



DEVELOP GREAT CREATIVE FOR YOUR VIDEO ADS AND MAXIMIZE VIRAL POTENTIAL

BY ANN GREEN

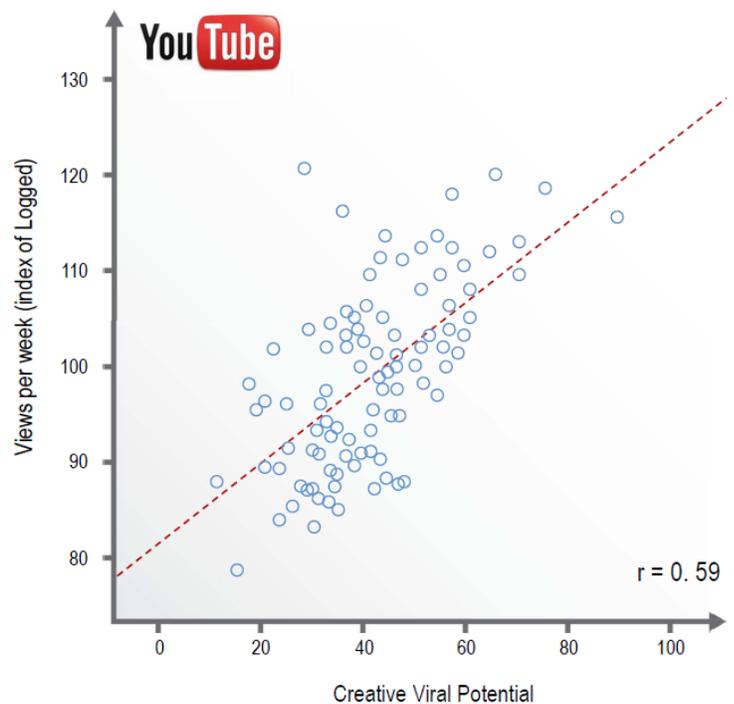


The strength of creative is an important factor that will influence whether an ad will go viral. To identify the creative criteria for viral success, Millward Brown recently conducted a research study on the power of viral video ads. We identified 500 ads copy tested, across seven countries, using our Link™ solution. All ads were also available on YouTube.

We used YouTube's publicly available viewing information as our measure of viral success. To create a "views per week measure", the number of views (aggregated across all posted versions of an ad) was divided by the number of weeks the ad had been posted. This measure of viral spread ensured a fair comparison regardless of how long the ads had been on YouTube. To help predict in-market viral viewing, we took measures from Millward Brown's Link copy testing solutions to build a Creative Viral Potential score.

So what creative factors drive viral viewing? Millward Brown identified the following measures that related to views per week:

Enjoyment: The industry can consistently demonstrate the importance of liking and/or enjoyment to an ad's performance. This also holds true when it comes to whether or not an ad is likely to go viral.



Source: Millward Brown 2013

Active Involvement: Viral ads are not those that simply “wash over” the viewer — they tend to have qualities that make the viewer lean in and take an active role.

Distinctiveness: Being distinctive is very important. To succeed virally, ads need to stand out from all other ads, not just from those of direct competitors.

Buzz: The quality of an ad makes someone want to send the ad to someone else. The act of passing an ad on contains a consequential element — personal endorsement. In sending a viral ad along, the sender is saying that he or she thinks it’s good. Sending a bad viral ad is rather like telling a joke that falls flat — embarrassing for all involved.

Millward Brown’s research also identified four elements of strong viral ads, summarized below, using the acronym LEGS.

L **Laugh out loud funny:** Four of the top five videos we researched over-indexed in terms of being funny. We learned the sender of a viral ad often needs to be sure the recipient will laugh when they see it. The likelihood of this is gauged against the sender’s own reaction to the video. Generating a wry smile is not sufficient for a video to be sent on.

E **Edgy:** Best described as the type of video most people wouldn’t show to their mother, these films operate on the edge of social acceptability. They might be viewed by some as offensive, shocking, sick, or unpleasant. Importantly however, when they combine this edginess with humor, the shock element is felt overall to be funny as opposed to gratuitous.

G **Gripping:** Finding a video to be gripping, engaging or involving isn’t the same as enjoying the viewing experience. Not many would claim to “enjoy” looking at a car crash, but the majority of people rubber-neck when they pass an accident site. While very gripping videos are not necessarily particularly enjoyable; very passive videos can be extremely enjoyable. Importantly, both positive and negative emotions can drive a consumer to be gripped by a video. The research shows there is no guarantee a video that is very gripping will be forwarded on — but a video that isn’t gripping is unlikely to be passed along.

S **Sexual content:** We chose not to include any particularly sexually focused films in the research due to common decency and industry codes of conduct. However, that is not to say we underestimate the importance of sexual content as a motivator for forwarding a video — particularly among young males.

The pursuit of an edgy or sexually focused viral video should not be detrimental to a brand’s character or proposition. An ill-advised film can damage brand equity, if it goes viral, because the brand has no control over its longevity in the public eye. A semi-pornographic film for many brands would detract from, rather than enhance, the brand promise and position.

Working with leading marketers and agencies on Creative Development, Millward Brown is often asked to help predict the extent to which their ad will go viral. In the study, Millward Brown set out to explore the main drivers of viral viewing, and what makes people want to share? In reality, the chance of achieving a major viral success is rather low. There are many factors that determine an ad’s viral impact.

Here's what we learned.

- ***Paid media in general has a role in viral success.*** YouTube videos with paid advertising achieve far greater views than videos that are not supported by paid placements. The ad itself may have appeared on TV, at cinemas or in paid online video slots. Other media such as posters or print can play a supporting role as well. PR can have a major impact, first in seeing the ad appropriately among opinion formers, and later in “fanning the flames” to ensure wider awareness.
 - Ads on YouTube's home page generate 86% of all views increasing expected views by over 600%.
- ***Holistic campaigns are more likely to achieve viral success.*** Executions that are linked by a common theme or device seem to benefit from being part of a campaign.
- ***Make your video easy to find.*** The name attached to an ad will contribute to it being easy or difficult to find. Advertisers can only control the name of the “official” versions of their videos, but they should consider the implications of how they do this. An intriguing name may help drive views among random surfers, but a more obvious name may help increase views among searchers. YouTube promotion ensures weaker ads achieve views — only the very best start to catch up via natural viral.

There is a growing trend for brand managers to suggest or request a viral campaign because “everyone else is doing it.” Before embarking on a viral video project, marketers need to ask the question: Would the film work on TV or in the cinema? If the answer is “no”, the ad won't fit any better when it's watched on a PC or mobile device. Media choice should always be driven by the communication objective, and not the other way around.

Finally it should be acknowledged that, despite the analysis presented above, there is still an element of luck involved. Some campaigns will inspire mash-ups, spoof responses, re-edits and other online chatter. At this point, you start to lose control of the campaign, and things may take unexpected twists and turns, but with luck, you could benefit from a massive viral surge in brand interest.

For more information on Millward Brown's validated Creative Viral Potential score, please contact:

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