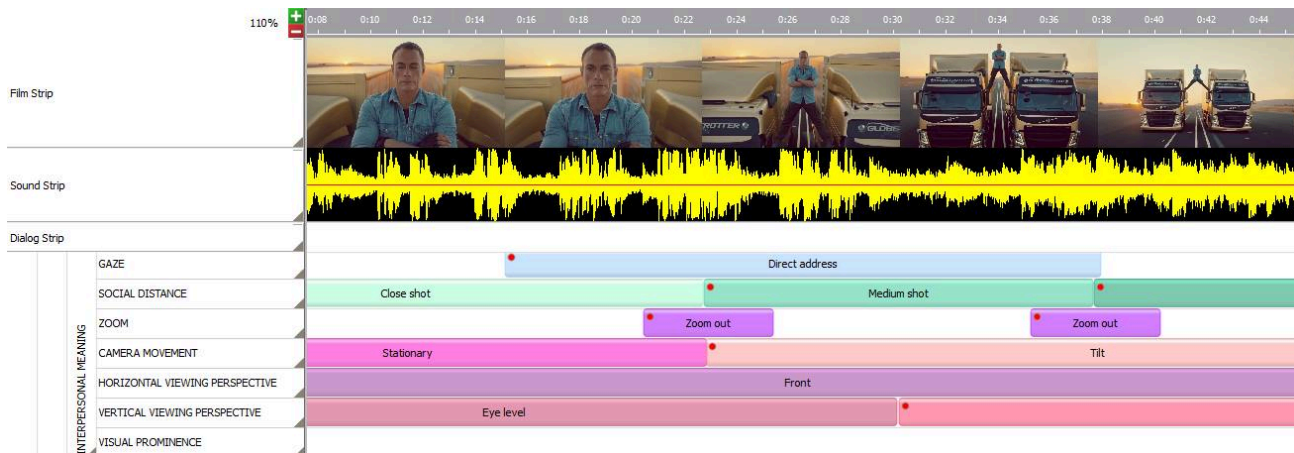
## 4.1 Multimodal video analysis

This section will discuss the multimodal video analysis, which was carried out by using the Multimodal Analysis Video program in order to analyse the content of the case advertisements.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the representation of a picture or a video has a central role in how the images are read and interpreted by the viewers. Multimodal Analysis Video program was used to analyse the representation and the styles of the case advertisements in more detail. This section presents the findings of the analysis and discusses the representation differences between the case advertisements.

Today the technologies are so advanced, that videos can easily be modified through different computer programs or studio equipment. A question of how realistic the case advertisements are can be raised in this context. Advertisement 1 clearly includes image processing, because the babies are performing in an adult-like matter that would not be possible in reality. The truthfulness of Advertisement 2 awoke discussion also in the interview groups (see the following sections). There are *making of*-videos available on both of the advertisements on YouTube, which explain how the advertisements have been made. However, a difference between them is that where Advertisement 1 is clearly modified with computers, one cannot be certain if the stunt in Advertisement 2 was actually carried out or not. This adds interest in the advertisement: did he really do what I just saw?

Advertisement 2 is more personal than Advertisement 1. One factor determining the level of personality is the visual configuration that is formed in the very beginning of the advertisement: the actor in Advertisement 2 looks directly to camera and an eye connection between the audience is formed. Advertisement 1 keeps more distance between the actors and the viewers, using different camera techniques, frame sizes and viewing perspectives than Advertisement 2. The methods used in Advertisement 2 can be seen from Picture 1, a screen shot from the Multimodality program.

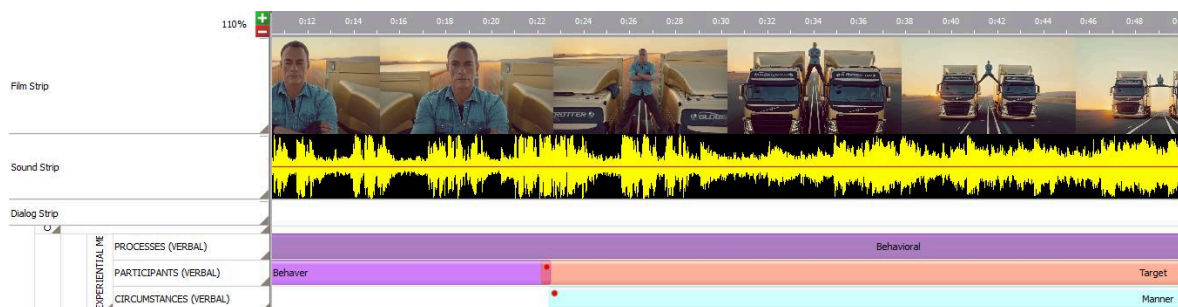


Picture 1. Viewer involvement in Advertisement 2

Picture 1 shows that the direct eye contact begins at 0:15 when the actor opens his eyes and continues until the camera zooms out of the medium shot into a long shot. As the actor continues to look straight forward, the direct eye contact is lost at this point. The eye contact together with a very close shot creates a “visual form of direct address” and reinforces the close relation between the viewer and the actor, as expressed by Kress & van Leeuwen (2006, pp.117, 124). To reinforce the look and the short social distance even more, the monologue of the advertisement is clearly addressed to the viewer: “—*now I stand here before you---*”.

After the connection with the audience is set, the camera begins to move away from the actor and shows the stunt area in a more wide frame size. Addressing the viewer this way in the beginning of the advertisement captures their attention and helps to build an exciting ambience for the rest of the advertisement.

Picture 2 shows how the experiential meanings of Advertisement 2 are divided. The experiential meaning of the language in an advertisement can be divided into three parts in the Multimodality program: verbal processes, participants and circumstances.

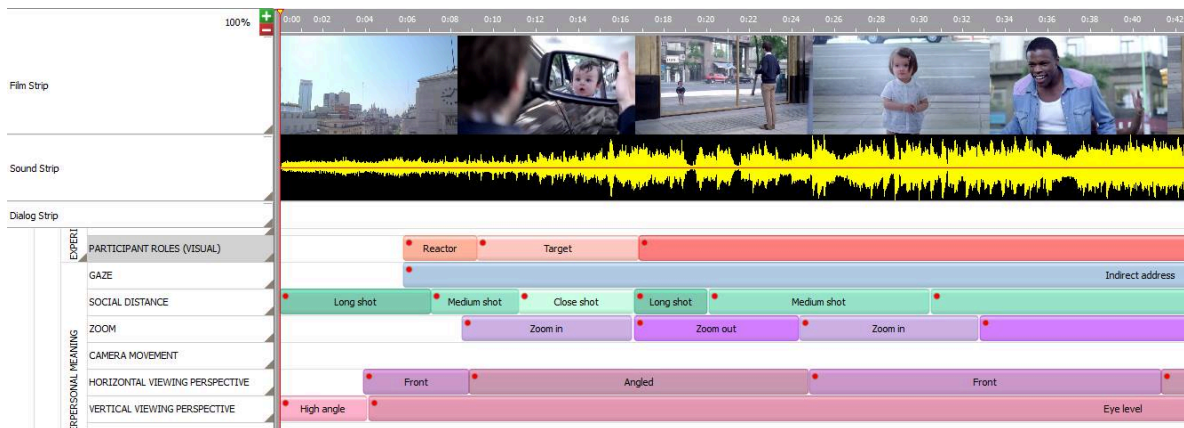


Picture 2. The experiential meanings of Advertisement 2

As can be seen from Picture 2, the verbal process is of the same type during the entire advertisement, but the participant process changes once: in the beginning the actor is stationary (behaviour), but when the trucks start to move away from each other, the participant's legs become the target of the trucks' movement, resulting in the split. According to the Multimodal program, behavioural processes "have to do with bodily functions and states". The actor of Advertisement 2 is standing on the trucks, which can be categorized as a behavioural process.

Advertisement 1 is built very differently compared to Advertisement 2. It also uses different frame sizes to build the relationship between the actors and the viewers, but in this case the relationship stays much more distant. The viewer has the possibility to connect with one of the actors in the advertisement, or all of them, but a personal connection like in the case of Advertisement 2 is not formed.

The advertisement begins with a long shot overlooking the street and introducing the story through a single actor. The viewer is included into the story by zooming onto the actor and his reflection using an eye-level shot, but the actors never look directly into the camera. Although an eye-level shot usually means that the viewer is positioned as an equal with the actor, there is no direct contact to the viewer in Advertisement 1. Moreover, the horizontal viewing perspective is mostly angled, which further distances the viewer from the scene.



Picture 3. Viewer involvement in Advertisement 1

Using mainly close or medium shots in the advertisement (as can be seen from Picture 3) gives the audience a chance to monitor the events of the advertisement and understand the emotions the actor might be feeling, but differently from Advertisement 2. With Advertisement 1, the viewer is not addressed on a personal level, but placed in a monitoring role.

Soon after the story is set and a (somewhat weak) connection is formed, more actors are introduced to the viewer. Because each of the actors also has a baby version of them in the advertisement, the viewer has many characters and objects to observe during the advertisement. This is very different from the situation of Advertisement 2, where the viewer can focus only on one character.

The involvement of several actors also influences the experiential meanings, which are very different from Advertisement 2:



Picture 4. The experiential meanings of Advertisement 1

Picture 4 shows how the experiential meanings of Advertisement 1 are divided. Firstly, similarly to Advertisement 2, the verbal process stays the same during the entire advertisement: the actors of Advertisement 1 are included in a material process. According to the Multimodal program, material processes “describe actions such as running, pushing and dancing”. As the actors are either walking or dancing in the advertisement, it is clear that the process is material. Second, the participant process of the actors is two-fold because of the involvement of the baby reflections. On the one hand they are targets – the receiving end in an interaction – as the babies are looking at them and dancing at them. On the other hand they are actors, looking at and dancing at the baby reflections. The change between the roles of target and actor is on going as there are several different participant pairs featured in the advertisement. Finally, the circumstances of the advertisement are mainly causal. According to the program, causes “describe why an event happens of the purpose of an event, such as ‘as a result of’, ‘for the purpose of’, ‘for the sake of’.” The first actor begins to dance as a result of seeing his baby reflection in the mirror. The other actors start dancing as a result of seeing the first man dancing to his reflection.

Including many character pairs (a baby and an adult watching the reflection) and many stories into the advertisement makes the video more lively, fast-paced and energetic. The background music chosen for the advertisement compliments this ambience and helps to create a coherent whole.

The reality of the advertisement was briefly introduced earlier. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p.154) underline that the reliability of messages is one of the key points in communication. People are used to trusting their eyes and decoding messages based on what they see. However, the technologies have developed, and we are aware of the possibilities of image processing. It is clear that image processing has played a role in the making of Advertisement 1. Advertisement 2 on the other hand can be relatively difficult to judge. Advertisement 2 ends with written text telling about the stunt conditions. The viewer might know the actor and be aware of the fact that he is known as a stunt man. This might convince the viewer of the advertisement’s truthfulness, but it does not leave out a

possibility for doubt: the actor might have actually been able to perform the stunt himself, but did he really perform it in between moving trucks? The answer is not obvious, which helps in building the interest of the viewer. After seeing the advertisement the viewer might want to see the *making of*-video about the advertisement. In this case the interest spreads beyond the initial advertisement. Regardless of the fact that the viewer might be more interested in the stunt than the brand behind it, he is now spending even more time with the brand and the product.

This section has presented the multimodal video analysis. The analysis helped in finding the most important parts in the advertisements which in turn helped to focus the analysis on the parts that the viewers were likely to notice and base their willingness to share or not to share the advertisements. The following four sections will present the findings of the two group interviews, following the structure of the theoretical framework.

## **4.2 Attention**

The first part of the theoretical framework focuses on whether or not the advertisement manages to capture the viewer's attention.

The results of the interviews showed, as noted by the framework's first two parts (*attention* and *interest*), that the content has to be interesting and address the right (preferably positive) emotions in order for the video to get enough attention to be shared.

The participants were asked about the emotions that they felt during or after watching the two advertisements. They were asked to rate the level of eight different emotions (happiness, amusement, excitement, sadness, anger, boredom, surprise and awe) on a scale from 1 to 5, one being 'not at all' and five being 'strongly'.

The results of the question are presented in the following figures. Figure 2 presents the emotional response rates for Advertisement 1 and respectively, Figure 3 presents the rates

for Advertisement 2. The figures include the answers from both interviews, Group A and Group B.

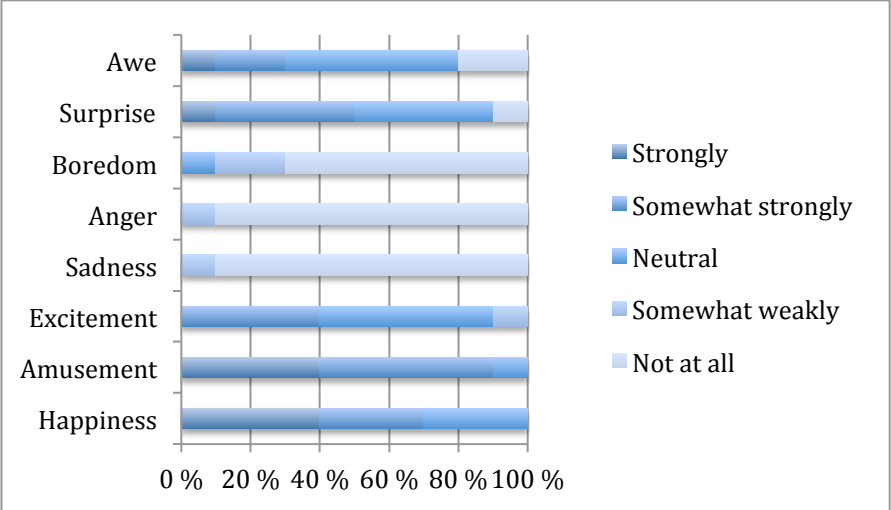


Figure 2. The level of different emotions felt during or after watching Advertisement 1

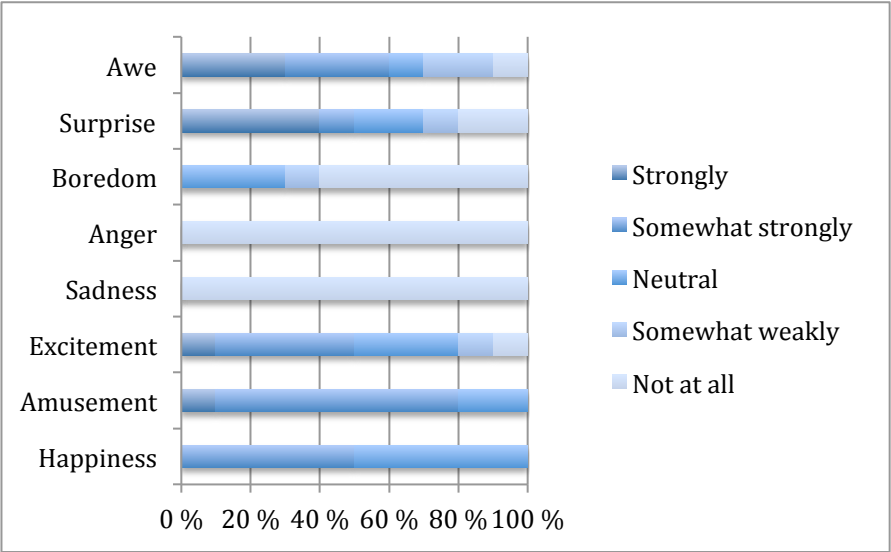


Figure 3. The level of different emotions felt during or after watching Advertisement 2

The overall response to both of the advertisements was positive, as can be seen from Figures 2 and 3. The advertisements were found funny, and the participants felt happiness and amusement after both of the advertisements. However, (although the differences were

marginal) Group A reported to have felt more happiness after watching Advertisement 1, whereas Group B reported to have felt more happiness after watching Advertisement 2.

Although the main response was positive, both advertisements also awoke boredom in two of the interview participants. Advertisement 1 also awoke anger and sadness in one of the participants, but only mildly. The participants in question had seen the advertisement before, which might have been the reason for slight boredom in watching the advertisement again.

One of the most visible differences between the two case advertisements is that advertisement 2 includes a public figure and advertisement 1 does not. Public figures are often used in advertising, but interestingly the interviews showed that it did not have determining effects on the sharing behaviour.

The use of public figures in advertisements did not automatically add the value of the advertisement in the eyes of the participants. Good (and especially funny) content remained the number one priority when making the decision whether or not to share the video. If the content was good and it made the viewers think of someone who might like it, they were likely to share the video, regardless of the involvement of a public figure.

*B2: If the advertisement itself is very bad, I mean it is not funny or anything, then it does not matter who is in it.*

*A5: I have shared some Pepsi advertisements that had soccer players in it. If it is well made.*

*A1: Yep, because the idea [of the advertisement] is built around those players specifically. It would not work with anyone else in it.*



Some participants also pointed out the influence that the public figure has in the choice of receiver. A certain actor would remind the viewers of a specific friend, but if the video featured e.g. a political figure, they might share the video to a different person.

*B2: The person might influence my decision on who I will share the video with. If I will share it with my friends, my co-workers or with my mom. The person in the ad has to be interesting to them, or it has to be somehow linked to both of us [B2 and the receiver].*

As found already by McNeal (McNeal 2012, pp. 13-14), if the content is stimulating, it does not matter whether there is strong brand presence or not. This was the opinion of the participants of Group B as well, when they were asked if brand presence is important considering whether or not to share the advertisement:

*B2: No [it does not matter], if the video is good then it is good. Unless the ending is really bad... what annoys me the most is if the video is trying really hard to be a viral video and you can clearly see that it is made by a company. I would prefer a really good video like the one from Budweiser where they just have a screen in the end with the texts "Budweiser, #bestbuds". Then the video is honest. It is what it is.*

*B3: If it is funny or interesting, I do not think that there is anything that would stop me [from sharing the video].*

*B4: I do not care which company is behind the video.*

Even though this seemed to be the most common opinion, there were some participants that paid more attention to the brand in the advertisement:

*A1: It does not matter how good the advertisement is.. if the product is super awkward, I would not share it because I do not want to be linked to the product.*

*B1: Well [it does not matter] exactly. If it is good or interesting then it does not matter. Unless it is made by a company that I do not like at all or if they make products that I do not use. Then I might not share it.*

*A3: I thought the babies were cute, I might have shared this. It was kind of funny. But then again I am not sure, because it was a water commercial. Maybe I would have just kept it to myself.*

*A5: Because why would you want to advertise the water yourself?*

*R: Do you think about that when you share videos?*

*A5: I might. I know some brands that I could share just because of the brand [even if the advertisement is not interesting itself].*

The importance of a brand can be linked to the third part of the framework: *motivation*. Company brands and product brands have strong images and reputations, they represent certain things to people. Sharing an advertisement produced by a brand you find socially acceptable might again add to your social currency. Respectively, if the brand is not true to the values of the social group, sharing an advertisement by that brand might have a negative influence on the social currency.

The first part of the theoretical framework is essential for Research Question 1:

*RQ1: What is the connection between the content of an online video and its online success?*

The interviews showed that stimulating, emotional content is important. According to the interviews, funny content is most likely to be shared. However, funny content is not the single key to viral success. Timing, the possibility to identify oneself with the advertisement and the personality of the topic are important factors as well.

The importance of brand presence varied between the interview participants. Some felt that the brand behind the advertisement had no influence in their sharing behaviour, while others seemed to pay significantly attention to which brand the advertisement was addressing. All participants except one were not willing to share an advertisement simply because of it represented a brand of their liking, if the content was not funny. Respectively, some of the participants would not share an advertisement with good content, if they could not identify themselves with the company or brand that the advertisement represented.

### **4.3 Interest**

The second part of the theoretical framework addresses the viewers' interest towards the advertisement. At this point the viewer's attention has already been caught in the first part of the framework, and now the viewer should be offered an interesting twist or story to keep the viewer interested to the very end of the advertisement.

It should be taken into consideration that the interview situation differed from a normal viewing situation, where the participants would have had the possibility to stop watching the advertisement if they did not find it interesting. In the interview situation all participants watched both of the advertisements.

No physical signs of boredom or indifference were notable in any of the participants in either of the interview groups. Even the ones that were very familiar with the advertisements watched them until the end. The fact that the participants knew that they were expected to have a conversation about the advertisement after watching it is likely to have had an influence in the fact that they continued to watch it even though they were already very familiar with it.

After the viewer's attention has been caught, the framework suggests that a story should be introduced to keep the viewer interested. The feeling of wanting to see what happens next should be raised in the viewer.

The conversation after watching Advertisement 1 in Group B showed that the advertisement did not quite reach the objective of keeping the viewer interested:

*B2: ---First I thought that this will be very funny, and it actually was quite funny, but in the end there was no "wow" feeling at the end of the advertisement like I had hoped there would be. So the whole point was the fact that they danced. That was a bit disappointing.*

Participant B2 might have watched the entire advertisement in a more realistic situation as well, in order to find out if there was a surprising twist in the end or not. However, the abovementioned comment hints to slight boredom, which might have lead to interrupting the advertisement or fast forwarding to the end in order to see what happens in the end.

The choice of frame size and shooting style in advertisement 2 was found effective in the interview group 1. At first, some of the participants thought that the actor was on a boat. It was only when the camera started to move and show more of the background that they realized the actual situation. This was a good example on how changing the social distance and showing more about the scene this way can be a powerful way to capture the interest of the audience.

If a story-like representation is important, then the power of advertisement series should also be taken into consideration. As mentioned in the literature review, Evian has used babies in its advertising several times. One of these advertisements – *Evian Roller Babies* (Evian 2015) – was mentioned by participant A3, although she had the recollection that the advertisement was done by a car company. The Roller Babies advertisement was mentioned in the conversation before either of the case advertisements was presented to the interview group. Participant A3 mentioned it as an example of an advertisement he found memorable.

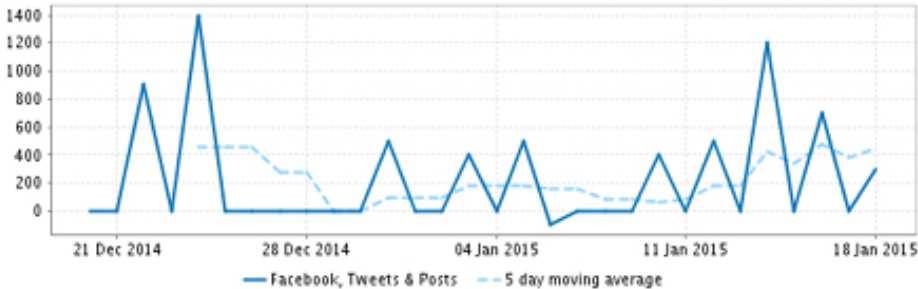
Because Evian has the history of publishing video advertisements featuring babies, it can benefit from the recall memories of viewers. Participant A3 might have been more interested in watching the case advertisement 1 when she noticed that it is similar to a previous advertisement of his liking. Evian’s most recent advertisement featuring a baby (The Amazing Baby & me 2) was published on YouTube in April 2014.

Publishing advertisements with content that has been found virally successful and that reminds viewers from the previous (successful) advertisements can have a positive effect on all of the company’s advertisement and the virality of the advertisements. The advertisements might not represent the same *story*, but they are connected to each other content wise, which can have a positive effect on their sharing figures.

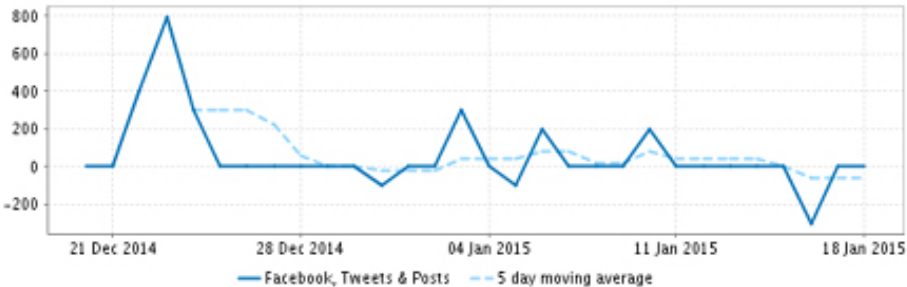
Unruly’s statistics show that Evian’s advertisement continues to get higher numbers of shares than the advertisement by Volvo Trucks, as can be seen from Figure 4.

Figure 4. Sharing of the videos in 2015 (Unruly 2015 B, Unruly 2015 C)

**Advertisement 1: sharing of the video in 2015**



**Advertisement 2: sharing of the video in 2015**



The difference in the number of shares between the advertisements (as seen on Figure 4) can be partly explained by the fact that Evian has many different advertisements currently on YouTube, which are easily linked to each other. After a viewer sees one of them, he might be interested to see another one and keeps spending time on the company advertisements.

A similar effect can occur by user-generated videos inspired by the advertisements. Individual Internet users upload these videos, *spin-offs*, to online platforms such as YouTube. Despite the fact that they are made by individual persons, the connection between the original advertisements is very strong. The spin-off can be an exact copy of the original video, but includes a humorous twist of some kind. These videos are usually found easily in the video suggestions that e.g. YouTube offers its users.

The motivation behind making a spin-off video based on an advertisement might have no connection to reinforcing the brand image. However, if the spin-offs themselves become virals, it is likely that people will also search for the original advertisement to see the origin of the inspiration. New spin-offs might be published some time after the original advertisement was published. This can lead to the advertisement getting new views even long after the first publishing date. The motivation behind making a spin-off video and the motivation behind sharing one is a question that could be addressed separately and thus it is not further analysed in this thesis. This study only takes them into account as tools to reinforce the buzz around the original advertisements and discusses their affect on the online success of the case advertisements. The motivation behind sharing a spin-off video could be analysed as the case advertisements of this thesis have been analysed: using the theoretical framework together with the multimodal analysis.

The case advertisement by Volvo Trucks has generated many spin-offs, as mentioned earlier in this study. The spin-offs had been noticed by the interview participants as well:

A5: --- At least I have seen other versions [of the Volvo Trucks advertisement], and they were as funny. There are different versions with different people in different arrangements and vehicles. All made with the same idea and with the same music in the background.

A1: Yeah, when we discussed parodies earlier, this is what I was thinking about, because so many versions have been made of it. I think that they were actually a bigger thing than the original one. I think they were shared a lot when the advertisement came out. You did not have to ask for it, you just saw them everywhere.

A5: Yep I have seen people sharing them.

A4: On Facebook feed.

A5: And on Twitter.

Similarly, Volvo Trucks might have benefited from the fact that the case advertisement was a part of a series of advertisements by the same company. The interview participants did not comment on the series, but statistics about the series was presented in section 3.1.1, where the virality of the case advertisements was discussed.

The interviews showed that the first part of the theoretical framework is closely connected to its second part. Noticing a similarity between the advertisement and a previously seen video (or another advertisement of a series of advertisements) is important regarding the level of interest.

Story-like representation has been found important by previous literature. This was notable in the interviews as well, although many of the participants had seen the case advertisements before. One specific comment was made regarding the story-like form of the Evian advertisement.

#### 4.4 Motivation

The importance of the third part of the framework, *motivation*, was highly notable in the interviews. The personal connection found in the video was emphasised by members of both of the interview groups.

When the participants were asked if they would have shared the advertisements to their social circles, the answer was often “no”. One especially interesting reason for this decision was the fact that although the advertisement was found funny, the viewer had not found a link between the advertisement and someone he knew. The comment made by one of the participants in group B shows this very clearly:

*B3: “If I have a mutual interest with someone and the advertisement was somehow connected to it then I would probably be more likely to share it. But if it is a thing that only I find funny then I would not be likely to share it at all. Then it would be my own thing. You have to know how to label it, what is the video about and who you should share it with.”*

As explained in the literature review, this thinking pattern follows the theory of social currency by Berger. The motivation to share online content rises from the possibility to offer interesting and valuable online content for your social circles, and at the same time you build your personal social currency.

All participants except two had seen Advertisement 2 before. Its viral success was discussed especially among group B, where the participants remembered that the video was widely shared when it was first uploaded. The fact that it was shared so much made the participants more reluctant to share the advertisement themselves:

*B1: “I remember that [the advertisement] was shared a lot when it aired. I would not necessarily have to share it if everyone has already seen it.”*



All participants of group B shared this view. However, one of the participants of group A felt differently, as he claimed to happily share the advertisement for the particular reason that it is a viral success:

A5: *“I could share [the advertisement] because it is a viral video. I would spam it more and get more likes.”*

These comments show the importance of online social acceptance, which was presented as the most important aspect of the third phase of the framework: *motivation*. Members of group B did not want to share widely spread content with their social circles, because they were quite certain that the content was already familiar to their friends and other connections. The above mentioned member of group A on the other hand had a different way of looking at the situation: even though he would spread content that people might have seen before, he would gain more likes which would be likely to boost his online appearance in the future. Getting more likes for your posts means that you have posted something that others find interesting and somehow valuable. The number of likes and/or followers in e.g. Instagram or Twitter is also probably the most simple way to measure the size of ones online social circles and online popularity.

One of the participants of Group B also mentioned the social benefits of being the first to share a video, being the only one of the group to admit this during the interviews. However, other members of the group acknowledged the comment by this participant as well. After the participant mentioned the importance of being the first one to share a video, the matter was discussed in more detail:

R: *How important is it to be the first one [to share a video]?*

B2: *Very. At least in this Facebook group we have with my co-workers, if you are the first one, you feel important.*

B1: *You get points.*

B2: *Yep, especially if e.g. the CEO comments on it. Then you feel like "yes, that was ME who shared it first". And then on the other hand if I share something with them and say that "hey guys this is cool, watch this" and then the others tell me that it is like two months old, then you feel awkward.*

Similar behaviour was reported to occur if someone sent you a video that you had already seen before. Both B1 and B2 said that they would somehow highlight that they had already seen the video. The level of the personal relationship outside the online platforms seemed to have a notable effect on how the message would be delivered. Participant B2 explained that if she was sent a video she had already seen, her behaviour would probably be somewhat different in the Facebook group of her co-workers than in a private conversation with a personal friend:

B2: *[if someone in our work sent me a video I had already seen] I would immediately comment that "dude I have seen this like two weeks before". I mean I would want to be the first to comment that the video is really old... But I might not do it with my friends. Or maybe I would tell them that the video is quite nice but actually I have seen it already.*

The interviews showed that an advertisement has to not only pique the viewer's interest, but he needs to think of someone to be personally connected to the topic in order to share it. If the connection is missing, the video will most likely not be shared. This was an expected result, since the theoretical framework also suggests that the most important part of the motivation to share online content is to find a personal link between the content of the video and the viewer's social circles.

## **4.5 Sharing**

The last part of the theoretical framework, *sharing*, is the final step before the actual sharing of the video. It is at this point where the person has already made the choice to share the video, knows who to share it with and why. In this part of the chain of actions he

chooses the platform and the way in which he wants to reach the person he intends to share the video with.

It was clear from both interviews, that the choice of platform depends heavily on who is the recipient of the sharing process. Facebook was a popular choice, and the participants named many different ways of using Facebook as a sharing platform. Facebook was used to reach both individuals and groups of people, varying from a group of less than 5 people to sharing content to all your Facebook friends, which in the participants' case meant on average 454 people. One of the ten interview participants does not have a Facebook account, so the number of his Facebook friends is naturally zero.

*R: Which platforms do you usually use when you want to share online content?*

*A4: If I share something then I do it privately. Always directly to someone's wall. I do not want to spam people [by sharing content through my own status].*

*A5: I share everything on my own wall without worrying. On my own wall so that all my friends see it. Same thing with Twitter, although it is not as personal as Facebook.*

*B2: It depends a lot on the situation. Because if I would share something publicly on Facebook, it would have to be something that I want to publicly state, something that my 400 connections would want to know. Usually I tell it to a smaller group of people in a group or send it directly on Facebook Messenger if it is only one person. If I realize that "I know who would think that this is funny" then I will not share the link to that person's wall, I will use Facebook Messenger for that.*

*P1: I also use the commenting option on Facebook and Instagram. I just tag the other person in the comment section because then no one else sees it.*

*P2: I do the same.*

*P1: But I do not share anything on my own Facebook wall.*

These comments show that the choice of platform depends highly on the recipient and the platforms they use. It was interesting to see the difference in the amount of effort that was included in the different platform choices. Sharing a YouTube link via e-mail or a private conversation in e.g. Facebook or WhatsApp requires that the original link is copied and then pasted on the chosen platform. Sharing the link directly to your Facebook status or tweeting it on Twitter might be possible with just a single click. However, if the content is found interesting and especially suitable to be shared to a specific person, it is unlikely that the amount of effort needed would prevent the action of sharing the content.

The theoretical framework suggests that the decision to share a video is made after a link to a specific person has been found. Usually the sender will profit from the sharing by building his social currency. However, the act of sharing does not need to happen instantly after the advertisement has been watched. One of the participants of Group A told the interviewer that he had just shared a video advertisement with his friends. He had seen the advertisement long before on TV and searched for it on YouTube:

A5: *[I shared a video on a Facebook event] because there was a meaning behind it. I wanted to show it to the specific group of people. And the idea of the advertisement worked for the purpose.*

The advertisement might not have been actively on his mind for a long time, but something might have acted as a trigger and made him remember the advertisement.

The sharing is normally most likely to happen instantly after seeing the video, but as we can see from the comment by participant A5, it might happen also later if memories of the specific advertisement are triggered. If the requirements of the first three steps of the theoretical framework, *attention*, *interest* and *motivation* have been met, the viewer will share the video. The interviews showed that the choice of platform depends on the receiver.

Some people are more easily reached through e-mail, but if the meaning is to share a video with a group of people, e.g. Facebook would be a more likely choice.

The interview participants were only interested in sharing funny content. However, even if an advertisement was found funny, it did not guarantee its online success. Many other factors needed to be in place before the decision to share the video was made. These factors were discussed in turn in each of the last four sections of this Chapter: *attention, interest, motivation and sharing*.

This chapter has focused on presenting the results of the multimodal video analysis and the interviews. The results will be discussed in the following chapter in relation to previous literature, the theoretical framework of the study and the categorisation of themes made for this study.

## 5 Discussion

Chapter 4 presented the results of the multimodal video analysis and the interviews. This chapter will discuss the results in relation to essential literature and the theoretical framework and the research questions of the present study:

*RQ1: What is the connection between the content of an online video and its online success?*

*RQ2: What do the most viewed online video advertisements (from 2013) have in common?*

As presented in the Chapter 2, the importance of interesting or somehow stimulating content has been noted by several different authors. Thus it was an expected result that content quality was underlined in the interviews as well. All of the interview participants agreed on that a video has to be funny and entertaining, otherwise they will not share it with their social circles. However, the definition of ‘funny’ depends on the viewer, the culture the viewer represents and the previous experiences the viewer has. The viewer will reflect the content to what he/she already knows, has already experienced or e.g. holds culturally acceptable.

Even if the content is not funny, the content was central to the participants of the interviews. Some of them were ready to share less funny content, if the content was closely linked to a specific friend or if the advertisement represented a company that the viewer looked up to. However, these were specific cases, and the main guideline that emerged from the interviews was that the content should be funny in order to be shared.

The aim of RQ1 was to find out the connection between the content of an online video advertisement and its online success. Because of the unpredictable nature of the development of online phenomena and the ever-changing trends occupying the social media sites, it is safe to say that the virality of a video cannot be planned. Even if the

content would be perfectly planned to meet the interests of a specific target audience, the advertisement may not result in a viral hit.

Yet, it is clear that some elements may increase the possibility to succeed virally. A successful advertisement requires perfect timing, funny content, an engaging factor (like a story) and most importantly, it has to remind us of someone. According to the theoretical framework and as confirmed by the interviews, it is crucial that the advertisement makes the viewer connect emotionally with the video content. This can be done e.g. by referring to a life event that most people can relate to (weddings, birthdays, friendships etc.), using a public figure who people are likely to recognize or addressing a topic that interests the target audience.

If every part of the theoretical framework succeeds and the content is emotionally relatable, it is possible that the video will be a viral hit. However, in the end the viral success lies in the hands of the Internet users, the customers and consumers. As Kormilainen (2013, p.62-63) underlined, the effect of virality is born by itself – if at all.

RQ2 was formulated to support RQ1 and facilitate the analysis of the two case advertisements. Based on the categorisation of themes and the multimodal video analysis, there are four main similarities between the advertisements: their length, the story-like structure, the surprise factor and the fact that they both woke mainly positive emotions in the interview participants. The categorisation of themes was presented in Section 3.5.1 and the multimodal video analysis in Section 3.5.2.

Both of the case advertisements have been viral videos, as is known from their placing in the YouTube top ten list. When comparing the content of the advertisements to the theoretical framework of this thesis, we can see that three of the four above-mentioned similarities between them are also parts of the theoretical framework: story-like structure (interest), surprise factor (interest) and positive emotions (attention). These three categories take the advertisements past the first two parts of the framework: interest and attention.

The discussions in the interviews continued from where the categorisation of themes left the case advertisements. Some of the interview participants told about their friends who might have enjoyed seeing the case advertisements, and some of the participants reported that they would have considered sharing the advertisements. The choice of platform for the actual sharing process depended heavily on the person who was going to receive the message from the sender. These factors support the hypothesis that if an advertisement manages to fulfil all the steps in the theoretical framework, it may result to be a viral hit.

The present chapter has discussed the findings and analysis, which was presented in Chapter 4. This thesis has managed to find reasons for the success of the two case advertisements through the research questions set for the study. Through the analysis of the case advertisements the research has presented an updated clarification on what a successful online video advertisement should include. It has been noted that the suggestions depend heavily on the two case advertisements and the results of the group interviews, and cannot as such be extended to all online video advertising. The limitations of this study and recommendations for future research will be presented in Chapter 6.



## **6 Conclusion**

This thesis has discussed the importance of the content of an online video advertisement in connection to its online success. The discussion has been built around two case advertisements, which were analysed using multimodal video analysis and discussing the advertisements in two group interviews.

This chapter consists of three parts. Section 6.1 will sum the findings of the study, followed by Section 6.2, which will discuss the limitations of this study, and finally Section 6.2 will present possible themes for future studies in virality concerning online video advertising.

### **6.1 Summary**

The findings of the interviews supported previous literature and theories of social currency and online sharing. The importance of good content and emotions was highlighted in the interviews: especially funny content seemed to overrule other factors when the participants were making the decisions of whether or not to share online content. In addition to funny content, the video needed to remind the viewer of a specific person or a common matter between a specific person and the viewer. Some attention was also paid to the brand or company behind the advertisement, and that is where the interview participants differed the most in their opinions. Some paid almost no attention to the brand while others were very strict about which brand they were willing to promote.

The action of sharing was found to vary in different circumstances, but even though social behaviour themes were slightly discussed, the interview participants did not seem to be conscious of the importance of social currency in their sharing actions. However, their responses showed that social currency did play a role in their actions.

The two case advertisements were the two most viewed advertisements on YouTube in 2013. They represent the advertisements of that specific year, and therefore the analysis might be somewhat different if the case advertisements were to be changed.

Even though the advertisements were quite different in style and represented very different companies, the results of the interviews were similar for both of their part. The most notable difference between the advertisements was the fact that one of them included a celebrity. Contrary to expectations, this had only a minor influence on the sharing behaviour of the interview participants.

## **6.2 Limitations of the study**

This study has its limitations, like any research project would. These limitations have been categorized in two parts: the quantity of data and the quantity of participants in the interviews. Both of these parts have a strong influence on the applicability of the results, which will be presented in this section.

First, the study focused on the examination of only two case advertisements. The advertisements were chosen because of their proven virality and online success in the year 2013, which justifies their selection for the present study. However, by studying several advertisements possibly representing different genres the study could have reached more extensive results.

Second, the group interviews included five persons each, adding to a total of ten people interviewed for this study. A higher number of participants or more than two interview groups might result in more interview data, which again would lead to more applicable results in the field of communication and especially advertising.

### **6.3 Future research**

This study has focused on studying the role of emotions and social currency in the virality of online video advertisements. The study was carried out by examining two case advertisements. This section suggests different perspectives and arrangements by which the present study could be continued or modified to meet the needs of the field of communication.

First, future research could further analyse the importance of advertisement content by including more advertisements to the study. By including several advertisements representing different genres or advertisements that evoke different type of emotions in people, future researchers might be able to get a wider conception on the importance of content in online advertisements.

Second, the case advertisements chosen for this study represented advertisements that made the viewers feel mainly positive emotions. Including negative emotions to the study would offer a more thorough perspective.

Third, in this study the participants of the interviews were chosen by their reported online behaviour. The usual behaviour concerning the time spent on online video sites and the sharing habits were found out by a preliminary questionnaire. In the future, the interviews could be carried out by dividing the participants into groups according to their age or sex. Changing the grouping of the participants might have interesting impacts on the interview situation as well as the results.

Fourth, an interesting comparison could be carried out by studying other five videos of the Volvo Live Tests –campaign compared to Advertisement 2, which was also part of the particular campaign. This study discussed the other advertisements only briefly (Section 3.1).

Finally, the comment section of YouTube videos was outlined from this study. More research attention should be given to the comment section in future studies. The comments could offer interesting additional information about the reactions, opinions and sharing habits of the viewers.

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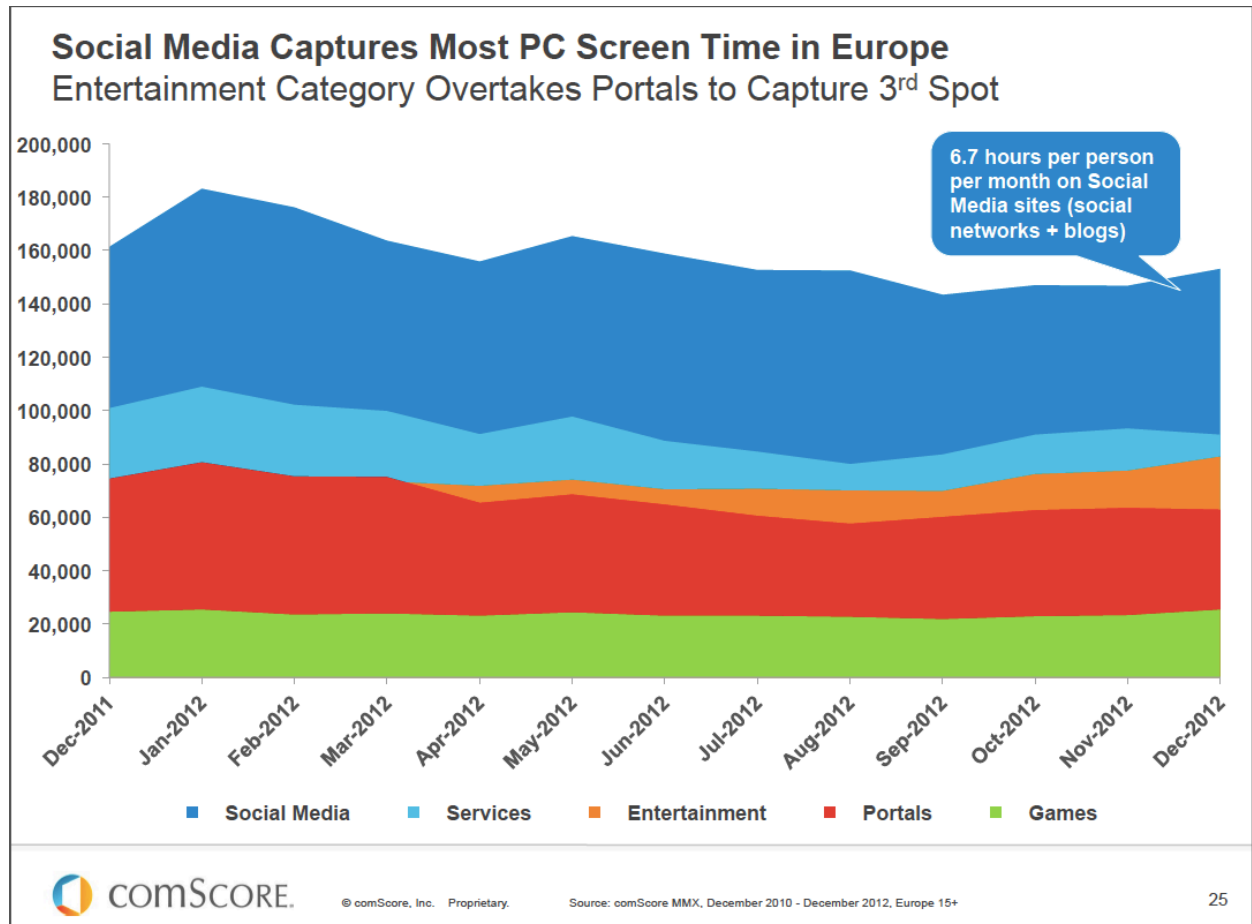
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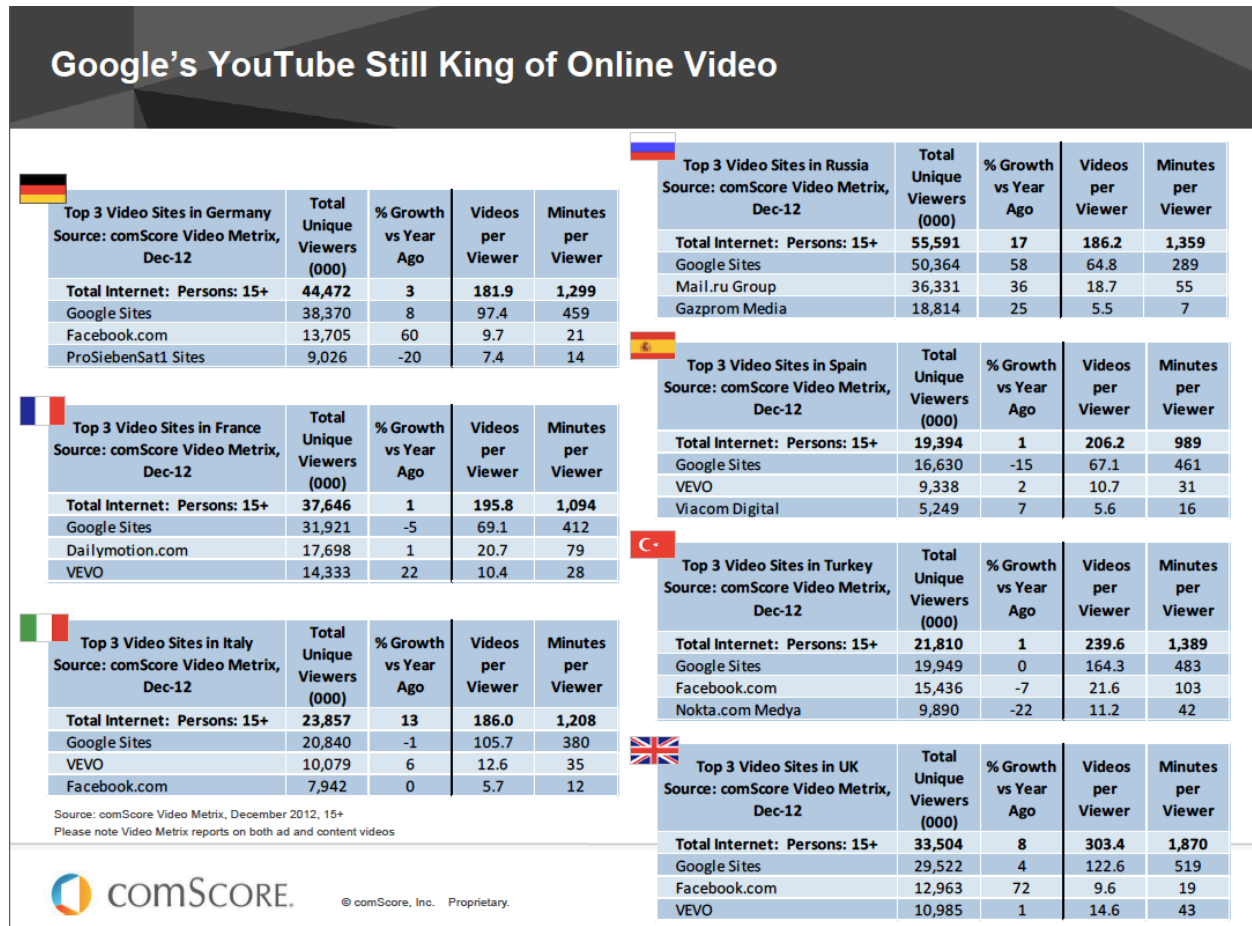
## Appendix A: The Europeans' use of Internet time in 2012

How did the Europeans use their time on the Internet in 2012.



## Appendix B: Google's YouTube Still King of Online Video

YouTube was the most popular online video platform in Europe in 2012.



## Appendix C: The online preliminary questionnaire

1. Which online site do you mainly use for watching online videos? | Mitä nettisivua käytät online videoiden katsomiseen pääasiassa?
2. How much time on average do you spend on that site weekly? | Kuinka paljon aikaa keskimäärin vietät kyseisellä sivustolla viikottain?
  - a. less than 1 hour | alle tunnin
  - b. 1 - 3 hours | 1 - 3 tuntia
  - c. 3 - 5 hours | 3 - 5 tuntia
  - d. more than 5 hours | yli 5 tuntia
3. How often do you share a video to your friends or family after you have watched it? | Kuinka usein jaat näkemäsi videon ystäville tai perheellesi?
  - a. never | en koskaan
  - b. about 25% of the time | noin 25% kerroista
  - c. about 50% of the time | noin 50% kerroista
  - d. about 75% of the time | noin 75% kerroista
  - e. always | aina
4. Your age | Ikäsi

## **Appendix D: Interview guide for the researcher**

### **Ennen mainosten katsomista**

- Esittele tutkimuksen aihe, haastattelun rakenne ja aikataulu
- Mitä mainoksia olette nähneet viime aikoina netissä? Tuleeko joku erityinen mieleen?
- Oletteko jakaneet eteenpäin jotain mainoksia viime aikoina? Mitä?
- Oletteko erityisesti etsineet eri mainoksia (tai jotain tiettyä mainosta) viime aikoina? Mihin käyttöön?
- Minkä takia yleisesti jaat mainoksia eteenpäin? / minkätyyppisessä tilanteessa?

Keskusteluaiheita (jos ei tule esiin muuten)

- mainostavan yrityksen merkitys jakamiselle
- julkkisten merkitys jakamiselle
- yhteisen taustan merkitys sen kanssa jolle linkin lähettäisi ("he get's it")

### **Mainoksen katsomisen jälkeen**

- Kyselyn täyttäminen
- Mitä jäi päällimmäisenä mieleen mainoksesta?
- Kuvitelkaa että olisitte nyt nähneet tämän mainoksen ensimmäistä kertaa YouTubessa. Mitä todennäköisimmin tekisitte nyt? (YouTube-ikkuna näkyville)
- Tuliko joku tietty henkilö/ystävä mieleen?
  - miten kertoisit mainoksesta henkilölle?
  - miten jakaisit/millä foorumilla/millä keinolla?  
(esim. FB seinä/ryhmä/event/suora viesti)
- Olisiko jakamisen kannalta eroa sillä että löysitkö mainoksen itse vai lähettikö joku linkin sinulle?

## Appendix E: Interview questionnaire

After watching the advertisement

1. **Have you seen the advertisement before this?**
  - a. yes
  - b. no
  
2. **Did you find it yourself or did someone send it to you?**
  - a. myself
  - b. someone sent it to me
  - c. I can not remember
  
3. **What type of feelings did you feel during or after watching this advertisement?**

	Strongly	Somewhat strongly	Neutral	Somewhat weakly	Not at all
Happiness					
Amusement					
Excitement					
Sadness					
Anger					
Boredom					
Surprise					
Awe					

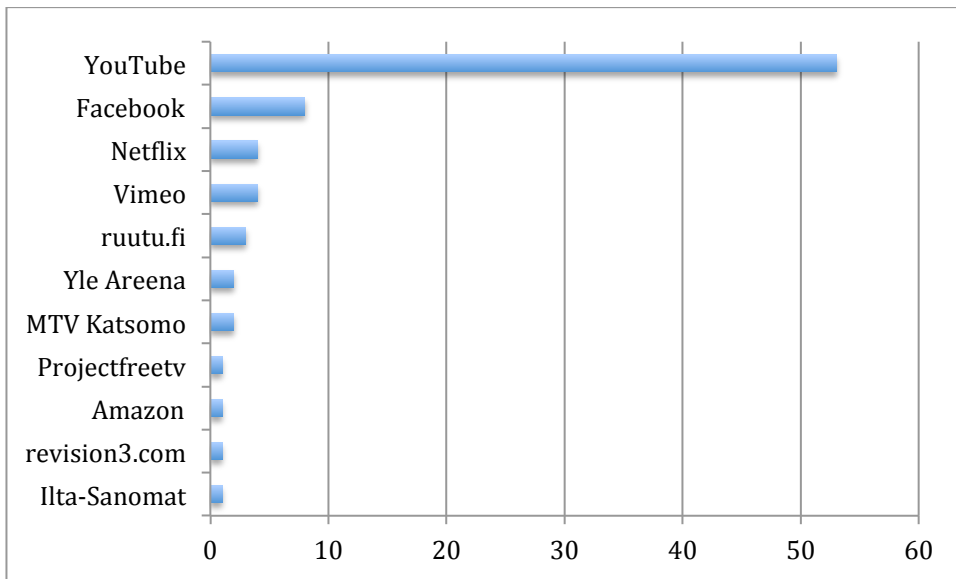
**Other, please specify and rate:**

	Strongly	Somewhat strongly	Neutral	Somewhat weakly	Not at all

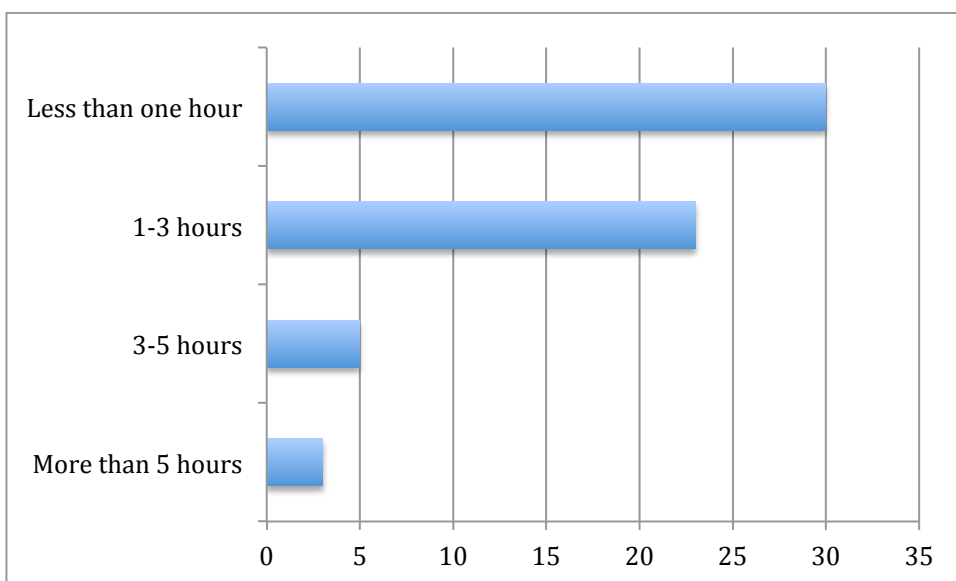
4. **What was the company behind the advertisement?**
5. **Did you recognize the man in the advertisement? Please specify.** (note: shown only for advertisement 2)

## Appendix F: Results of the online questionnaire

1. Which online site do you mainly use for watching online videos? | Mitä nettisivua käytät online videoiden katsomiseen pääasiassa?

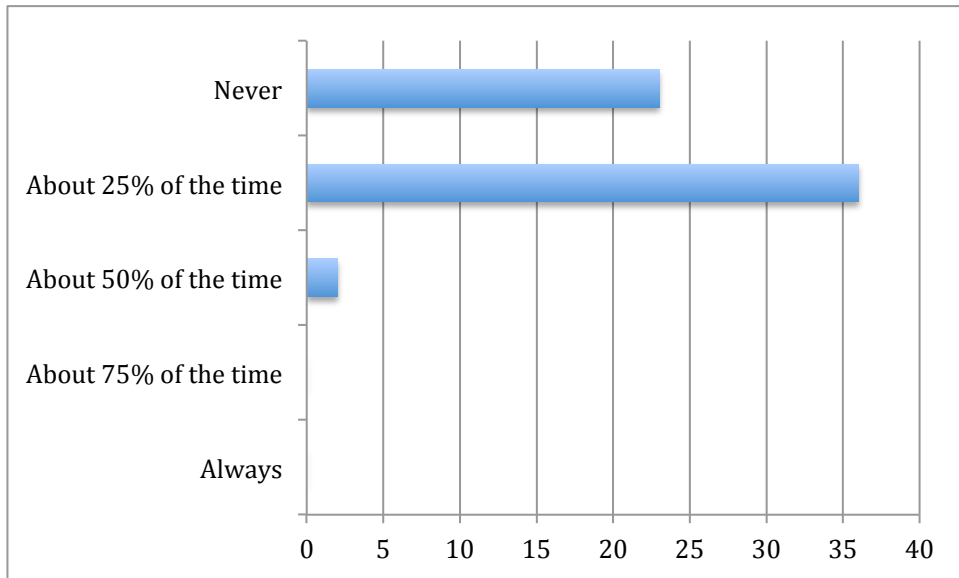


2. How much time on average do you spend on that site weekly? | Kuinka paljon aikaa keskimäärin vietät kyseisellä sivustolla viikottain?





3. How often do you share a video to your friends or family after you have watched it?  
 | Kuinka usein jaat näkemäsi videon ystäville tai perheellesi?



4. Your age | Ikäsi

Age	Number of respondents
15 years	1
16 years	1
17 years	1
18 years	1
19 years	3
20 years	1
21 years	2
22 years	2
23 years	2
24 years	2

Age	Number of respondents
25 years	5
26 years	9
27 years	16
28 years	2
29 years	3
30 years	1
32 years	1
33 years	3
37 years	1
40 years	1
55 years	1
56 years	1
61 years	1