An exploration of creative managers' perspectives on digital creativity: the impact of viral campaigns on creative processes, appeals and creative teams in UK advertising agencies

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Birmingham City University Business School,
Birmingham City University
October, 2016

Abstract

This research aims to develop conceptual insight into the practice and impact of a specific digital phenomenon – "viral marketing" – on marketing communications agencies. Specifically, it explores the UK, one of the most important hubs in global advertising looking at agenciesr campaign design planning, the roles of creative teams and the management processes through three research objectives:

- To explicate, classify and explore the changes in advertising campaign planning processes and roles which digital phenomena such as virals have introduced
- To capture and codify the working models which creative managers employ and the messaging strategies considered and implemented in viral campaigns
- To develop theoretical models for understanding virals, agency campaign management, creative roles and develop extant frameworks

Prior Work:

Research into virals has grown rapidly over the last ten years but it is dominated by computing studies of online diffusion. The creative perspective has received little attention. Those studies which do address this viewpoint are principally focussed on the final advert. The voice of the producers of such campaigns – creative managers – is largely absent from the literature with a single study of campaign measurement. The roles of core teams/functions within the agencies, the criteria for viral creative concept evaluation, the campaign processes and working models are experiencing unprecedented change. Viral campaigns offer a bridge between the "old" and "new" worlds; it possesses the characteristics of TV and the Web. It is important because such viral campaigns have challenged the established models of advertising management and planning.

Methods:

The study undertakes the first comprehensive evaluation of the exisiting research into viral marketing, locating gaps in the creative design and management. Qualitative methodology through semi-structured in-depth interviews with creative managers in a range of UK advertising agencies is used to represent their views and responses to viral phenomena as they conceived, designed and reflected on campaigns.

Contribution to Knowledge:

This is the first study of the pre-launch/pre-production phase of campaign development. It has clarified a plethora of terms, in so doing developing the SPEED framework to understand the biological metaphor underpinning the phenomena, and finally producing a more accurate and comprehensive definition of the phenomenon.

The paradigm funnel evaluation of prior research has tested and extended formal tools to arrive at a state of the art. The current research primarily consists of studies utilising secondary datasets, mainly quantitative – this study explores questions not just of what but of why, producing deeper insight than available before.

Theoretical contributions:

In the final model of viral creative management and design is an overarching conceptual contribution which for the first time represents creative roles, agency management and creative considerations at both pre and post-launch campaign phases. The thesis also develops theoretical constructs in specific areas – definition from practitioners, construct of campaign zones in viral design, a model of critical factors which facilitate virals, comparative theory of conventional and viral campaigns, characteristics of viral agencies, model of digital brand/agency relationships, a role construct for digital creatives among the main theoretical developments. These led into the final theoretical model.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Rattie Raghubansie. She has forever been a lighthouse in rough seas, as a single parent with three boys in tough circumstances.

My wife, Chandrani who has been intelligent, loving and supportive all the time. And my boys, Devinda who was born into this study (and felt the loss of time) and Nadal whose first consistent sentence was, "Don't do your work".

My in-laws, Karu and Rathna for their love and support for us and the boys, giving me space to study.

To my brother, Rodney, my relatives and friends, my heartfelt thanks.

In memory of Chris.

The Researcher

Antonius Raghubansie is now with the British Council as Head of Teaching Centres & Libraries across India, having joined the organisation in 2015 as Head of Sri Lanka Teaching Operations. This marks a return to general management where he is responsible for marketing, communications, customer service and financial performance for the English product range and largest network of bricks and mortar libraries in the British Council. Academic quality and staffing also fall under his remit. He has recently overseen the launch of new digital services in Sri Lanka and for the future strategy of the online Library in India.

Immediately prior to that he was Associate Head and Principal Lecturer in Marketing Communications and Advertising at the University of Worcester, having previously held various academic roles at Coventry University, London Metropolitan University and Birmingham City University. He has also managed and taught the Chartered Institute of Marketing and Chartered Insitute of Public Relations professional courses from certificate to postgraduate level. Before joining UK HE, he was in the private sector in the Caribbean and South America in the beverages industry where he was Head of Marketing working with brands as diverse as Pepsi, Tropicana, Frito Lays and El Dorado Rums among others.

With experience in developing, leading and managing large scale marketing and advertising campaigns, he was especially interested in the challenge to current business models which digital presented and started studying the more extreme "free" forms such as viral marketing in his Masters. This PhD is the culmination of that interest and life experiences both as educator and business leader.

Publications based on this study:

Journal:

Raghubansie, A., El-Gohary, H. and Samaradivakara, C., 2013. An Investigation of the Evaluation of the Viral Marketing Research. *International Journal of Online Marketing (IJOM)*, *3*(4), pp.1-27.

Conference papers:

Findings Chapter:
"An Empirical Study of Innovation in the Digital Advertising Creative Process among SME Advertising Agencies in the UK: the case of Viral Advertising", Creative Industries Entrepreneurship Track, ISBE Conference Manchester, Nov. 2014.

Winner Best Paper 2014 - http://www.isbe.org.uk/Award-winners-shine-at-ISBE-2014

Literature Review Chapter (and partial Findings Chapter):
"Revising Extant Frameworks of Viral Marketing: Implications from Empirical Investigations of Digital Advertising Creative Managers' Practice in the UK", Creative Industries Entrepreneurship Track, Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship Conference (ISBE) Manchester, Nov. 2014.

Research Methods Chapter (September 2014):
"Chasing Ghosts: Problems of Participant Recruitment from among Innovative Practitioners in the UK Advertising Industry", Marketing Track, International Multidisciplinary Academic Conference, Venice, Italy, July 2014

Book chapter:
Based on the Literature Review Chapter:
Raghubansie, A., El-Gohary, H., & Samaradivakara, C. (2015). An Investigation of Viral Marketing Research. *Marketing and Consumer Behavior: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications*, pp. 201-230.

There were three other internal presentations at the University Research Conference as well as at the researcher's then university employer.

1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The rationale for this exploration of creative managers' perspectives on digital creativity is outlined. Firstly, the industry and management challenges are summarised, then the research problem arising from those and the research questions which examine that problem. Next, the importance of the study is articulated. It also links key literature and the gaps therein to the research objectives and the methodology adopted. The final section summarises the structure of the thesis.

1.1 *Summary*

This is a cross-sectional, exploratory study of the impact of viral marketing on advertising campaign planning processes among a previously unrepresented group in the literature – those who produce such creative materials such as digital creative directors, heads of digital and content managers. It is qualitative in nature, utilising one of the most dynamic forms of emerging online marketing communications tools – viral marketing as the phenomena to frame the investigation.

1.2 *Management Issue:*

Viral marketing has several key features – consumer engagement, online platforms, the distribution, the client, the ads themselves and the producers of the ads. Managers and academics can call upon a growing body of research on the consumer; there is an established body of work on the media platform and distribution; a small group of studies of the ads themselves; but there is very little on clients and just one on the creative producers of viral marketing. Arguably, this last element is the core of what makes viral marketing, although the others are also important in implementing a successful campaign. If marketing and creative managers are to evaluate what makes for a viral creative, then there is need to understand and develop models which assist them.

1.3 *Research Focus:*

This research explores changes in the creative management, processes and concepting considerations of UK advertising agencies, resulting from online consumer to consumer transmission of advertisements. Of particular focus are those advertisements which have been shared among Internet users on an exponential scale; i.e. those which have achieved a pattern of distribution similar to that evident in a viral epidemic.

1.4 *Services Sector:*

The service sector within the UK is the largest contributor to GDP at 78% (ONS, 2016). The creative industries are part of this sector, employing over 2 million people. Creative industries contribute a substantial 7% of GDP, compared to financial services which contribute 9.5%. The growth rate in the creative sector has been at twice the rate of the UK economy in 2011 to 2014 and that is expected to continue (CBI, 2015). The Department for Culture, Media and Sport in the UK categorises the following types of businesses as part of the creative sector – advertising, architecture, art and antiques, computer games, crafts, design, fashion, film and video, music, the performing arts, television and radio, and publishing (DCMS, 2015).

1.5 *Creative Industries:*

Academics disagree as to the definition of creative industries, varying across countries (Foord, 2009). However, Flew and Cunningham, (2010) provided some clarity. Two related aspects are presented here, both taken from Flew and Cunningham (2010, p3), based on United Nations consultation:

> "The cycles of creation, production, and distribution of goods and services that use creativity and intellectual capital as primary inputs".

> "Tangible products and intangible intellectual or artistic services with creative content, economic value, and market objectives".

The pattern of activity within advertising does fit to these, more to the second but with elements of the first as well. While these point to the process which is the focus of this study, de-Miguel-Molina et al (2012, p. 1253) add "these industries are in fact groupings of specific sectors of low technology manufacturing and knowledge-intensive services". Advertising agencies range from low to high technology and act a a microcosm of how business models are changing in general.

The main outputs of advertising professionals are TV, radio, print, outdoor, direct and online advertising. They also provide advice to clients (De Propris, 2013). Foord, (2009) points out that the key activities delivering these outputs are planning promotional programmes, conceiving and developing creative content, buying media space, supporting the promotion of services and products, sharing creative content and relevant consultation services (e.g. market research, training).

1.6 *The UK Advertising Industry:*

Having understood creative industries in general, the focus is turned to the UK where advertising agencies have emerged from five years of decline (− 1.3%) (See IAB, 2016). Clients reduced advertising budgets very quickly (2008-09) as the recession started to impact, continuing into 2009 (De Propris, 2013). There was a slight recovery (2010) but the overall UK economy was still struggling and became worst. The inflows brought by the London Olympic Games pushed revenue up and that helped in 2013 as the broader economy improved showing positive signs beyond 2014 (de-Miguel-Molina et al, 2012).

In economic terms, Advertising firms employ over 86,000 people working in 14,000 plus organisations (IBISWorld's Industry Research Report, 2015). The sector has low capital investments reflected in expenditure for every £1 on capital equipment is outstripped by £9 for staff. The latter is about 19% of industry costs, the second highest expense (IAB, 2013). The market is dominated by Omnicom/ Publicis, Interpublic and the WPP Group plc (IBISWorld's Industry Research Report, 2015). They are large holding firms which own many agencies (operating as their own business units), within the UK and internationally. There is a mid-level group of holding companies but they are going through consolidation at the moment.

While the UK and the global economy have been sluggish in the last 8 years, new advertising techniques have had notable success. In 2002, advertising spend on digital was less than £200 million; in ten years it had grown to more than £5 billion (IAB, 2016). The UK in 2009 became the first major economy where online advertising exceeded television (BBC, 2009). The projected spend by end 2016 is £7.5bn in the UK alone, an increase of 15% over last year (IAB, 2016). Mobile is now accounting for 20% of digital spend, delivering more than half of total digital growth. The 2016 IAB report, compiled by PricewaterhouseCoopers, also highlights that the FMCG category has finally become the leading market sector using online advertising, showing some integration of conventional and new media among mainstream brands. Reflecting the growth and popularity of viral marketing, video has grown over year 2012, 13, 14, 15 by 46% (IAB, 2016).

1.7 *Advertising Agencies:*

In order to assess the impact of digital innovations it is necessary to understand the structure of advertising agencies. The stereotypical view of an advertising agency is increasingly out of touch (Takemura, 2012). The very core of what is classified as "advertising" itself has experienced considerable change. It can mean turning a bus station into a bedroom or playing drums to Phil Collins' music on Facebook and YouTube and so on (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Advertising tools which were perceived as emerging have established themselves as part of the creative agency's arsenal (Hackley and Tiwsakul, 2011). These have had profound effects, particularly among small and medium-sized (SME) agencies that make up the largest proportion of the new interactive advertising agencies.

An advertising or creative agency is usually a business to business (B2B) organisation whose foremost function is to envision and construct comprehensive promotional campaigns (Hackley and Kover, 2007). Advertising agencies develop a key creative concept followed by a series of draft realisations of advertisements that express the core idea as it could be in media (Truong, McColl and Kitchen, 2010). These agencies, classically concentrate on ATL (above-the-line advertising), which deliver their messages by leveraging the main mass media - television, print, radio and outdoor

(Webster and Ksiazek, 2012). However, the emergence of e-marketing and various digital platforms, while usually classed as BTL (below the line advertising) is forcing a shift in the activities (Hackley and Kover, 2007).

There are two other types of agencies– media and marketing services. Media agencies decide on which platforms messages should be placed and they purchase that space (Webster and Ksiazek, 2012). While they are not the focus of this study, their role is also being increasingly changed in light of digital technology. Marketing services agencies primarily deliver BTL (direct marketing, sales promotions), functions which require unique skills sets, more specialists (Hackley and Kover, 2007). Digital services tend to be categorised within this grouping as well, though they are increasingly an important part of the conventional advertising agency.

To return to the archetypal creative agency, there are three groupings. The large holding companies which own agencies are global, matching the scale needs of their clients (Pepsi, Ford etc). They number just into double digits, about 13, including BBDO, Saatchi and Saatchi, Leo Burnet etc (Hackley and Tiwsakul, 2011). They may operate in more than one hundred countries, often with localised branches. They provide a wide range in terms of creative capabilities (Hackley and Kover, 2007). In contrast to these large scale operatives, the second category is comprised of medium sized advertising agencies, sometimes referred to as multi-hub creative networks. They also operate overseas but in a much more focussed way, in regional offices (for example aligned to international trading blocs). Compared to the global agencies, this second type provides a more customized set of services (Takemura, 2012). Some of the well-known names in this category are Wieden and Kennedy and Bartle Bogle Hegarty (BBH).

The third type tends to be smaller, often owner-owned, independents. They have a national and local focus but with connections to overseas partners. The larger of these provide a profile of broad services beyond the typical creative agency (marketing for example) in which case they are called full-service agencies (De Propris, 2013). The smaller agencies within the independents tend to have a niche capability, sometimes referred to as creative boutiques (Grabher, 2002; Horsky, 2006). This latter sub-group, tend to get bought out by the large and medium sized agencies from the two other brackets.

New agencies are emerging, others re-structuring, some struggling and so the relationships and roles of brand owners themselves are more fluid than before. Both buyers of creative services and the producing creative teams have much to do in truly meeting the opportunities delivered by digital (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Technology leaders are developing platforms but the creatives are still to respond fully, or to develop management processes that give confidence to brands (Bharadwaj et al, 2013). The increase in mobile (phones, tablets, personal digital assistants etc) will drive another set of wireless social connections, marketing opportunities and new business structures (Hackley and Tiwsakul, 2011; Clemons, Barnett and Appadurai, 2007). The digital environment is not just engaging but also influencing brand awareness/attitudes and purchase patterns and therefore brand owners and creative managers have to respond.

To understand where and who these changes are affecting, below is a summary of how marketing communications agencies are organised. Typically six roles obtain – account management, planning, media, finance, production and creative (Broschak and Niehans, 2006). In the latter section, the creative artefacts are prepared. Staff include copywriters, graphics, art directors and designers who are answerable to the creative director (Pratt, 2006). This group are collectively labelled "creatives", with the competencies to develop campaigns (Davies, 2010). Among smaller agencies these divisions are less clear (Berthon, Ewing and Napoli, 2008).

The advertising agencies recognise that digital technology is disrupting their business models (Takemura, 2012). The dominant paradigm established by Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB) in the 1960s of the creative director and writer produced iconic, globally acknowledged work for brands like Volkswagen (Mallia and Windels, 2011).

This investigation explores how and why digital phenomenon such as viral marketing is affecting creative teams within agencies. The creative department is typically the core of operations, producing the ideas which build reputation and win global awards (McLeod, O'Donohoe and Townley, 2009). To access a deeper understanding, this study concentrates on the functions of creative leaders and heads of digital. Their multiple roles make them ideal to provide depth of insight. They make proposals to clients; exercise leadership, hire staff, manage across the agency, consult on, discuss

and agree creative budgets (Mallia and Windels, 2011). Of particular interest, they also craft overall creative directions and digital plans. They design the campaign plan; assess concepts, ultimately providing authorisation of creative ideas and the end products (Sheehan and Morrison, 2009). This diversity is what offers a potentially rich perspective on the lived experience of designing viral campaigns.

1.8 *Research Problem and Rationale:*

As firms develop their presence online, market boundaries are re-drawn with potential customers from hitherto inaccessible markets (Groeger and Buttle, 2014a). It follows that these changes are effecting significant adjustments in the way customers interact with brands, with each other and with creative artefacts (Liu-Thompkins, 2012) on multiple devices (Bart, Stephen and Sarvary, 2014). Researchers have confirmed these changes particularly in consumer-consumer exchange (Phelps et al, 2005). The consequences for organisations have attracted research attention at the level of industry structures (De Propris, 2013), in marketing channels (Porterfield, Bailey and Evers, 2010), in customer behaviour (Adjei, Noble and Noble, 2010), within marketing communications (Webster and Ksiazek, 2012) but there is little empirical work in the field of advertising. The implications for extant models of advertising planning and management are under researched, the specifics of which are further developed below.

Businesses have found some ways that tackle the challenge of building product and brand awareness outside of traditional advertising (Baxter, 2004; McDonald and Wilson, 2002). Viral marketing is one such technique. All types of viral marketing are increasing while traditional communication approaches are not projected to grow (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). Viral marketing was firstly defined simply, as "network-enhanced word of mouth" (Jurvetson, 2001, p. 1). A message (e.g. video or text) is passed among Internet users, mainly through social media. It has a greater effect than third party advertising as there is implied approval from a friend; acting as "retailer" or "media spokesperson". Unlike offline word-of-mouth, the Internet allows rapid adoption beyond spatial and network locality (Jurvetson and Draper, 1997). It is more like a biological or computer virus in this way, with its interactivity providing enhanced mobility. While this phenomenon has a rapidly expanding literature

modelling diffusion patterns, there is none on the role, views and thoughts of the people who produce the advertising which consumers then appropriate. This study makes a first attempt to address this gap, to capture the views of the creative "manufacturers" of content.

1.9 *Researcher's Viewpoint:*

The researcher transitioned from a role as Head of Marketing responsible for revenues in excess of £18 million, having overseen global marketing campaigns, observing the profound way the Internet was re-shaping the relationships between brands, their creative partners and consumers, as well as the confusion among managers with regard to existing paradigmatic frameworks. A quantitative study conducted at the final stage of a Masters in Marketing further strengthened the interest, particularly in the phenomenon of peer-peer online communications, where the findings showed that the attractiveness of the creative appeal generated mass sharing. Specifically, the creative design and the process of development appeared to be different from the typical approaches used by brands.

The researcher was until recently principal lecturer in advertising and marketing communications, experiencing the speed of change in advertising driven by technology and its corollary consumer behaviour but also the scarcity of studies in the field, the inadequacy of current conceptions of the creative campaign development process. Now returning to industry, this PhD therefore extends commercial and academic interest into a doctoral investigation to understand why advertising creative strategists are responding in the manner they are to digital technology and how the creative idea, design, testing and introduction are changing extant models of advertising campaign planning.

1.10 *Gaps in the Current Literature:*

Compared to much social science phenomena, it is only 19 years ago that Draper Fisher Jurvetson (1997) pointed to the ability of shared online messages to rapidly generate brand awareness and customer engagement, never before seen. Within the context of e-marketing, viral marketing methods are becoming increasingly accepted and integrated into major campaigns among some leading firms. However, it does not

fall into one of the four main elements of the marketing communications mix, advertising, personal selling, sales promotions and public relations. Viral marketing has relevance across all elements (Broderick and Pickton, 2010). It is engaged throughout the total marketing communications process as messages are transferred from sender to multiple receivers. It is however, particularly effective at the initial stages of the communications process and resides in targeting those who have some influence over others in the market (Kirby, 2006).

1.10.1 How are creative roles changing in relation to digital technology?

There are no studies of the role of digital creatives as they design viral campaigns. An assessment of their traditional roles will be developed further when we look at the structure and functions among creative agencies in the next chapter. However, a summary is provided below. Changes emerging in the daily lives and responsibilities of the creative within a digital campaign will be explored in this research.

- o In the last 6 decades creative concepts have been vested in the creative team led by the Creative Director and writer having substantial control and decision-making power.
- o The dominant models are well established. The lessons of Ogilvy on writing, from Bernbach on creative ideas, Katz and Lazarfeld (1955) on influencing, communication model of Shannon and Weaver (1949), the established roles of TV, print and radio respectively.
- o Creatives have to work with clients to understand their needs and create a campaign in conjunction with their account management and planning counterparts.
- o Agency teams have clear lines of responsibility from account management, planning, creative and media, the latter being the most powerful with influence across the industry while buying advertising space.
- o Large media budgets allow for greater blanketing of the market with messages. Media is extremely poweful and usually account for more than 60% of total budgets.

- Even a creative concept which may be slow to take off initially will have a media schedule to build awareness.
- Teams input into the campaign at various points and have clarity around their functions in those units in supporting the campaign.

How and why the creative roles are evolving in campaign development is a key part of this study.

1.10.2 Overall Campaign:

There are a few studies of viral marketing as a total campaign. Dobele, Toleman and Beverland (2005) use case study analysis of successful viral campaigns in Australia and the US concluding that a fun and easy to use message works best. Another Australian case study (Hodgetts et al, 2006) examined campaign characteristics and motivation in viral promotion of health activity. Phelps et al (2004) study motivations, attitudes and behaviours of US consumers who forward emails collecting data from interviews, focus groups and observation of behaviour. They set out implications for target selection and message creation for advertising when attempting to achieve viral effects. A Danish case is used by Blichfeld and Smed (2015) in their follow-up paper suggesting that campaigns can still be highjacked by the wrong target audiences regardless of the planning. Case studies are also used by Wiedemann (2008) in Germany to identify relevant characteristics of viral marketing but for mobile devices.

These papers are mainly based on case studies but this study will seek to delve in depth into how messages are actually designed and seeded from the viewpoint of the people who initiate such campaigns.

1.10.3 Diffusion Characteristics:

Rajagopalan and Subramani (2003) evaluate US cases outlining the contexts and the characteristics of products and services more likely to be viral. They also show systematic patterns in the nature of knowledge-sharing and persuasion by influencers and responses by recipients in online social networks. Chiu, et al (2007) in China examine personality and message characteristic effect on forwarding behaviour. Using the classical communication model in an experiment, they find messages from close contacts and more utilitarian/ hedonic appeals are often forwarded. Also, extraversion

and low conscientiousness traits, and access to broadband result in more forwards. Li, Lee and Lien (2012) using a survey based on an initial experiment propose a social endorser–based advertising system formulated on network influence and user preference analyses. Zhang et al (2016) continue this trend, modelling distribution of resources to reach consumers over social networks. Liu-Thompkins (2012) build on social capital theory and social network analysis to discuss the strategic potential of VM. She tracked 101 YouTube videos finding that it is best to start a viral campaign with consumers who have a strong tie with the viral message originator. It is ideal to use seed consumers with a large number of connections than to have a few highly connected hubs in a social network (Chen et al, 2012).

None of these explore the role of creative intermediaries and the campaign process from the agency perspective.

1.10.4   Characteristics of Creative Design:

Golan and Zaidner (2008) are the first to propose and define the term viral advertising, applying Taylor's six-segment model to content analysis of 360 viral ads showing that individual ego oriented appeals (humour and sexuality) are dominant. Stampoulidou and Pantelidis (2012) explore the thesis that word of video will be the natural evolution of e-wom in hospitality. Users find pictures more useful and trustworthy than text reviews, than video blogging. Significant difference when it comes to hotel purchases versus restaurant visits, suggesting that online reviews are less important for habitual purchases. Taylor, Strutton and Thompson (2012) using symbolic interactionist perspective of identity theory, tests whether online consumers use eWOM i.e. the sharing of online advertising, to construct and express their self-concepts (survey N=615). Self-brand congruity, entertainment value, and product category involvement increase the self-expressiveness of online ads, which then increase the likelihood of sharing those ads. More recently, Hayes, King and Ramirez (2016) attempt to experimentally model consumer play as ads are shared over social media networks.

Aral and Walker (2011b) conduct field experiments to determine how firms can create social contagion by designing viral features into their products and marketing campaigns. Viral features generate econometrically identifiable peer influence effects.

Although active-personalized viral messages are more effective in encouraging adoption per message and are correlated with more user engagement and sustained product use, passive-broadcast messaging is used more often, generating more total peer adoption in the network. Petrescu, Kargaonkar and Gironda (2015) use the same method to test appeals, source influence and attitudes finding positively for attitudinal influence on appeals and sharing. English, Sweetser and Ancu (2011) explore traditional appeals (ethos, logos and pathos) in political advertising using YouTube videos. Ethos appeal ranked as the most credible appeal, followed by logos and pathos. Southgate, Westoby and Page (2010) apply a measurement tool to videos (N=102) from the UK and US, which were shown on TV and also online. Pre-test measures that predict ability to generate offline TV advertising awareness, can also predict viral viewings.

These are important studies but primarily directed to the consumer and to the examination of the content of viral advertisements.

1.10.5   Emotional Appeals:

The use of emotions in viral marketing constitutes the largest number of papers. Porter and Golan (2006) compare viral and television advertising using content analysis (N=501). They show that viral advertising relies on provocative content to motivate unpaid peer-to-peer communication of persuasive messages from identified sponsors. Brown, Bhadury and Pope (2010) take this further investigating the effects of comedic violence in viral videos on ad message involvement, brand memorability, likelihood of being passed on to third parties, and attitude formation. Humorous ads that combine higher levels of violence intensity with more severe consequences appear to elicit greater involvement with the ad message, better retention of brand information, higher pass-along probability, and greater ad likability. Petrescu et al (2016) similarly find attitudes toward the brand remain unaffected. Schlegelmilch and Ollenburg (2013) also study emotional appeals like risk/fear/thrill as main motivation to take part in adventure activities, and their possible utilisation in viral marketing in the tourism sector.

Hsieh, Hsieh and Tang (2012) evaluate factors which make online video engaging. Awareness of persuasive intent exerts a negative influence, whereas the humour and multimedia effects have positive influences on both attitude toward a received online video and forwarding intentions. Nelson-Field, Riebe and Newstead (2011) examine arousal and valence in user-generated videos shared via Facebook and its relatedness to content sharing. When designing creative content, advertisers need to upscale amusement to hilarity, surprise to astonishment, happiness to elation etc. Content that is positive, rather than negative and shorter videos receive more sharing. Garcia et al (2012) analyse a dataset from Youtube from the U.S. presidential campaigns of 2008 and 2012. Using sentiment analysis, they quantify the collective emotions expressed by the viewers. Democrats elicited more positive emotions than republicans. Botha (2014) on satire and Eckler and Bolls (2011) on emotional tone (pleasant, unpleasant, coactive) explore effects on attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and forwarding intentions. Pleasant emotional tone elicits the strongest attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and intention to forward. The effects were weaker for coactive tone and weakest for negative emotional tone.

While various emotions and types of appeals are evident in the ads themselves, the process by which they are arrived at remains unexplored.

1.10.6   Process Characteristics:

Nail (2007) tracked 39 Super Bowl ads to identify how they created buzz before, during and after. They found that brands promoted their involvement and revealed their ads online before, concluding that strong promotional activity is the most effective way to achieve consumer buzz. The only study to discuss the campaign staff, (Gold et al, 2012) suggest that allowing adequate time for approvals, securing sufficient resources for building, teamwork, maintaining online presence and impact evaluation are essential to campaign success (based on a health case study). Woerndl (2008) based on three European cases; identify five factors that may critically influence success. These factors are the overall structure of the campaign, the characteristics of the product or service, the content of the message, the characteristics of the diffusion and, the peer-to-peer information conduit.

This study goes beyond case studies to investigate whether the assertions of Gold et al (2012) has any basis and a deeper understanding of what is meant by the structuring of the campaign and the ways in which the concept for the content is developed.
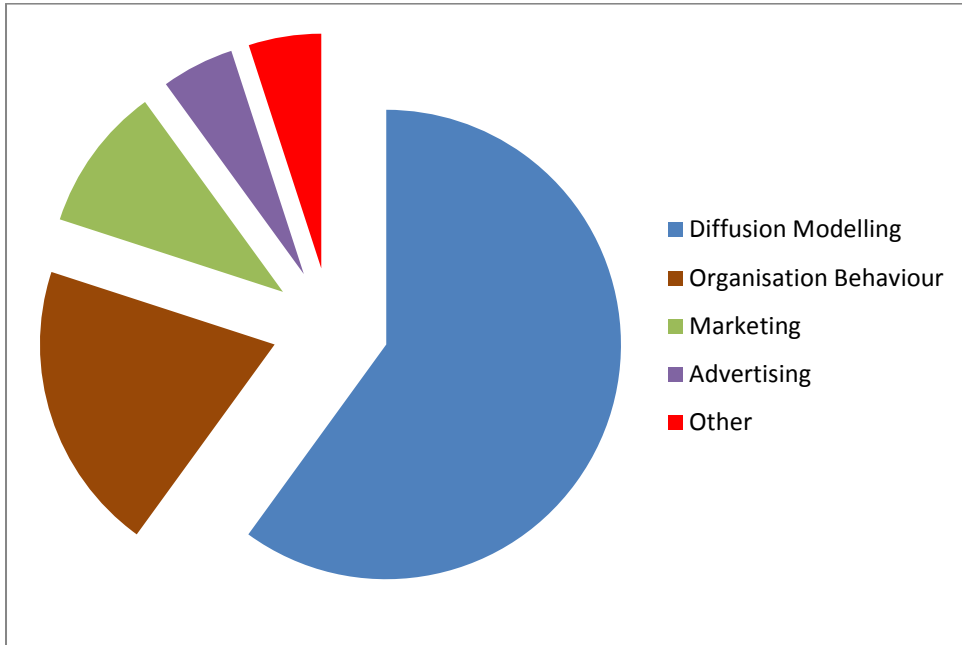
Figure 1-1 Summary showing limited attention to advertising in the current research

The chart above provides a visual summary of the lack of attention to the advertising perspective but also the dominance of diffusion studies to be discussed further in the literature review chapters.

1.11 *Research Aim, Objectives and Questions*

1.11.1   Research Aim:

Despite the growth in viral marketing campaigns, the implications for brand managers commissioning advertising, for the creative process and consequences for the management of advertising agencies have not been explored from within the creative industry itself, at a micro level among creative professionals. This thesis represents the first effort to capture the implications for practice and existing theory of the changes in technology, of ideation, of campaign and agency management.

Therefore, the overall goal of this research is to produce insight into viral marketing's impact on advertising campaign planning models, creative roles and digital appeals.

1.11.2   Research Objectives:

These are outlined here and then briefly rationalised afterwards.

> To capture and codify the views of digital creative managers on the concepts and messaging strategies considered and implemented in viral marketing campaigns

> To explicate, classify and explore the changes in advertising campaign planning processes and roles which digital phenomena such as viral marketing have introduced

> To develop theoretical models for understanding viral campaigns, agency management, creative roles in campaign planning and extend extant frameworks

In order to understand, locate and make explicit the activities undertaken by creative teams as they respond to phenomena such as viral marketing, it is first necessary to gather their experiences, beliefs and approaches. To employ sense-making, progressively as data is collected, it is necessary to convert these into meaningful codes and themes that can generate insight into these processes. Therefore, research objective (RO1) is:

> To capture and codify the views of digital creative managers on the concepts and messaging strategies considered and implemented in viral marketing campaigns

Having located the patterns emerging from the data, these can then be related to the literature, the existing theoretical frameworks, the established practices of brand managers and creative managers. How these patterns are conventional and where and why they are innovative has to be evaluated. The second objective of this study is therefore (RO2):

To explicate, classify and explore the changes in advertising campaign planning processes and roles which digital phenomena such as viral marketing have introduced

Following the collection of empirical data, progressive analysis of the themes, setting these in the context of prior research, existing models of advertising creative campaign creation, the logical next step after achieving these two objectives, directly relates to the overall aim of the research. That is, to generate new frameworks for academic and managerial understanding, based both on extant literature but also the lived experiences evident from the empirical data, summarised as the final research objective (RO3):

To develop theoretical models for understanding viral marketing campaign creation, digital creative roles and extend extant models of advertising creative process and agency management

1.11.3   Research Questions:

The research questions address the managerial and academic rationale for this study, reflected in the research objectives and the overall research aim. The questions do address specific research objectives, however; they relate to each other in fulfilling the overarching goal of this study.

Questions related to RO1:

How and why do creative managers' conceive of their practices of viral advertising in the way they do?

How do they construct such campaigns and what are the implications for current models?

Questions related to RO2:

What is the nature of the changing role of advertising creative intermediaries resulting from digital marketing phenomena such as viral marketing?

What are the barriers and constraints which creative managers encounter and why and how are creative teams evolving solutions?

Most digital advertising agencies are small or medium-sized enterprises and tend to be independent, how are they managing the speed of technological and industry changes and why is in the manner in which they do?

Questions related to RO3:

What are the established models of advertising campaign management, creative development and planning?

How and why are these extant concepts changing based on the practice of viral marketing? How and why are there new aspects emerging based on the empirical data in this study?

1.12 *Impact and Significance of the Study*

The rationale for this study is outlined below:

Focus on the UK Advertising Industry: - The UK advertising industry is one of the most important in the world, as observed in the context at the start of this chapter. There is one related survey identified. That is in Turkey (Gecti and Dastan, 2013).

This study will be the first in this area: - The Gecti and Dastan (2013) study takes a generic approach addressing adoption of general digital advertising tools. This thesis investigates one of the most impactful forms, viral marketing.

This research examines the impact of digital technology on the creative processes preceding the end product: - the majority of existing studies focus on the end product, the adverts themselves. Therefore, insight generated from this exploration will serve to uncover the phase before the advertising artefact is generated. That is the critical point at which brand managers and creative directors possess greatest influence on the final end product. The output is primarily, fixed and cannot be changed, reducing managerial and creative influence. Yet, such output has been the focus of research interest thus far; this study addresses this imbalance.

This thesis examines the role of intermediaries, a business-business context: - Existing research is primarily aimed at understanding consumers and how they interact with viral adverts (their characteristics, motives and sharing patterns). However, the final ad which the consumer will encounter or share is mainly a negotiation between client and advertising agency, among creatives and decision-makers. This study investigates the roles of the creative managers and how that is evolving in light of digital technologies.

Views of a group whose voices are absent from the extant research: - Creative managers are the people, who construct, deliver and oversee the implementation and evaluation of viral marketing campaigns. Yet their perspective of such tools has not been researched.

The method produces depth of insight: - This thesis adopts in-depth interviews compared to the dominant advertising content analyses, case study approaches and experiments. This research addresses questions of how and why, as well as what and who. As a result, it will produce a rich exploration of the experiences, beliefs, motives, the ideation of creative concepts, roles of members of the campaign team, and the decision-making dynamics.

Clarifies managerial decision-making: The major problem for managers is two-fold. Firstly, the question of engaging with a particular digital advertising opportunity, and secondly; to make a choice between brand control of the message and ceding some of that to the consumer. This research will provide insight into the risks, benefits and shortcomings of brands' adoption of digital advertising. It will support managers in determining the appropriateness of such opportunities to particular situations, but also in recognising a new environment in which conventional models of knowing which have underpinned advertising creative planning are changing.

1.13 *Chapters of the Thesis:*

Provided below is a summary of each chapter to help the reader in conceptualising the nature of the thesis.

Chapter 1 – Introduction – outlines the subject under study, the focus, the rationale, the industry background, the academic context, articulating the issues that this study investigates. It also sets out the main research objectives and the questions of the study.

Chapter 2 – The literature review is developed over chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 concentrates on models of advertising campaign planning and the development of viral marketing, having clarified related and competing terms/concepts briefly. Theoretical frameworks underpinning viral marketing and conventional linear hierarchical models of advertising campaign development are evaluated. It starts with a brief summary of what viral marketing currently means. This is followed by an examination of its relationship to advertising management – how advertising agencies operate, how creatives have responded to viral marketing, the principal focus of the study. It then moves on to the etymology of "viral" as this term finds manifestation in different disciplines, to show its development and its relevance here. A theoretical framework, SPEED is developed and applied to show the lifecycle of viral message spread. The origin of the viral marketing concept is then considered to explore its ontological and epistemological foundations and the consequences for extant models of marketing communications. A survey of the relationship between advertising and viral marketing forms the basis on which the gaps in the current conceptions are identified. The chapter ends with a synthesised definition of virals which addresses the weaknesses of prior conceptualisations and serves as the basis for this investigation.

Chapter 3 evaluates empirical studies of viral marketing to demonstrate specific gaps in the existing research which this study addresses – the focus on the people and processes which create viral campaigns.

The empirical stage of this research is developed from chapters 4 to 9. In chapter 4 there is an excursion into the value of social constructivist philosophy as an approach to uncovering individual perspectives, to explore the foundations of knowledge and the

research design casting light on the execution of this empirical investigation. The objectives of the research are outlined and the choices made in terms of the research techniques are justified and related to the prior research decisions taken in the field. There is a discussion of ethical concerns and the limitations. Chapter 5 concentrates on the data analysis process including preparation, field note-taking, reflections, initial coding concepts and definitions.

Chapter 6 describes the coding framework developed to transform the qualitative data into readiness for description, sense-making and analysis of the views of digital creative managers on their discipline and the situations of their clients in relation to creative outputs such as virals. The empirical results from the coding and analysis process are the subject of Chapter 7. They are evaluated to arrive at the main strands emerging from the data – individuals' conceptions of their creative processes, employment of creative techniques and the rationale for this, factors influencing those viewpoints, perceptions of the requirements of consumers and clients and ways of structuring those experiences. Chapter 8 builds further on these findings, analysing the main creative insights produced from the research, setting those in the context of the extant research and conceptual frameworks. Chapter 9 summarises the research study, set against the overall aim, the objectives and the research questions investigated.

Chapter 10 – summarise further research opportunities, the limits to the findings and design and main conclusions. It articulates how this investigation into creative managers' views of the impact of viral marketing on their campaign development processes has provided a distinctive contribution to the theoretical understanding of digital and also conventional models of campaign creation. It also illustrates the major insights for managers and researchers from the viewpoint of the producers of such campaigns, a group hitherto absent from the extant research.

1.14 *Chapter Summary:*

This first chapter introduced the subject under study, the focus, the rationale, the industry background, the academic context, observing the issues that this study investigates. It also sets out the main research objectives and the questions of the study. It finally sets out the titles of the chapters within the thesis. The next chapter clarifies the background of viral marketing and then an assessment of the conceptual underpinning of the pheomenon.

2 CHAPTER TWO: POSITIONING VIRAL MARKETING AMONG EXTANT THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

"Viral or contagion marketing appears to represent the most significant change in communication orientation in marketing since the inception of the discipline".

(Miles, 2014, p.5)

What is Marketing?
Promotions Mix

What is Viral Marketing?

Established Models of Communications & Advertising
Stages in Campaign Development | Agency Roles

Relationship between Epidemiology & Viral Marketing
SPEED Framework | Definition of Related Terms

Viral Marketing Metaphors
Meme

Virals in the Promotions Mix
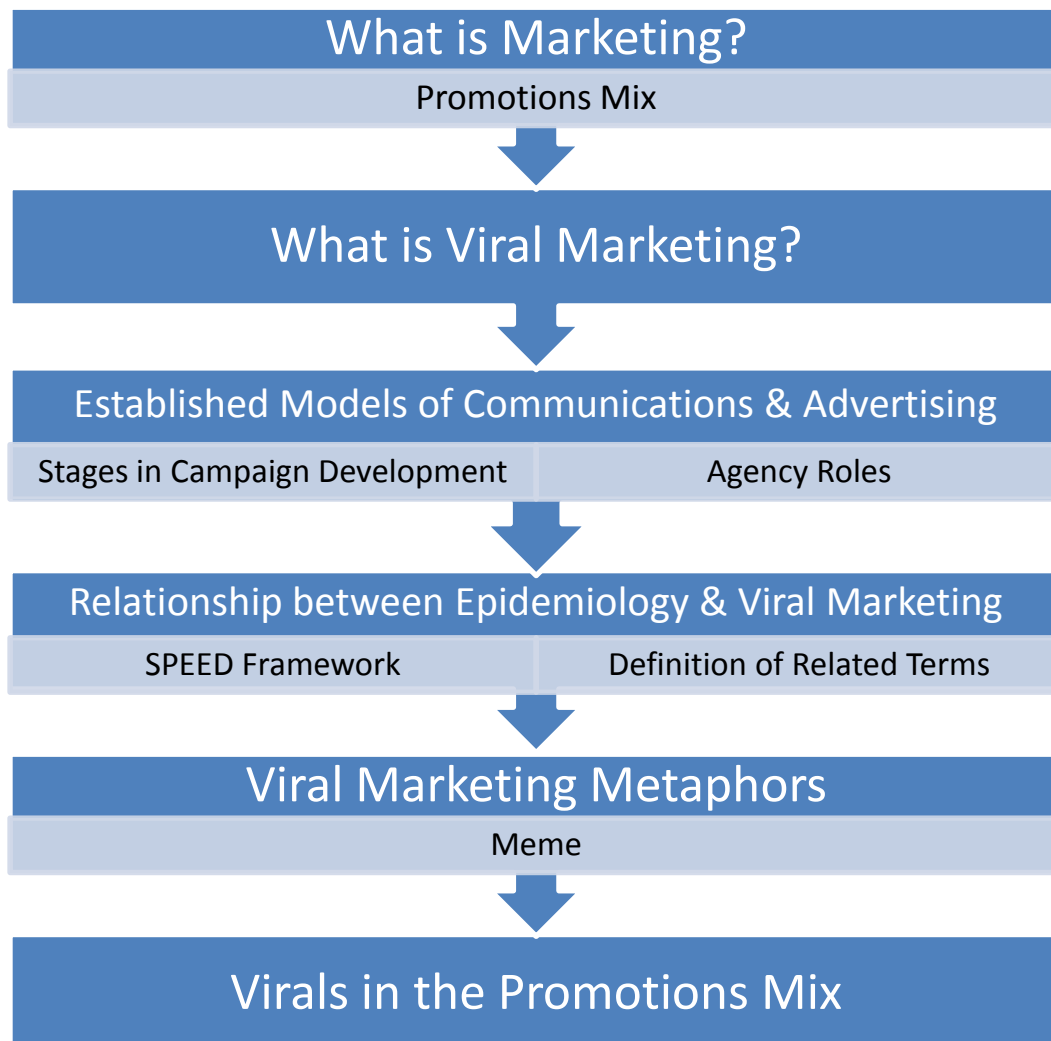
Figure 2-1 Summary of viral marketing relationship to existing theory and conceptual proposals

The previous chapter set out the industry, academic and managerial questions relative to the roles of creative intermediaries in the design and development of viral marketing. This chapter (see Figure 2-1 above) briefly clarifies a range of confusing terms, then outlines the assumptions underpinning viral marketing, evaluated against classical theory and a conceptual framework – SPEED – to generate novel insights into

the biological episteme central to the concept. The metaphoric assumptions are then synthesised, followed by an evaluation of limitations with existing definitions of the phenomena. The chapter then locates the phenomena in the marketing canon, before closing with a new, comprehensive definition which addresses the limitations of extant conceptions. The second part of the literature review (Chapter 3) will further delve into the existing research, to show the additional gaps in the literature.

2.1 *Introduction:*

Viral marketing research and the conventional linear hierarchical models of advertising campaign development will be critically evaluated to develop the study. This chapter begins a brief summary of competing and related terms to viral marketing, followed by an assessment of "marketing" and the core conceptual frameworks within, closing with the promotions mix, to which viral marketing is related. This is followed by an examination of the relationship between viral marketing and advertising - effects, campaign management, operation within an agency setting, impact on creatives (people who work on campaign ideas), as these form the principal focus of this investigation. It then moves on to the etymology of "viral", to show its development and its relevance here. A theoretical framework (SPEED) is developed and applied to show the lifecycle of viral message spread. The origins of the viral marketing concept will then be considered to explore its ontological and epistemological foundations and the consequences for extant models. A survey of the relationship between advertising and viral marketing forms the evidence base on which the gaps in the current conceptions of viral marketing and advertising are identified.

2.2 *Related Terms & Concepts*

Clarifications of the broad areas of electronic business (e-business), electronic commerce (e-commerce), towards the narrower sub-field of electronic marketing (e-marketing) under which viral marketing (VM) is categorised. With regard to VM, there is a discussion of word of mouth (WOM) and how this has evolved into electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) of which VM is an expressive form. A range of often confusing, definitions and terms are discussed to synthesise the theoretical concepts. These are further narrowed into the area of viral advertising.

2.3 *What does marketing mean?*

While a discussion of the meaning of marketing can be considerable and outside the scope of this thesis, it will suffice to provide an overarching view. As noted below, these discussions are important to clarify limits and context. It is more than an exercise in semantic analysis. At a most basic level, consistency in overall understanding allows activities to be more efficient, than for example, each author having to defend their individual definitions (Richards and Curran, 2002). A common lexicon allows practitioners to engage in conversation globally. However, the term viral marketing needs careful delineation as it is relatively new and distinctive (Pride and Ferrell, 2012). Without such distinctions, it will be difficult for practitioners to understand the skills needed to operate in this area (Nan and Faber, 2004). On a more direct level, the regulation literature on VM is a vocal and well established sub-grouping (Trzaskowski, 2011). In the event of legal questions, established academic and practitioner conceptions of a particular practice will also be used to guide the decisions made (Richards and Curran, 2002).

Kotler since 1967 has regularly updated his most widely used definition of marketing (2006). He proposes that "marketing is a societal process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering, and freely exchanging products and services of value with others" (Kotler, 2006 p.6). This is a broad, inclusive set of ideas which cover many activities. The most established definition in the UK is one from the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) which says "Marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably" (Gamble et al, 2011, p. 231). Kotler places marketing outside of organisations but the CIM definition within a management function. Nevertheless, it too is a general conception of activities. Like Kotler, Pride and Ferrell (2012) define marketing. For them it is a process applying the marketing mix to achieve mutual satisfaction among the trading parties. There are many others which respond to various contexts (Gamble, et al, 2011); however, the core fundamentals are the same – a process, managing many activities which support exchanges of value between producer and customer.

Viral marketing is not a management function; it certainly requires management but it is a sub-set of lower order decision-making. It appears that viral marketing does match many of aspects set out in the Kotler (2006) definition. There is the broader community environment; people and groups do engage with each other to satisfy their needs; they do generate some content and proffer this to others who may or may not accept. It is until the idea of exchange comes in that it becomes problematic. In the case of viral messages, there does not have to be reciprocation but it can be completely one-sided, from the sender (Cho and Ha, 2011). It is also difficult to reconcile the idea of profitability; but in this case it could be conceived of as a benefit (e.g. emotional relief). In terms of Pride and Ferrell's (2012), there are some similarities of creating, distributing and promoting services or ideas but the pricing, exchange aspects that do not fit.

Clearly then, the use of the word marketing in the case of "viral marketing" is a misnomer. In this case, its use is primarily to allocate viral messages to the category of marketing activity, marketing being a generic term, as noted above for many different activities (Miles, 2014).

2.3.1 Sub-categories Within Marketing

The marketing mix is the received model for understanding marketing management. In this perspective, the marketer is seen as "… a "mixer of ingredients," one who is constantly engaged in fashioning creatively a mix of marketing procedures and policies…" (Borden, 1964, p.7). The marketing mix "…represents the programme that a management has evolved to meet the problems with which it is constantly faced in an ever changing, ever challenging market" (Borden, 1964, p.11). This programme was formalised by McCarthy (1960) into the main four Ps which are recognised today, briefly set out below.

Product considerations which affect the decisions taken to serve the market (range, lifecycle, demand levels etc.)

Price is the category for considerations of what the market will pay (intermediaries, end users, costs, projected revenues etc.)

Place refers to the structure and the parties involved in the process of delivering the product/ service to the user (e.g. wholesalers and retailers)

Promotion is concerned with communications of the other aspects of the marketing mix.

McCarthy (1960) subdivided promotions into:

- Advertising
- Personal selling
- Publicity (now subsumed in public relations)
- Sales promotion

These four types of promotions are referred to as the marketing communications mix or the promotions mix (Kotler and Armstrong, 2009). Direct marketing is often set aside as a separate element; so too packaging (Solomon, 2009). It is to the marketing communications mix that we turn our attention as the phenomenon of viral messaging best matches the functions categorised here.

The promotions mix

Richards and Curran (2002) used empirical data to re-define advertising.

Advertising is a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action, now or in the future. (p.74)

Public relations (PR) on the other hand, deliver organisational communications to specific groups through free media, in order to develop or reinforce audience opinions and generate positive views of the organisation (Curtin, 2012).

Viral communications are different from advertising and public relations. Viral messages can be paid or unpaid and identified or unidentified. While this distinction has not been made in the literature, there are two types of viral messages – paid (where an intermediary is used such as an agency or a blogger) which based on the definition will be classed as advertising and unpaid which will fit into the category of PR. Advertising and viral marketing are similar in the campaign development including placement of messages. In offline advertising, it is difficult to find out what the consumer has done with or about an advertisement. The reach, the frequency, the

target audience etc. can all be set in conventional advertising; this is also possible in the first placement of viral messages. What is distinctive online is the recording of what the consumer does with the ad (Dave, Bhatt and Varma, 2011).

To compare with sales promotion (SP) and personal selling, SP is defined as tactical marketing activities and offers calculated to encourage faster and larger volume sales over short time periods (Valette-Florence, Guizani and Merunka, 2011). SPs are offered on a large or small scale and can also be used to motivate repeat buying (Adcock et al., 1998). Personal selling is based on a one to one interaction between a salesperson and customer. In following a process of matching service benefitss to client needs, this element of the promotions mix can develop long term relationships (Wang et al, 2013). Viral messages are used as a promotional tool (especially for films, games and music) sometimes offering prizes, special opportunities etc. (Reinhard, 2011). However, its core purpose is not attempting to generate sales. Viral communications also stimulate interest, raise or reinforce brand awareness. It is not personal selling.

The later but well established, addition to the marketing communications mix is direct marketing. Direct marketing (DM) is strictly a sub-set of advertising but it has become more and more distinct with data-mining technology (Hackley, 2010). It does continue to aim advertising direct to target audiences but it is also part of selling, relationship building and strategy design. Suman, Anuradha and Veena (2012) define direct marketing as the process of selling directly to customers rather than through the typical distribution channel (e.g. retailers, wholesalers). Only at the start is a viral message like direct marketing. After distribution, it goes off to any consumer. An agency can continue to track behaviour and develop strategies accordingly but it is not controllable.

These promotional tools have always had cross-over but with some distinctions (Waterschoot and Van den Bulte, 1992). An advertisement could be spread by lots of people offline either by speaking, or writing about it, or sharing the video (as used to be done at press conferences/ launch parties for campaigns and products). This would have been achieved by advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, personal selling, and PR; they use the same base artefacts, stories but to achieve different purposes.

The phenomenon under study here does not fit any of the categories within the marketing communications mix. It certainly serves marketing communications objectives; it can persuade people to take action; it can enhance the reputation of an organisation or a brand; it can achieve short term sales objectives; it can directly connect with individual customers in the initial selection of seeds; it could be used for personal selling to get the attention of a potential prospect (but that would be classed as advertising or PR).

The evaluation above helps to understand the "marketing" in the term "viral marketing" but not "viral". Before the latter is addressed, models of advertising need to be assessed to contextualise the study. Then it will be necessary to define virals.

2.4 *Established Models of Communications and Advertising*

2.4.1 The Basic Model:

To begin to answer the research questions, it is imperative to summarise the extant processes of advertising design and development. Shannon and Weaver's (1949) is the established communications process model. It is informational in its perspective but it forms the basis of much of subsequent communications studies. From a more behavioural viewpoint, Lasswell (1948) reflects the same processes but with a greater focus on the on the human elements.
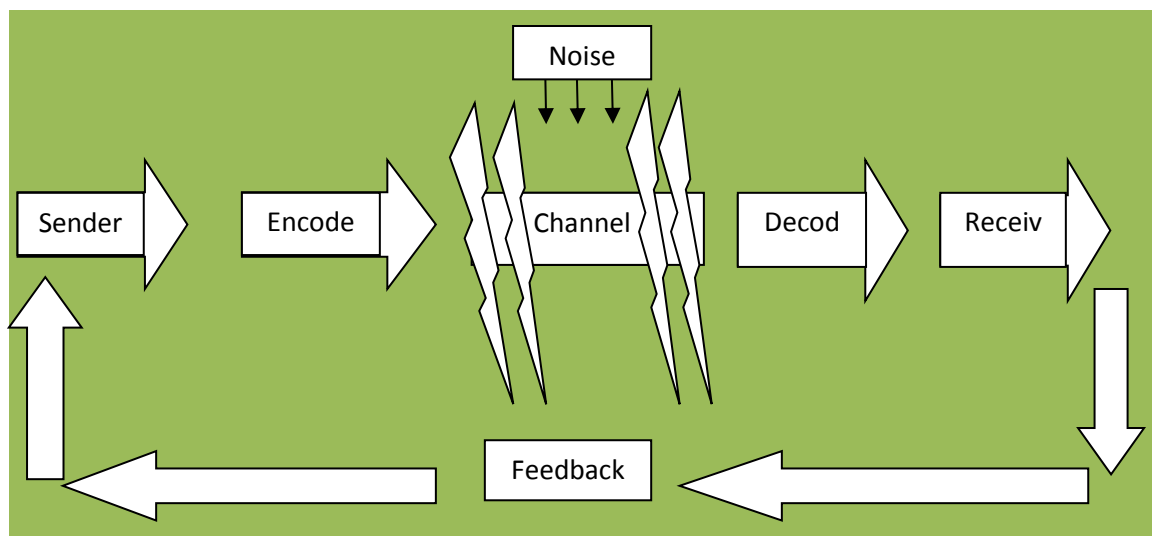
Figure 2-2 Shannon and Weaver (1949) Informational Model of Communication

2.4.2 Encoding:

Encoding is the domain of marketing communications. Advertising agencies operate as encoders/ transmitters, channel planners (including consideration of noise) as primary activities but they also review the decoding of messages and provide feedback. Brand owners, consumers also are clearly involved (Gladwell, 2002). However, with digital channels, the levels of noise, the influences on decoding are multiplied compared to typical platforms (TV, radio etc) (Godin, 2000). The idea of feedback is a very simple process but online, it would be constant, affecting all the stages of communications (Kirby, 2006). Viral advertising attempts to amplify that feedback (Porter and Golan, 2006) and therefore how creative teams manage this process is of importance.

How these communication stages are managed is summarised in Figure 2-3. In stage 1, the brand owner objectives are outlined by the client or by an advertising agency pitching for work (or sub-contracted from another commissioning agency) (Pratt, 2006).
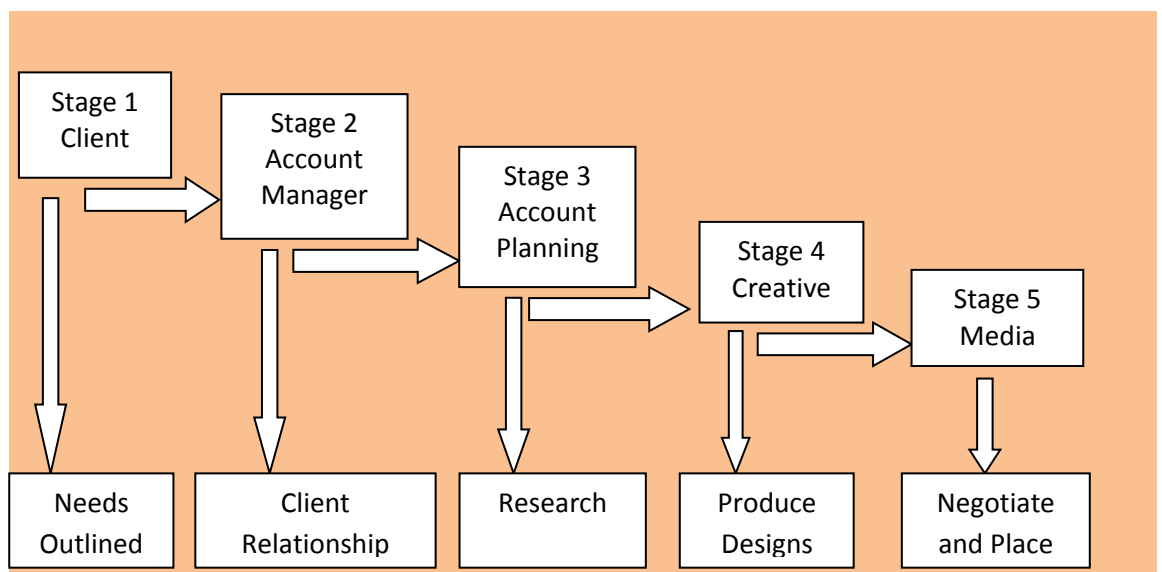
Figure 2-3 Process and Stages within the Creative Campaign in Advertising Agencies (source: Raghubansie, 2017)

At stage 2, account management has responsibilities for maintaining and developing client relationships. Therefore, they are the communications interface among people at stages 3, 4 and 5 (D'Alessandro, Peltier and Dahl, 2012). Account planning leads on insight which underpin strategy, the creative approaches and the media decisions. They conduct context analysis and research during campaign development and

implementation (Hackley and Kover, 2007; Baskin and Pickton, 2003). Stage 4 is the sphere of the creative – developing ideas, debate, re-develop, present internally and to clients (El-Murad and West, 2004). Stage 5 is traditionally where most of the budget is allocated. The media role is to evaluate the most appropriate channels to distribute the outputs of the creative team. They are concerned with reach and frequency measurements which are in essence similar to mapping of diffusion to judge the success of their media placement strategy (Cheong, De Gregorio and Kim, 2010). All of these roles are in constant communication throughout the development of a campaign (Crosier, Grant and Gilmore, 2003). However, for clarity, these stages have been simplified (see figure 2-4) How has the interaction across these stages changed in the design of viral ads?

2.4.3 How do creatives operate in this structure?

The agency structure and teams discussed aboved provides a snapshot of operations in communications agencies. There are specific factors linked to the profile and functions of creative managers within that structure. Summarised below, this study will seek to explore how such roles, profiles and the functions they play are changing in response to digital phenomenon such as viral marketing.

- o Creatives traditionally are recruited from a relatively closed industry with UK red brick universities, particularly Oxbridge dominating the pool. Typically there are certain disciplines – Latin, history, literature – from which staff would be drawn from (McLeod, O'Donohoe and Townley, 2009).
- o In the last 6 decades creative concepts have been vested in the creative team led by the Creative Director/ Writer having substantial control and decision-making power (Hackley and Kover, 2007).
- o The dominant models these managers employ are well established. The lessons of Ogilvy on writing, from Bernbach on creative ideas (Thomas and Harden, 2008), Katz and Lazarfeld (1955) on influencing, communication model of Shannon and Weaver (1949), the established roles of TV, print and radio respectively (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016).

- o Creatives have to work with clients to understand their needs and create a campaign in conjunction with their account management and planning counterparts (Hackley 2010).
- o Agency teams have clear lines of responsibility from account management, planning, creative and media, the latter being the most powerful with influence across the industry while buying advertising space (Broderick and Pickton, 2010).
- o Large media budgets allow for greater blanketing of market with messages. Media is extremely poweful and usually account for more than 60% of total budgets (Hackley 2010).
- o Even a creative concept which may be slow to take off initially will have a media schedule to build awareness.
- o Teams input into the campaign at various points and while they will work across the agency, they have clarity around their functions in those units in supporting the campaign (see Figure 2-4).
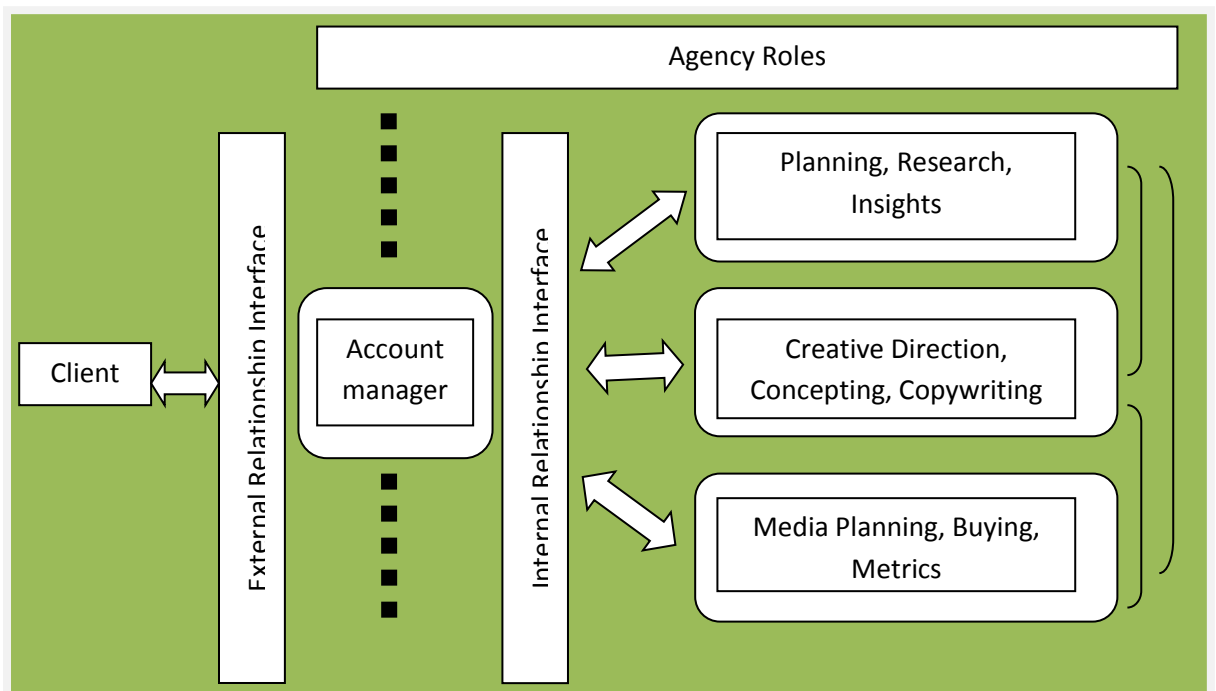
Figure 2-4 Roles, Boundaries and Relationships in the Creative Development Process (Raghubansie, 2017)

This study will explore how the roles above are evolving in response to viral phenomenon.

2.4.4 The Channel and Decoding

In the Shannon and Weaver model (1949), channel sits in both the sender's half and in the receiver's half. Decoding is in the territory of the customer. In most of the communication literature however; it is common to see encoder and decoder as source and receiver (Cho, Jisu and Faber, 2012). This is the meaning adopted here also. To show how these processes link to the creative stages within an advertising agency, the two models are merged and adapted (Figure 2-5). The nature of the creative and client relationship has been changed with the growing influence of digital media (Grewal et al, 2016). How is this affecting the creative choices in the production of viral marketing?

So, there are changes in the overall communication model; there are questions of how the various parts of the creative agency works to produce the viral advert; there are questions of how innovations are emerging or being introduced in the media decisions taken (Clemons, Barnett, and Appadurai, 2007). In television advertising for example, after the completed product leaves the agency it is delivered directly to the TV firm, or to another (media) agency that transfer it to the TV company (Kirby, 2004). Afterwards, it is sent to the receiving TV set, the consumer could then see and hear it.
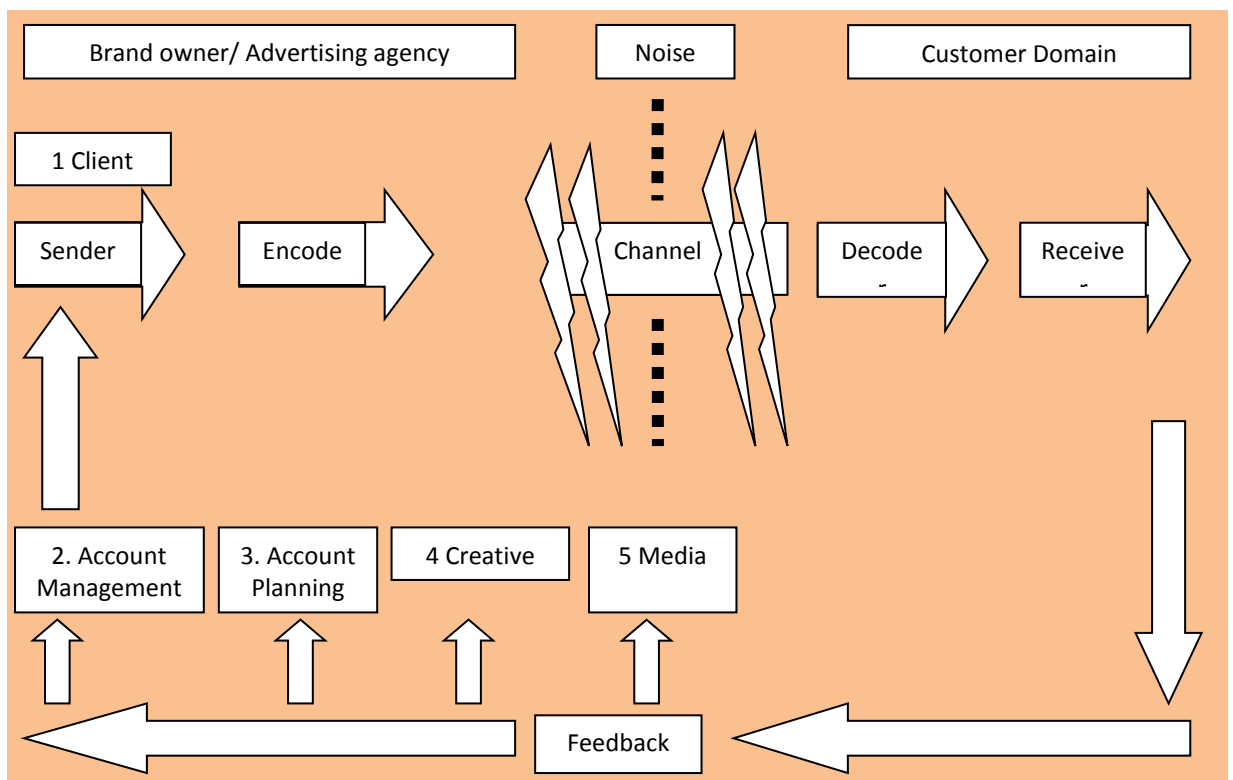
Figure 2-5 The communication process and advertising campaign stages (Adapted from Shannon and Weaver, 1949)

ure 3.4

With viral marketing, the advertising agency may also deliver the TV ad to another agency which specialises in seeding viral ads (Kirby and Marsden, 2006). This media agency could "plant" it with a few relevant people/ sites ("seeds") across the Internet, who then transmit it to others (Chiang, Huang and Yeh, 2013; Chiang et al, 2013). Advertising/media agencies have always placed adverts with seeds – e.g. marketing and media editors, sponsored people and organisations, key stakeholders (Okazaki and Taylor, 2013). Thus far traditional and viral marketing communication processes appear to be the same.

2.5 *The Differences Between Traditional Advertising and Viral Marketing*

The assessment above can be précised as advertising based on interruption – communications from organisation to consumer without their permission (Godin, 2001). The development is controlled by the organisation and the consumer submissive (Gladwell 2000). This paradigm infiltrates advertising from its instigation; however digital media has questioned the principle. Social networks shifted power to customers who display their views including in marketing communications (Horovitz, Petrecca and Howard, 2008). Such a fundamental shift represents a major challenge for creative managers, who need to find answers and enhance their creative management and design systems and processes (Kirby, 2006). This research will investigate these questions.

In media management, it was the case that buyers in the agency were purchasing spots in the media but much of this is becoming computerised (Boyd and Crawford, 2012; Sheehan and Morrison, 2009). This is a dramatic change as buying media spots utilises the largest share of agency costs. The relationships among creative teams, account planning and media during the creation of viral advertising campaigns is an under explored subject. This is further complicated by the types of agencies (smaller and medium-sized, new) which are producing viral campaigns and the response of larger agencies which if they adopt certain campaign forms can accelerate its adoption (Advertising Association, 2015). The nature of these relationships among small, new, well established and larger agencies as they battle with digital advertising is also under-researched and viral marketing provides such an opportunity to develop new knowledge.

The potential audiences (the reach) and the potential frequency of message delivery are different online with seeding an essential element to viral launch (Jankowski et al, 2013). The seeds are classified under a well-established concept, opinion leaders (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955) who engage in social communication with others See Figure 2-6). The most evident difference between conventional marketing communications and viral marketing is in the role of the influencer (Chiang, Huang and Yeh, 2013). Given the relative novelty of the phenomena, there is a narrow group with the expertise to service advertising agencies to seed content (Kirby and Marsden, 2006). This has

resulted in the development of some specialist media agencies which concentrate on seeding viral ads. The number of seeds could be dramatically higher than was possible in the offline world (Jankowski et al, 2013). Viral marketing more than any other of the "new" e-marketing phenomena, has provided large-scale network datasets to evaluate the role of influencers in the dissemination of information (Aral and Walker, 2013; Bhat and Abulaish, 2013). How does this use of opinion leaders affect creative content?
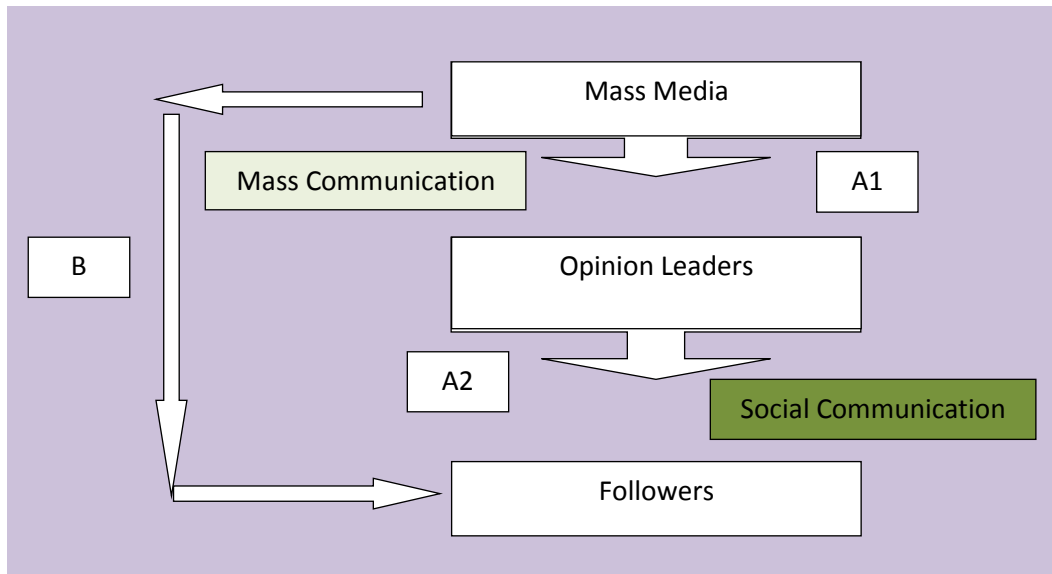
Figure 2-6 Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) One Step and Two Step Communication

Another practical difference from the traditional process is that the advertising or the media agency itself may take on the signalling role of, for example a TV station because it can do the simple act of uploading ads to the Internet (D'Alessandro, Peltier and Dahl, 2012). With VM the speed of message transmission is considerably faster; the cost of delivery lower because the content is in digital form and the seeds themselves pay for their own Internet services, as much as it is a routine overhead for the agency; the cost of reach is dramatically lower as physical ads are not couriered all over the world; time is saved in the campaign implementation stage, allowing messages to achieve coverage very quickly, essential if awareness objectives are to be rapidly achieved and competitor activity in response to the advert is to have a reduced impact (Kirby, 2004). The consumer may do all the usual (ignore, like, dislike), but with VM, especially videos, they do not re-encode the message; it is not for the most part changed (Langer, 2003). Besides, unlike conventional WOM, it is also recorded – transmission, commentary and re-transmission.

This makes it easy for firms and agencies to examine transmission patterns, the nature of commentary and to take appropriate action to counter, encourage etc. (Deuker and Albers, 2012). In conventional advertising, they can examine patterns of distribution, they can examine commentary and they can take action too.

Stages	Standard Advertising Plan	VM Plan
Client Objectives	Clear and relatively certain	Clear but unsure
Account management	Comparative control of factors affecting relationship	The online consumer sphere means surrendering some power
Planning	Established protocols to develop insights	Evident research data but emerging methods
Creative	Considers regulations (e.g. audiences, watershed)	Relatively open and pushing boundaries
Media	Agreed	May or may not be agreed
Channels	Fixed (offline and online)	Fixed or unfixed (online)
Others		
Timing to launch	Teaser before or after	Teaser before or after
Reach and frequency	Agreed targets set	Benchmarks but possibilities unlimited (to people with Internet access, technological capacity)
Resources	Relatively fixed	Partly fixed

Table 2-1 Comparison of Standard Advertising Plans with that of Viral Marketing

However, the differences are in:

- Speed (of information availability and therefore action)
- Richness of data (multiple media platforms, predictions of success or failure)
- Multiple stakeholders (not just a narrow field of seeds)
- Scale (local, regional, international – also possible in traditional but at a slower pace and can be costly)

So, the viral element in viral marketing is within media planning and execution. It is also in the consideration of creative design of the message. Therefore three aspects to viral marketing communications emerge: -

there is viral message creative design

message placement

and then dissemination

These last two have dominated the literature thus far. Those studies of the media aspect are mainly concerned with the structure of placement (via mavens or specialist agencies) not how the agency conceives of, plan or actually implement the schedule. In terms of dissemination, the influence maximisation problem is the main focus, not how the account planners monitor, nor how the media buyers consider the actual spread, nor how the creative teams perceive the "success" of diffusion. In terms of viral message design, most studies evaluate the content of ads, the end result not the ways of conceiving them. Thus far, we have assessed the creative management perspective; how does this relate to the biological metaphor at the heart of viral phenomenon? The link is assessed below.

2.6 *The Relationship Between Epidemiology and Viral Marketing*

2.6.1 Definition of Related Terms

A thorough examination of the links between biological viruses and viral marketing does not yet exist in current research. The single paper (Miles, 2014) which considers the metaphor is a recent one which bridged some of this gap. This section will address this problem, firstly outlining the main concepts, offering a brief illustration of the biological qualities and secondly, a direct comparison of the path of a virus and that of viral marketing.

The approach employed here is consistent with notions of parsimony and common factors to evaluate theoretical propositions (Smith et al, 2007). It concentrates on the distinctive main features which are needed to make sense of the phenomena (Richards and Curran, 2002). It allows for discrimination of the experiences, their relationships to each other in terms of scale, place within the broader process, providing a basis to investigate the spreading behaviour of viral messages, it notes the separation of stages at which interventions may be made to influence the pattern (Vakratsas and

Ambler, 1999). Associated terms such as immunisation are drawn on to add to the logical internal consistency of the discussion. What has been done here is to bring several disparate elements into a meaningful pattern, making connections, building upon existing work. There is empirical work to support much of the framework, mainly from computing, medical and engineering fields but rigorous, established and world class (Kempe, Kleinberg and Tardos, 2003).

Key Terms	Qualities
General Terms used in Science and Viral Marketing	
Biology	The overall science of living things with a number of separate areas such as behaviour and spreading patterns (Kitano, 2002).
Medicine	The study of detecting, remedying and deterrence of disease. Also refers to the jobs related to the application of medical science (Barabási, Gulbahce and Loscalzo, 2011).
Epidemiology	This is the part of medicine addressing the patterns of infection, spread and the detection of points for health interventions (McKeown, 2013).
Infection	The course of infecting or the condition of being contaminated. Verb – Transference of a disease-causing agent to another person (Hoyle and Wickramasinghe, 1990).
Contagion	Infection through close contact. Many applications of the term in markets, sociology etc. (Hoyle and Wickramasinghe, 1990)
Epidemic	Mass infection of a particular population centre within a specific time (Smith et al, 2009).
Pandemic	Disease infection across an entire nation or the earth (Enemark, 2009).
Specific Terms	
Virus	A carrier of disease that propagates itself in an organism. An illness which is the consequence of a viral infection. Influences which cause injury ("the virus of bank bonuses"). Origins - Latin *virus* 'poison' (Kalia and Jameel, 2011)

Computer virus	An electronic carrier of a file/ software which can duplicate itself and result in damage to the receiving machine (Sung, Ku and Su, 2014)
Viral	Descriptive of and linked to viruses (Kalia and Jameel, 2011).
Virality	The characteristics of being viral (Kalia and Jameel, 2011).
Associated Terms	
Virulent/ence	Highly infectious viruses which manifest with the maximum consequences. In everyday use, vehement dislike (Picchio et al, 2014).
Virulence gene	This is a specific gene which is responsible for the infection carrying capacity of a microorganism (Picchio et al, 2014).
Viral load	Refers to the quantity of viral agents observed in a host or a specific situation (Picchio et al, 2014).

Table 2-2 Terms from Science employed in Viral Marketing

2.6.2 How is a biological virus spread?

In examining the biological literature and the viral marketing research the discussions below are categorised into a five stages to cover the lifecycle of the virus and of viral marketing, summarised as the SPEED framework. The first element is labelled as stealth referring to the stage of dormancy when the virus is quietly entering and starting to develop itself (see Table 2-2). Preparation is the initial processes of delivering the infection into the host followed by expansion where there is multiplication and integration into the host's natural environment. The fourth stage, explosion is made up of the exit of the virus from the host into the wider world. The fifth is dissolution, when the virus begins to subside and gradually effectiveness and transmission rate decreases. The SPEED framework is useful in making sense of what could be called the second half of viral marketing – the after launch phase; it does not address pre-launch.

2.6.2.1 Stealth

Virus	Viral Marketing
A virus cannot become active on its own; it is in the environment waiting.	Viral ads require cooperation from consumers.
It enters through various parts of the body (e.g. the nose, mouth).	Channels to enter the web are many such as blogs, video sites.
It remains dormant until it has a host when it becomes active.	
Viruses can exist for a long time outside the body.	
Viruses spread through carriers.	The influencer who will act as initial host, then others will join.
Viruses spread through the air.	Ambient social media – e.g. YouTube, Twitter, Vine, Instagram etc
Viruses spread through individual contact.	Person to person as in a contagion explained above.
Viruses spread through by lying on surfaces.	Online surfaces such as when browsing websites, micro sites, subscriptions, by email etc

Table 2-2-2 SPEED Framework - Stealth comparison between virus and virals

2.6.2.2 Preparation

After absorption, it enters a host cell releasing its genetic material.	
The material recruits the host cell's enzymes	Consumers become "media" and "advertising" agencies ("booking" space to share the message).
The enzymes make new parts for more new virus particles.	Adding bits of personal comments to the messages.
The new particles assemble the parts into new viruses.	Therefore, each message is like a new virus but actually it is a clone with a few additions by the person, especially for viral videos.

Table 2-2-3 SPEED Framework - Preparation comparison between virus and virals

2.6.2.3 Expansion

All viruses have a protein coat that recognises the proper host cell.	Targeting, seeding specialists, market mavens.
Some enveloped viruses dissolve right through the cell membrane of the host, releasing their content once inside.	Perfect match between influencer and message and then between influencer message and recipient.
Those viruses that cannot dissolve through inject themselves.	Some messages match exactly and others closely.
It then starts to replicate, followed by multiplication on a large scale.	
These organisms then assemble together before being released into the rest of the body.	The idea of viral load, testing the number of people involved in transmission is a significant section of diffusion studies.
Some viruses once inside the host do not reproduce immediately.	E.g. bloggers are often provided content which they hold on to.
They then mix their genetic instructions into the host's so that it replicates in the host's offspring. The host may go through many rounds of reproduction.	An example of this is also with bloggers who develop what is known as native content. That is they integrate the message into their topic of interest and their own materials.

Table 2-2-4 SPEED Framework - Expansion comparison between virus and virals

2.6.2.4 Explosion

The viruses then leave in two ways – break open and destroy the host.	This is like a computer virus. This is why the computer virus metaphor is weaker than the biological one.
Or they pinch out and break away (budding) with a piece of the cell membrane surrounding them	As noted before, with the addition of a comment or two from recipient one to the next person.
This then leaves the cell without destroying the host.	This is like a viral message.
For those viruses which delay reproduction, there is then a signal at which point, they take over the host cell and continue to replicate as outlined above.	E.g. the campaign launch moment is equivalent to the signal as is common in viral ads for music, for tasters, games etc.
Once out of the host, the new viruses can attack other cells.	Once the message has left the influencers, it can move very quickly into other groups of customers as outlined in the term epidemic.
One virus can reproduce thousands.	Some seeds are very influential, and their role if to increase the viral load.
Viral infections spread quickly through the body.	Viral message diffusion across the Internet is very much in the manner of a pandemic.
The cycle is repeated again and again.	That is, there is virulence in the behaviour of the viral messages.

Table 2-2-5 SPEED Framework - Expplosion comparison between virus and virals

2.6.2.5 Dissolution

The immune system raises the body temperature as the body's chemical reactions slow down.	There is a fever pitch that a viral campaign will reach and then it begins to tail off.
Since viruses reproduce so often, they can change and so the vaccine can become less effective.	Creative content, quality, category, styles vary in viral ads.
So, new vaccines must be produced constantly.	Some campaigns continue in different ways.
This fever continues until the viruses are eliminated as antibiotics have no effects on viruses.	Viral messages are not eliminated from the web but their impact does become less.
Immunization pre-infects the body so it knows how to produce the right antibodies as soon as the virus starts to act.	There is a growing group of consumers who are deliberately choosing to ignore marketing messages. They are familiar with marketing methods and therefore are immunised against their effects.
To prevent viruses hygiene and reduction of contact are essential.	Consumers also are closing their accounts on social media, are blocking certain sites, subscriptions etc

Table 2-6 SPEED Framework - Dissolution comparison between virus and virals

Fundamentally, the idea of control sits with studies of influencers. On this, Miles (2014, p.4) observes that it "...generates a tension between associations of wild, uncontrollable danger on the one hand and carefully controlled domestication on the other". Despite such a purist view, with viral marketing communications messages there is some control in the creative phase, in the media placement, the initial sharing on video platforms or with opinion leaders which Miles fails to observe.

The term "sneezers" has taken forward the virus metaphor as it is an established synonym for online influencers/ opinion leaders/ market mavens (Horovitz, Petrecca and Howard, 2008; Feick and Price, 1987). Another medical metaphor in advertising concerns message immunity briefly referenced above (Yang, 2013). There is a well-

established research literature into the development of immunity to marketing messages in consumer behaviour studies (Yoshida et al, 2013).

Nature	Behaviour	Effects	Characteristics
Living organism attaching to a living host Contagious Capable of becoming an epidemic/ pandemic Stealthy Have to be allowed to run their course	To propagate Adaptable Active Spreading Explosive in bursts	Illness From state of normal to discomfort Strength (enhanced immunity after)	Invisible Difficult to detect Fast Energetic Determined Carefree Short term (possibly medium term) Indiscriminate Problematic Uncontrollable Dangerous

Table 2-7 The Nature, Behaviour and Effects of a Virus

To sum up this section, it is evident that viral messages and the processes of epidemiological investigation have much more in common than previously noted in the literature. Here is presented a close linking of the pattern of entry, development, spread and closure visible in biological viruses and that of viral message movement, showing a number of new linkages encapsulated by the SPEED framework. This explains why research is dominated by studies of influencers and diffusion modelling (Brudermann and Fenzl, 2010). Therefore, there is need to study the qualities of a virus in the creation of viral advertising campaigns (Table 2-8).

2.7 *Viral Marketing: The Metaphor at the Core*

Reference is made above to Miles' (2014) valuable study of the discourses underpinning viral marketing discussions. It does help to bridge a conceptual gap in the literature but leaves much still unclear about the term itself (e.g. Brown, 2013). Building on the biological root analysis above, the prime metaphor at the centre of the

term is evaluated below, firstly broken down into its component parts to show that some of the confusion arises from a conflation of meanings within the phrase.

2.7.1 Metaphor

The term viral marketing is actually made up of a number of metaphors. While these provide depth, ease of access to grasp the idea as shown above; there are others below the surface which have different purposes. These require clarification. A metaphor is saying that one thing is another (Kovecses, 2010). Here a form of online marketing message transmission among peers (called a tenor) is said to be virus (called a vehicle) (Tsoukas, 1993).

Firstly, there is a visual metaphor – a representational image of the infection patterns of the message linking the association with a virus (Phillips and McQuarrie, 2004). Strictly speaking a visual metaphor is present in a physical image but it is not always the case (Phillips and McQuarrie, 2004). The image of an infected person infecting many others is a common one. The contagion literature (from sociology, computing, medicine, business, finance etc.) has made that pattern a standard picture across much of the everyday life (Hoang et al, 2011; Kalia and Jameel, 2011).

Secondly, the literature is replete with personification which is kind of metaphor that compares something to people (Kovecses, 2010). It transfers human characteristics to a non-living entity - "a viral video takes on a life of its own". Viral campaigns are presented as offspring and there is need to show how marketers are "…caring for their charges" (Miles, 2014, p.7). Thirdly, it is an extended metaphor, which makes the comparison between two different things but takes it through several different levels (Bowdle and Gentner, 2005). Fourthly, it is evidently, a conceptual metaphor. In a figurative way, one concept becomes another and so makes sense (Coulter and Zaltman, 1995). Finally, it is a root metaphor, providing a familiar narrative acting as an easy entry point to understanding (Gannon, 2011). These metaphors operate at a surface level as handles to understanding but move to progressively deeper insight and to fundamental conceptual assumptions.

It is important to understand this because it is critical for creative design where metaphor is part of the core communications devices employed in producing advertising (Phillips and McQuarrie, 2004).

	Insights from metaphors	Surface
Visual metaphor	Common image of viral spread	
Personification	Human traits – attractive and alive	
Extended metaphor	Several layers of meaning	Layer of Insight
Conceptual metaphor	Reveals an incomplete representation of viral marketing	
Root metaphor	Independent Dominant machine view in current understanding	Deep
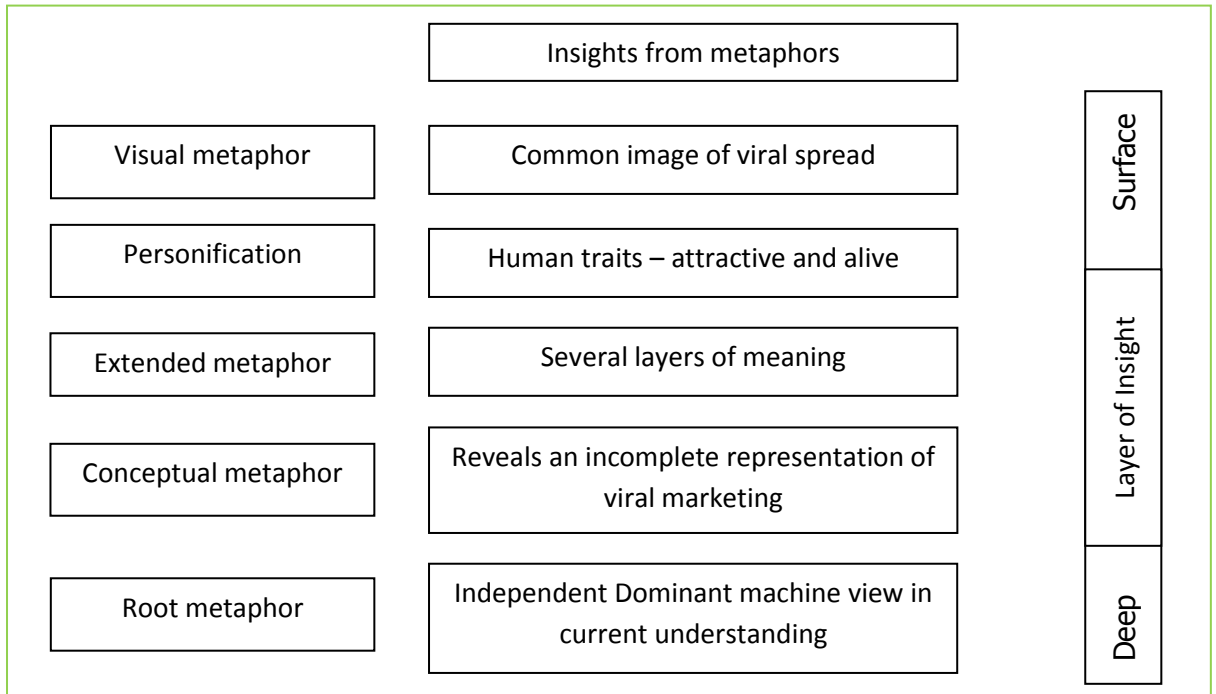
Figure 2-7 Layers of and Insights from Metaphors underlying Viral Marketing (Raghubansie, 2017)

The various metaphors have not been evaluated in this manner before and in conducting this analysis, it provides a structure and clarification but also novel ways to understand viral marketing. In the root metaphor, the philosophical world view is uncovered, the visual metaphor, a widely accepted image; the personification imbues it with "live" associations which deliver a perceived potency, an agency which while non-existent makes viral marketing more exciting. The conceptual metaphor points to the fusion of two different abstract domains to make sense of a new phenomenon but also to its synecdochic nature. In so doing the limits of the metaphor and the opportunities to address that knowledge gap are identified.

2.8 Discussion Summary

It is apparent then that this phenomenon labelled "viral marketing" crosses the boundaries of bricks and of clicks; is relatively new; and is attracting growing and intense research scrutiny (mostly from the transmission perspective as seen in Figure

2-6). To start with, it was necessary here to present an understanding of what viral marketing means. That was shown via comparison with traditional advertising illustrating where there are similarities and what the real differences are. This has shown that there is some exaggeration and lack of questioning with regard to what the key issues are. In order to understand the substantial lack of attention to creative perspectives (planning, design and media), it was necessary to briefly summarise the conventional models of the communications process, the links to advertising and to viral marketing, in so doing clarifying and amalgamating models of creative process and communications. A novel close comparison was undertaken with the biological virus lifecycle with that of viral marketing using the SPEED framework which showed for the first time, the layers of similarity which can be drawn from the epidemiological concept. An original exploration of the metaphors which are subsumed by the two words, "viral marketing" is conducted to provide insight into how they can be used to make sense of the phenomenon on varying levels concluding that the contextual perspective is largely absent.

Miles (2014, p. 4) concludes that the attempt to control represents a "conflict with theories of marketing communication that are based upon valorising the necessity for long-term relationship construction and the generation of deep dialogue between brand and stakeholders". He then finishes in saying that "this disconnection...contributes to an ironic situation in which viral marketing finds itself promoting a turning away from interaction with the customer" (p.4). However, this is a very narrow view – seeing viral messages as isolated from other marketing efforts generally. Taking the example of the Old Spice viral video, this was not done on its own but in the context of a much wider campaign which actually re-built, expanded and reinforced relationships with consumers, besides being a re-invention of the brand, much of which was based on interactivity (Huang et al, 2013).
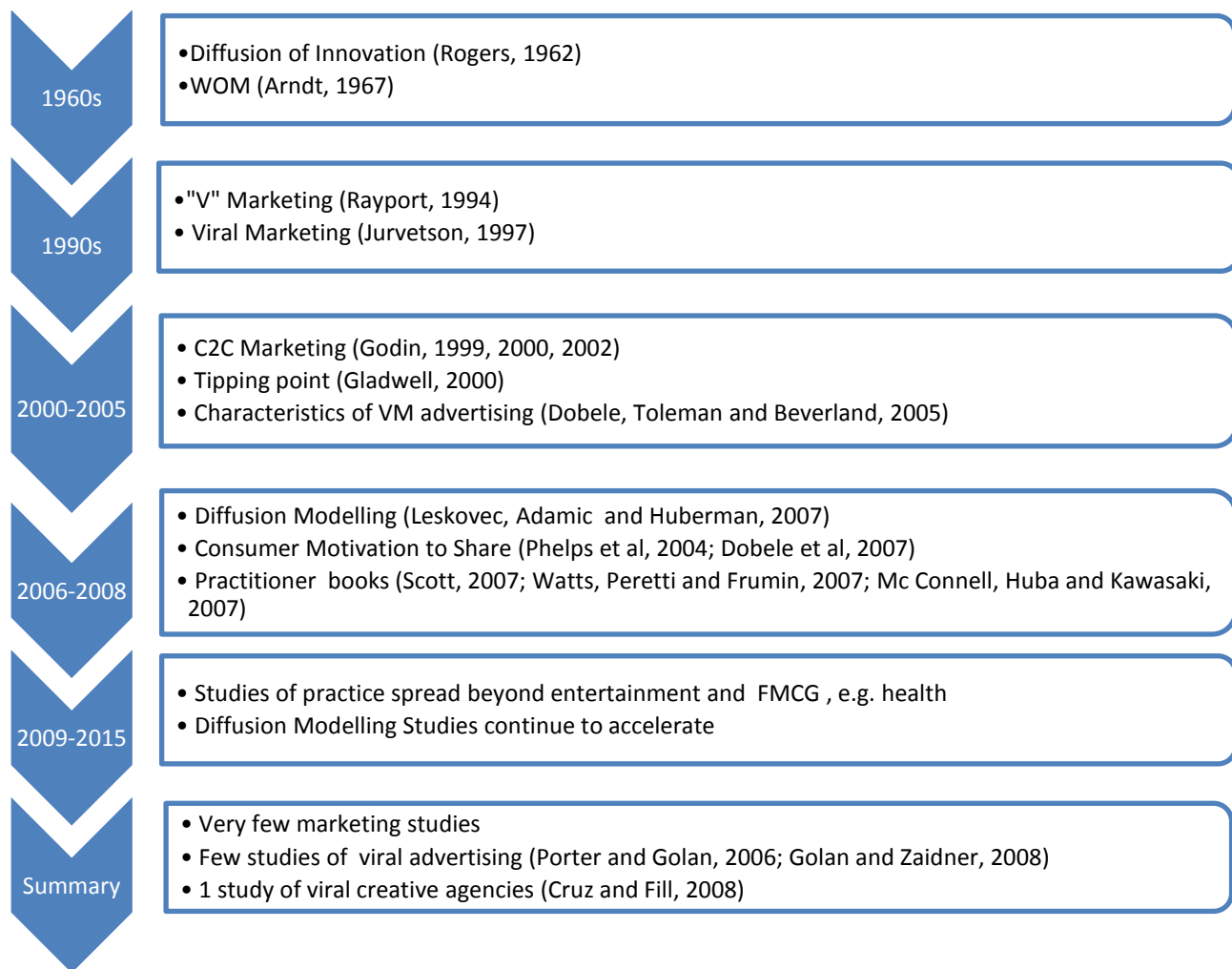
Figure 2-8 Summary of VM Development

Another point to highlight here is that viral videos and "old" TV ads which are exactly the same; therefore, unlike other forms of online message, cannot be changed/ interacted with (Gurney, 2011). This is one of the reasons for this study because viral marketing offers a bridge between the "old" and "new" world. Viral videos are similar to conventional creative material, yet have been "successful" in the new media environment. How have these changes been made, while maintaining an "old" format?

Examining the creative process showed clearly that most of the stages of advertising campaign development are absent from the literature on VM. The use of the SPEED framework showed there is little in the viral marketing lifecycle which captures it pre-launch phase.

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2.9 *A New Element of the Promotions Mix*

From the discussion on marketing, advertising and biology metaphors, it is clear that the term "viral marketing" is a misnomer. It does not fit into the elements of the promotions mix. It is in fact a new addition to the promotions mix. An accessible way to understanding is to think of it as an online equivalent of the traditional chain letter. There is a commercial purpose as it was in offline examples such as Tupperware parties and Anne Summers girls' nights (Herbenick, Reece and Hollub, 2009). VM is the only tool to bring together traditional advertising and online – videos (for TV), emails (sales promotions and direct marketing) and games (sampling). A VM campaign could be based on any of these formats, individually (Hinz et al, 2011a). In an electronic environment, there is no single place for comments – there can be millions, so that encourages more people to interact all over the world. There is no single platform (e.g. YouTube, email, Facebook) on which a VM message could be distributed, creating more opportunities for penetration (Lindgreen, Dobele, and Vanhamme, 2013). As a result, there is no single role which VM fulfils – you can have brand awareness objectives, a forum discussion, product/ service reviews and particular target audience engagement captured in one campaign.

With the related idea of viral media, Rushkoff (1994) developed notions of messages infecting vulnerable publics. A few years later, Rayport (1996, p. 1.) took this into the business discipline, deliberating on "virus marketing" arguing that "when it comes to getting a message out with little time, minimal budgets, and maximum effect, nothing on earth beats a virus". However, as indicated elsewhere, it is Jurvetson's business which is most often ascribed with producing ther term "viral marketing" (1997, p. 1) proferring a succinct definition as "network enhanced word of mouth". Helm (2000, p.159) suggests that it is "a communication and distribution concept that relies on customers to transmit digital products via electronic mail to other potential customers in their social sphere and to animate these contacts to also transmit the products". She is clearly classifying advertisements as products. A useful definition but it does not point to how this is different from a normal email or a blog that is forwarded a few times – like the digital equal of a chain letter. The main issue is to say digital products which refer to much software purchased online, for example. Phelps et al (2004) refer to marketing messages which are distributed to online customers in a similar way in which a biological virus infects. One customer receives the message (is "infected") and

then acts as a "host" (in their email, social media page) before passing the message on (like a virus infecting). It is a metaphor to make sense of an online form of WOM in which customers may or may not be conscious of a commercial intent in transmitting it (Richardson, 2008). Taking a more strategic perspective, Plummer et al, (2007, p.263) note that it is a "marketing strategy that encourages consumers to pass along messages to others in order to generate added exposure". In an advertising study, Golan and Zaidner (2008, p. 961) offer the following definition:

> A broad array of online WOM strategies designed to encourage both online and peer-to-peer communication about a brand, product or service.

Theirs is based on empirical work but this definition like the others could refer to many different tools not just online but also offline. It therefore fails to clarify the term and its relationship to the rest of marketing communications tools. To make a summary of the concept, a sharper definition was proffered by Cruz and Fill, 'the informal, peer-to-peer electronic exchange of information about an identifiable product or service' (2008, p. 746). However, this could be so many things – a telephone call to a blog. It could be two friends on the radio discussing the new washing machine one of them bought. Critically, there is no acknowledgement of the time element, the steep curve of the message spread. Petrescu and Korgaonkar (2011, p. 14) suggest "that viral marketing represents online and offline marketing activities performed to influence consumers to pass along commercial messages to other consumers". They further define viral advertising as "unpaid electronic (e-mail, web or social media) distribution of business or user generated advertisements from consumer to consumer, based on ad content likeability, entertainment and controversial characteristics" (p. 20).

This is in agreement with Porter and Golan (2006) who earlier developd the first definition of viral advertising as "unpaid peer-to-peer communication of provocative content originating from an identified sponsor using the Internet to persuade or influence an audience to pass along the content to others" (p.29). Petrescu and Korgaonkar (2011) seem to conflate social media as an all-encompassing tool. The definition of VM could also apply to buzz and general WOM. The inclusion of user-generated content in the viral advertising definition takes in a far too broad range of phenomena which are usually categorised under media – e.g. lipdubs, songs etc.

Fundamentally, there is little difference between the terms viral marketing and advertising.

However, contrary to the arguments of most of the papers on viral marketing; these definitions produce little that is different from how a message travels from a brand to one or millions of consumer/ customers via conventional media. A consumer may choose to share the message with another if they want. This is the same case for WOM and eWOM. In other words, like a virus to follow the metaphor, it has a source (a brand), a medium (a "host" – print media), then into another aware host (e.g. TV) or without (e.g. doing the dishes while listening to the radio). The new host may choose to infect another by telling about it (researching it and sharing it) whether they are aware of the commercial intent or not. This assumes that they have registered it in their minds to recall it.

E-marketing appears to conjure a bandwagon mind-set that everything is different, so this clarification is critical to point out the misconceptions in the current research, and thereby to be able to make an effective distinction between viral marketing and conventional marketing. With viral marketing, the difference is that the media platform makes it very easy to link to other online avenues - i.e. to Facebook, to YouTube, to email, blogs etc. In other words, whether a consumer can recall the message or not, or if he or she is habitually sharing messages and so forwards it based on prior behaviour, or thought it interesting at a particular moment, the platform allows ease of sharing. Online, there is no need for the consumer to remember the message and then recall it at a later point to research/ share with another consumer.

Following this through, it means that any advertisement using the Internet is likely to be shared which is clearly not the case as some are more shared than others. Here the figurative links to the behaviour of a virus, a process that is considered in the next chapter, becomes relevant. Since the platform makes it easy to share, it is possible that like a virus does in its spread, the more people who are infected, the more infections result and the greater the spread. So too, viral messages can be passed along at speed on the same scale as an epidemic or pandemic.

An addition is therefore proposed to the existing promotions mix and it will be simply referred to as virals. These are:

Marketing communications messages targeting online audiences, placed by organisations and/or their agents which then go on to achieve exponential peer-peer transmission within a limited timeframe.

It is a particular communication product developed to be made available to customers to interact with online. The field of marketing itself is a much bigger discipline than viral communications. Virals are more like advertising or viral public relations if the practice of video releases in the past is recalled, when PR agents would provide copies of advertisements to journalists and other key stakeholders to generate "press". The distribution of virals is not just a one sided process – with the sender alone active. The receiver can provide new, related or unrelated content. Their role in current definitions is almost discounted, with agency being given to the viral message itself.

The campaign planning process for virals from an advertising agency perspective is defined as the planning, conception, development, placement and distribution of marketing communications messages which exponentially grow through online transmission from consumer to consumer.

2.10 *Chapter Summary:*

This chapter set viral marketing in the context of classical marketing theory, related to the management of advertising campaigns, the roles and operations of creatives, uncovered the metaphoric assumptions, which provided novel insight through the application of a new conceptual framework (SPEED). These led to a new definition of viral marketing, an addition to the promotions mix and the location of the phenomena within the extant marketing theory. As a result the core knowledge assumptions are clarified, developing the foundation for the remainder of the study. The specific research into viral marketing is evaluated in the next chapter to narrow the research gaps into research objectives and questions.

3 CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW – CURRENT RESEARCH INTO VIRALS

'Creating content that goes viral is the ultimate goal of any Internet marketing professional', (Earl and Waddington, 2012, p.39).

Chapter one outlined the research aim, objectives and questions, clarified the confusion of terms and introduced the nature of the phenomena in the second chapter, it was necessary to locate viral marketing in extant marketing theory and develop a new definition of viral marketing (previous chapter). This section evaluates empirical studies of virals, analysing and synthesising to identify gaps in the literature.

3.1 *Introduction:*

The term "viral marketing" was coined in 1997. Given this relative novelty, there is no comprehensive evaluation of the literature. An attempt was made by Petrescu and Korgaonkar (2011) who integrate some of the strands of the research, but conclude with a definition lacking distinctiveness. This thesis will speak to this missing element, employing a multi-layered model for an empirical literature review developed by Berthon, Nairn and Money, (2003), the paradigm funnel. In this framework literature is synthesised into four groups starting with empirical studies, then methodological decisions, particular theories and the fourth layer, papers on the implicit factors across the research canon (Nairn, Berthon and Money, 2007; Breazeale, 2009). In summary: a continuum starting with discernible phenomena moving to the assumed, where "anomalies on one level of the funnel can potentially be resolved by recourse to a deeper level" (Berthon, Nairn and Money, 2003; pp. 57).

There are few established approaches to conducting literature reviews (Anderson, 2013; Boote and Beile, 2005) despite their importance in understanding the current issues, the result being that some reviews are merely annotated bibliographies or take a very a narrow range of studies (McCrae, Blackstock and Purssell, 2015). It is against this background that the paradigm funnel (Berthon, Nairn and Money, 2003) is considered a tool which could deliver comprehensiveness (a range of disciplines contribute to this topic), relevance (how streams coalesce to produce insight into

virals), study design (supports this research) and developmental (add to theoretical and practitioner research) (see Maxwell, 2006 for a discussion of this debate). The paradigm funnel produces structured insight into the canon (see Nairn and Berthon, 2015; Waizenegger, 2015; Confente, 2014; Scott, 2012) that address the needs of this study as well as concerns about doctoral level evaluations of current research (Pickering and Byrne, 2014). It results in a clearer and rigorous approach over the conventional narrative style (Upton, Upton, and Scurlock-Evans, 2014; Green, Johnson and Adams, 2006), delivering both quantitative and qualitative conclusions from the current research (Pickering and Byrne, 2014).

The value of this review is fourfold (1) to reveal the focus of this research into the discipline; (2) to discover commonalities and divergences which can be problematised, while identifying gaps in the existing research; (3) to locate discrepancies in relation to analytical approaches; and (4) to present a pathway for future study.

3.2 *Method*
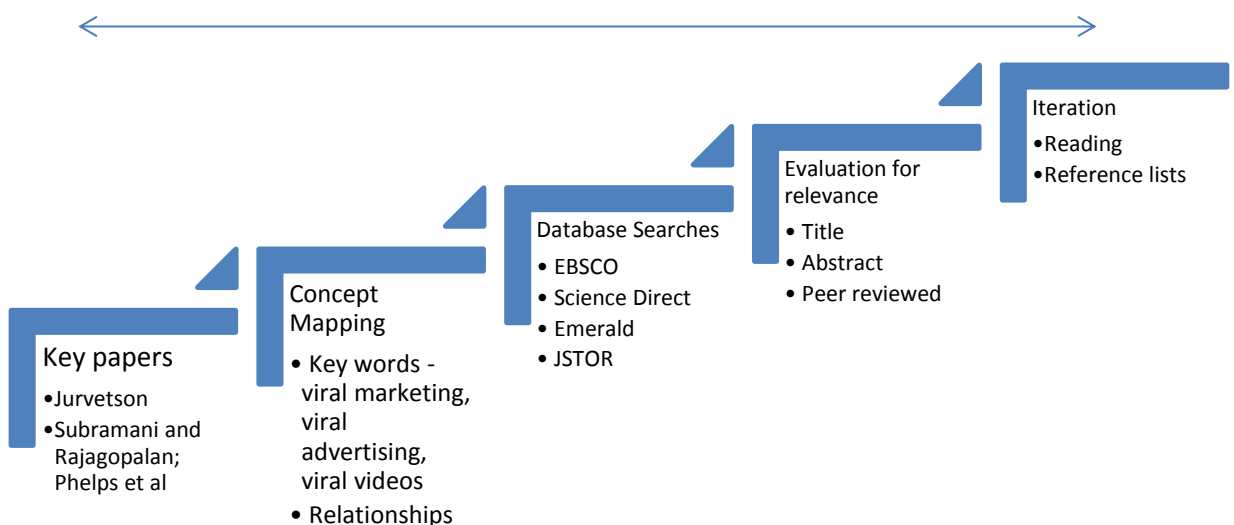
Figure 3-1 Process Map of Literature Review (Source: Raghubansie, 2017)

This literature evaluation was initiated with a Boolean search on the EBSCO database (see Figure 3-1 above). EBSCO includes among many others, the major academic aggregators such as academic search complete, ERIC and academic search premier, which account for the majority of publications in Business, media and management. In addition, Emerald Insight and ABI/INFORM (itself based on 11 databases) were also

searched. Given that the phenomena is a cross-disciplinary one, the foremost academic resource databases for Computing, Engineering, Physics and Mathematics – IEEE and ACM – databases were also searched.

Search parameters include peer-reviewed, academic journals and conference proceedings using the terms viral marketing, viral advertising, viral videos, buzz marketing and stealth marketing (following Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2009; Nairn, Berthon and Money, 2007). The researcher has not located a paper which has taken such an inclusive and comprehensive approach to evaluating virals. The search produced 1444 papers; this is against free searches from general portals which result in enormous figures such as Summon (6508 entries) and Google Scholar (18,000+). For the 1444, relevance was enhanced by deleting book reviews, forewords, personal viewpoints, other editorial interventions and some replications (following Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre, 2008). As a result, the number of studies was reduced to 826. Studies were further narrowed after reviewing the titles, abstracts and keywords of all papers resulting in 440 (Journal Quality List, 2013). Alerts were set up against these search terms to keep the researcher up to date with new papers, including on Google Scholar resulting in the addition of a further 24 papers to date, bringing the total to 464. None of these papers study creative perspectives on viral campaign designs. There are only 2 papers which study communications agencies, a survey of digital communications from Turkey (Gecti and Dastan, 2013) and a proposed measurement framework (Cruz and Fill, 2008). The cut off point was 2015. The research was then analysed with the application of the paradigm funnel of Berthon, Nairn and Money (2003). The papers in this review come from the top rated journals but it is also comprehensive encompassing papers from many different countries, across the full range of publications.

3.3 *Short History of Research into Virals:*

During the early stages of a discipline, researchers typically approach the topic from multiple viewpoints (Nairn, Berthon and Money, 2007). The journals which have accepted publications on virals, are mainly from Computing and Engineering (C&E) but also from Advertising, Business and Marketing (ABM), Communication and Media (C&M), Health and some categorised under others (Table 3-1). The ABM strand has

emerged as the dominant grouping with C&E next. These are further sub-divided into the early and later phases (Table 3-2). The later phase is from 2007 when the number, range and disciplines attracted to the phenomenon increased dramatically. The early phase (1998 to 2006) has few papers with a rare marketing-related publication.

Virals only go back to 1997, but the related subject of word of mouth (WOM) has been a research subject since the late 1960s (Buttle 1998; Sheth 1971; Arndt, 1967). Virals borrow characteristics from WOM in terms of sender credibility and trust but not necessarily in terms of influence and persuasion (Cheung et al, 2009; Eccleston and Griseri, 2008; Hung and Li, 2007; Shimp, Wood and Smarandescu, 2007; Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czaplewski; 2006; Sun et al, 2006). In this study, it is electronic word of mouth (eWOM) which is relevant, sharing some aspects of traditional WOM but also possessing a number of differences (Breazeale, 2009).

Year	ABM*	CandE	Cand M	Health	Others	Total
1994-2000	8				1	9
2001-2004	13	5	1			19
2005-2006	13	2	2	1	1	19
2007	13	2	1	1	1	18
2008	12	4	1	4	1	22
2009	15	16		1	2	34
2010	17	19		4	2	42
2011	35	29	4	2	4	74
2012	51	31	8	5	3	98
2013	41	40	4	5	4	94
2014	15	10			1	26
2015	3	5				8
Totals	235	163	21	23	20	464

Table 3-1 Studies over Time by Discipline

*Advertising, Business and Marketing (ABM), Computing and Engineering (CandE), Communication and Media (C&M), Health

Over the early phase (1998 - 2006), the lack of focussed research is clear (see Table 3-2). Ghose and Wenyu's (1998) paper is only slightly relevant evaluating website design; from a literary view (Moor, 2003; Moore, 2003); eWOM (Sun et al, 2006 on music; Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czaplewski, 2006 on mobile phones); concerns about children (Nairn, 2006); public health campaigns (Hodgetts et al, 2006); pass-along behaviour (Phelps et al, 2004); applications by political parties (Williams and Trammell, 2005); theoretical attempts (Kaikati and Kakati, 2004 on stealth marketing and Moor, 2003 as experiential marketing and an influence matrix from Subramani and Rajagopalan, 2003).

Year	ABM	Other Groups Combined	
Early Phase			
1994	1		1
1996	1		1
1997	1		1
1998	2		2
2000-2002	8	3	11
2003	2	5	7
2004	5		5
2005	6	3	9
2006	7	3	10
Sub total	33 (70%)	14 (30%)	47
Later Phase			
2007	13	5	18
2008	11	10	22
2009	15	19	34
2010	17	25	42
2011	35	39	74
2012	51	47	98
2013	41	53	94
2014	15	11	26
2015	3	5	8
Sub total	201 (48%)	214 (52%)	416

Table 3-2 The ABM Sub-category by Year of Publication

The relationship to eWOM is made, the importance of consumer forwarding habits for viral campaigns recognised; some elements of creative appeal started to receive attention; a few core theoretical ideas and aspects of management decision-making were outlined. There was one advertising paper in the 1994 to 2006 period from Porter and Golan (2006) which concentrated on the characteristics of the adverts themselves.

The second stage, 2007 to 2015, shows considerable research growth on virals; the majority develop algorithms to map diffusion. Their main focus is on developing machine learning models to locate influencers and network dissemination of messages (e.g. Golkar Amnieh and Kaedi, 2015; Iribarren and Moro, 2011a, 2011b, 2009; Katona, Zubcsek and Sarvary, 2011; Li, Lai and Chen, 2011; Narayanam and Narahari, 2011; Ackerman, Ben-Zwi and Wolfovitz, 2010; Mossel and Roch, 2010; Trusov, Bodapati and Bucklin, 2010).

3.4 Research by Country

The international attention which virals have attracted demonstrates its importance to academics and practitioners with studies coming from 42 different countries (Table 3-3). These represent advanced economies and emerging nations - South America (1 item), Africa (3 papers), the Middle East (3 studies), Australia (23 studies), Europe (115 articles), Asia (129 studies) and North America (180 articles). Among the European countries, Germany is first, followed by the UK, Spain, Italy and France. Internet penetration rates are currently low in the regions with fewer studies but that situation is constantly changing for the better, so virals will continue to expand.

	Country Rank	No. of studies
1	US	164
2	China	59
3	India	38
4	Germany	25
5	Australia	23
6	UK	20
7	Canada	16
8	Spain	15
9	Italy	9
10	France	8
11 - 14	Israel, Malaysia, Poland, South Korea	6 per country
15 - 18	Japan, Netherlands, Singapore, Turkey	5 per country
19 - 21	Austria, Denmark, Switzerland	4 per country
22 - 24	Finland, New Zealand, South Africa	3 per country
25 - 27	Bangladesh, Romania, Sweden	2 per country
28 - 42	Ukraine, Thailand, Taiwan, Slovenia, Serbia, Saudi Arabia, Portugal, Pakistan, Norway, Iran, Greece, Egypt, Czech Republic, Brazil, Belgium	1 per country
		464

Table 3-3 Country of Origin in Rank Order from Largest # of Papers

The United States (USA) accounts for three times (36%) as many as the next nearest country, China (13%), followed by India, Germany and Australia making out the top five (Table 3-3). Together they make up just over 2/3^{rds} of all research. China and India contributions are mainly towards computing and engineering.

Country - Main Contributors	No. of studies	%
US	164	35.42
China	59	12.74
India	38	8.21
Germany	24	5.18
Australia	23	4.97
Total	308	66.52

Table 3-4 Research Output % Comparison for Main Contributing Countries

The United Kingdom (UK) is at no 6 with 4% of the total articles (Table 3-5). This suggests that there is scope still for research in the UK as the country with the highest internet penetration rate in Europe, as the first developed economy in which Internet advertising exceeded TV and as a major contributor to world research output (BBC, 2009). The UK also boasts one of the world capitals for advertising – its London creative hub. This study will make contributions to address these concerns. There is no UK study which considers virals from the perspective of advertising agencies.

Country - Medium Contributors	No. of studies	%
UK	20	4.10
Canada	16	3.46
Spain	15	3.24
Total	51	10.80

Table 3-5 Research Output % Comparison for Medium Contributing Countries
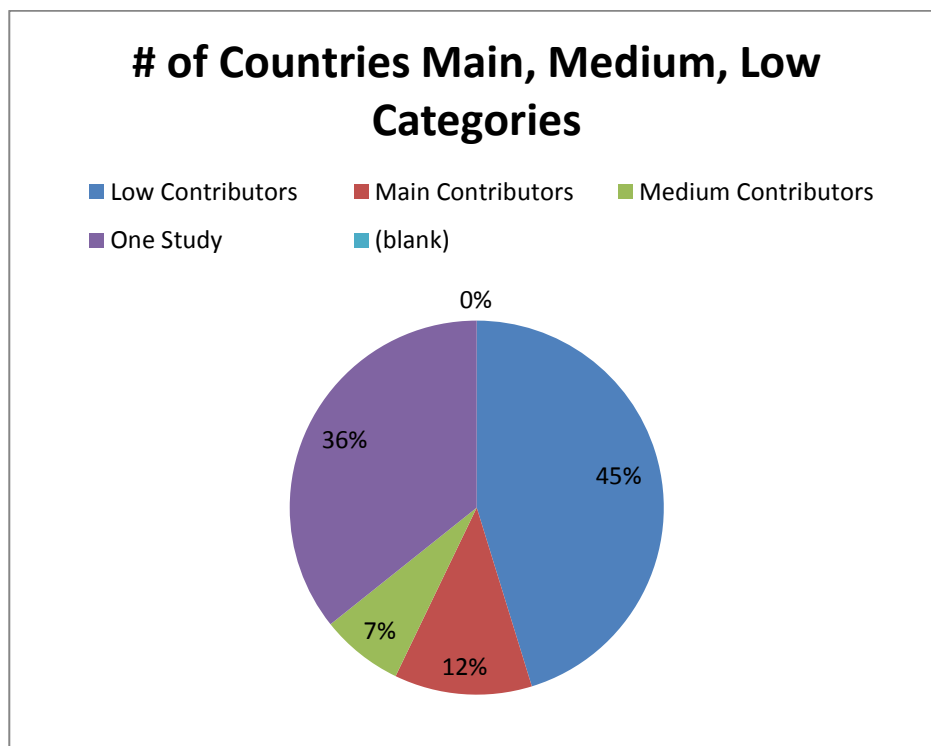
Figure 3-2 Extant research by key country groupings (Source: Raghubansie, 2017)

Eight countries account for the majority of research, 77% (358 of 462). There are 19 countries which account for a further 19% of the total, categorised as low contributors

with numbers in single figures. There are a further 16 nations which contribute 1 paper each making up 3.5% of the total.

In summary, from the graph below, the UK still has opportunity to develop its research outputs in the area of viral marketing. As one of the four major world advertising hubs, this thesis will make a contribution to in this area.
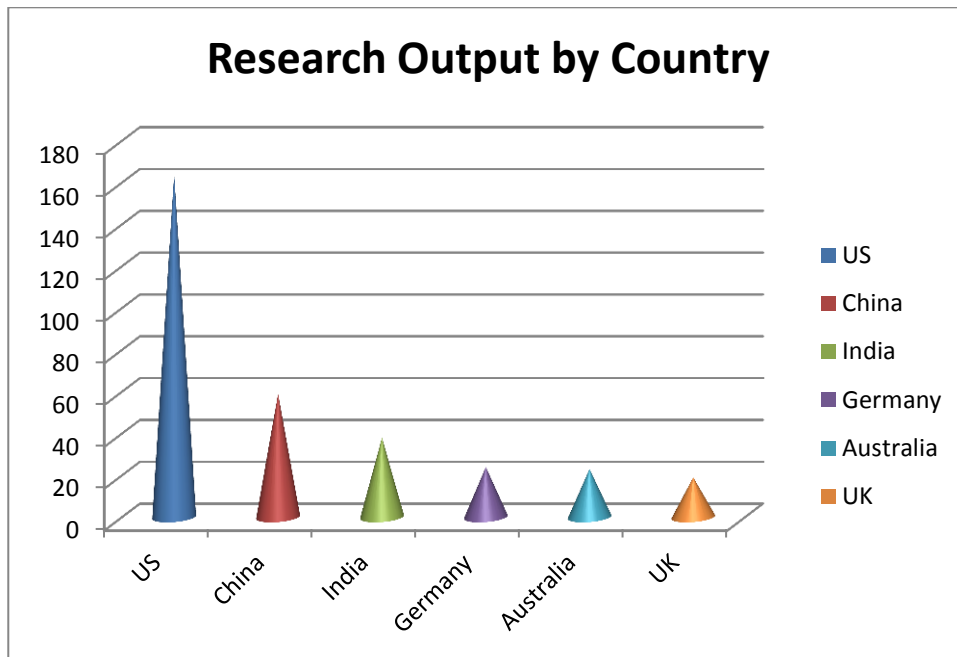
Figure 3-3 Current research showing UK contribution (Source: Raghubansie, 2017)

3.5 *Strands in the Extant Research*

Figure 3-4 demonstrates the paucity of advertising research (2.8% of the total), a total of 13, assessed later in the chapter. Social network distribution studies dominate (40%), a total of 176 papers. While these are important to identify seeding strategies to launch viral campaigns, they do not produce insight into the creative ideas which support the work of influencers. This latter gap is explored in this thesis.
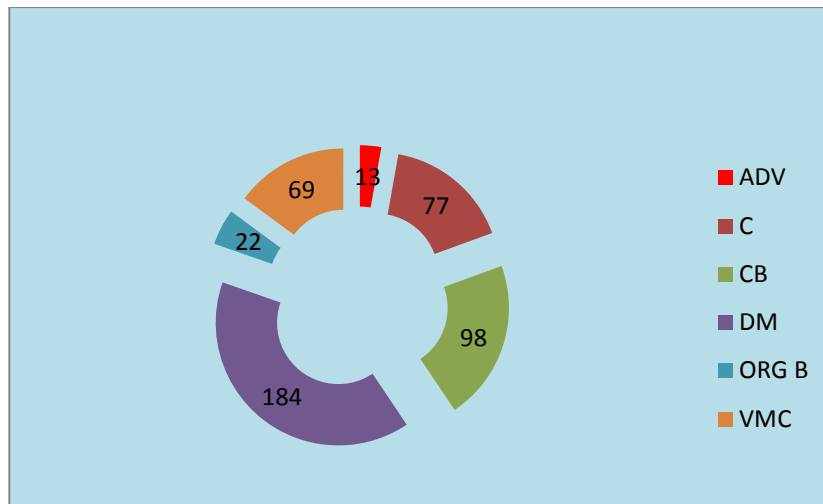
Figure 3-4 # of Current Research by Discipline Perspective (Source: Raghubansie, 2017)

Key: ADV – Advertising, C – Conceptual, CB – Customer Behaviour, DM – Diffusion Modelling, ORG B – Organisation Behaviour, VMC – Viral Marketing Characteristics

The second theme is customer behaviour at 21%, critical to campaign planning and creative concept evaluation to match the motives, behaviours and cognitive profiles of consumers. From the 98 articles, 10 are linked to other themes; 2 address customer behaviour, advertising and VMC; 1 looks at CB from a pedagogic perspective; 3 CB and DM and 4 CB and VMC. A further 3 specifically examine customer behaviour on mobiles. However, this theme provides little understanding of where in the advertising campaign design process or if, or how consistent, and why creative teams make the decisions that they do, in developing the final advertising product evident to the public. This study investigates these discrepancies in the current literature.

The third most populous strand of papers is conceptual in nature, contributing about 17% of the literature. There are 3 articles which link to other research themes; 1 to advertising; 2 address concepts and VMC. Among the total 77 articles categorised as conceptual, 10 make some reference to advertising, and within these, four (Li, Lee and Lien 2012; Petrescu and Kargoankar, 2011; Miller and Lammas, 2010; Kaikati and Kaikati, 2004) pay varying levels of attention to advertising. In reality, Petrescu and Korgaonkar (2011) dedicated time to defining viral advertising and Kaikati and Kaikati to developing the term stealth marketing. Li, Lee and Lien (2012) propose a diffusion model for viral marketing and Miller and Lammas (2010) make generic recommendations for social media. Theoretical opportunities are therefore available for further development; hence one of the foci of this research is to collate the views, understanding and approaches with a view to building and contributing to theory.

69 studies are dedicated to uncovering the characteristics of viral marketing (VMC) make up the third largest grouping (15%). Among these there are 8 papers which address both VMC and ADV and 5 VMC and CB. The majority of articles observe viral marketing campaigns, profiling the common features. In this way, they produce understanding of elements which creative teams need to consider in campaign development. This research aspect has established the role of emotion as a critical element which encourages virals (e.g. of particular importance are Eckler and Bolls, 2011; Brown, Badhury and Pope, 2010). However, this sub-group of work is mainly directed at observing the completed product of the advertising creative process – the advert. There is no study which has examined the antecedent processes which generate the final output. This thesis will undertake an investigation to explore this novel aspect of the research.

Studies into organisational concerns (such as legal issues, measurement, corporate reputation, gender roles etc.) complete the full count of 464 articles. This, behind the Advertising group is the second smallest of the strands (4.5%). Among the 22 papers is 1 which also addresses CB and another organisational, CB and DM concerns. In terms of advertising relevance, there is 1 study by Bugge (2011) which takes an economic approach looking at the impact of the Internet on the advertising industry. Groeger and Buttle (2013) actually evaluate online and offline WOM to compare advertising agencies measurement of reach and frequency. The key area of how organisations have changed within and across creative teams remains without study. This thesis will capture the views of creative directors, creative managers, heads of digital and social media managers to understand where, how and why there are emerging changes.

Research Strand	#
Diffusion Modelling	185
Customer Behaviour	98
Conceptual Papers	77
Viral Marketing Characteristics	69
Organisational	22
Advertising	13
Total	464

Table 3-6 Summary of Articles by Research Strand

Table 3-6 illustrates the under-developed nature of the advertising focussed research into virals even though the majority of campaigns are based on video advertisements. Consequently, innovation to process, creative products and operational activity is at the core of these changes – topics of this study.

3.6 *Framework for Empirical Review of Literature - the Paradigm Funnel:*

Breazeale (2009) has shown that the paradigm funnel is effective in ascertaining the accrued knowledge, locating the methods used to produce the accrued facts, as well as to assess the conceptual ideas developed and based on the synthesis determine if a move is occurring at the fundamental level across the full research output (see also Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2009). This latter point demonstrates how the paradigm funnel can evaluate both the assumptions and the observable in the literature (Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre, 2008).

To achieve this comprehensive function, it examines the research across four different groupings. Berthon, Nairn and Money, (2003, pp. 56) make this clear when they refer to employing the paradigm funnel to identify "anomalies" which emerge "between facts, analytical methods, theories, and deep assumptions". This examination is in agreement with the emphases of systematic research established in the literature (Kuhn, 1970). Survey that which can demonstrate the facts; then assess the nature of the connection between the observed and the theory; and then consider the ways in which those are communicated to reveal the basic world view underpinning the research corpora. The collection of data on the topic of interest produces particular insights; comparing theory with the evidence collected, helps the creation of enhanced methodological procedures; from these the ways in which the theory is framed reveals challenges of the core suppositions in the literature (Berthon, Nairn and Money, 2003). In summary, resolution of anomalies between the layers which the paradigm funnel evaluates parallels three typical doctrines of scientific inquiry following Kuhn (1970).

In other words, if there are inconsistencies between the theory and the data on which it is based, then the methods and analytical models are assessed (Nairn, Berthon and Money, 2007). Should the discrepancy continue, the conceptual base on which the research aims were developed, may be questioned. Finally, should the incongruity still remain, the themes in the cannon should be examined to expose the underlying postulates, to discover any moves to a new archetype (Breazeale, 2009). Each paper is assessed against the intentions of the articles, their methodological procedures and their conclusions (see Table 4-5 for a summary of the model).

3.7   *Rationale for Assigning Studies to the Levels:*

At the first level, are categorised those publications which conducted empirical observation of facts underpinning the phenomena (following Berthon, Nairn and Money, 2003). The next level of the funnel narrows in terms of the number of studies representing articles that apply analytical models and methods. Level three, is used to group those research that mainly examine specific concepts and those papers that have developed theory. The final level, four, marks a sub-set of papers whose purpose is to explore and confront the nature of reality, methodological and deep-seated values that represent the unobservable foundations of peer-peer online communications in the context of virals and advertising intermediaries who create them.

Level	Research Focus	Question Posed by Researcher	Research Process
1	Empirical Observations	What is the reality of the observed phenomena?	Collect data
2	Analytical Methods	Are the methods and analytical processes appropriate to the theory developed?	Organisation, configuration and management of results
3	Specific Theory	The theories fit for purpose?	Processes that produce theories and related conceptual applications
4	Deep Assumptions	Are our fundamental philosophical assumptions correct or suitable?	Interrogating profound ontological, epistemological, methodological, and values

Figure 3-5 Levels in the Paradigm Funnel (based on Berthon, Nairn and Money, 2003 p. 57)

3.8 *Paradigm Funnel: - Level One – Empirical Observation:*

Berthon's paradigm funnel has been espoused by different scholars (Waizenegger, 2015; Confente, 2014; Scott, 2012; Heding et al., 2008; Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2009; Breazeale, 2009). Its value is immediately evident on first application to the papers showing 209 papers (of 464). These are empirical works that seek to substantiate virals as a discernible reality (Nairn and Berthon, 2015; Berthon, Nairn and Money, 2003).

The main themes found in the empirical level of the extant literature are customer behaviour (in the main - motivation, habits and attitudes) accounting for the majority (95), secondly, studies mapping the profile of virals (62), papers developing theory (17), those focussed on organisational impacts of virals (15), on the advertising perspective (13) and finally diffusion modelling (6). See Appendix VI for a summary of papers grouped into the first level of the paradigm funnel. This section will synthesise these articles starting with the transmission perspective, then organisational, followed by articles developing theory, customer behaviour next and finally to viral characteristics and advertising, i.e. ending with those that are especially relevant in the context of this study.

3.9 *Empirical Studies Addressing Diffusion Modelling of Virals:*

Among articles dedicated to modelling the diffusion of virals there are few empirical papers (of 184) which are based on experiments rather than the simulations which account for most of the others (addressed at level 2 of the paradigm funnel).

Aral and Walker (2013) find greater tie strength and embeddedness in the network results in higher levels of influence. Similarly, Bakshy, Karrer and Adamic (2009) consider ties among friends (pace of adoption increases proportionally) and find significance in the role of the social network (Second Life). Gil-Or (2011) track diffusion using a social media experiment for a restaurant (growing from 20 to 80 members). Attempting to make sense of the process of message sharing, Jankowski et al (2012) propose four steps: awareness, infection, engagement and action to identify where and how messages draw interest (firstly distributed to 16 potential early adopters among social campaigners). Engagement across the stages increases likelihood to attend but most people did not take all steps. Likewise, Yamakami (2013) develops a model (Emotion-Object-Interaction) to examine the impact of emotions on transmission from the first recipient and how subsequent diffusion changes. The Xiong and Hu (2010) study has a diffusion focus but to determine pricing strategy in the hotel industry based on the diffusion rate of messages to achieve difference objectives – revenue or awareness. The issues addressed here are varying, but primarily focussed on diffusion influences, the post-creative launch stage of virals. They inform the media management function within agencies which may have an influence on

campaign design but that aspect is considered here only in relation to its impact on creative decisions.

3.10 *Empirical Studies: Impact on General organisational Issues:*

Organisations do not believe that virals will produce positive commentary on their corporate brands or are neutral at best (Lekhanya, 2014) while Sudarevic et al (2013) shows the opposite in the food industry. Bugge (2011) and Groeger and Buttle (2013) are referred to above. These papers take a managerial perspective but they are few. The views of managers from the creative sector are absent.

Broad-spectrum studies of social media (SM) adoption is the focus of 6 papers, 3 of which are in the not-for-profit sector starting with Quinton and Fennemore (2013) finding factors driving uptake of SM include environmental pressures, proactive approach to brand image and the pursuit of new customers but adoption was sporadic. Certain categories of charities (e.g. education) make broader use of social media features but the health sector is more focussed on Facebook (Park, Rodgers and Stemmle, 2011; also Freeman and Chapman, 2008 who add a regulatory view). From a more commercial view, Salo et al (2011) profile the functions of social media in music, finding positive consumer attitudes (also Enders et al, 2008, looking at business models; Carl, 2006 on formal influencers). Understanding the media networks is important to designing virals but the literature is silent on how, why and what creative professionals actually do when thinking about social media.

Cruz and Fill (2008) produce a framework to measure campaign outputs, a theme which has attracted some attention from other researchers (also Dellarocas and Narayan, 2006 on WOM). Niederhoffer et al (2007) study factors to increase WOM (also Veil, Sellnow and Petrun, 2012 on crisis; Vesey, 2013 virals as gender neutral device). It is clear from the assessment above that of the marketing-related studies here; they consider general marketing issues, with advertising receiving relatively little attention. The nature of organisational change within marketing communication agencies and the impact of these on creative processes, campaign design and across the teams is not researched.

3.11 *Empirical Studies Developing Theory:*

There are 17 studies in this group. Two of these are from the founders of the viral marketing concept, based on the Hotmail case study (Jurvetson, 1997; Jurvetson and Draper 1998). Others are rudimentary introductions (Prakash 2012; Kalpaklioglu and Toros, 2011). 5 studies do not take a marketing or business perspective (Kolar and Atchison, 2013; Giardina, Vasa and Tan, 2012; Gilroy, 2012; Skrob, 2005; Moor, 2003). 1 appears to duplicate parts of another study (Kadam, 2012) and another demonstrating a consultancy measurement tool (Nail, 2007). Based on their findings, Goswami and Bhutani (2014), Reinhard (2011) and Burgess (2008) propose conceptual insights. However, the latter is attempting to understand music videos and produce insights into popular culture. The Reinhard (2011) paper is in the area of film studies attempting to assess how gamification can be applied. Goswami and Bhutani (2014) confirm prior research. 3 articles develop particular models. Goyette's (2010) paper is about eWOM among consumers in general with some reference to virals. The SPIN framework (Mills, 2012) is a valuable contribution to the literature but based solely on the Old Spice viral case. Subramani and Rajagopalan (2003) on the other hand, initiated much of the study of virals in the marketing literature with a useful classification tool to profile successful campaigns.

3.12 *Empirical Studies to Understand Viral Customer Behaviour:*

There are 95 articles in this area. 28 (29.5%) profile users; 21 (22%) attitudes and 46 (48.5%) address motivation. 16 are not focussed on virals but associated in some way for example about blogs. 6 are about health messages on social networks. A further 3 explore social media in general in facilitating sharing and 5 are focussed on WOM. This is a total of 30 (31.5%) papers, leaving 65. After removing these there are 15 studies of consumer profiles, 15 about attitudes and 35 about motivation. These are evaluated below. However, to set them into context, it is essential to point out that there is no single study here which reflects a test or an exploration of how these motives, attitudes, behavioural habits are integrated into campaign development.

3.12.1 Profile of Users:

Feroz and Vong (2014) show that males account for just under half of the video postings online, females (36%) and organisations last. Two thirds of the top 100 viewed videos were posted by people in the 30-49 age bracket (18-29 16 %), mainly from the USA (78%), then the UK (8%). Williams and Trammell (2005) find that consumers are less resistant to email virals. Those who are in a state of flow are more willing to share games (Gurau, 2008). Exploring this flow, neural processes were mapped by Falk et al (2013) finding that those associated with remuneration were activated when messages were initially encountered, before transmission. The papers come at the topic from politics, gaming, and neuroscience rather than a marketing or direct advertising view.

A number of papers move beyond individuals to profiling customer behaviour in groups. Carida and Colurcio (2013) find that consumers engaged in diffusion (e.g. using engaging technology, wikis, etc.), their responses to creative aspects (e.g. humour, novelty, dissent etc.) and active engagement during the campaign are critical to success (also Huang, Lin and Lin, 2009 on positive attitudes). Using YouTube, Afrasiabi Rad and Benyoucef (2012) find that sharing was greater among those uninvolved in a friendship or a subscription group (also Camarero and San Jose, 2011). Sastry (2012) researches groups at the bottom of the dissemination curve, finding that those at the end of the tail constitute half of those "liking".

The remaining 6 articles have a passing relationship to virals (Mapaye, 2013 explores media story sharing; Morrish and Deacon, 2011 on entrepreneurial marketing; Eccleston and Griseri, 2008 on Web 2.0 features; East, Hammond and Wright (2007) and Romaniuk (2007) study consumer interactions in WOM, negative and positive types). Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czaplewski (2006) link research themes – motivation, attitudes, behaviour in the context of customer knowledge exchange.

The studies profiling viral customers investigate individuals but very few are from the marketing or advertising discipline. Those papers describing groups of customers provide important insight into media consumption and habits; however, with the exception of Carida and Colurcio (2013), Afrasiabi Rad and Benyoucef (2012) who add some insight into creative appeal, these are mainly linked to activities that support

sharing. How creative managers target audience profiles and involve consumers in their viral campaign design process is an area which remains under researched.

3.12.2 Customer Behaviour Studies of Attitudes:

Among the 15 articles, 8 are partially related to virals. 4 are general studies of consumer attitudes to social media (Kim, Periyayya and Eik, 2013 among generation Y; Verma, 2013 across decision-making phases; Cho and Ha, 2011 in relation to film websites ticketing; Chu, 2011 among Facebook groups showing that it has no effect on virals; Compton and Pfau, 2004 probe message immunisation for credit cards). Leach, Liu and Winsor, (2008) find post-conference attendance attitude is the most important factor predicting future intentions. Nassar (2012) and Singhal and Singh (2012) find positive managerial attitudes in tourism and retail. Finally, Notarantonio and Quigley Jr. (2009) buzz and traditional advertising finding that buzz is more influential.

Among the remaining 7 papers, 3 are dedicated to studying virals specifically on mobile devices. Palka, Pousttchi and Wiedemann (2009) initiated this area of study, locating the key factors influencing consumers in the message receipt, processing, and further transmission (also Pousttchi and Wiedemann, 2007; Wiedemann, Haunstetter and Pousttchi, 2008). Liu and Zhou (2012) advance their work to forecast viral attitudes, purposes and habits for amusing and functional virals, finding positively (also Yang, Zhou and Liu, 2012; Yang and Zhou, 2011).

3 research papers test specific aspects of consumer behaviour and how this relates to particular aspects of virals. Level of involvement with music and its effects on disgust appeals and sharing actions is evaluated by Henke, (2012), concluding that the low involvement customers were still likely to transmit and attend events. This is in agreement with Zernigah and Sohail (2011) but they also find that attitudes to virals, to amusement and information and trust are important (also Shimp, Wood and Smarandescu, 2007 showing hyperbole has the reverse effect).

To summarise the research of customer attitudes to virals, it is clear that positive attitudes to social networking (though not Facebook groups), to viral messages, to certain types of appeals (emotions, testimonials, social purpose), to buzz and attitudes to services are important in determining likely sharing. Campaigns would need to

leverage these qualities but studies have still to investigate how such attitudes are considered or integrated when advertising agencies produce virals.

3.12.3 Customer Behaviour Studies Addressing Motivation:

There are 13 empirical studies which investigate customer motivation to engage with virals which will be considered in the last part of this section. 6 further studies also develop a framework to capture the drivers behind viral success, evaluated at the start here. 4 papers combine investigations of motives with profiling particular groups. 3 explore issues of trustworthiness and allegiances. A further 2 papers test the impact of incentives on motivation. The final 7 research papers (Schulze, Scholer and Skiera, 2014; Lee and Lee, 2012; Veil, Petrun and Roberts, 2012; Carter, Donovan adnd Jalleh, 2011; Payne et al, 2011; Ermecke, Mayrhofer and Wagner, 2009; Sun, 2006) study motivation from various perspectives, totalling 35.

Among the 6 papers considering customer behaviour to develop a model to explain virals is De Bruyn and Lilien's (2008) multi-stage model used to help identify the role WOM plays during each stage of a viral recipients' decision-making process, including the conditions that moderate such influence. They found tie strength facilitated awareness (also van Noort, Antheunis and van Reijmersdal, 2012); kinship prompted their attention (Cho, Jisu and Faber, 2012; Veil, Petrun and Roberts, 2012) and demographic likeness had an adverse effect on each step of the process (see Arkoudis and Samanta, 2012 on EU demographics).   Coyle et al (2011) show that viral consumers are more attentive to others (see Fan et al, 2013), more inclined to share routine Internet materials (Ahmet and Mattila, 2012), have high involvement with brands, and unusually trust has a reduced impact (contrary to Roy et al, 2014 on trust).

San José-Cabezudo and Camarero-Izquierdo (2012) contextualise the work of Coyle into social capital theory. Huang, Chen and Wang (2012) propose a quality perception - benefit expectation - intention model of viral sharing disposition (see Toubia, Stephen and Freud, 2011 and Dasari and Anandakrishnan, 2010 who encourage sales promotions). Pescher, Reichhart and Spann (2014) create a model for mobiles, this time in three phases – perceived elevated functionality and high amusement are prone to move to the interest and referral phases of the model (also Yang, 2013; Yoshida,

2013; Carter, Donovan and Jalleh, 2011). These models are relevant to assessing the effects of virals but produce limited insight into how, if, and why creative managers seek such benefits for example.

3.12.3.1   Motivation:

Most of the research (13) here is focussed on discovering why consumers download, open virals and why share them (e.g. Miquel-Romero and Adame-Sanchez, 2013; Alexandrov, Lilly and Babakus, 2013; Xie and Kukla, 2012; Iconaru and Octav-Ionut, 2011; Harvey, Stewart and Ewing, 2011). Lee, Ham and Kim (2013) find only happiness and escapism had affirmative influence on customer attitudes (also Nelson-Field, Riebe and Newstead, 2013; Bagga and Singh, 2012; Xie and Kukla, 2012; Chiu et al, 2007 who also note the spread of broadband). A survey of college students' motivations to pass along online content, found more individualistic and more altruistic do (Ho and Dempsey, 2010). Hung-Chang, Monle and Jin-Rung (2006) found NWOM affected males; PWOM affected female.

The most wide-ranging and influential papers are from Lewis et al (2005) and Phelps et al (2004). In their seminal work they evaluate viral consumer attitudes, motivations, and behaviours. Started the mavenism trend (from Gladwell, 2000), the focus on motivations, the importance of particular appeals (fun, entertainment), and particular categories of virals, matching these with the desires and habits of consumers (same group of researchers as Phelps et al, 2004).

3.13 *Studies Categorised under the Advertising Theme*

Among 13 advertising articles, there are two sub-groups evident from the approaches taken and the findings – studies that test a particular feature and those at macro level, and it is the latter which are first analysed. Gecti and Dastan (2013) in Turkey take a macro view of advertising and communications agencies concluding that technologies have had a positive impact on operational business performance, including financial efficiencies through reducing marketing outputs. What Gecti and Dastan (2013) do is at the macro level, meaning that there is scope for examination of technologies on a micro level for example within teams, departments. Saxena and Khanna (2013) also

found hedonic elements more likely to be well-received. This is consistent with prior research but how this hedonism is infused into ads is as yet unexplored.

With a similar perspective, Westland (2012) evaluates social media in film promotion in the USA, demonstrating that a relatively low increase in SM presence produces a threefold growth in online search. Why, which and how SM is considered in the creation and development of a viral marketing campaign is still under-investigated. Gold (2012) focusing on health promotions via social networks in Australia find that it is possible to reach difficult groups. Viral marketing tends to require mass rather than niche audiences, and Gold's (2012) work is really about peer to peer transmission rather than exponential message spread (similar to Theriault et al 2012) also in Australia). User-generated copycat music videos are examined by Vellar (2012), finding that the original artist encourages copying by integrating audience-relevant "hooks" to encourage sharing, How do creatives conceive of such "hooks" to encourage viral marketing?

The second grouping of papers test one or more technical features. For example, Hautz (2014) compares consumer perceptions of credibility and production skills between user-generated videos and agency produced ones in relation to a tourist destination across Austria and Germany, finding that lack of technical production values for user-generated videos increases trust but the size of this advantage is reduced in high quality videos. Video quality is a narrow focus on a particular technical feature that could inform the production of a video. There is therefore, opportunity to focus further investigation into the broader creative process. Bakshy et al (2012) in the USA also investigate source relationships, moderating social cues/ ties to test its impact on WOM ads, finding positively for strong ties. This is a helpful insight in ad design. However, adding social cues is realistically only possible at the first seeding of the advert and viral marketing after this stage, is largely in the hands of the consumer to decide if to add or not add any personal commentary.

Like Hautz (2014), in a Chinese study (Hsieh, Hsieh and Tang, 2012) examine technical values (multimedia elements in the advert) coupled with humour and reduced persuasive intent, finding enhanced willingness to receive and pass-along videos. These points are relevant to creative campaign development; however, there is room for further exploration of the nature of humour ideation, how creative managers

conceive of persuasion, and if at all, in relation to viral marketing. Evidently, there is too some element of contradiction between the low production quality video findings in Hautz (2014) and multimedia effects found by Hsieh, Hsieh and Tang (2012) recognising the different nature of the countries in which the studies were conducted.

Likewise, researchers in the USA (Taylor, Strutton and Thompson, 2012) test different viral ads to understand to what extent engaging is an expression of consumer identity finding positively but also that entertainment and category interest enhance predisposition to share. Allied to these arguments about product relevance, in the UK, countering other studies in different contexts, Stampoulidou and Pantelidis (2012) conclude that in the case of reviews, text is more effective than videos. Reviews tend to be typically based on logical appeals rather than emotional ones, the latter established in the literature as essential to viral messages. Garcia (2012) explores political video ads on YouTube concluding that videos that attracted positive emotional comments allow greater virality but memory was stronger for the less positive ads. These are relevant to advertising planning and to creative development but how and to what extent creative practitioners employ, discard emotion in their development of viral ads are still undetermined. This argument is supported by Southgate, Westoby and Page (2010) who study viral ads in the USA and UK, finding that unique qualities and consumer perceptions of a recipient's likelihood to further share are key to achieving viral spread but also contradict Taylor, Strutton and Thompson (2012) concluding that category or brand interest do not appear to play a significant role.

3.13.1 Summary of Gaps Among Studies Addressing Advertising Issues:

The major conclusion across these papers is that none of them focus on viral marketing directly but actually from a variety of different starting points – social media, health promotion, technical features of advertising production. This suggests a significant range of avenues for future exploration taking an advertising perspective on virals. Below is a summary from these papers:

Cross-campaign:

> Scope for examination of technological impact on a micro level for example within teams, departments
>
> Why, which and how social media is considered in the creation and development of a viral marketing campaign is still under-investigated.
>
> Reconciling the need for mass audiences with niche interest (e.g. product category impacts, brand involvement etc.)
>
> Broader creative process

Creative design and development:

> How do creatives conceive of such "hooks" to encourage viral diffusion?
>
> Understanding how is hedonism infused into viral ads. Related to this how, why and to what extent creative practitioners employ, discard emotion in their development of viral ads.
>
> There is scope for further exploration of the nature of humour ideation, how creative managers conceive of persuasion.
>
> Technical considerations such as quality of video production and inclusion of social cues.

The next section below will assess the contributions of those articles categorised under advertising but with links to DM, CB, VMC and C strands of the literature.

3.14 *Advertising Combined with another Research Theme*

Here the dominant theme is the role of emotions (7 of 14). Viral marketing characteristics are studied in Australia by Brown, Bhadury and Pope (2010), specifically the impact violent comedy has on ad engagement, brand recall, pass-along intentions and attitude development. They find positively for funny ads. Given the global nature of virals, their study does not address why creative managers choose one example of comedy over another. Some comedic violence can be quite upsetting to viewers and therefore, Eckler and Bolls (2011) take a different angle examining pleasant tone and its link to message attitude in the USA. They find positive effects on attitudes to the viral video, the advertiser and on forwarding intentions. Neutral is less effective and negative emotional tones have least impact. This is important in terms of the style of message that would be approved by creative teams. However, exploration of the

extent to which advertising creative teams actually engage in such conscious decisions is still to be conducted.

Exploring viral marketing characteristics of videos which generate higher copycat rates, Shifman (2012) finds some common aspects - "normal" individuals, playing with masculine stereotypes, use of comedy, straightforwardness, repetition and quirky storylines. Studying Australian customer behaviour, Nelson-Field, Riebe and Newstead (2013) examine arousal and valence to determine their influence on video sharing habits (on extreme behaviour see Schlegelmilch and Ollenburg, 2013) They show that elevated arousal is mainly responsible for sharing, with valence having a lesser role. Cho, Jisu and Faber (2012) research informational/entertainment characteristics in viral ads while English, Sweetser and Ancu's (2011) conclude ethos appeals were dominant then logos and pathos.

Half of the papers address the use of emotions in virals. The remaining 7 articles which cross other research themes and advertising take a more general approach to virals. In a Chinese study, Li, Lee and Lien (2012) propose a social endorser–based model to match consumer profiles on social media (see Wu, Hu and Zhang, 2013 on advertising on SM; Liu-Thompkins, 2012 on advert involvement and Liu-Thompkins and Rogerson, 2012). Aral and Walker (2011b) show that passive-broadcast viral characteristics produce a 246% growth but active-personalised result in a 98% boost. Waters and Jones' (2011) USA article on the other hand, examine the characteristics of non-profit organisations' videos finding they are used principally to provide information and share corporate background. Carida and Colurcio (2013) study is comprehensive, on customer behaviour, viral characteristics and advertising. They concentrate on the effects: cognitive, behavioural and economic.

These studies reinforce the absence of research into the process that produces these behaviour, effects and systems. If that is addressed, Brand managers and advertising agencies would be able to gain insight at the point at which they can influence the design – the only stage at which they really have such influence and control of virals.

3.15 *Studies of Viral Marketing Characteristics (VMC)*

There are 61 articles which attempt descriptive profiling of virals (from a total of 69, 7 of which are considered above). A number of publications (9), particularly from countries contributing single studies are basic introductions, in most cases based on existing literature (5) and are therefore not analysed in detail. There are 13 articles which have an indirect relationship to virals but the issues they consider are quite different – music dubs, knowledge management systems behind virals, WOM in various forms etc. A couple of papers (Lis, 2013; Chaarlas and Rajkumar, 2014) study the established topic of trust among senders. There are a further 3 articles that suggest ways in which social media can be used to generate viral spread (Abedniya and Mahmouei; 2010; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011; Hausmann, 2012).

3.15.1 Characteristics of Viral Campaigns:

There are 15 studies which categorise and describe the common features of virals post campaign launch. Appealing content that comprises amusing and fascinating elements (also Gosselin and Poitras, 2008 in Canada using a health game), about simple products can inspire habitual behaviour and prominent sharing if it is well targeted and effectively employs cross-platform technologies (Dobele, Toleman and Beverland, 2005; also Woerndl, 2008). In agreement with Hodgetts et al (2006), Ferguson (2008) this time in the USA, notes that campaign evaluation is an issue but argues that not just in health but in general, there is no certain formula to guarantee viral spread. He does identify placement (also Liu and Qu, 2011), careful consideration of content and risqué appeals as essential elements (similar to Dobele, Toleman and Beverland, 2005).

Kalyanam, McIntyre and Masonis (2007) conclude that even where the product has features that support sharing (also Woerndl, 2008); it is difficult to identify patterns to achieve viral diffusion (Silberer, Henning and Steinmann, 2012; Liu and Qu, 2011). In their USA study, they found that brands have to monitor campaigns and simulate incremental improvements (also Wallsten, 2010 in the USA) but what they refer to as the "viral engine" (the systems) to launch and sustain the campaign has to be ready (in agreement Woerndl, 2008 detail the transmission pattern). In a study of mobile

technology, consistent with the work of Kalyanam, McIntyre and Masonis (2007), Pousttchi and Wiedemann (2007) (also Wiedemann, Haunstetter and Pousttchi, 2008) in Germany develop a series of dynamics which can support virals –

a.) utility (Woerndl, 2008, generalises to the nature of the product),

b.) sender incentives,

c.) perceived user-friendliness,

d.) access to free materials,

e.) access to influencers (also Allsop, Bassett and Hoskins, 2007 in the USA who find varying power; Wallsten, 2010 in politics; Liu and Qu, 2011),

f.) first in category,

g.) volume (also Wallsten, 2010),

h.) ability to generate sharing (but dependent on the specific situation according to Allsop, Bassett and Hoskins, 2007; Ferguson, 2008).

There are 3 other papers which are only partly relevant (Kozinets et al, 2010; Celtek, 2010; Kahl 2012).

Figure 3-6 integrates the advertising campaign planning stages against current research into the characteristics of virals. It is necessary to also show the pre-launch phase of advertising campaign development and the post-launch phase to illustrate the fullness of the planning cycle. Consequently, this evaluation evidences the lack of attention to the pre-launch phase. The domain of influence exercised by the brand/ advertising planner and the domain of the public/ consumer across this cycle provides confirmation of the paucity of research into the brand planners' domain with regard to virals. In this way, it shows that the advertising planning stages are under investigated; the agency/ brand owner perspective is also lacking research attention with the majority of studies focussed on completed virals, on customer interactions at launch and after, on campaign diffusion, the media and the effects.

To conclude, none of these papers address the issue of on-going feedback across these advertising planning stages, how these processes iterate. There is no study which considers these characteristics from the advertising agency domain - creative production - creative considerations, the roles of digital creatives, their conceptions of

new creative ideas, whether studies are inadvertent or specifically commercial, to use the bi-fold characterisation of Woerndl (2008).
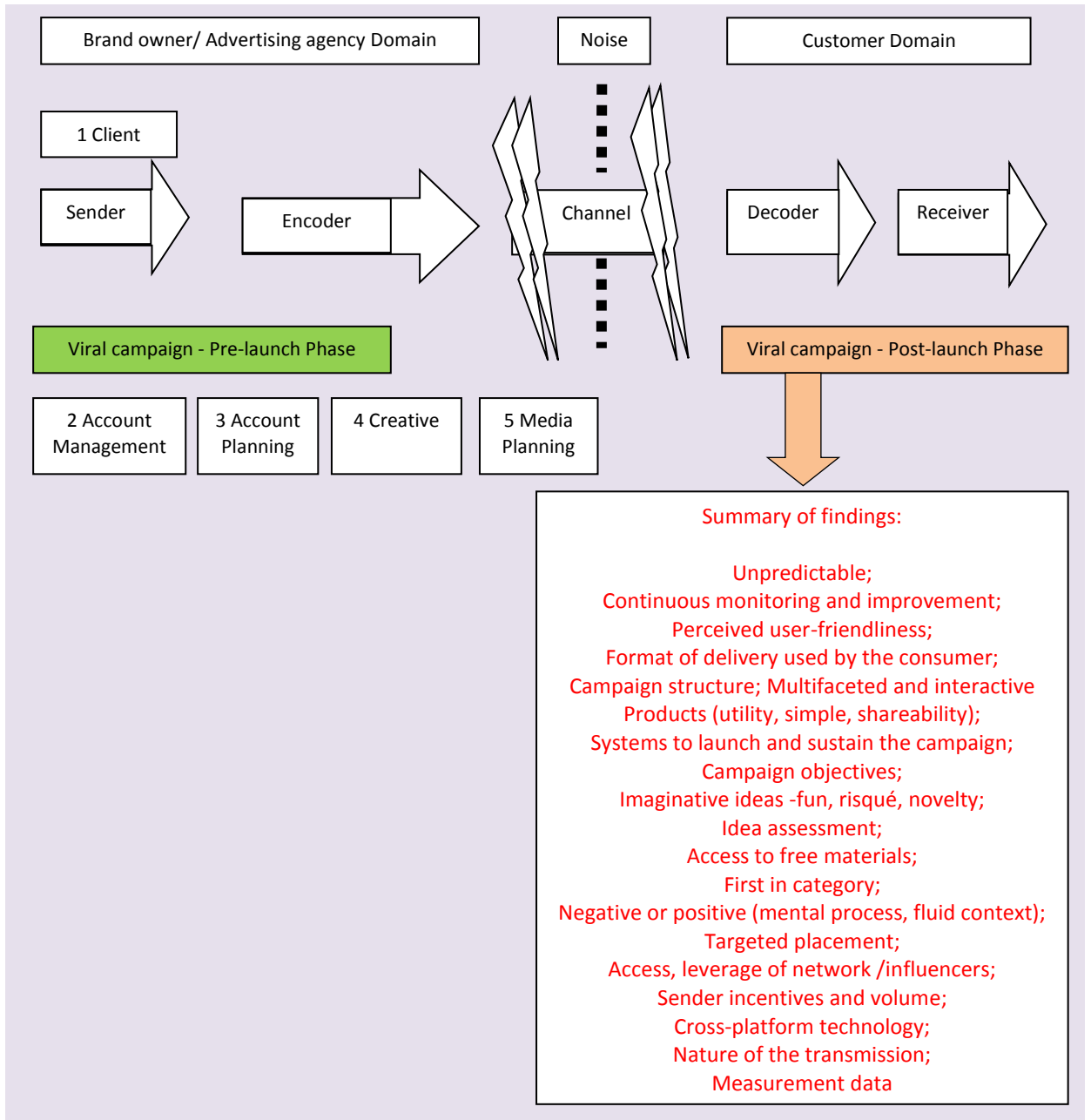
Figure 3-6 Summary of studies of viral characteristics showing concentration of papers at the campaign post-launch phase (Raghubansie, 2017)

3.15.2 Particular Characteristics of Viral Campaigns:

A few (7) studies investigate particular creative characteristics - irony versus direct messages (Pehlivan et al, 2013); message length and sophistication targeting children (Cheyne et al, 2013); readability in written formats (Bigi, 2013); how YouTube might be used (Bal et al, 2013) and the nature of commentary additions during message sharing (Blichfeldt and Smed, 2015). Hansen and Johnson (2012) test the traditional question of trusted sources.

3.15.3 Papers Examining the Emotional Characteristics of Virals:

Among the total VMC papers, there is a core (12) of articles which focus on emotion. Lindgreen and Vanhamme (2005) demonstrated the importance of emotion – in particular the element of surprise. In one of the first empirical studies, they started what has become the dominant strand of articles from the marketing and advertising perspective. The next major study is from Porter and Golan (2006) whose empirical work led to the first definition of viral advertising (refer to previous chapter) through a juxtaposition with TV ads. Establishing the emotion themed research they conclude that virals depend on a creative that piques the emotion of consumers by employing unvarnished content. Golan with Zaidner (2008) this time, continue the original work, finding supremacy of fun and sexual references in virals. Also examining a particular aspect of emotion, enthusiasm (and its link to entertainment), Brozek, Lehner and Schoditsch (2013) confirm that the commercial nature of the message does not affect positivity. The study from Alhabash (2013) is not strictly relevant. It considers the emotions associated with sharing anti-cyberbullying messages but concludes similarly that positive emotions encourage transmission. These studies do not consider the viewpoint of the brands nor of the creative agencies which actually produce the virals. As noted elsewhere, understanding the extent, nature and experiences of creative teams in their employment of emotions is unexplored. Taking the findings of these specific elements of emotion would serve as a basis for an initial examination of if they hold, how, where and why they are considered in campaign design.

Considering a broader range of emotions across viral campaigns, Strapparava, Guerini and Ozbal (2011) show that the emotional impact can be sub-divided into different

types of effect – pleasure, sharing, eWOM, discussion and provocation. On a similar scale, a decision tree based on motives and attitudes is developed to explain unintentional processes which a consumer might be undertaking in forwarding or deleting virals (Botha and Reyneke, 2013). A model which reflects the influence of emotions on sharing activities is proposed by Binggeser et al (2015), finding in favour of upbeat emotions and against negative emotions. In agreement with these conclusions, Cohen (2013) attempts to forecast across a range of affections - efficacy, sentiment and gratification – concluding that positive experiences do predict sharing during online games. Negative feelings forecast game sharing after play but in terms of serious games sharing occurs regardless of the type of emotion. Following similar topics but in a more general test of involvement, it was found that those who are more engaged in the experience are more likely to share regardless of whether the content is positive or negative (Henke, 2013). While observing the range, instead of examining type of emotion, Botha (2014) finds that it is not the precise sensation, but the strength of the feeling that produces the viral effect.

These overarching studies are valuable in informing account planning, the work of creative teams and discussions with clients. However, their focus is very much on the effects of virals. Prior models of advertising campaign planning for conventional phenomenon (prior chapter refers) would suggest that if creatives included specific types or a range of emotions, even with well executed diffusion, it will not consistently produce successful virals. The question of how such emotions are integrated when virals are being designed remains underdeveloped in the extant research.

Over this sub-section, strengths in the current literature were assessed but also shortcomings based on the nature (basic introductions), the contextual factors (well established ideas of trust and social media), relevance (indirect), general elements (across viral characteristics which show a paucity of work examining the creative perspective), particular creative characteristics (among 7 papers, 2 are important to studying creative design of virals) and emotion (important but silent in terms of creative planning perspectives). As a general evaluative conclusion to the discussion of the characteristics of virals, it is evident that there is no study which examines the pre-launch stage.

3.15.4   Summary of Level One:

Research into consumer motivations, behaviour and attitudes dominate this level of the paradigm. Studies, which have a different focus, also touch on these areas. The user profile articles are also linked to the studies of the psychological factors within a broader consumer focussed grouping of research. Empirical work from the managerial perspectives has a limited appearance in the literature. Research into the characteristics of viral marketing adverts is an important sub-category of studies. However, it is linked to what virals mean in strategic terms and the impact of technological platforms on the phenomenon. There is no empirical work that captures the insights of creative intermediaries responsible for designing viral campaigns.

3.16 *Paradigm Funnel: - Level Two – Analytical Methods:*

Most of the papers which study diffusion modelling (184) select and apply various analytical models to viral phenomenon (except 9 considered under level 1). Under level two of the paradigm funnel, 175 of these articles are categorised. Consistent with the paradigm funnel and with Kuhn's scientific investigation foci (Nairn, Berthon and Money, 2007), the first stage of research is the empirical, and then the tools used in developing the research, seen at this level. The research here focuses on comparisons of various analytical tools in different contexts. A list of the publications for level 2 can be found in Appendix VII.

There are 14 case studies; 10 content analysis, 6 literature-based, 3 which are based on surveys and 1 interview. For the remaining 141, statistical algorithms form the prime methodological tool for the majority of papers. Most of the latter studies come from Computing and Engineering (C&E) (e.g. Aslay et al, 2015; Iribarren and Moro, 2011; Li, Lai and Chen, 2011; Narayanam and Narahari, 2011; Ben-Zwi et al, 2011; Ben-Zwi et al, 2009; Mossel and Roch, 2010). They conduct experiments on various secondary data sets or simulations to test if their mathematical model can predict message diffusion patterns. The dominant analytical framework is social network analysis (Zhao, Chen and Zhao, 2012; Katona, Zubcsek and Sarvary, 2011).

To firstly consider the 141 studies, most papers (128) focus on influence maximisation. The remaining 14 papers make the broader role of the network (taxonomy) in diffusing their subject (See appendix VII). Diffusion is an important element of understanding virals and it would be logical to conclude that advertising media decisions are influenced by the findings generated in this area. On balance, however, they produce little insight into how creative and media planners work together in making decisions which might affect diffusion patterns. The extent to which and how creative decisions are influenced by the roles of influencers in the design of viral advertising campaigns, is an unexplored aspect of the literature.

From among the total 141, there are 15 which study blogs (5) and micro-blogs (10), the latter being in the main Twitter. A further 10 examine the ways in social networks facilitate viral dissemination (e.g. Mehta et al, 2015; Long and Wong, 2014; Chalermsook et al, 2013; Goel, Watts and Goldstein, 2012). Creative managers' views about their use of such platforms in their decision-making processes to develop the virals is unrepresented. Pricing, promotions and incentives are tested to determine the impact on sharing in 8 studies (e.g. Dayama, Karnik and Narahari, 2012; Arthur et al, 2009; He, Cattelan and Kirovski, 2008; Richardson and Domingos, 2002). A few studies concentrate on removing fake and inactive users (e.g. Rad and Benyoucef, 2011; Amini, Draief and Lelarge 2009). Gaming perspectives and its impact on sharing is the emphasis of a further 3 (Karmaker, Rahman and Bari, 2011; Banerjee, Al-Qaheri and Hassanien, 2010; Balcan, Blum and Mansour, 2009). This area could be potentially rich in terms of consumer activities but also in terms of creative views of diffusion strategies but that research perspective is underdeveloped.

The majority of these articles use non-commercial secondary data sets such as academic research portals and Twitter on which to test their proposals (e.g. Serrano, Iglesias and Garijo, 2015; Silva et al, 2013; Kwon and Han 2013; Xie et al, 2013; Harrigan, Achananuparp and Lim, 2012; Romero et al, 2011; Stonedahl, Rand and Wilensky, 2010). There are therefore many opportunities to collect data directly from other parties involved with viral phenomena – brands, influencers, consumers, producers of these campaigns etc.

Influencers and their effects on nodes and others account for the majority of work (e.g. Abbassi, Bhaskara and Misra, 2015; Abadi and Khayyambashi, 2014; Liu et al,

2014; Goyal et al, 2013; Iribarren and Moro, 2011; Li, Lai and Chen, 2011; Narayanam and Narahari, 2011; Ackerman, Ben-Zwi and Wolfovitz, 2010; Mossel and Roch, 2010; Trusov, Bodapati and Bucklin, 2010; Southwell et al, 2010). Another sub-set examines the power of ties and links between individuals (Zhang, Li and Wang, 2013; Sharma and Shrivastava, 2013; Aral and Walker, 2011; Katona, Zubcsek and Sarvary, 2011; Southwell et al, 2010). Applying social network analysis to a community in Europe, Katona, Zubcsek and Sarvary (2011) develop and use a model to identify adopters in the diffusion process (also Li, Lai and Chen, 2011; Trusov, Bodapati and Bucklin, 2010).

A further grouping of outputs at this level examines the distribution of information over the network, mainly developing branching models to map that movement (Cicalese et al, 2014; Iribarren and Moro, 2011; Narayanam and Narahari, 2011; Ackerman, Ben-Zwi and Wolfovitz, 2010). Others study the selection of the target audience (PTSS) to distribute the message (Silva et al, 2013; Yang and Leskovec, 2010).

3.16.1   Summary of Level Two:

Research, which applied various social network analysis techniques, dominates the existing body of work. Studies use analytical models to examine participants as part of a system, the power of their ties, the nature of their links and the movement of shared information over the network. The lack of articles exploring the creative perspective in this level of the paradigm funnel demonstrates the research gap.

3.17 *Level Three – Specific Theories:*

The paradigm funnel narrows here to 17% of papers focusing on particular theoretical perspectives. The majority are literature reviews (59) with case studies making up the next group (12 papers). They are basic and introductory (e.g. Kataria and Hasan, 2014; Manap and Adzharudin, 2013; Kaplan, 2012). However, 14 papers have made important contributions to the development of theoretical insight into virals (Petrescu and Korgaonkar, 2011). Miles (2014) is considered under level 4; Mills (2012) and Rajagopalan and Subramani (2003) under level 1.

3.17.1   Summary of Level Three:

The small number of papers at level three is normal but the absence of research into campaign antecedents identifies an opportunity for further theorectical exploration.

3.18 *Level Four – Deep Assumptions:*

In this final level, papers which evaluate the underlying assumptions of the cannon are identified.   The Miles (2014) paper would fall here. It is assessed in the section on metaphor. The lack of research points to the need for extending current studies.

3.19 *Discussion and Suggestion for Further Research*

The paradigm funnel is employed to evaluate the extant research. It is a structured approach with clarity of categories, producing multi-level insight. Empirical issues result from level 1; the analytical frameworks are then identified at level 2; followed by theoretical contibutions at level 3 – noting the key concepts that can be used in further research. The final level shows epistemological factors that could be challenged.

Level	Number	%
Empirical Observation	32	50%
Analytical Convention	24	37
Specific Theory	8	13
Deep Assumptions	1	0

Table 3-7 Studies at each Level of the Paradigm

The consequence of this approach is to locate gaps from each level of assessment – noting patterns, underdeveloped areas and conflicts. The reflection on each level evaluates potential departures between fundamental assumptions and empirical work. Certain publications, key academics and subjects emerge, ultimately leading to questions of paradigmatic movements. These are consistent with Berthon, Nairn and Money (2003). This study has tested and enhanced the application of the paradigm funnel as a framework to evaluate literature.

3.20 *Chapter Summary:*

Over 18 years, the engagement with VM is apparent across disciplines, showing its value to academics and managers. The general area of e-marketing is now better established (Eid and El-Gohary, 2013; El-Gohary, 2012); however VM is less visible in marketing. The table below condenses the findings from the state of art review conducted across the introduction, background and the two chapters which evaluated the core theory of the viral concept and the extant research respectively.

3.21 *Summary of Future Research into Virals*

	Current Research
1	Diffusion – influence maximisation, social networks, taxonomy etc.
2	Customer behaviour – profiles, motives, attitudes etc.
3	Organisational concerns – measurement, persuasion, brand effects, regulation, CSR etc.
4	Viral characteristics – emotions, technology, features etc.
	Gaps in the Literature
1	No study at the pre-launch stage of virals. This is the domain where the advertising manager and the brand owners can influence virals.
2	Absence of the views of creative intermediaries - the people who conceive, develop, and manage the production of virals. The roles of creative directors and heads of digital are neglected in favour of influencers and networks. Perceptions of the phenomenon, its role and value, the nature of this type of creative technique – managing risqué creative ideas, sharing power with consumers, it global reach, difficulty of objective setting, considerations of use and applications of "big data".
3	The assumptions underlying the viral metaphor in campaign development, how creative, planners and media managers consider social media, how they integrate thinking about diffusion patterns. If the network structure is critical for example, it is worthwhile to investigate in what ways creative teams do integrate this into

	their concepting, design processes and messaging strategies. The extent to which and how creative design decisions are affected by the roles of influencers.
4	There is scope for development of broader insight into creative process – the extant research shows a narrow focus on the characteristics of virals. The question of how such emotions are integrated when virals are being designed remains underdeveloped in the extant research. How creative managers use audience profiles, consumer attitudes and motives in their viral campaign design.
5	From a cross-agency perspective, the ways in which new phenomenon such as virals have effected changes among creative departments and teams, relationships with other agencies such as specialist digital agencies.
6	Dominance of social network analysis, computing and engineering perspectives, and descriptive studies illustrates opportunities to examine questions of how and why, to collect richer, more detailed insight.
7	Theoretical opportunities to produce new concepts of advertising campaign planning processes and management for virals. Scope to explore deeper assumptions in practice and in light of these to re-imagine current advertising theory.

Table 3-9 Summary of future research into virals

The findings of this review illustrated that there are specific gaps in the literature that require further investigation. This thesis therefore has the following objectives and questions (also in chapter 1):

To capture and codify the views of creative managers on the concepts and messaging strategies considered and implemented in viral marketing campaigns.

To explicate, classify and explore the changes in advertising campaign planning processes which digital phenomena such as viral marketing have introduced.

To develop theoretical models for understanding viral marketing campaign creation and extend extant models of advertising creative process and agency management.

Questions related to RO1:

How and why do creative managers' conceive of their practices of viral advertising in the way they do?

How do they construct such campaigns and what are the implications for current models?

Questions related to RO2:

What is the nature of the changing role of advertising creative intermediaries resulting from digital marketing phenomena such as viral marketing?

What are the barriers and constraints which creative managers encounter and why and how are creative teams evolving solutions?

Most digital advertising agencies are small or medium-sized enterprises and tend to be independent, how are they managing the speed of technological and industry changes and why is in the manner in which they do?

Questions related to RO3:

What are the established models of advertising campaign management, creative development and planning?

How and why are these extant concepts changing based on the practice of viral marketing? How and why are there new aspects emerging based on the empirical data in this study?

The thesis adds to existing literature by observing future research trajectory in terms of method (qualitative), academic discipline (Business) and research subjects (creative intermediaries). Further research into these areas will advance knowledge.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter assesses the qualitative methodology utilised for this research. It discusses the social constructivist and realist philosophical background. The objectives of the research are outlined and the options for research tools evaluated to arrive at the choice of semi-structured interviews. The agency sampling is justified based on the market conditions and its suitability to this study closing with reflexive quality measures employed, including thematic analysis and peer review.

4.1 *Research Problem:*

What are the practices and assumptions which underlie the conception, design and creative management of digital phenomena such as viral marketing? If marketing and creative managers are to effectively make decisions about creative ideas for virals, to manage their teams and processes then there is need to understand and develop models which assist them (Tsang and Ren, 2015; Hackley, 2010).

4.1.1 Research Aim:

This study aims to contribute an absent perspective in the viral marketing literature. To be specific, the aim is to explore the views of the people who construct viral advertising campaigns in order to locate this phenomenon in the extant theory base, to identify creative process innovation and insight into the creative management changes within advertising agencies which have arisen in response to virals.

4.1.2 Research Objectives:

In order to achieve this, the following objectives form the basis of the research:

RO1:
To capture and codify the views of creative managers on the concepts and messaging strategies considered and implemented in viral marketing campaigns

RO2:

To explicate, classify and explore the changes in advertising campaign planning processes which digital phenomena such as viral marketing have introduced

RO3:

To develop theoretical models for understanding viral marketing campaign creation and extend extant models of advertising creative process and agency management

Initially, it would appear that RO1 could be achieved employing a positivist philosophy, a deductive approach, employing quantitative approaches such as a survey. However, looking at the research questions which underpin this RO shows the need to explore not only questions of what but also of how and why. It is therefore, less easy and appropriate to utilise a predetermined tool such as a survey. Given the limited range of studies in the area – there are few established protocols of what can be explored. Therefore, the requirement for flexibility to explore, to follow-up comments, to clarify prevents the employment of such an approach.

RO2 has elements which could be addressed employing data collection tools such as quantitative content analysis of campaigns over a timeframe. This especially relates to the classification of campaign creation processes for which there is established classical theoretical models. However, it is classification in relationship to an emergent phenomenon. The discovery of implicit assumptions requires an approach that could capture ideation processes including discarded ideas, "failed" campaign "stories" which produce richer understanding than content analysis for example. In addition, the changing nature of the media platforms which the phenomenon is distributed on requires a less rigid set of research tools.

In the case of RO3, it could be argued that a literature review would suffice. However as shown in the introduction and the last chapter, there are many studies from the computing and engineering fields but few studies in marketing and a handful in advertising. The thesis does not neglect the extant literature and does illuminate the misconceptions, inaccuracies and assumptions underlying viral marketing, indeed redefining it and locating it among current theories of marketing. However, digital phenomena such as viral marketing have presented major challenges to established creative houses, with small agencies, some located outside of London deemed more

responsive and equally competitive in digital. The nature and extent of relevance of classical theories in this context are therefore in flux, requiring a careful revaluation.

4.2 *Research Decisions*

There are a number of options available to a researcher to investigate phenomena and in this study to address the research problem and questions. The diagram below summarises these well.
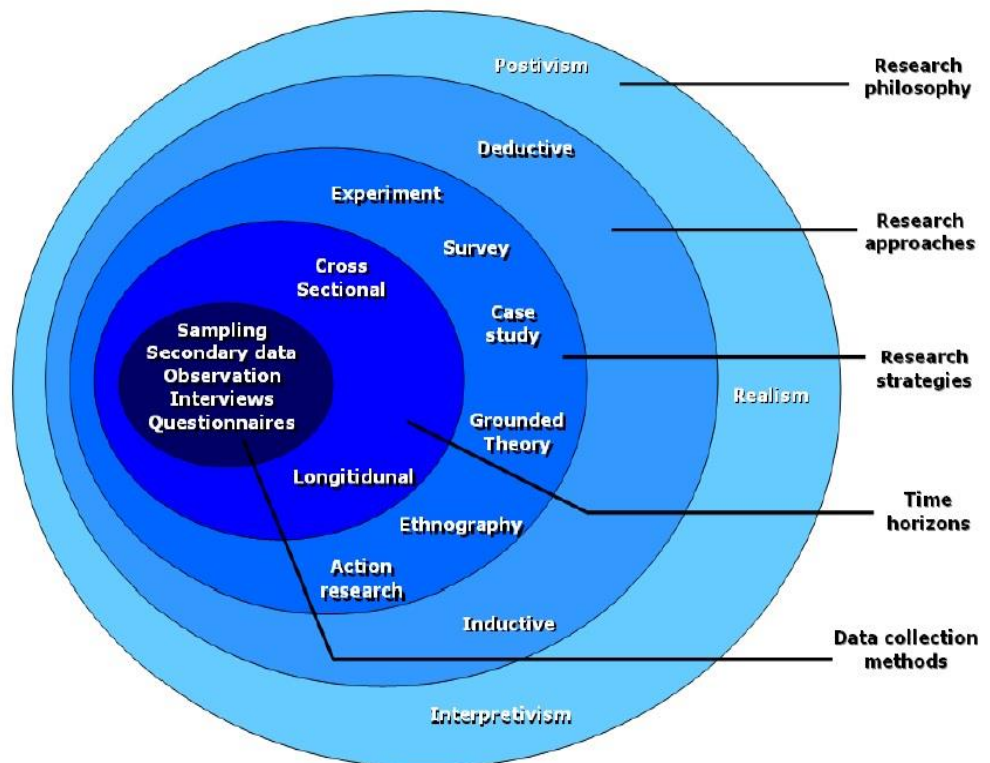
Figure 4-1 Research Decisions (adapted from Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, 2009)

4.3 *Philosophy:*

Epistemology is that aspect of philosophy which studies the fundamentals, compass and legitimacy of knowledge or in straightforward language, how humans develop understanding (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The philosophy strongly influences the particular methods applied to investigate phenomenon which contribute or challenge knowledge (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). The dominant philosophy in business research has been positivism as evidenced in the extant literature on viral phenomena

– simulations, surveys and experiments account for 54.3% of the papers reviewed in the previous chapter (e.g. Binggeser et al, 2015; Cho, Jisu and Faber, 2012; Aral and Walker, 2013; Gecti and Dastan, 2013; Eckler and Bolls, 2011). However, increasingly there is a post-positivist challenge to the assumptions and the methods (Corbin and Strauss, 2014; Cresswell, 1998).

It is therefore necessary for a brief discussion of these assumptions about the nature of reality within this study and how and what decisions have been taken (e.g. San Jose-Cabezudo and Camarero-Izquierdo, 2012; Cruz and Fill, 2008). This allows for harmonious approaches to be developed to meet the nature and the purpose of this particular study (Antwi and Hamza, 2015). It is argued that in the social sciences where the research subjects are often aspects of human behaviour (see Blaikie, 1993), it is even more important to consider different paradigms to study phenomena (Silverman, 2016). For example, in the extant literature on virals, there are only 1.7% (8) papers which adopt interviews, a data collection tool associated with social constructionism, the other main philosophical tradition (Denzin, 2012). See Table 4-1 for a summary of research tools employed to study viral phenomena.

Method	Philosophy	Number	%
Experiment	Positivism	6	
Simulation	Positivism	168	
Survey	Positivism	81	
Sub-total		255	55
Focus Group	Social Constructivism	1	
Interviews	Social Constructivism	8	
Sub-total		9	2
Case Study	Either	60	
Content Analysis	Either	44	
Mixed Method	Either or Mixed	14	
Literature Review	Mixed	82	
Sub-total		200	43
Total		464	

Table 4-4-1 Methods and links to philosophy in the extant research

4.4 *Positivism and Social Constructionism Paradigms*

There are many alternate and modified terms and considerable debate about the meaning and implications of these two main approaches (Denzin, 2012; Baker, 2003). An indication of the characteristic methodological distinctions might best be able to demonstrate the differences. These are summarised in Table 4-2.

Methodological Concerns	Positivism	Social Constructionism
Aims	Discovery	Invention
Starting Points	Hypothesis	Meanings
Designs	Experiment	Reflexivity
Techniques	Measurement	Conversation
Analysis/ Interpretation	Verification/ Falsification	Sense-making
Outcomes	Causality	Understanding

Table 4-2 Methodological Implications of Different Epistemologies (Source: Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002, p. 34)

Denscombe (2002, p. 14) states that positivism applies the natural science model to "*investigations of social phenomena and explanations of the social world*". It is reliant on empirical observation, drawing conclusions to validate interpretations made of the reality which already exists in the world (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Social constructionism or interpretivism as it is also termed holds that social reality is individual. They believe people react to being studied and it is therefore not possible to gain objective knowledge about social phenomena (Silverman, 2016).

The positivist thinks that the aim of science is to focus on what can be observed and measured (Age, 2011). So, sentiment (though partly quantifiable) and cognition would be considered unacceptable subjects, for example. These ideas are set up as the pure sciences, to discover "truth", employing a deductive approach (Riff, Lacy and Fico, 2014; Cresswell, 2013).

There are philosophical positions which reject the positivist view, the most polarised being intepretivism or social constructivism (Corbin and Strauss, 2014; Cresswell, 2013). Meaning is being created and re-created all the time – "constructed" – resulting

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in multiple views on a situation (Denzin, 2012). Therefore, the context that affects these interpretations has to be understood. The world exists in multiple realities where researchers are also involved and work with others in sense-making (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015). Its approach is inductive and not necessarily generalizable (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Insights into people's cognition and emotions are as important as what they are saying and doing (Cresswell, 1998). Given the individual, subjective nature of this paradigm, the methods tend to be qualitative (Daymon and Holloway, 2011). Self-reflection is an important element to reduce the risk of the researcher framing the interpretation in their own mind only (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011).

4.5 *Social Constructionism & Reflexivity in this Study*

Exploration is the main aim of this study. Following the conclusion from the literature review, the lack of representation of creative managers' views on this phenomenon, it is necessary to understand their working assumptions, indicating that deeper investigation is required. In the initial phase of studying a new issue, data should be collected on what the term means to the people being researched (Silverman, 2016). In other words, to continuously develop the initial conceptions to accommodate new ideas and to then refine these as more data is collected; there is need for reflexivity (Berger, 2015). In order to meet the research objectives - to explore viewpoints, to show campaign design innovations and construct frameworks for understanding virals, data collection techniques based around conversations are more appropriate (Silverman, 2016). Conversations allow depth of exploration, opportunities to follow-up, to question, to ask for clarification and so on (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015).

The reflexive process referred to is also indicative of an approach to the analysis of empirical data – it is focused on making sense of the lived realities of creative management engaged with the production of virals (Yin, 2015). Consistent with the exploratory aim of the study, the achievement of the research objectives will result in better understanding of how advertising teams conceive of, develop, manage and expose the implicit theories by which they produce virals. In summary, a social constructivist philosophy helps to fill a gap in extant research; is utilising neglected methodological perspectives in past research and therefore producing deeper, richer data and it is suited to the purposes of this study (Langley, 1999).

4.5.1 Realism:

The end product of research and the process are not as 'pure' as the researcher may intend (Cresswell, 2013). This is where 'relativism' emerges as a third philosophy drawing from both positivism and interpretivism. There are elements of reality which can be discovered independent of human awareness but understanding is socially constructed (Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, 2009). Despite the differences between natural and social sciences, realism holds that there must be an empirical basis, with sound logic and clear objectives (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Therefore, in terms of methods, social activity can be researched as entities in themselves not only through communications (Daymon and Holloway, 2011). This approach can result in multiple methods being used, diverse sources of information and many perspectives being surveyed (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002). The realist does not attempt to employ the underlying apparatus as a law to direct future actions but as being itself mutable, so the focus should to understand than to forecast (Denzin, 2012). Given the gaps in creative focus, first there has to be explanation and understanding before attempting to develop conclusive research (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006).

Realism is still part of post-positivism with a different view of what constitutes "objectivity" (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Positivism rested the responsibility for objectivity with the scientist who set aside their own beliefs to see the truth as it is (Cresswell, 2013). Intepretivist and realist views agree that research observations are affected by pre-existing theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). This means that what is objective exists outside an individual, is actually a shared, communal view (Krippendorf, 2004). People can work as a social group to get closer to understanding a version of reality – a community which evaluates its own versions of "truth" to collectively move forward (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011).

4.6 *The Research Paradigm in this Study:*

The nature of this enquiry categorises it on the social constructivism side of the matrix (figure 4-3 below). In examining the literature, it is observed that the studies have been dominated by a positivist philosophical underpinning, noted above. This demonstrates need for a wider perspective on the viral phenomena but also points to

opportunity to explore particular situations in depth to add insight (there are only 8 studies for example which use interviews but as mixed methods) (Cresswell, 1998). In addition, the absence of studies investigating VM from the campaign design perspective directs the researcher towards a more exploratory stance, the social constructivist. In other words, if the aim of setting virals into the creative advertising literature is to be achieved, it is firstly, necessary to attempt to understand the mindsets and activities of those people (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Consistent with this, the analytical approaches are within the involved and social constructionist quadrant – the choice of thematic analysis or a grounded theory approach for example, which will be explored later in this chapter. The research however, has aspects of both positivist and social constructionism traditions, therefore placing it within the domain of realism. The aims of the research are exposure rather than discovery (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002).
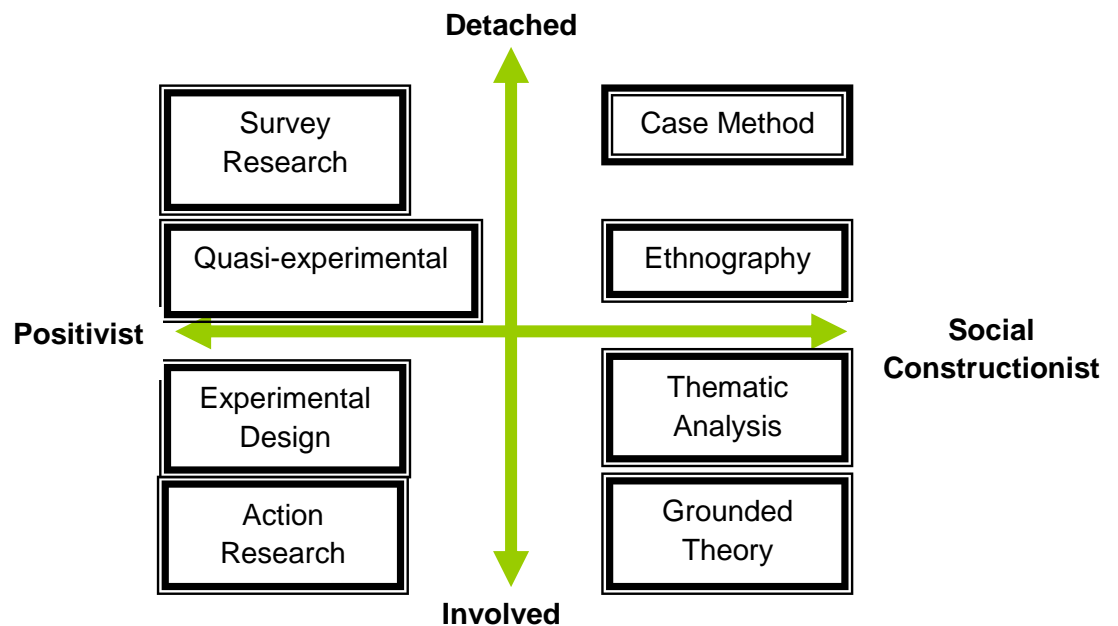
Figure 4-2 Matrix of Research Design (Source: Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002, p. 57)

In other words, data serves the purpose of providing an insight among many, into the world in which those individuals live, perceive and communicate about it (Truong and Simmons, 2010). Use data as a source from which to produce profiles of activity, views of subjects studied, and of the contexts in which those acts and behaviours occur (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). This approach typically follows the realist paradigm (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). In examining the research aims, the problem, the objectives, the secondary research questions and the realist philosophy, this research

corresponds to the generation of elements of reality (assumptions for example) on which the activities and views of participants are based (Denzin, 2012; Brown, Broderick and Lee, 2007).

4.6.1 Abduction & Reflection in the Study:

Research is also about subjective human values (Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury, 2013). In social sciences, it is not only about intellectual curiosity but also about practical considerations of the best way to achieve the research objectives (Garcia et al, 2009). Typically there are two approaches which are adopted to address this dilemma – deduction or induction (Silverman, 2016). The inductive approach would build from particular points and then towards generalisations and theory development (Healy and Perry, 2000). However, no study can claim to be purely deductive or inductive, but that there is a dominance of one approach over the other (Age, 2011).

Hence in this study, it is more specific than induction; here it is abduction. This is particularly important to reflect on the data as the researcher's particular experience and background is relevant in the inferences drawn from the data (Riff, Lacy and Fico, 2014). Abduction is able to allow the researcher to identify new insights in a logical and structured manner, to produce new discoveries while employing particular guidelines in the evaluation (Reichertz, 2007). Given the researcher's commercial, marketing, advertising, academic career and digital background, it is very difficult to separate that knowledge and life experience from the inferences drawn (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Collating data characteristics for which there is an emerging but as yet unestablished account is here, abductive in nature (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The researcher cannot be separate from this as it requires intellectual exertion (consciously or not) to propose a comprehensible explanation (Berger, 2015). In other words, it is a process in the mind that fits elements of data into a meaningful whole, previously unavailable (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). However, in abduction, the empirical result is primary and the legitimacy of prior research is to be questioned from the data (Reichertz, 2007).

Given that data has primacy of place, then some answers to the puzzle which started the research process are discovered to explain the intriguing phenomenon of viral marketing (Age, 2011). As will be seen in the next 2 chapters, this is the case in this study. The analytical approach, the process and final coding framework are intended to help managers with future action, to develop practical models that are useful (Mays and Pope, 2000). This is not to claim that they are reality but are mental productions of how that reality is reflected in the data (Reichertz, 2007). The outputs are not complete in themselves but are indicative at this point in the development of knowledge of virals (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). This is particularly the case with a social phenomenon such as digital which itself is evolving so quickly, is mutable. In other words, the research acknowledges that these are not truths but constructs that will serve as starting points for potential hypotheses (Cresswell, 2013).

4.6.2 Qualitative and Quantitative

This thesis conducts a literature review firstly (following Barrutia and Gilsanz, 2009; Berthon, Nairn and Money, 2003) which sets out the current established findings about virals but also the gaps in the cannon. A research strategy which is quantitative "emphasise quantification in the collection and analysis of data" and that it "entails a deductive approach to the relationship between theory and research, in which the emphasis is on the testing of theories" (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 37). In other words, there is a positivist philosophy which underlies the research decisions taken.

The types of questions with which quantitative research is concerned include how many, how often, who, when and where. The kinds of issues which a qualitative strategy entails collecting data about personal principles, judgments, values and purposes (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Morse et al, 2002). The types of question with which qualitative researchers are concerned include how, why and if (Cresswell, 2013). The samples tend to be smaller and typically less representative of the views of the general population but offer deep insight into a particular situation (Yin, 2015). Instruments of data collection typically include focus groups and interviews for example (Kvale, 1996). This type of data can deliver revealing insights but it is time-consuming to manage and can be expensive (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). To

summarise, qualitative research concentrates on the development of theory, typically follow an inductive or abductive approach (Cresswell and Miller, 2000).

Set against the lack of research into the advertising views of virals, it is necessary to understand their perceptions, attitudes and beliefs even as a preliminary step to a wider-scale survey across the population of interest. To achieve this, then questions of how, why and if need to be explored and therefore, a qualitative approach would be more appropriate here (Riff, Lacy and Fico, 2014). The objective of producing theory which helps brand managers and advertising directors to make decisions in the development of viral campaigns, suggests that a quantitative strategy would be less effective (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). In considering a range of UK advertising agencies' perspectives on the term viral marketing, how they practice it and its implications for their agencies and the industry, the outlook and connections among people within a mutable setting, a qualitative method which involves the participants is an apposite one (Cresswell, 2013).

The research is investigating a comparatively novel and embryonic subject amongst a sample group which is challenging to reach (Berger, 2015). In the extant research, quantitative research strategies dominate (more than 60%) but none of these are aimed at generating knowledge about creative processes during campaign design suggesting a need to apply a qualitative strategy to broaden the current understanding of viral phenomena (see Table 4.1). It should also be noted that there is no study of its kind in the context of the United Kingdom, despite the UK being one of the global capitals of advertising. The single UK-based study (Cruz and Fill, 2008) does not consider virals actually, concentrating on measurement of effect rather than creative design and management. Likewise the realist, intepretivist philosophy and abductive approach outlined above are consistent with a qualitative rather than quantitative strategy (Berger, 2015).

Six aspects of this research predicate a qualitative strategy: reference is made above to the exploratory nature of the study, to its holistic design, the intricacy of the topic of investigation, the importance of an emic perspective, the naturalistic setting of the data environment, and the absence of these participants' views in existing research (Denzin, 2012). As Creswell (1998, p.15) argues, "qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that

explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting". The aspects outlined at the start of this paragraph firmly roots this study within the tradition outlined by Cresswell (1998).

The philosophy and approach is captured in a much wider view proposed by Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 2) who propose that "qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right. It crosscuts disciplines, fields, and subject matters. A complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts, and assumptions surround the term *qualitative research*. These include the traditions associated with foundationalism, positivism, postfoundationalism, postpositivism, poststructuralism, and the many qualitative research perspectives, and/or methods, connected to cultural and interpretive studies". In practical terms, there are four conditions which Creswell (1994) proposed to determine the suitability of qualitative approaches. Accordingly, this study aligns with these principles.

1. A paucity of research into the topic. The literature review has shown that in the last ten years, much attention has been paid to viral marketing but there are only two of studies taking an advertising agency perspective (Gecti and Dastan, 2013; Cruz and Fill, 2008). Others have concentrated on the post campaign launch phase rather than the creative design and development phase (e.g. Brozek, Lehner and Schoditsch, 2013; Berger and Milkman, 2012; Eckler and Bolls, 2011).

2. Current concepts might be inadequate, imprecise or partial (e.g. Golan and Zaidner, 2008; Porter and Golan, 2006 analyse the message content of the actual ads themselves). The views of the creators of viral advertising have not been captured in the extant research.

3. An aligned aspect is that the theory needs further improvement and additional research would support this.

4. The topic and context of investigation makes it less appropriate to use quantitative tools – here the difficulty of accessing the target group, the emergence of digital agencies, the lack of research, and the entrance of staff with digital skills from outside of the traditional advertising industry (Thomas and Harden, 2008).

4.7 *Data Collection Tools:*

To summarise the rationale and justification for the methodological decisions taken thus far (Figure 5-3 below). It also sets up the discussion to follow with regard to the data collection tools, the sampling decisions, the analytical approach and reflections on the reliability and limitations of this research design (following Alreck and Settle, 1995).

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│          Philosophy - realism           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│          Approach - abduction           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Methodological Strategy - qualitative │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Data collection tool - depth interviews│
│   (n= 12) face to face semi-structured  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│        Sampling - homogenous            │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│          Analysis - thematic            │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
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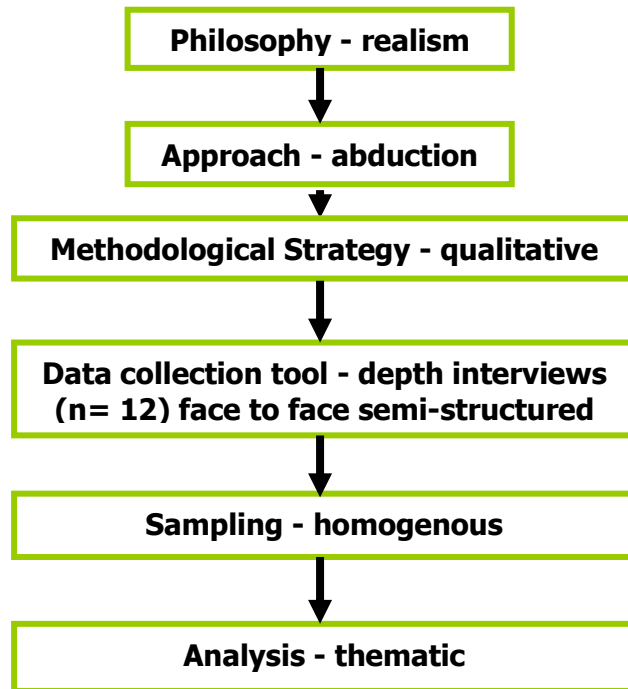
Figure 4-3 Key Research Design Stages (Raghubansie, 2017)

These include experiments (174 in the current literature), surveys (81), non-participant observation (0), focus groups (1), and interviews (8), participant observation (1), case studies (60), mixed methods (14 researchers) and content analysis (44 papers). These options will be briefly evaluated in the context of this study starting with mixed methods.

Mixed methods: the researcher applies more than one data collection tool in order to reflect the complexity of the subject being studied (e.g. Phelps et al 2004). It would combine the strengths of different tools which can draw from both qualitative and quantitative tools (14 studies among the current research – e.g. Berger and Milkman, 2012; Smith et al, 2007). It can be used to enrich the meanings which a single

viewpoint would produce (Lewis et al, 2005). Often, research is progressive following from qualitative towards quantitative (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Before deciding on the research design, it is essential to query if the research question requires the use of multi-methods (Yin, 2015). The production of theory, of capturing the meanings of viral phenomenon within advertising agencies, creative process innovations do not yet require mixed method adoption. There are too questions of time and resources, of sampling issues (based on two traditions) and managing consistency in the analysis with mixed methods (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). If one were to choose a tool such as depth interviews, across a range of advertising agencies, people from different roles and locations and backgrounds, it would produce manifold perspectives on the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

4.7.1 Quantitative Data Collection Tools:

Experiments: utilised when the researcher has control over all the variables which can influence the results of the test (Aslay, 2015; Wu, Hu and Zhang, 2013). This is evident in the extant literature here where the majority of studies employ this technique (38%) but focussed on testing particular diffusion data sets such as Twitter. In employing this technique, the intention is to ascertain or forecast what might happen (e.g. Naik and Yu, 2015; Bonchi, 2011; Leskovec, 2007) if tie strength among peers is dynamic what is the effect of this on the transmission of virals (e.g. Bhat and Abulaish, 2013 who investigate overlapping community effects on peer-peer sharing). Often they will validate instruments beforehand to test the measures being proposed, followed by a pilot to conduct the full experiment before applying a relevant test of significance (e.g. Bonchi, Castilo and Ienco, 2013 who devise a set of heuristics and then test them). An experiment would be inappropriate for developmental, exploratory research such as this, as there is still need to understand what should be investigated.

Surveys: are essentially structured interviews, typically employing close ended questions. They are inexpensive, easy to process, analyse and provide anonymity, which can therefore result in more honest answers (e.g. Bingesser et al, 2015; Lee, Ham and Kim, 2013). Consequently, it is a data collection technique which has been well used in the current research (17.5%) to reach large samples (e.g. Alhabash and

McAlister, 2014; Campo et al, 2013; Yang, 2013; Liu and Zhou, 2012; Gruen, Osmonbekov, and Czaplewski, 2006).

However, the sample of interest in this investigation is B2B, a smaller population. Most people who receive surveys do not return them and this is a time poor industry, well known for being difficult to access, so the likelihood of success is low (Cruz and Fill, 2008). In addition, a number of the agencies developing digital creative output are new, are not as geographically dense as before in London (Pratt, 2006; 2011). They cut across professional bodies and attract people from IT, from media (IAB, 2015), not typical creative arts and language background common in the UK advertising industry (see McLeod, O'Donohoe and Townley, 2009 for a review of the narrow recruitment pool of the conventional agency). Research objectives for this study require follow-up, to clarify which is difficult with survey instruments, even if some open-ended questions are included (Botha and Reyneke, 2013). In summary, the survey is not exploratory, lacking the depth needed to produce understanding and possible hypotheses.

Non-participant observation: the researcher does not take part in the situation to remove the risk that individuals' behaviour might be influenced by the researcher, or to facilitate groups cooperating with the study (Bryman and Bell, 2015). This method does however produce less data and insight as the researcher is not embedded in the setting (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2008). There is no study in the literature thus far which has employed this data gathering tool. This reflects the nature of advertising which deals with commercially sensitive materials, tends to be dynamic and involving different teams at distinct stages of campaign development (Hackley and Tiwsakul, 2011). It would be very challenging to gain access for such a wide-scale observation attempt in this type of organisational environment.

4.7.2 Qualitative Data Collection Tools:

Participant observation: has opposite characteristics to non-participant, reversing the disadvantages noted above (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015). This tool can answer questions such as those explored in this study – what and how. It can also be employed in situations where little is known about the phenomenon (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). However, there is research on this topic, even if that is from different

angles, and that provides cues to initiate the discussion. It is important in understanding a particular setting but here, there is need to firstly understand how people conceive and makes sense of this phenomenon before moving further to examine in detail particular aspects such as conflict among creative and technical teams (Vellar, 2012). For the reasons noted above in relation to non-participant observation, it would be difficult to embed into these types of advertising agencies – whether small or large.

Focus groups: can be defined as "a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research" (Powell and Single, 1996, p. 499). It is a type of group interviewing; however, focus groups are dependent on the relations among the set of participants as they consider the topic provided by the researcher (Yin, 2015). In this study, it is important to understand the nature of the tacit assumptions, working theories that creative managers employ as they decide on what they classify as a viral campaign, discard ideas, consider insight from planners (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015). In other words, before the interactions are examined in detail. Focus groups do reveal attitudes, dispositions and values which might be separate but about which the probability of exposure is higher in the social gathering and interactive situation (Yin, 2015). However, that is not the focus of this investigation. Practically, it would be challenging to get a group of Creative Directors/staff together as they are time poor.

Case studies: the purpose is to yield an important and profound insight into a situation – its context, the multiplicity of factors linked to the organisation, problem (e.g. Goswami and Bhutani, 2014; Brozek, Lehner and Schoditsch, 2013; Wallsten, 2010) It is defined as:

> An empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (e.g., a "case"), set within its real-world context – especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, (Yin, 2009a, p. 18)

As a result of this breadth, it becomes necessary to use different data collection and analytical frameworks drawing from both qualitative and quantitative traditions (Yin, 2015). They do explore the lived world context of the case in its natural setting (13% of extant studies). To this end, case studies share qualities of exploratory research

(Blichfeldt and Smed, 2015). However, case studies are relevant when there is need for descriptive or explanatory research (e.g. van der Lans et al, 2010 is actually predictive; Dobele Toleman and Beverland, 2005). In fact, case studies have become increasingly established as an instrument of evaluation, of measurement of particular interventions, situations (e.g. Carida and Colurcio, 2013; Liu and Qu, 2011; Kalyanam, McIntyre and Masonis, 2007).

Examples of viral campaigns will certainly be referred to by participants and will be considered before and after data collection events (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). However, this is to further develop understanding of the participants' views. It is also not the intention to generalise (e.g. Mills, 2012; Liu-Thompkins, 2012).

Interviews: are based on one to one dialogic conversations. They tend to be less structured than surveys (Salo et al, 2011). Typically, there are three types – face to face, telephone and computer assisted personal interviews (CAPI) (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The latter is associated with completing surveys, except that the interviewer uses a computer rather than paper copies. It makes for better processing and can also be done using online video technologies (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015). They are less effective in establishing rapport which can affect how cooperative participants are (Josselson, 2013). Interviews using the telephone provide access to mass populations (D'Alessandro, Peltier and Dahl, 2012). Response rates however, tend to be poor compared to face to face (Tussyadiah, 2012). The population of interest is a very busy group of business leaders who will rarely have time to receive such calls.

The main advantage of face to face interviews lies in the establishment of rapport with the participants (Josselson, 2013). Therefore, the quality of data is higher and the response rates are the best (San Jose-Cabezudo and Camarero-Izquierdo, 2012). They can be time-consuming and expensive (Deuker and Albers, 2012). They also require careful data management and analysis given the volume of data (Kvale, 1996). However, this tool can be employed to gather data to achieve the aim and the objectives of this study (Josselson, 2013). There are very few studies which have adopted this tool in the current research (8 in total). Among these, there are two studies which collect data from marketing communications agencies - Quinton and Fennemore (2013) collect data on social networks use among charities and Cruz and Fill (2008) who study the effects of a viral campaign. It is also consistent with the

philosophy, the approach, with qualitative strategies and with analytical frameworks. These ideas are further discussed below.

To summarise, this discussion about data collection options, it should be evident that research design decisions are never as pure as intended or as clear cut in simple terms. However, the researcher can demonstrate appropriateness of fit with the research aim, the questions, objectives, country of study, gaps in the literature and the work of prior researchers. This discussion has evaluated and rationalised the choices which have been made to meet the needs of this study – to develop insight into the processes behind observed creative outputs and assess their views of the success or failure. This relies on exploration – "a shared product of what two people ... talk about and how they talk together" argues Josselson (2013, p., 1), continuing that "some meeting of two minds occurs through this conversation".

4.8 *Face to Face, Semi-structured, Depth Interviews:*

In depth interviewing was adopted as the data collection instrument (Cresswell, 1998). It is a powerful tool to gather rich and holistic data in a relatively efficient way (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). A major issue, which will be discussed under the sampling section, is the approach to time-poor participants and the matter of establishing trust. In depth interviewing provides outstanding ways to gain trust as it possesses qualities of naturalness, is relatively unobtrusive and there is time to develop rapport (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). Kvale (1996, p. 6) argues succinctly that it is "…a conversation that has a structure and a purpose". It is the first quality – dialogic exchange – which allows researchers to access data in such a rich manner (Silverman, 2016). Other methods such as focus groups do result in quicker results, cheaper but one to one depth interviews have some superiority relating to the quality of the output, the richness and deep insight (Stokes and Bergin, 2006).

It is a further logical choice for this study based on five factors. Firstly, the subject of investigation here is the understanding of a phenomenon, the perceptual conceptions of participants in the events the actors are engaged with (Cresswell, 2013). Examining the available tools to provide such data, the interview comes closest to recording the intricacies of essentially mental constructs (Josselson, 2013). Case study has a close

relationship but that is likely to have to include interviews to achieve the objective of providing participant views (Sudarevic et al, 2013; Bugge, 2011). Perhaps closest is content analysis which is discussed above. In short, among the data collection tools, interviews stand out.

Second, in depth interviews are recognised as among the best tools to explore a view which may be challenging to that of the researcher (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015). As observed above, advertising practitioners and managers see academics as far removed from what they perceive as their work. "The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences, to uncover their lived world" (Kvale, 1991, p. 1). This is the purpose in this study, to understand and then to theorise.

Thirdly, the topic of investigation is such a particular one. Fourthly, there are a number of concrete reasons for choosing the in depth interview over other tools (Stokes and Bergin, 2006). Examining the research aim and the main objectives it could be argued that being embedded (e.g. observation) into advertising agencies when they develop viral marketing campaigns, following ethnographic techniques, would produce findings which give wider understanding (Brozek, Lehner and Schoditsch, 2013; Griffiths and Casswell, 2010). The nature of the advertising industry makes it extremely difficult to access and their time is at a premium, making such an approach highly unlikely in practice (Gecti and Dastan, 2013; Bugge, 2011). In addition, it would be over a long time. As will be discussed below in sampling and in reflections on the research, agencies were resistant to further "incursions" into their space/ time, in the end mainly to do with confidentiality of clients and creative concepts.

Fifthly, depth interviews provide the opportunity for focussed probing, detailed exploration of a relatively new and under-theorised area of advertising research, which is the purpose of this study (Josselson, 2013). Besides, prior studies, even though few, have generated views at discipline and industry levels but there is none at the level at which this research concentrates.

4.8.1 Interview Procedures:

The literature review and the refinements over time were used to create a preliminary interview schedule. The literature review chapter highlights four key issues:

Advertising creative manager's views of what constitutes viral marketing/ advertising, how they develop such campaigns, and finally, what this means in their everyday practice within the agency/ industry (Kvale, 1996). To develop rapport, the guide engaged both general questions and more particular, direct queries. It has already been indicated that the option was for semi-structured interviews (Wilson, 2003) as these provide a balance of interviewer control over the areas of focus and participant freedom to provide their individual perspectives to generate rich data (Malhotra and Birks, 2007), essential to the qualitative endeavour.

This was tested in two 40-50 minutes practice interviews, one using hand written notes to record the session and the other using a hand held video recorder and with hand written key notes (Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury, 2013). This was treated as a small scale pilot study with one participant coming from the researcher's University Marketing Communications department with responsibility for digital communications in student recruitment. The other was from a post graduate student who was studying digital consumer behaviour in the music industry. As part of the iterative cycle, the experience was shared with the two qualitative academic researchers for their views on process and results (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Further enhancements were made from reflecting on the points made to improve the researcher's conduct of the interview, the instrument, the questions therein and to choose the process of recording the data (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). For further feedback and expert viewpoints, these were also shared with the academic supervisor prior to commencing the substantive interviews and amended as advised. (Please see the final interview schedule in the Appendix).

Following Cresswell, (2013), it was necessary to develop a consent form and to agree this in accordance with University guidance beforehand (attached in Appendix). It is interesting that participants were pleased to know this was available, reading the terms but only in one case was it requested to be left with the participant (Allen and Wiles, 2016). This speaks to the level of rapport and the trust critical to in depth

interviews and qualitative research in general (Morse et al, 2002). The names of participants were removed; the names of brands were also changed or a brief explanation added if necessary to understand context; the agency details were also removed to avoid identification (Silverman, 2016). Their roles within the agency was maintained so that the research could identify how departmental functions, organisation are changing.

Data gathering sessions were between 45-70 minutes with the majority about an hour long (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006) and took place from 2011 to 2014 across the United Kingdom. It has been noted above that the majority of these were within the agencies themselves but three were conducted over tea or lunch at the interviewee's request (Elwood and Martin, 2000). Close attention was given to clues from the interviewer to establish some sense of comfort before the sessions were started. Field notes were taken before the session, while waiting, some during the interview and immediately afterwards (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). Over time, reflecting on the methodology improved the structure and flow of questions. In addition, as the data emerged, was considered, the subsequent interviews were more focussed. The pilot interviews were useful preparation (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Notes were also made progressively of concepts as they helped to develop evolving topics for exploration in subsequent interviews and reading (Morse et al, 2002).

One of the greatest concerns was about the commercial time pressure but in all cases, participants were always professional, generous and in most cases went beyond the time agreed as they wanted to discuss the issues (Kelly, Lawlor and O'Donohoe, 2007). This allayed a research concern for the quality of the data that would be produced. The other issue was about actually locating assumptions and practice. This was overcome by some oblique questions and using a range of ways to follow-up interviewees comments (Cresswell, 2013). This was particularly the case in pursuing examples from their current and prior work, as well those with which they were familiar. In this way, theoretical considerations and practice were brought together. Evidently, the researcher was careful to find a balance to avoid interviewee fatigue in following up (Elwood and Martin, 2002).

It is important to discuss here the method of recording the interviews. Reference is made above to the pilot interviews in which handwritten researcher notes and video

recording was used (Bryman and Bell, 2015). These possess different advantages. From the literature and the pilot here, it was clear that hand written notes can affect the flow of the interview, the accurate capture of the participant voice and perhaps critically affect the rapport established (Kvale, 1996). However, it is accepted and allows both parties to view and perhaps make comments, clarifications, review the content. The video on the other hand ensured that these issues were overcome (Shrum, Duque and Brown, 2005). It captured the environment, the sounds, the expressions, the tone and the style of the interview for both parties. It is a memorable mode of refreshing memory and reflecting on an interview afterwards by the researcher and also the participant if they requested a copy (Pink, 2001). However, it is an unusual tool in face to face business research (vom Lehn and Heath, 2016).

It could make interviewees uncomfortable; its physical presence is a constant reminder to both parties during the session and there are concerns about post event handling among actors (vom Lehn and Heath, 2016). Critically, it could affect the fullness of answers because these were confidential discussions about global, public brands, campaigns and business information (Shrum, Duque and Brown, 2005).

In the end a hybrid was decided as it meets with recognised research protocols, with the advantages of video recording outweighing the challenges in this context, with limited handwritten notes and extended field notes (as outlined above) (Saldana, 2009). Handwriting materials were available during all sessions as a back-up but also to make notes of key points, to keep a summary of the interview and to watch the camera in the event it went off, to note the point and to record the rest of the participant comments (Cresswell, 2013; Sliverman, 2016). The final point that brought this decision was the sample being investigated here. The population for the most part dwell in public communications; engage in constantly with audio, visual and written forms (Kelly, Lawlor and O'Donohoe, 2005). The video is a part of their everyday lives. It was therefore necessary to check with the first participants and to advise of this (Morse et al, 2002). Consistent with the conclusions reached beforehand, they were at ease with the camera and did not pay any attention to it. In the one case where the batteries went and interrupted the session, that participant, despite working in one of the largest agencies in the world, took it in stride and provided extra time, introduced additional colleagues and invited the researcher back to present the findings (Rowley, 2012).

4.9 *Sample Design:*

The target population are creative directors, heads of digital and managers responsible for creative development of advertising and marketing communications campaigns among UK agencies. Advertising agencies work under considerable time pressures. Time is literally money, best used in a way which can be invoiced to clients (Reid, King and DeLorme, 1998). In addition, those in the London creative village face intense competition (Stuhlfaut and Vanden Bergh, 2012; Pratt, 2008a). Digital advertising creative managers tend to be outsiders (often from technology or digital media) or are to be found within new agencies (Takemura, 2012). Besides, with digital advertising practitioners, they have an additional integration and education responsibility within their agencies, for themselves and in support of clients (Hackley and Tiwsakul, 2011). They typically form a community of innovators, particularly where involved in digital marketing communications such as viral advertising (Maguire and Matthews, 2010). Innovators are often classified as populations which can present barriers to sampling and access (Sasser and Koslow, 2008).

Overall, therefore the population of interest here can be classified as hard-to-reach groups (Heckathorn, 1997) and the group under study are also often new to the industry. They may be categorised as industry outsiders but they are transforming digital competencies within advertising agencies to meet creative needs (Takemura, 2012). They are creating the ground rules of a changing industry and consequently, it is necessary to bring their views into the existing literature on creative campaign development. Therefore they are the ones who need to be interviewed.

4.9.1 Participant Setting:

London has dominated the UK advertising sector with over 80% of the agencies in the pre-recession period (Advertising Association, 2015). Over the last seven years there has been some re-distribution across the UK (Nyilasy, Kreshel abd Reid, 2012). It was therefore necessary to explore the situation outside of London as well. In terms of the broader industry there have been numerous rapid changes, re-shaping the connections among institutions and new entrants, mainly SMEs which make it very difficult to map the structure and to choose participants (Pratt, 2008b). In addition, the London-centric

nature of the UK industry is not that important with digital agencies since they can still access the cluster for learning- e.g. electronically, as a result being in the "regions" can be compensated to some extent.

4.9.2 Sampling Technique:

There are a number of challenges to access the population of interest to the study outlined above. There are also some possible solutions discussed here. Snowball sampling has been employed to access difficult groups employing chain referrals from initial subjects to generate others (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). However, it produces biased samples because respondents who have a large number of social connections are able to provide researchers with a higher proportion of other respondents who are similar (Garcia et al, 2009). Such convenience sampling is common but is the most criticised as it can introduce different layers of bias (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). Heads of digital/ digital creative managers being a small and difficult to access group, it would require considerable researcher presence in the social world of the population to apply convenience or embed on location as is common with ethnography (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009).

A more recent option which addresses many of the problems with snowball sampling is respondent-driven sampling (RDS), simplified here as a mathematical modelling similar to normative probability sampling methods for hard to reach groups (Heckathorn, 1997). Their key argument is that it is now possible to draw conclusions of "hidden" populations as a whole, especially where the groups under study are small compared to the population and for which there are no databases to draw on. The challenge this view is that if a researcher concentrates on the most reachable group, probability sampling could be employed; however; there would be inadequate representation of the population. Increasingly digital creatives are coming from new, independent or semi-independent agencies, so peer invitation is limited (Gold et al, 2012). They are required to constantly up-skill, of educating themselves, colleagues and clients, which can be unwelcomed by those parties (Nyilasy, Canniford and Kreshel, 2013). Current networks will not be responsive to the recent changes across the UK, nor does it show the geographical spread away from London which was initiated in the recession. Applying RDS would therefore be difficult.

In terms of broader network sampling there have been numerous rapid changes, re-shaping the existing networks, blurring the nodes of insiders and outsiders, connections among institutions and new parties (Takemura, 2012) which make it very difficult to utilise such sample selection solutions. There is too the emergence of small, medium and large new agencies on whom data is not available (Pratt, 2008a). While RDS accesses hard to reach people on whom there is little available data, for the group under study here, there is a lot of data available - linked in, corporate websites etc. That does not mean the information is readily accessible in a user-friendly format for the networks as a whole.

Another major issue is gatekeeper access; lack of time for these people; value of their time as they charge by the clock; some lack of interest; other priorities (Pratt, 2011). Gaining entry to a highly skilled managerial group which is responsible for competitively sensitive corporate information for a wide range of clients was always going to be a very complicated attempt (Pratt, 2006).

As a conclusion from this evaluation, homogenous sampling provides a solution to address the access issues and opportunity to apply it to the changing context, new entrants and networks based on location, the industry, size of firm, the gender and the job roles (Damon and Holloway, 2011). This type of sampling is suitable to the design of this study. Homogenous sampling does not pursue statistical representativeness or substantiation of a model but in conceptual development (Silverman, 2016). It is more akin to Glaser and Strauss (1967) concept of theoretical sampling, intended to collect data until a "saturation" point is met.

4.9.3 Sample Size:

Agencies were selected from four counties across the UK (Exeter, Coventry, Staffordshire and London); in keeping with the London dominance, though not reflecting a representative match, two thirds (seven) were from London and the remaining five from the regions outside (Pratt, 2011). The rationale for this is to reflect the broadening of geographic spread evident from digital agencies across the country, referred to elsewhere in this chapter (Advertising Association, 2015). Six women and

seven men, in managerial roles with responsibility for creative and digital aspects of the agency's work were interviewed (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Three large global agencies; five medium-sized and four small firms were selected to provide a balance of perspectives (Cresswell, 2013). Six of these are independent agencies and six are part of larger holding companies of international advertising agencies, to be able to evaluate the differences and commonalities (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). Three are boutique agencies with a specialist focus; three are primarily regional agencies with most of their client based close to their location; the others are full service agencies. The sample reflect well the ideas of homogeneous sampling providing perspectives from participants in different types of advertising agencies, consistency in the managerial level/roles within the organisations, the geographic locations, the size of the firms and the genders (Silverman, 2016).

Size		
Large	Medium	Small
T5; T9; T6	T3; T4; T10; T8; T7	T2; T12; T11; T2
Locations		
London	Regions	
T5; T6; T10; T8; T11; T2	Coventry - 3; Exeter - 2 and 4; Staffordshire 12; Midlands 7	
Ownership		
Independent	Group	
T2; T4; T12; T9; T8; T7	T5; T3; T1; T6; T1	
Agency Type		
Boutique	Regional	Full Service
T8; T10; T11	T1; T4; T12	T2; T3; T5; T6; T7; T9
Gender		
Men	Women	
T2; T3; T7; T4; T5; T9; T1	T12; T10; T11; T7	

Table 4-3 Summary of Sample Characteristics

In terms of the number of interviews, Kvale (1996) suggests a wide range from 15 with the option of adding a further 10. Others suggest as few as 6 (Rowley, 2012). The literature is therefore variable in its suggestions but consistent in pointing to the

importance of resources and the context of the research in determining the number of interviews (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) found that 12 typically generate data which reaches the point of saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) or redundancy, where no new insights are emerging from the data (Cresswell and Miller, 2000). This is the number used in this study. This manner of sample selection was indispensable to the effectiveness of the study.

This number allows for a sample that can provide a full theoretical exploration of participant views on viral marketing (Rowley, 2012). It may not be generalisable to the whole population but that is not the intention; it provides a deep, rich picture of the element under study. It is clear from the sample summary table above that many different perspectives are represented in the study (Cresswell, 1998).

The sampling technique was effective but required persistence and in some cases several attempts before an appointment could be arranged (Bryman and Bell, 2015). There were some which were unsuccessful and alternatives had to be located. In the Midlands, there were two, London three, and in Manchester two rejections. In all cases there was no response to emails and phone calls could not get past gatekeepers.

4.10 *Precedents for Analytical Approach:*

These are precedents for the analysis method. However, the analytical approach of prior research is dominated by quantitative frameworks, by approaches established in Computing and Engineering, and by diffusion models. It is weighted to those analytical choices appropriate to the finished creative output. Similarly, it is dominated by consumer research analytical frameworks, by B2C not B2B by an external gaze in, not within organisations. Therefore, what is being proposed here brings a different analytical framework from that which is current in the literature, though there are related precedents.

There are thirteen previous studies which have employed content analysis, some based on thematic analyses as is the case in this research. These are briefly summarised below to demonstrate that the approach and decisions taken in this study have been tested and previously established. Among these are three seminal studies

which have shaped the viral marketing literature – Phelps et al (2004), Porter and Golan (2006) and Golan and Zaidner (2008). They all employed content analysis though with different research subjects and contexts. Phelps et al's (2004) work is the first to examine consumer motivations to share messages, which has resulted in a rich vein of similar studies. Porter and Golan (2006) was the first study to examine viral ads themselves and later the first to define the term viral advertising. Their approach to analysis of ads has led to a number of further papers, though smaller than the consumer sharing behaviour stream, of similar investigations.

Authors	Research Focus	Method	Findings
Almaraz, González & Van-Wyck (2013)	Spain Viral Marketing Characteristics (VMC). Campaign videos posted on YouTube to establish the dominant profiles in production and the relations between the formal and content aspects of videos.	Quantitative content analysis, applied to a sample of audiovisual texts from the Third Sector.	Low levels of creativity, the incorporation of a great amount of very clear information, the predominance of explicit content and the use of very similar formats. Two types - Predominantly informative profile (PIP), redominantly persuasive profile (PPP).
Cheyne et al (2013)	USA VMC Using Internet traffic data, to examine how cereal marketers reach children including VM.	Content analysis: (N=26 branded websites) Sites with more than 1 engaging feature, present on individual pages and a virtual world.	Confirm that these techniques work: reach children online with lengthier and more sophisticated engagements than are possible with traditional, passive media such as television advertisements or product packaging
Kopacz and Lawton (2013)	USA Minority groups	Content Analysis: User comments on Viral YouTube videos of native Americans	The value of new media to encourage open discussion about difficult topics and marginalized groups. Their objective was clearly to show what is observed.
Paek et al (2014)	South Korea VMC Message, source, and health information characteristics of e-	A content analysis of 365 e-cigarette videos	85% of the videos were sponsored by marketers. Economic and social benefits, featuring a low level of fear appeal and negative message valence and a high level of marketing information. Defy regulation

	cigarette videos on the popular online video-sharing platform YouTube.		in some claims.
Berger and Milkman (2012)	USA VMC Characteristics of viral videos that generate greater sharing.	Content analysis of New York Times articles published over 3 months followed by experiment.	Emotion shapes virality with positive content more viral than negative, but the relationship between emotion and social transmission is more complex than valence alone. Virality is partially driven by physiological arousal. Causal impact of specific emotion on transmission.
Giardina, Vasa & Tan (2012)	Australia Customer (C) & VMC discussed how the viral growth of an application's user community can be induced via user interface elements, proposed a meme lifecycle called VML	Content analysis of forty-three software systems, spanning desktop, web and mobile domains.	Framework is to assist developers in thinking about these features early on in the design phase of the application development lifecycle. This will ensure that both usability and user experience are well thought out.
Hausmann (2012)	Germany C & VMC To analyse the opportunities and limitations of Web 2.0 and social media for the VM of arts institutions and if visitors behave differently.	Case study (three arts institutions) using content analysis of SNs, within the economics of information approach.	VM helps to stimulate WOM among customers which is considered particularly effective with regard to experience and trust characteristics of service providers such as museums, theatres or orchestras. Social media can help arts institutions to reduce quality and/or behavioural uncertainty.

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Waters & Jones (2011)	USA VMC & ADV Nonprofit organizations	Content analysis of the most viewed videos on the top 100 official nonprofit YouTube channels	Videos used to inform and educate viewers about their missions, programs, and services. Organisations were not living up to their potential in terms of engagement through direct appeals for involvement. Organizations were likely to use outsiders' words and stories to build the narratives rather than using internal stakeholders.
Golan and Zaidner (2008)	Israel/UK An important study defining viral advertising	Content analysis of 360 viral ads, applying Taylor's six-segment model.	Find dominance of individual ego oriented appeals (humour and sexuality).
Graham and Havlena (2007)	USA (Practitioners) PWOM and advertising in FMCG & services. Also advertising and measurable behaviors of brand interest.	Statistical Content Analysis 35 brands over a 26-week period using online big data (5 sets) and advertising spend.	Brands should redouble their advertising to grow brand advocacy through the integration of online and offline branded consumer contact points.
Porter and Golan (2006)	USA Comparison of viral and television advertising	Quantitative content analysis of 501 ads. This sample included 235 television advertisements and 266 viral advertisements.	Viral advertising relies on provocative content to motivate unpaid sharing from identified sponsors. While emotive content has always been the key to capturing audiences' attention in advertising, viral advertising relies on increasingly raw content for actual distribution.

Williams and Trammell (2005)	USA Political applications and distribution platforms for VM. Also investigated issue coverage, message strategy, and interactivity.	Content Analysis of 78 email messages sent during the Bush/ Kerry election campaign in 2004	Key events increased the number of e-mails. Direct address in the e-mail messages occurred at a statistically significant higher level than expected. Candidates used e-mail messages for promotion more often than opponent attacks. Candidate e-mail messages can be considered a form of VM that offers a unique way to overcome the problem of selective exposure.
Phelps et al (2004)	USA The motivations, attitudes, behaviors of the people to forward emails	Content Analysis Focus groups Email tracking Interviews	Implications for target selection and message creation are discussed for advertising practitioners interested in implementing viral efforts, and suggestions for future research relating to computer-mediated consumer-to-consumer interactions are presented for academic researchers.

It should be observed that there is no study focussed on the UK. It is also important to note the focus on consumers and ads, rather than on clients and on mediators of creative content (creative managers). There are applications considered in a number of different sectors but very little representation of client and creative views, the latter of which is the focus of this thesis.

4.11 *Alternatives in Qualitative Data Analysis:*

In analysing the data, there are a number of options – ethnography, netnography, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, narrative analysis, grounded theory, qualitative comparative analysis, case-oriented understanding and content analysis (Patton, 2002). The research question is a key driver in shaping the choice of analytic approach but also the experience of the researcher. Ethnography is usually employed to study culture by embedding into the community (Daymon and Holloway, 2011). Netnograhpy is similar except that it examines online cultures (e.g. Kozinets et al, 2010), here on the end artefact of the advertising creative process, the ad. This study is concerned with the antecedents of digital ad creation. How people construct the social world in which they live is the focus of ethnomethodology. This study seeks to describe some aspects of the participants world view on particular issues (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2008). Conversation analysis emerged from ethnomethodology, collecting conversations and conducting the analyses thereon (Bryman and Bell, 2015). It could have been used if there was on-going access to the agencies.

Narrative analysis attempts to produce a broader understanding of the overall story as individuals perceive situations or activities (Riessman, 2008). Like the other forms of qualitative data analysis, case-oriented understanding also looks at issues from the standpoint of the actors (Botha and Reyneke, 2013; Quinton and Fennemore, 2013). Grounded theory is more structured than other analysis models and qualitative comparative analysis is similar. This process attempts to produce a summary of the contributing elements across multiple cases which deliver the same result (Cress and Snow, 2000). It is aimed at developing insight into causation (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). This particular study does not seek to evaluate the outcomes but the process which produces them.

Grounded theory is a common method adopted by researchers, in which the theory is inductively produced based on the data (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). The first step is to develop a set of conceptual groups which are then tested in the research environment against additional data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Huberman and Miles, 1994). As the iterative data analysis process is implemented the issues are further scoped and theory refined (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). With regard to the concluding summary, the data

is used to ground the model, to identify contradictory evidence that challenge the model (Saldana, 2009). Many aspects of the analysis process in grounded theory are common to qualitative data analysis.

However, in this research, there is indeed very little research into advertising agencies and how they create viral campaigns but there is some pre-existing work in the area which investigates the finished viral ads (such as Botha, 2014; Brown, Bhadury and Pope, 2010; Porter and Golan, 2006; Golan and Zaidner, 2008). While one of the objectives of the study is to produce theory; it is not a completely fresh start (e.g. Petrescu et al, 2016; Liu-Thompkins, 2012; Cruz and Fill, 2008). In addition, there are some strands of the current literature which can inform the initial questions asked in the data collection stage (Petrescu, Kargaonkar and Gironda, 2015; Aral and Walker 2011b). As a result, the full grounded theory method of data processing is not applied in this study but many aspects are adopted and linked to thematic analysis, discussed in this and the next chapter.

4.11.1   Content Analysis Background:

To make sense of the analytical procedure, it is firstly necessary to provide some clarification of content analysis in this study. There are three approaches – conventional, directed and summative (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). In the first, the codes are directly derived from the data; in directed, the existing theory is used to inform the first set of codes; the third, summative is numerical analysis, then interpretation. Within these approaches, there are different types of content analysis including relational analysis (semantic), linguistic analysis (enunciation, speech propositions etc.) and thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2011).

In the latter, the data is used to allow the themes to arise (Krippendorff, 2004). While similar to the other types of content analysis because it can be used in combination with the others, the purpose is distinctive (Holsti, 1969). The thematic analysis comes in after the coding has been done so that the broader themes can be collated to make sense of the full data (Bryman and Bell, 2015). In other words, there is content which is manifest – easy to identify and to initially code.

Then there is content which is latent – these are less obvious and require greater attention to uncover (Holsti, 1969). This is the domain of thematic analysis. This is one of the reasons for choosing thematic analysis in this study, as the investigation is into underlying theories underpinning the creative design of viral marketing ads (Berelson, 1952). Other factors include the volume of data collected, the theory creation research objective and the opportunity to self-train, and to follow established guides (Krippendorff, 2004).

4.11.2   Thematic Analysis:

It is a flexible tool. The examination of data to detect common ideas, themes, sub-themes and patterns especially in relation to understanding human experiences and situations, to explore phenomena (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012; Joffe, 2011). Consistent with this thinking, thematic analysis can be applied in abductive, constructivist and realist research (Cresswell, 2013). It is suited to a range of research topics and conceptual viewpoints (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009).

It works well with a range of open-ended questions, those that are exploratory rather than conclusive, about social issues and views of the world (Strauss and Corbin, 2014). Thematic analysis is especially suited to understanding how people make sense of particular practices, consciously or tacitly (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015). It can be used to fragment, evaluate and synthesize large data sets (Saldana, 2009). It combines data driven and theory developing research (Silverman, 2016). It is therefore consistent with the objectives of this study and is used as the analytical approach for the data analysis.

4.12 *Reflexivity and the Data Analysis Process:*

At the foundation level, the researcher locates relevant classes in the dataset but also commonalities and connections among these, and this is by gradual revelations (Saldana, 2009). In many cases, there are few pre-set factors to evaluate – an emic focus. That is, the research subject sets the perspective and the context rather than the analyst's (the etic approach) (Silverman, 2016). As a consequence, it is a test of the value of qualitative analysis processes which direct attention to the associations

among the research situation, the research subjects as a set, or to the individual (San Jose-Cabezudo and Camarero-Izquierdo, 2012). In other words, the full perspective, rather than separation into discrete parts is acknowledged as a superior in supporting interpretation of the phenomenon in particular campaigns, the thinking and the decisions taken (Byrman and Bell, 2015).

As noted in the abduction section of this chapter, this general framework means that the data analysis process is circular and recursive which starts as data is being collected rather than after as often is the case in quantitative data analysis (Stake, 1995). In addition to the transcriptions of the interviews (see next chapter), the researcher also maintains memoranda as the data is collected, immediately after and on later reflections (Brown, Broderick and Lee, 2007). In this way, ideas emerge with regard to the sense of the text and how they might be related (Palka, Pousttchi and Wiedemann, 2009). The act of considering, analysing and re-interpreting is a continuous cycle throughout the research (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As a result the researcher can amend the research questions, aspects to be further explored and new connections to examined, referred to as progressive focusing (Parlett and Hamilton, 1976).

There are summaries taken through observations on site, during the interview and after (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). These are also interpreted in the context of the data collected (Kvale, 1996). It is important to reflect on how this has affected the researcher' views and interpretations of that particular situation, and the broader context (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). The data begins to be analysed at the point of collection as issues and potential theories emerge that provide insight into the situation (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). Reading and extending the comments made is an important stage in the analytical process (Krippendorff, 2004). It is recommended that the qualitative analyst annotates progressively to locate critical ideas and initiate coding headings (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Core issues are often immediately apparent from the commentary; connecting them is an interim stage before further exploration in the data itself (Saldana, 2009). This is also an on-going process arising from observing the records, from the summaries, the organisation and editorial cycle (Daymon and Holloway, 2011).

4.12.1   Reflexivity and Researcher Peer Review/Support

Initial planning for the empirical stage began well in advance of the interviews themselves (Kvale, 1996). Following the development of the research topic, the initial objectives and major questions to be investigated, it was decided to identify researchers who were involved in qualitative research among marketing communications practitioners (Creswell and Miller, 2000). Two were agreed to discussions, which led throughout the research to on-going dialogue and critique (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The first studies Public Relations practitioners and how they create identity, employing in depth interviews; the other case studies of digital business modelling online (Garcia et al, 2009). Face to face and phone conversations were held to discuss the subject of this study, on-going discussions about issues, solutions and resources. It was through one of this researcher's use of Dragon Software that it was decided to use this also and to consider the issues of outsourcing transcription in one case and the other for the researcher to do them directly. These discussions have encouraged a reflexive approach throughout the conceptualisation, design, methodology and implementation of the study.

In order to implement the data analysis process successfully, Miller and Crabtree (1999b, pp.142-142) outline some essential activities:

> The researcher has to understand their own predispositions, prejudices and views – there is recognition of a predisposition to be positivist as it is the dominant nature of the marketing discipline and this is a tension that needs to constantly balanced throughout the study. In addition, the international background, commercial experience and on-going lecturing in this area has strengths given the global dissemination of virals but also the strategic perspective which has to be balanced with the need to look at fine detail. Having both experienced and studied digital phenomena, it is important to maintain a slightly outsider's view as there is somewhat of a bandwagon mentality enveloping the whole research subject.

> Have a key research question – this research is adding the perspective of the creative who produces virals, a voice currently absent from extant research

Be open to input from others – The researcher worked very closely with experienced and doctoral level researchers. E.g. Dr. Christian Schnee who has expertise in similar methodologies in PR and Dr. Nigel Walton who is conducting a study into the impact of digital technologies on macro-level business models using a case study approach. They have been immeasurably helpful in discussions in particular about ways of managing data, of the appropriateness of categories produced and to compare the whole process of conducting the research. Also Dr. Jon Ivy for research methodology expertise, who has been mercurial in his views.

Take a flexible approach – in the documentation section below, reference is made to field notes, reflective summaries, case notes etc. which have been used to inform the data analysis process, the development of concepts and the implementation of the empirical stage of the study.

Explore the dataset fully – sometimes there are irreconcilable points and these have been noted e.g. the distinctive model of one agency which pays members to view ads.

Such divergence should be seen as opportunities to consider different perspectives.

Expose the analysis, the process and the findings to critical evaluation by others – There have been opportunities to receive and address critical feedback received from peer-reviewed publications (journal and conferences) in addition to supervision, working colleagues and internal research presentations (at studying university and employer university)

Summarise and make clear the details with other colleagues, audiences, industry in this case.

It is can compromise the study if the qualitative researcher only consider their own interpretations given the nature of the data and the research methods employed (Jones and Alony, 2011; Corbin and Strauss, 2014). Therefore, the researcher has

taken the steps outlined above to ensure there are multiple views accommodated in the study.

4.13 *Chapter Summary:*

The intent of the study was to approach the subject from the perspective of mediators of advertising production. The methodology provides a sound framework to achieve the objectives of the study. The chapter illustrated the managerial and academic value of this investigation, problematized in the research objectives, evaluated the challenges of accessing the population of interest and assessed the sampling solutions, justifying the decisions taken. The arguments supporting the analytical procedures are also developed.

5 CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYTICAL PROCESS & CODING FRAMEWORK

Data gathering and categorisation were iterative (Dey, 1993). Analysis and colleague feedback encouraged reflexivity (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). The video recorded, interviews lasted from about 40 to 60 minutes each, producing an extensive data set, in excess of 72000 words. Before, during and after each interview notes were made of key points in the interview and reflections (Ceci and Lubatti, 2012). Participants' company profile and background were researched in the recruitment stage and then printed before the meetings to prepare (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). Transcripts were checked for errors and Excel was used to conduct initial coding and sub-categorization, following Elo and Kygnas (2008). This chapter justifies the decisions taken in the evaluation of the data set.

5.1 *Introduction:*

The research analysis process has to be related to the following areas, developed in the rest of the chapter (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008).

Research objectives

Data collection and preparation

Exploration of data (descriptive and graphical)

Approaches to the analysis (explore relationships, compare)

In other words, techniques of qualitative data analysis – documentation, concept development, steps taken to explore relationships in the data and appropriate ways of presenting the data, issues around substantiating the findings and applications of reflexivity to add credibility to the situational context of the study (Saldana, 2009).

5.2 *Research Purpose:*

This research provides insight into how viral marketing creative campaigns are conceived, designed, implemented and evaluated by the creative managers tasked

with production. It also shows how advertising agencies are changing in response to digital and therefore how managers need to adapt their understanding and practice in commissioning work. In order to achieve this, the research objectives are:

RO1:

To capture and codify the views of creative managers on the concepts and messaging strategies considered and implemented in viral marketing videos

RO2:

To explicate, classify and explore the changes in advertising campaign planning processes which digital phenomena such as viral marketing have introduced

RO3:

To develop theoretical models for understanding viral marketing campaign creation and extend extant models of advertising creative process and agency management

5.3 *Qualitative versus Quantitative Data Analysis Process*

To summarise the process underpinning the analysis, it is worthwhile to compare the differences between the two dominant ways of analysing data. The distinctions highlight the qualitative researchers' objective of achieving richness of insight, wide-ranging interpretations that recognise the role of the data analyst in all of those stages (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2008). This is distinct from the quantitative researcher who attempts to be detached, observing particular factors (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). Following Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 8–10) and Patton (2002:13–14):

- Concentrate on sense-making rather than statistical significance
- In-depth data capture on a small number versus large numbers with less data
- Analyse many facets profoundly, allowing themes to emerge and relationships to develop against pre-determination
- Data analyst acknowledges role as part of the research set against the dispassionate research designer typical of the quantitative analyst
- Situational responsiveness not wider reflections on the broad population

- In opening the data to the views of others, acknowledgement of the effect of values and beliefs on the analytical cycle versus the effort to be value-free
- A comprehensive picture of the participants views of situation, phenomenon, thoughts and feelings rather than predetermined measures

5.4 *Techniques of Qualitative Data Analysis:*

Before starting the analysis, the data had to be prepared (Silverman, 2016). Through these processes the researcher becomes familiar with the text, compares the field notes, interview notes and begins to develop the theoretical ideas for the remainder of the data gathering (Cresswell, 2013; Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). These procedures provided an initial feel for the ideas within the interview (Rowley, 2012). It also supports the coding and analysis, to be discussed below. The application of essential data processing tools are discussed below.

Documentation

Concept development, coding, themes

Steps in exploring connections, presenting data (also see Analysis Chapter)

Substantiating findings

Reflexivity

5.5 *Documentation:*

Documents are the original source from which the voice of participants can be presented, pertinent points, ideas and feelings are made into sense (Ceci and Lubatti, 2012). Managing these documents is the first stage of analysis (Yin, 2010). The participants, the transcripts, the written documents, the video files, the case studies referred to, the organisational profiles and summaries of these have to be saved and inventoried (Saldana, 2009).

The first two video recorded interviews were transcribed into Excel to allow greater manipulation and sub-categorisations into separate pages. However, the remainder were subsequently transcribed into Word. Before this could happen however, the interviewees were repeated into Dragon speech recognition software by the

researcher. This converted them into an audio file. The audio files were then converted by the software to Word. The original three were also converted into Word afterwards by simply copying over. So the data was safely preserved in video, in audio and in transcript (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). The transcript outputs from the Dragon Software were then re-checked against the video interviews and corrected for accuracy (Morse et al, 2002). An information management system is indispensable to process a large volume of data, and in this research in multiple formats. This documentation stage is essential for other reasons (Miles and Huberman, 1994):

- Evidences and supports the qualitative analyst to provide a way of developing and outlining the analytic procedure
- Critically, it is the base of developing theory and of sense-making in general

Documents in this study from a total of 12 agencies interviewed and 2 pilots (that alone more than 72000 words) include the following:

Handwritten interview: 2 (1 pilot and 1 other)
Video recorded: (13)
Audio files of the above: (11)
Transcripts – Excel (2)
Transcripts – Word (11)
Transcripts – Dragon software and Word (9)
Notes at and after interview – handwritten
Reflective summaries
Conceptual notes
Case details in folders – includes interviewee details, role and functions, organisation background, brands and campaigns, cases referred to

5.6 *Concept Development, Coding, Themes:*

"Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information. The encoding requires an explicit 'code'" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. vi). This means that what participants are saying in the raw data is grouped into similar sets. This is then encoded in the

analytical process in such a way that raw data is transformed into meaningful categories – codes. Saldana defines a code in qualitative inquiry as "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (2009, p.3).

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidance on thematic analysis a procedure was created for the development of the coding framework.

1. Familiarising with data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing report

It is the case that concepts emerge progressively from the data, initially finding them, and then finessing the critical ideas as part of the iterative process (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is also common to find ideas in the initial stages, following Strauss and Corbin (2008) and Cresswell (2013; 1998) and then to deconstruct these before reconstituting them in a more sensible fashion (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009).

Such analytic conclusions are then set against further data collection and analysis (Daymon and Holloway, 2011). In this way, the focus of the research can be amended, the issue problematised in a more focussed way (Corbin and Strauss, 2014; Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006). For example in this study, the idea – cultural cues – was further researched and then integrated as an explanatory criterion against which to test the ideation of virals (see table 5-1 to show data collection progression).

Pilot		Coding Name
1	DD (Wales)	Pilot 1
2	TA (Worcester Finland)	Pilot 2
Main Study		
1	RHP	Transcript 1
2	EC	Transcript 2
3	OG	Transcript 3
4	C&W	Transcript 4
5	DDB	Transcript 5
6	ZO	Transcript 6
7	CE	Transcript 7
8	MF	Transcript 8
9	GV	Transcript 9
10	T	Transcript 10
11	PMAD	Transcript 11
12	E	Transcript 12

Table 5-1 List of studies in respective order of collection

Concepts emerged progressively taking the research further at each step. The concept of "creative topicality and freedom" (creative appeals) emerged from the T3 interview, then taken forward to T4 where it emerged again but "constraints from brand owners" as a limiting factor to digital creative freedom was much stronger (organisation behaviour theme); the data collected from T2 is quite focussed on insight and understanding creative platforms, target audiences and how to leverage technology across the various departmental functions within the agency (diffusion platforms and more flexible creative management model). When the researcher reflected on the notes and the data, it was decided that the model has to be explored further and it was a focus at the T5 interview, since becoming a major theme in the study (advertising planning process).

5.6.1 Coding Process

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) procedure outlined above, Charmaz, (2003, p. 94-95) proposes that researchers use the following questions as tools to aid coding:

- What is going on?
- What are people doing?
- What is the person saying?
- What do these actions and statements take for granted?
- How do structure and context serve to support, maintain, impede or change these actions and statements?"

The researcher has chosen a computerised method of organising the data over a manual one (see Figure 5-1 for Process). This makes it easier to manipulate text and reduce the manual handling involved (Jones and Alony, 2011). Physical records have been mostly replaced with computer-based filing systems, although it is necessary to maintain original documents for reference (Saldana, 2009). Such a large data set requires attentive and detailed consideration and so a computer makes that much more flexible (Walker and Myrick, 2006). Data coding was initially conducted by the researcher, then separately by another coder, and later by 2, also working separately, then together (Saldana, 2009). The latter practice is important to check interpretation, to include divergent views, to locate missed codes, to support the quality of the initial analysis and the coding framework (Gibbs, 2002).
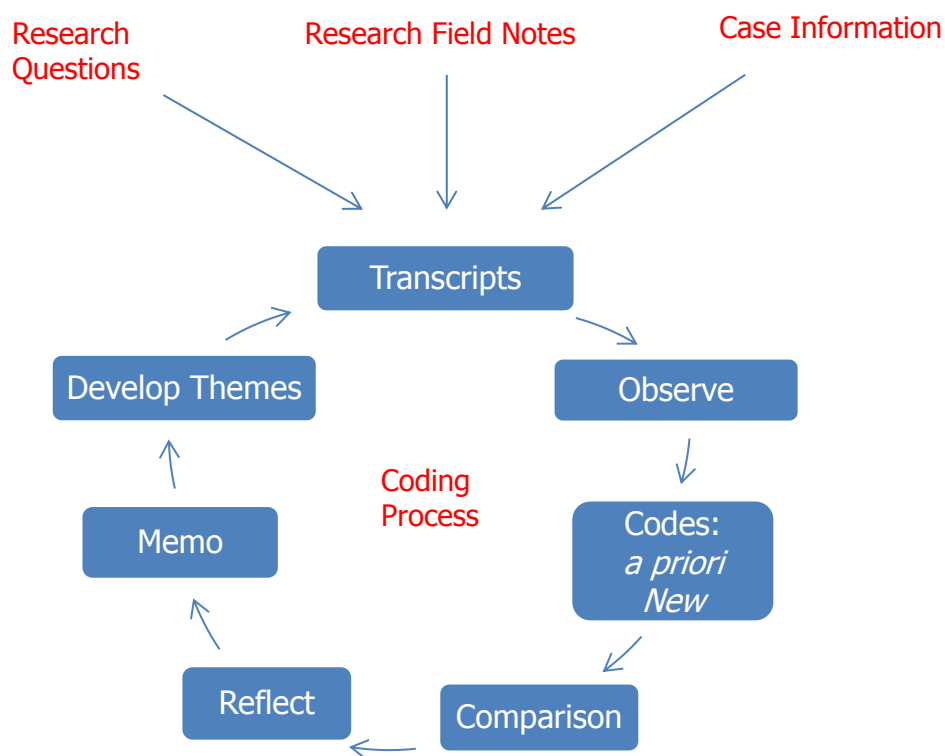
Figure 5-1 Coding Process (Adapted from Gibbs, 2002)

5.6.1.1 Observation and Non- hierarchical Coding

Coding involves the location of meaningful sections of the transcript and identifying these under a heading which exemplifies a possible theme (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). The result is an assembly of related parts of the data into groups (Cresswell, 2013). This then allows exploration together across the various participants (Miles and Huberman, 1994). To start with, the transcripts are carefully read, re-read and re-organised, and a code label is assigned so that it can be recovered for additional analysis. There are a number of possible bases for identifying the codes: a common strand, a subject, thoughts, particular expressions, technical phrases and index words (which are part of a common lexicon) (Boyatzis, 1998). Codes are objects which represent facts, or they are exploratory techniques for further exploration and discernments (Saldana, 2009). They are rationalising tools that facilitate greater insights from the data (Kelle and Seidel, 1995).

Non-hierarchical coding is a first level coding of the key ideas in the data, following a line by line review (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). It does not attempt to categorise

but list based on the order in which they were noted; in other words descriptive coding, to reflect the content of the data (Silverman, 2016). Work was done on a first transcript, preparing the first outline, as in Table 5-1 below. This was then compared to a second (Table 5- 2), combining the two to create a third template. This process continued from transcript 1 aross all to T12 (Strauss and Corbin, 2014). The full set of transcripts, the progressive coding, the new codes identified from each transcript, the deletions/merger/redefinitions, summary of key issues and main insights is provided as a separate document to the final submission (following Corbin and Strauss, 2014; Saldana, 2009). The definitions of each code and relevant text units that capture the new/reinforcing insights from each transcript are separately printed and bound for the whole data set (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009).

Code name	Definition	Notes
Comparison of agency type	Comparing the typical advertising agency to the demands of digital.	
Technology	The use of technology in the creative process.	
Comparison of people in old and new world	Skills possessed by professionals in relation to digital.	
Definition	Participant view of a particular concept.	
Taxonomy	A structure to make sense of connections online.	Taxonomy
Taxonomy on and offline	A structure to make sense of connections online and offline.	
Taxonomy - digital	A structure to make sense of connections across platforms.	
Purpose	Use of digital for own objectives	
Clear objectives	For a campaign.	
Social media ubiquity	The presence of social media in multiple formats.	Media Structure
Conventional campaign planning	Following the normative processes for campaign creation.	
Widening opportunity	The creative possibilities of digital	Content
Speed	The pace of transmission, sharing of online messages.	
Imagination and technology	Technology as a chance for creative exploration.	
Consumer ego/ public kudos	Ego appeals in creative content.	Content
Viral distribution platform	Media used for virals to spread.	Deleted "Viral platform"
Self-reflection	Participant comments about self	
Consumer power	Shift of engagement initiatives to the consumer.	

Comparison of conventional model	Highlight viral creative process in relation to existing processes.	
Media distribution platform	Platforms such as Facebook, Pinterest.	Media Structure
Desire for change	Participant yearning for new models of working (for client and agency).	Digital creatives
Researcher summary	Researcher confirming what the participant if indicating.	
Brands and their knowledge	This refers to gaps in existing client knowledge or attitudes to the creative opportunities.	
Motives to move to other roles	Participant explanations of motives for moving into digital/smaller agency/ interactive creative work	
External thinking and new ideas	References to specific sources of new creative thinking for campaign development.	
New creative model/ mind-set	Proposals of what the new model of designing creative work can look like.	
Can control tactics	Level at which client strategy is mostly responsive.	Brand control
Little power to influence businesses	The level of influence that digital creatives feel they can exercise over clients.	Brand control Institutionalisation within large agencies
Data overload	Too much information provided back from digital campaigns.	Too much data
Metaphors (to make sense)	Participant use of metaphor to illustrate a concept.	
Comparison of people/ organisation in old and new world	Highlighting skills gaps between people / organisations in the typical way of understanding campaigns and the emerging.	?
Get better at using tools available not	View that more techniques mean greater opportunities to be more	Institutionalisation

be afraid of consumers	efficient.	within large agencies
Digital community	Of consumers who engage	
Other communications support	Creative campaigns work if they have support in other marketing communications	IMC
Data intelligence	There is data to provide information on behaviour, consumption etc	Making sense of information
Age and consumer interactions	Reflections of changing boundaries among age groups, particularly among the "older" groups	Consumers
Relevant content	The provision of core creative materials that satisfy the target audience	Content
Consumer power and baby boomers	Shifting consumer power but also among the soon to retire	Consumers
Easy to share	Commentary about the simplicity of technologies to share messages	Low information processing and action costs
Network connections	One network links to the other in some way (apps, bluetooth, webpages in games for example)	Media Structure
Creative novelty	Virals possess some creative novelty which makes them compelling	Unique creative idea
Exclusive pre-release content	Content which is used as a taster before conventional mass media	Content
Different campaign model	Explanations of elements of current campaign development model	
Measurement - sales	Conventional ways of measuring advertising	Campaign evaluation
Product category expectations	Dominant industry/ product/ service categories in viral messages	
Viral spread	Comments on diffusion of messages	

Education in agency, consumer and brands	The teaching role which digital creatives have for staff, client and consumer	Lack of knowledge for clients/ staff
Brand context	The competitive, ownership etc factors which influence perceptions and decisions about viral messages	
Brand heritage	The traditions of the brand and how consumers will perceive a viral campaign which can depart	
Campaign and value consistency	The history of prior campaigns and how a viral campaign may match that	
Measurement – awareness	Questions of what to measure in terms of online campaigns	Campaign evaluation
Cultural link	Comment about suitability of creative ideas in terms of a culture/ shared memory	Currency
Viral measures	Views on the limits of "viral" spread.	Campaign evaluation
Clear objectives for virals	What is the level of acceptable spread? 2000 people may be enough	Campaign evaluation
Creative idea	The idea at the centre of the ad	
Viral and brand size	There is a link to the viral campaign and the scope of operation of the brand	
Size of budget	Resources affect the creative and support resources	
Conversations and media platforms	Opportunities for discussing a viral campaign on and offline	Conversation facilitation links
Viral as brand or response	Viral as a brand building tool or as a mechanism requiring a particular action	Campaign evaluation
Measurement - time	Virals have to be measured over different time periods	Campaign evaluation

Seeding and brand loyalty	The link between brand loyalty and the desire to participate in sharing virals	Intermediaries
Role of creative within and without	The tension between creative campaign creation and brand advocacy outside of work	Boundaries of creative role
Brand planning and consumer	A basic foundation of planning which does not change with the consumer at the centre of thinking	Planning foundations
Media platforms and audiences	Shrinking of audiences because of media platforms means need for better targeting	Media Structure
Creative humour	Important of humour in online message spread	Fun
UGC	User generated content	
Upset consumer	Brands lack of understanding of how consumers interact, unwittingly make consumers unhappy	Unintentional closure of conversation channels
Campaign life	Reference to the possibilities of a campaign continuing for extensive periods (years) online	Campaign closure versus open-endedness
Future creatives	Creative ideas for future advertising concepts	

Table 5-2 Coding Transcript 1

5.6.1.2 Comparison

If the codes emerge from the data, the preconceptions and knowledge from prior studies is excluded, known as grounded codes (Walker and Myrick, 2006). However, codes can be developed using existing labels which have come from the literature, the research questions, the interview schedule and the researcher's perception (Jones and Alony, 2011). These are *a priori* codes. In this study there are both, though more grounded codes.

The labels are grouped to identify categories and subcategories (Walker and Myrick, 2006). As this study progresses, it will become clear that there are a number of rounds which are dedicated to filtering the data into appropriate codes, linked closely to the data set (Jones and Alony, 2011; Corbin and Strauss, 2014; Miles and Huberman, 1994). Thus allowing a deep understanding of virals and how such campaigns are created but also the management and process evolutions.

The data is then further organised into potential analytical themes reflecting the key issues in the research and the literature, captured in memos (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). Codes and themes are developed through the application of the constant comparison method proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Every encounter with a new piece of labelled text should be compared to the others similarly coded (Harwood and Garry, 2003; Morse et al, 2002). It leads to internal consistency and to reflection on whether or not a text fragment should be moved to another category or linked to others (Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

Code name	Definition	Notes – codes added from this transcript, definitions changed
Definition	Participant view of a particular concept.	
Creative Novelty	Virals possess some creative novelty which makes them compelling.	
Conversations	The nature of the creative to encourage talk.	New from T2
Cultural Link	Comment about suitability of creative ideas in terms of a culture/ shared memory.	
Adoption	Rate of use of virals among organisations.	New from T2
Measurement - clutter	Viral adoption leading to congestion.	New from T2
Purpose	Use of digital for own objectives	
Viral and brand size	There is a link to the viral campaign and the scope of operation of the brand	
Size of budget	Resources affect the creative and support resources	
TV Response	The actions of traditional media, especially TV in response to virals	New from T2
Digital community	Of consumers who engage	
Viral measures	Views on the limits of "viral" spread	
External thinking and new ideas	References to specific sources of new creative thinking for campaign development	
Taxonomy – of website	As a mechanism which leads to mass viewing	New from T2
Self-reflection	Participant comments about self	

Emotion	Use of emotion driven appeals in virals	New from T2
Seeding and brand loyalty	The link between brand loyalty and the desire to participate in sharing virals	Deleted "Brand advocates". Deleted Consumers acting as "advertising agencies"
Intermediaries	Parties responsible for delivering virals from the producer to the customer.	New from T2
Age and consumer interactions	Reflections of changing boundaries among age groups, particularly among the "older" groups.	
Data intelligence	There is data to provide information on behaviour, consumption etc	
Brand planning and consumer	A basic foundation of planning which does not change with the consumer at the centre of thinking.	
Client relationships	Depends on the relationship of the ad agency with the client.	New from T2
Fluidity between large agencies and smaller ones	Changing relationships among agencies.	New from T2
Comparison of conventional model	Highlight viral creative process in relation to existing processes.	
Viral distribution platform	Media used for virals to spread.	Deleted "Media Platform"
Creative idea	The idea at the centre of the ad.	
Creative humour	Importance of humour in online message spread.	

Interactivity	Customer involvement with the campaign	New from T2
Measurement – awareness	Questions of what to measure in terms of online campaigns.	
Celebrity sponsorship	Inclusion of personality into the campaign.	New from T2
Data intelligence and campaign structure	Using the campaign to develop more insight and information	New from T2
Games	Viral content within and using games online mainly but increasingly networked.	New from T2
Other communications support	Creative campaigns work if they have support in other marketing communications.	
Foreknowledge	Know if a campaign has a greater possibility of becoming a viral.	New from T2
Importance	If a viral is important it will spread if given certain creative characteristics.	New from T2
Imagination and technology	Technology as a chance for creative exploration.	
Future creatives	Creative ideas for future advertising concepts.	
Comparison of conventional model	Highlight viral creative process in relation to existing processes.	
Researcher summary	Researcher confirming what the participant if indicating.	
Bandwagon	Digital evangelism.	New from T2
Widening opportunity	The creative possibilities of digital.	Deleted "More creative possibilities"
Upset consumer	Brands lack of understanding of how consumers interact, unwittingly make consumers unhappy.	
Fear	Fear of "uncontrolled" campaigns on brand owners' part.	New from T2

Risqué	Creative appeals which are controversial or push against social boundaries.	New from T2
Data intelligence - privacy	Customer attempts to maintain privacy in social media.	New from T2
Media distribution platform	Platforms such as Facebook, Pinterest.	
Hijack	The distribution of the campaign for unintended purposes.	New from T2
Meme	A pattern of established cultural behaviour.	New from T2
Comparison of people in old and new world	Skills possessed by professionals in relation to digital.	
Media buying changing too	The way media buying is conducted and from who is different from before.	New from T2
New creative model/ mind-set	Proposals of what the new model of designing creative work can look like	
Brand heritage	The traditions of the brand and how consumers will perceive a viral campaign which can depart.	
Media platforms and audiences	Shrinking of audiences because of media platforms means need for better targeting.	
Product category expectations	Dominant industry/ product/ service categories in viral messages.	

Table 5-3 Coding Transcript 2

5.6.1.3 Reflection and Memoing

Since reflexivity is essential in qualitative analysis, it is necessary to maintain notes of the coding process, known as memos as seen in Table 5-2 (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). Notes taken by the researcher before, during and after the collection of data are used as reflective tools (Jones and Alony, 2011). This demonstrates research process but is also used for extended notes on the codes, to record ideas about possible themes and the overall links between and among these (Cresswell, 2013). It also helps with the second coder examining the data (Morse et al, 2002).

It will be clear from the tables above and the matrices below how the coding becomes progressively more summative, analytical and consistent (Saldana, 2009). Duplications, or related codes are merged, deleted, new categories are developed following the procedure of constant comparison outlined above (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The memos support the creation of the themes that form the concept development output from the data and the research, the subject of the analysis chapters to follow.

5.6.1.4 Themes

The final structure (Table 5-4) was assembled on the basis of a detailed re-consideration of the full data set (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015). From Tables 5-2 and 5-3, it is clear there are too many codes. When taken together with other codes generated from the other transcripts, it is necessary to group them for analysis (Silverman, 2016). Besides, in this process, new possibilities suggest themselves, dimensions attached to a particular code (Gibbs, 2002). Of additional value, is the discovery of aspects for which there is no code (e.g. here some codes have to be added/ defined as noted in the final column in the table above). In other words, it is the start of the analysis process to follow.

Following Miles and Huberman (1994), pattern coding was employed. They define pattern coding as "a way of grouping" the initial codes generated into a "smaller number of sets, themes, or constructs" (p. 69). Twelve overall analytical codes were identified (Table 5-4). The mid and lower level sub-categories for these overarching

codes are also shown (Saldana, 2009). Such an organisation of codes demonstrates relationships between the main codes, the key sub-categories and the extended links (Silverman, 2016). From this analysis, the key themes begin to appear (Cresswell, 2013). Most of these codes reflect specific conceptual questions related to theories of creative campaign development as they operate in the context of viral communications (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015). The codes are agency, technology, people, definitions, taxonomy, objectives, consumer, planning, creative, transmission, brand owners and evaluation.

These codes form patterns broadly comprising the main ideas underlying the five areas of research into virals – factors affecting diffusion, customer behaviour, organisational responses, characteristics of virals and the advertising campaign process for virals. Pattern coding allows researchers to locate these distinct blueprints which can be further evaluated (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Diffusion modelling theory forms a pattern across three of the overarching codes, transmission patterns, technological platforms and taxonomy.

Pattern 2 is essentially customer behaviour, motivations and attitudes forming a category by itself.

Organisational behaviour is pattern 3 encompassing the changes in brand owner behaviour in relation to commissioning and evaluating virals, and to the changing structures within advertising agencies.

Creative considerations, the changing roles of creative people and definitions of these new processes refer to pattern 4, viral marketing characteristics.

Finally, pattern 5 includes the codes, objectives and planning, together forming the core work of an advertising agency in its development and placement of virals.

Agency	Technology	People	Definitions	Taxonomy	Objectives
Advertising	social media	Creative Directors	viral	connections	servant to purposes
Media	Ubiquity	Digital	social media	offline/online	clarity of objectives
digital	Imagination	Clients	digital	offline	"limits" on spread
big	Mobiles	New	creative	online	awareness
Small	Speed	Old	appeals	across platforms	action
New	Connected	Leaders		within platforms	
Old	Old	Followers		within websites	
persuading clients	New	boundaries work/life		Dissemination	
tactical influence	Games	skills/ diversity			
competitor co-op	Better quality	Roles/ blurring			
New entrants	FB as noticeboard	Distrust			
Acquisitions		Stress			
Smaller		Desire			
Agile		Disillusion			
Clusters		external thinkers			
Difficult		Education continues			
Agency as audience		Bandwagon			
Disruption		Balance			
Emergent social network		Teams			
Management structure		New legitimacy			

Not corporate					
Consumer	Planning	Creative	Transmission	Brand owners	Evaluation
Ego	Normative	Possibilities	pace	worry	data overload
Public	Digital	Idea	platforms	attitudes	valuable data
Power	New	Novelty	seeds	measurement	trackable now
Loyalty	Future	Humour	intermediaries	relationships	existing
Community	Insights	Emotion	easy	many providers	new
"Age" barriers less	product category	Interactivity	Low process costs	knowledge gaps	time period
Video literacy	Budgets	Effectiveness	Email targeted	control	better tools
Ads as short break	Scale of client	Integration		experimental	
Ease of access	Foreknowledge	Continuity		ownership	
Absorbed in digital	Media buying	multiple simultaneous		values	
	TA profiles	Relevance		heritage	
		Content		adopters won	
		Exclusive		more virals competing	
		brand context		revenue	
		cultural link		Hijack	
		"talkability"		Push	
		Inadvertent upset			
		The new			

		Future			
		TV virals			
		Celebrity			
		Data			
		Important subjects			
		Risque			
		Memes			
		Viral as bonus			
		Liberation			
		Pull			
		Reverse engineering			

Table 5-4 Pattern coding showing related themes and sub-themes

5.7 *Steps in Exploring Connections, Presenting Data:*

Based on the process outlined above, the researcher was able to develop a series of matrices (Miles and Huberman, 1994) which supported the development of the codes and themes. In qualitative enquiry, a matrix is a data reduction and concept development template which can methodically capture specific aspects recurring across the interviews (Saldana, 20091). In order to produce matrices, the data has to be carefully evaluated, reflective notes, follow-up examples/evidence assessed, drafting, editing and then final headings, in order to substantiate the data connections (Miles and Huberman, 1994). See exemplars below. The first is a general matrix (Table 5-5) which the researcher started to employ to begin to make sense of the broad ideas emerging from the interviews. While the matrix below supports a broad stroke analysis, it begins to fragment the data into meaningful categories which can be further evaluated to develop more complex evaluations of particular strands emerging from the interviews (Gibbs, 2002).

	Creative issues	Advertising management
Role	Insider or outsider	Pathway to role – planning, creative?
Experience	New to digital or digital native? Prior campaign stories	Predisposition to institutionalisation
Definitions	Of digital and viral to understand context	Model varies based on the definition
Brand	Brand heritage	Conflict with account management re: client needs
Technology and media platforms	Before, during or after campaign development?	Virals are cost light in terms of media buy
Objectives and campaign development	Absolute clarity from account management to creatives	
Concepting and ideation	Major focus – what, how, why, views, stories	
Creative freedom	Perceived obstacles	Awareness of impact and extent
Connecting with consumers	Major issue for creative teams – what would make a viral appeal?	Planning and creative working together?

Data and creative planning	Too much, if and how used	
Education	Of creative, digital, the agency as a whole and the client	Willing and open
Relationships – teams and agency	How do teams work within the agency in responding to digital media creative work?	Managing creative conflict and approving final campaigns
Models of working within the advertising industry	Some creatives feel that they are struggling to keep up.	Decide on organisational risks
Products	Some categories more viral than others.	
Measures	The image of success	Extremely important for senior manages and clients
Conventional advertising	Constant comparison to understand models and mind-sets	Still the cash cow and therefore ensure core creative work becomes better to match digital

Table 5-5 Matrix worksheet for processing data

The matrix below (Table 5-6) shows analysis at a deeper level. Matrices can be related to the codes, the themes, the theoretical stream to which it belongs, to relationships across and then to producing explanatory theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In other words, the qualitative analyst can examine relatively simple ideas towards more composite constructs/models of connections (Deuker and Albers, 2012).

	Less likely to be Viral	Mixed economy	More likely to be Viral
Level of restraint	Control	Transition	Flexible
Constraint Location:			
Agency	Larger, agencies, part of groups are more reluctant	A mix of the others are open to alternatives	Most of the smaller, newer agencies are able to deliver but need the larger ones too
Brand	Participants confirm managerial concern	A few categories are early adopters	Even products (e.g. car insurance) which lack "viral" qualities can become successful
Creative Team	Reluctant but acknowledge need to accommodate digital capacity	A few are discussing new models	Multi-modal: digital lead across agency, within creative team, specialist division

Table 5-6 Creative Freedom Matrix: constraints on creative flexibility and viral failure or success

Tables 5-5 and 5-6 illustrate multiple connections which digital creatives have across the stages of campaign management within an advertising agency. In other words, increasing insight into the complexity and more sophisticated concepts generated from the analysis process to theorise practice, identify creative process innovation and creative management changes within advertising agencies (as in Table 5-7).

	Less likely to be Viral	Mixed economy	More likely to be Viral
Level of restraint	Control	Transition	Flexible
Constraint Location			
Agency	Larger, agencies, part of groups are more reluctant	A mix of the others are open to alternatives	Most of the smaller, newer agencies are able to deliver but need the larger ones too
Brand	Participants confirm managerial concern	A few categories are early adopters	Even products (e.g. car insurance) which lack "viral" qualities can become successful
Theoretical link: Institutionalisation. Theme 3 – organisational behaviour	Sub-theme 1 – Conservatism	Sub-theme 2 – Agency Management changes	Sub-theme 3 – Industry restructuring
Creative Team	Reluctant but acknowledge need to accommodate digital capacity	A few are discussing new models	Multi-modal: digital lead across agency, within creative team, specialist division
Theoretical link: creative production. Theme 4 – viral characteristics	Sub-theme 2 – Roles of digital creatives	Sub-theme 2 – Roles of digital creatives	Sub-theme 3 – Conceptions of new creative ideas

Table 5-7 Creative Freedom Matrix: relationship to theory and effect on virality

This work represents the main focus of the analytic process (Elo and Kyngas, 2008; Harwood and Garry, 2003). Here simple observations of creative managers' views and contexts can be transformed into meaningful conclusions about why these people think, act and behaved in the way they did as they discussed advertising ideas with clients, planned for the campaign, developed creative concepts, disseminated and then evaluated virals (Truong and Simmons, 2010; Southgate, Westoby and Page, 2010).

5.8 *Substantiating Findings:*

Classically, there are three criteria against which qualitative research can be evaluated (Becker, 1958) detailed below.

5.8.1 Participant Credibility:

The likelihood that they are being honest and that the researcher has not used a prior connection to influence their views. This study found the participants by contacting agencies (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). However, there were three referrals from interviewees who recommended particular individuals (T4, T6, T8). This is not unusual and can produce insight into key individuals especially in industries where it is difficult to access people as is the case in advertising (Heckathorn, 1997). They were screened for their roles, their experience and agency characteristics (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

5.8.2 Whether Participants are led by the Researcher:

Natural, free-flowing comments are likely to produce more reliable data while militating against leading questions from the researcher (Josselson, 2013). The interview schedule was open, general and allowed free flow comments (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2008). The majority of interviews are recorded on video (Krippendorff, 2004). The researcher made particular efforts to establish rapport but also to remember to minimise comment (Kvale, 1996).

The impact of the researcher on the situation: being under the microscope can affect the participant (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). This requires vigilance in drawing parallels with when the researcher is absent, what the researcher has documented and what is evident from the views of others on "typical" practice (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). A deliberate effort was made to make the interviews as natural as possible, particularly using informal spaces within the agencies (Daymon and Holloway, 2011). 3 interviews took place over lunch/tea rather than in the agency.

5.9 *Credibility of the Findings:*

On balance, the work of the qualitative analyst has to be assessed by the credibility of the findings in a particular aspect of social life (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). The researcher has been particularly keen to share the process over the course of the study at various fora (seminars, conferences and publications) (Cresswell, 2013). The interview transcript has been returned to three participants (T2, T6 and T12) and the findings also to them (following quality guidance from Daymon and Holloway, 2011; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011; Saldana, 2009). This way, the qualitative analyst can confirm the accuracy of interviews but also in the findings, the discovered, "tacit" insight that has been gleaned during the research (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009).

Reliability and validity concerns are similar to any other methodology adopted (Rowley, 2012; Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). In terms of reliability, there are three issues:

> Stability
>
> Reproducibility
>
> Accuracy

Rowley (2012) observes that errors can never be totally eradicated but reduced as much as possible to meet established expectations (80%). Stability refers to the propensity for uniformity among researchers to code the same data in the same way over time (Bryman and Bell, 2015). If it was done by a group of coders, they should do it in in a similar way (Saldana, 2009). This was a key factor in deciding to first ask another coder to code 2 transcripts, then later as the interviews progressed two coders as well the researcher for the remainder.

The second, reproducibility is related to choices in terms of the grouping of codes/ classes (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). The 2 coders worked separately, emailed their coding efforts after completion. The researcher also coded the same transcripts individually. Then the 3 met together to look at the codes, the draft definitions. There were differences but on balance, similar (Gibbs, 2002). New viewpoints were integrated and some codes were changed/merged (Cresswell, 2013). Definitions were expanded (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This was particularly around diffusion as coders had different ideas of what that meant and what participants were referring to.

Following conference presentations and research papers (attached), the nature of the study evolved, stabilising around the final coding framework and themes presented in Table 5-8. As observed in the discussion analysis process above and the production of matrices, the reproducibility of the categories is important to making the research more robust but also the techniques used to determine the whole set of themes (Walker and Myrick, 2006).

The last, accuracy refers to the closeness of match between the categorisation of this study with that of a "norm" based on a numerical comparison (Rowley, 2012). This can be checked for the codes based on quantitiative word counts in the transcripts. However, in terms of an established standard in prior research, it does not exist for research into antecedents producing digital communications campaigns such as virals.

Validity in this study is primarily focused on two issues: links between themes and conclusions and the theoretical generalisability (Silverman, 2016). The themes (also labeled categories) can be challenged in some forms of content analysis such as quantitative (Cresswell, 2013). A word can be counted but it has homonyms which require reflection on the context before conclusions are drawn. The conclusions reached could be questioned on the basis of the limits to the inference drawn (Allen and Wiles, 2016). What is the secondary (implicit) reference which one word conjures but which is not explicitly noted in the data? Validity is therefore reached through the application of a number of grouping techniques to set the definition of that category (Strauss and Glaser, 2014). Example, in this study, the word "viral" refers to a particular type of online advertising. However, it also refers to biological viruses, to sharing patterns and to attention-generating ideas. This is the use of a number of classifications to arrive at the overarching theme. The category is consequently expanded to include these implicit elements.

With regard to generalisability, it has already been show above that the definition of the categories is essential to validity (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). If validity is affected, then the generalisability is too (Rowley, 2012). Those categories must be carefully defined and stability has to be built in to test this (Boyatzis, 1998). To support that process, guidelines for the production of these have to be carefully developed (Corbin and Strauss, 2014) as discussed in this chapter above and the

research methods. Besides, this study is not intending to generalise its findings but to be indicative, exploratory.

5.10 *Reflexivity:*

The research methods and this chapter have made it clear that iteration and recursiveness underpins the entire process (Boyatzis, 1998). In order to add clarity of the background behind the study, it is suggested that researchers also produce stories about the nature of interactions with participants including any problems encountered and how they were resolved, it at all (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). This narrative provides evidence to other researchers of how data was accumulated, reflecting the context of interpretivism (Bryman and Bell, 2015). It is particularly helpful to track the advancement and adaptable nature of the study, to understand method, process and conceptual developments (Altheide and Johnson, 1994). In other words, it is the case in qualitative enquiry that a concept, as illustrated in the matrices above, can develop over time in a specific situation (Elwood and Martin, 2000). To this end, it is evident the extent to which the researcher is involved in the study (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). The notes on participants, on interviews, campaign examples and agency background are attached in the appendices to the thesis.

5.11 *Ethics in Qualitative Data Analysis:*

The fieldwork should not commence unless the researcher has a plan that others believe will produce the outcomes intended (Josselson, 2013). In this study, the researcher prepared the schedule and shared with other academics for comments before proceeding (Silverman, 2011). The researcher shared and discussed the schedule and the plan with a colleague who was then a Director of Marketing in an advertising agency and an academic and with the Director of Studies. Connections made with participants should be nurtured and they need to be kept abreast of progress on the research (Lincoln, 2009). It is also suggested that they are asked to discuss emerging findings, and as noted above, this has been done in this study (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009).

During the analysis process the qualitative analyst has to bear in mind how conclusions might affect the work situation and if there are any effects on people (Josselson, 2013). Following Miles and Huberman (1994:293–295), a set of key questions should be asked, especially in the data analysis processing. These are assessed below in relation to this research.

Confidentiality, discretion, anonymous treatment: Consider issues of intrusion, data protection, and privacy of individuals and of organisations (also D'Alessandro, Peltier and Dahl, 2012). There is a tension in presenting the data if the participants cannot be fully identified and achieving rich depictions of the issues and situation (Josselson, 2013). These issues were addressed at the data collection stage, preparing a confidentiality agreement, including anonymity in the analysis (Lewis et al, 2005). It would also be appropriate to seek participant views of the materials before release for them to decide if privacy has been properly conserved (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Intervention and advocacy: in the event of disturbing or illicit behaviour qualitative analysts can suppress parts of the analysis. In this study this issue did not arise (Allen and Wiles, 2016).

Research veracity and trust: due care should be taken in constructing the study against accepted standards (Tussyadiah, 2012). It is essential to adhere to the data analysis process to create valid conclusions (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). This is the subject of the analysis chapter.

Ownership of research materials: resolve any issues progressively if there is likely to be conflicts when results are published (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015). This is not likely in this study as the companies and brands have been anonymised.

Managing the results safely: the qualitative researcher sometimes has concerns about whether the conclusions will be used in a suitable manner (Daymon and Holloway, 2011). The analysis of the data in this study will not need to consider these as the issues are mainly commercial and the researcher does not share sensitive business information.

5.12 *Proposed Final Theme Template:*

Above, five themes have been identified from the data. Saldana (2009) outline what is meant by a theme - "a phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is about and/or what it means" (p.139). The guidance makes it clear that this is the final stage, the conclusion of the observation, the coding and reflections, refining and analysis of the data categories and sub-categories (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). The themes draw together the whole data set as the base for analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The themes assist in the development of higher level conceptual constructs (Silverman, 2016; Saldana, 2009).

Twelve main codes were generated from the data (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). These have been further examined for links and with further consolidation of these relationships into five themes (Saldana, 2009). These overall conceptual strands summarise the viral marketing communications phenomenon and provides insight into the range and depth of factors which have to be evaluated (Bryman and Bell, 2015). At this stage, the coding framework has delivered and structured insight into the data and the construction of such virals within the UK advertising industry.

Theme 1 Creative factors influencing diffusion			Overall theoretical category
Sub-theme 1 Transmission	Sub-theme 2 Technological Platforms	Sub-theme 3 Taxonomy	Contagion modelling

Theme 2 Customer behaviour			
Sub-theme 1 Behaviour? Profiles (includes media cons?)	Sub-theme 2 Media consumption? Motivation and attitudes	Sub-theme 3 Emotional desires	Motivation and attitude theory

Theme 3 Organisational behaviour			
Sub-theme 1 Conservativism and Evaluation	Sub-theme 2 Agency management changes	Sub-theme 3 Industry re-structuring	Institutionalisation? Communication process and advertising stages

Theme 4 Viral characteristics			
Sub-theme 1 Creative considerations	Sub-theme 2 Roles of digital creatives	Sub-theme 3 Conceptions of new creative ideas	Creative production

Theme 5 Advertising planning			
Sub-theme 1 Planning processes	Sub-theme 2 Insight? Ideas and appeals	Sub-theme 3 Objectives	Advertising effects models

Table 5-8 Summary of Overall Coding Template

5.13 *Chapter Summary:*

The resulting coding template emerged from the coding and analysis process. The multitude of possible qualitative data analysis approaches has left the field with the challenge of consistently setting benchmarks for evaluating quality. In closing, this section refers to Denzin and Lincoln's (2002) suggested questions that qualitative researchers should employ to consider in benchmarking their work. These have been examined and established by qualitative analysts as credible measures against which to judge the research (Sliverman, 2016; Bryman and Bell, 2015).

> Is the experience captured as it is in a live situation? The data and its analysis can provide insight into the lives of the people.

> Are the experiences presenting a rich description that fully captures the social setting of the study? Yes.

> Is the data grounded as time progressed and is it linked to the people within the situation? Consistently, so across transcripts.

> Is the research process evident and interactional? In this study, the researcher has described the research process and interactions within that setting.

The study has undertaken a systematic evaluation of the prior research and also noted the researcher's own biases. This chapter has set out the processes of data management and analysis of the interviews generated. In response to these questions, when the analysis of qualitative data is completed successfully, then the aim of achieving authenticity has been met.

6 CHAPTER SIX: CODIFYING CREATIVE MANAGERS' CONCEPTS AND MESSAGING STRATEGIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF VIRAL CAMPAIGNS

"The fact that it, they [Old Spice] made a little of a joke about it and embrace it and send it out and make spoofs out of [it], that's what people were interested in; they did not run away from it. I am sure they researched it. I'm sure they got the data. Marketers must have said let's go against it".

"They saw it and they said oh let's just go with it. It was easier [for consumers] to endorse as a result of that. People do not endorse things that are commercial and false. They will however get behind a commercial prospect that comes from a place of honesty and realism. The advertisers giving the audience some credit for knowing what they did about their brand for being able to being intelligent enough to interpret the message and come up with positive messages about Old Spice".

I know the ROI was absolutely unbelievable on that campaign. I think they gave intelligence to their audience and respected that. A lot of marketing, advertising dumb down their audiences". (T8, on one of the most successful viral campaigns of all time.)

The campaign example above in the voice of a digital creative director, reflects a number of key ideas from the antecedent phase of viral campaign development, which are touched on in the coding framework and the themes identified in the last chapter. Ideas – a creative which builds on a shared social understanding (stereotypes of Old Spice, named here as it is a publicly documented campaign), emotion, building trust, consumer collaboration/respect, going against conservatism, compelling content (surreal scenarios). Over this and the next chapter, they will be further developed to address the research objectives.

6.1 *Introduction:*

There were two pilot interviews but the evaluation and theoretical insights here are based on twelve video recorded, face to face interviews conducted by the researcher mainly in the offices of participants and three at lunch, which lasted from about 40 to 60 minutes each, producing an extensive data set, approximately 71, 300 words. Before, during and after each interview notes were made of key points and reflections (Ceci and Lubatti, 2012). Participants' company profile and background were researched in the recruitment stage and then printed before the meetings to prepare (Cresswell, 2013). Transcripts were checked for errors and Excel and word were used to conduct initial coding and sub-categorization, following Elo and Kygnas (2008). Campaigns referred to were followed up after and some prepared beforehand where it was clear what campaigns the participant had worked on (Rowley, 2012). The researcher was part of a group of four mutually supportive academics with whom the research project was shared, discussions held and issues resolved (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009).

The next two chapters address the following questions:

1. How and why do creative managers' conceive of their practices of viral advertising in the way they do?

2. How do they construct such campaigns and what are the implications for current models?

3. What is the nature of the changing role of advertising creative intermediaries resulting from digital marketing phenomena such as viral marketing?

4. What are the barriers and constraints which creative managers encounter and why and how are creative teams evolving solutions?

5. Most digital advertising agencies are small or medium-sized enterprises and tend to be independent, how are they managing the speed of technological and industry changes and why is in the manner in which they do?

Sub-questions that need to be addressed to answer the above research questions:

- How do practitioners define virals? Why and what are the implications for current thinking?
- Why are certain characteristics critical in the messaging strategy – e.g. emotions?
- What are the appeals used, how and why? How is this related to persuasion?
- How constraints to the creative idea are addressed - product category, technical features, diffusion?
- What limits viral creativity? Solutions to these?
- How is the role of influencers affecting the campaign development process?

In other words, exploration of the overall design of viral campaigns, the impact of network characteristics, characteristics of creative design, the types of creative appeals and the nature of creative team management with the objective of codifying the views of creative managers, classifying the innovations they have introduced in advertising planning processes as a result, and to develop theoretical models which help managers and academics to understand, manage and influence the production of such campaigns. The worksheet below summarises the broad pattern of data fragmentation taken across the full data set (Silverman, 2016).

The data is fragmented to uncover creative managers' underlying assumptions and working premises in making sense of virals (Sliverman, 2016). In this way, the researcher can locate possible frameworks, the value of virals, the nature of campaign development, forms of delivery, the likely effects and challenges (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). They also produce a window into how creative teams consider their and brands' roles as message senders, the techniques used to encode virals, concept evaluation processes and the nature of roles, boundaries and relationships across the stages in campaign production. The use of continuous feedback within agencies and across consumer insight is also observed.

	Creative issues	Advertising management
Definitions	Of virals/digital context	Model varies based on the definition
Objectives and campaign development	Absolute clarity from account management to creatives	Conventional linear campaign models
Concepting and ideation	Major focus – what, how, why, views, stories, viral characteristics	Much decision-making within agencies and within campaign development is in this area
Creative freedom	Perceived obstacles. Questioning deep assumptions	Awareness of impact and extent
Brand	Brand heritage	Conflict with account management re: client needs
Connecting with consumers	Major issue for creative teams – what would make a viral appeal? Customer Behaviour.	Planning and creative working together?
Technology and media platforms	Before, during or after campaign development? Diffusion modelling.	Virals are cheap in terms of media buy
Role	Creative roles: insider or outsider	Pathway to role – planning, creative?
Experience	New to digital or digital native? Prior campaign stories	Predisposition to institutionalisation
Education	Of creative, digital, the agency as a whole and the client	Willing and open
Relationships – teams and agency	How do teams work within the agency in responding to digital media creative work?	Managing creative conflict and approving final campaigns
Models of working within the advertising industry	Some creatives feel that they are struggling to keep up. Theoretical models/ assumptions.	Decide on organisational risks
Measures	The image of success	Extremely important for senior manages and clients
Data and creative planning	Too much, if and how used. Planning and insight/methods.	To what extent planning, media and creative teams are utilising rich data
Conventional advertising	Continuous comparison to understand models and mind-sets	As the cash cow, core creative work becomes better to match digital
Products	Categories predisposed to virality.	Is it the case that some product categories are more viral?

Table 6-1 Overall worksheet for processing data

To demonstrate how the research progressively developed over the course of the data collection, Table 6-2 provides an overview of the main ideas incrementally observed in each data set. It is a summary, helping to narrow the focus of the participants' views. Items are not repeated in the summary of the next transcript. They are reinforcing each other progressively building additional insight as each transcript is analysed (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). In other words, the new ideas located from the data are presented in each row of the table. It references each data set developmentally but also integrates the ideas (Cresswell, 2013). It allows others to trace the analysis back to the data but also frames the way in which they are transferred into broader analytical frameworks and supports confirmation of the findings (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). As a result, other researchers can also build on this study.

		Insight-driven factors		Creative factors		
		Diffusion factors influencing virals	Customer behaviour issues	Organisational attitudes to virals	Creative characteristics considered	Advertising planning approaches to virals
Reinforcing key ideas from T1	Pilot (x2)	Privacy and taxonomy; Social movements	Power; Habits and activities; Attitudes to marcomms	Value to individuals	Friendship interests	New models of operating
	Focus of T1	Taxonomy	Ego	Conservatism	Disruptive	Role across agency
	Incremental from T2	Viral effect distinction	Reference points	Talkability	The response of traditional TV	Brand values; Strong planning
	Incremental from T3	Global reach	Live consumer engagement	Low budget	Topicality	
	Incremental from T4	Data overload	Age of the instant; Free	Variable adoption; Non-hub location	Relevant content; Distinctive execution	Not different from the arrival of TV
	Incremental from T5			Demanding adopter clients	Deep concept ideation; Cultural links; Beautiful	Open briefs; Ideas team; Bravery; Integration
	Ideas from T6	Influencers; Networks; Public Relations		Regardless of product type/ nature	Content (interesting angle); Native integration	Research; Sentiment tracking
	Themes from T7	Customer relations	Intelligence; Trading identity in virals	Sales; Roadmap of maturity	Inspire people	Basics not melodrama
	Concepts from T8	Serendipity comes from deep insight	Global audience creativity; Unpredictable reactions	Leaders to resisters; Risk	Storytelling aspects; Risqué is disposable; democracy	Embedded measures

Observation of new ideas	T9	Early adopters; Amplify (-1% content)	Rent audiences	Dissuade clients Refuse work	Bespoke	Long term measures; Technology team
	T10		Audience convergence; Double opt-in; Premium charges	Vanity Virtual currency		Different media planning
	T11	Multi-channel impact; Embedded.	Sense of community (geographic spread)	Younger brands = adopters; Established brands = strategy; Big – specific; Small –flexible	Good content + the approach; Advertising as art	Younger directors; Agencies will struggle
	T12			Depends on the brands' understanding of itself	Generational humour	Strategy Shortened processes

Table 6-2 Matrix- Progression of concepts across interviews

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6.2 *Viral Concept Definition: Creative Managers' Views:*

Key questions analysed in this section –

- How do practitioners define virals?
- Why?
- How do they relate to prior definitions?

Having examined the data for creative managers' understanding of virals, the selected texts below provide examples of the main elements of their conceptualisations (Cresswell, 2013). This step is essential in order to follow the ways in which they make sense of their campaign development processes (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). In other words, to achieve the overall research aim to generate theoretical insight into the creative design of virals, it is important to clarify how the participants define virals (Morse et al 2002). Each quote/text unit is linked to the transcript number from which it is taken to ensure the analysis is closely linked to the data set (Saldana, 2009).

The lack of conceptual clarity which is encountered in the prior research is reflected across the data set (Lindgreen, Dobele, and Vanhamme, 2013; Petrescu and Korgaonkar, 2011; Cruz and Fill, 2008; Golan and Zaidner, 2008; Plummer et al, 2007). This thesis has already clarified the gaps in current conceptions in its development of a more accurate definition. However, the point made by one creative director reflects the lack of agreement but also lack of representation of the creative view on virals:

> "There have been a lot of discussions over the last eight/ nine years of what viral actually is? What is art?" (T2)

The quote below also points to a variety of appeals and recognises that there are multiple conditions for producing virals.

"I think it's information and humour. I think a lot of companies are doing a lot more content-led campaigns online through to TV. So they would have something on TV and say go into Twitter or go on… to continue the conversation. You know there is no incentive or anything. That's why you have viral campaigns. We have come up with something so interesting." (T6)

Here is added the idea that a creative with compelling content (humour and utilitarian value), which connects conversations across multiple media platforms will form the base of virals.

"I see it as something slightly different because that is where aspects of brand come in, disruption and how you draw people's interest. (T1)

The above quote from a Head of Digital agrees that a viral does compell customers' attention but proposes a disruptive element, a clear understanding of the brand context and the relationships among these aspects. This is a very different view from current conceptions. Disruption (of established expectations of e.g. media, perceptions, creative standard) is proposed as the key feature of locating a unique element which can be integrated into the viral design.

"The end creative product that you have come up with is less important that the cultural reference point. (T1. Also seen in T2) "And very often with viral, you get those words, "You really should watch this". And there is this miss-out-factor. If I don't watch it, they're all gonna be talking about it the next Tuesday, when I see them". (T12)

From the quotations above, relevant to the creative angle as well, a viral campaign is one in which the creative team must integrate an allusion to a pre-existing aspect within society that is widely known, to produce the sharing. This goes against exisiting viral marketing communications literature and is a construct progressively developed over the transcripts. Similarly, the idea of a unique experience is repeated.

How virals are defined "depends on whether you see it as a brand or a response mechanism". (T1)

This view above also touches on brand but is more about clarity on the purpose/objective of the viral – is the focus on brand awareness among a particular group or volume of sharing? This is a novel clarification of current conceptions. All of the voices to this point focus on the pre-launch phase of viral campaign design in their definitions.

"It does go back to the whole PR thing. That is PR". (T1/T6)

"The thing I am most comfortable with it being is an effect rather than a definition of a particular type of media". (T2)

The two participant definitions above take a different perspective defining a viral creative as one distinctive in its ability to generate positive public relations for the consumer. This is a distinguishing view of virals in relation to the consumer. A viral creative produces an effect which perpetuates based on its "talkability" qualities. It is linked to their identity and PR on a personal and social scale, post-campaign launch.

In other words, that there is need for a more comprehensive conception of virals across the both the pre-launch, neglected in the literature and post-launch phases, the dominant aspect of prior research (Aral and Walker, 2013; Jankowski et al, 2013; Li, Lee and Lien, 2012; Liu-Thompkins, 2012).

In summary, there are a number of general elements which are set out as key aspects of participants working conceptions of virals – clarity of objectives, brand values, multi-media platform flexibility but also clarity of customer insight and technological capabilities. This clarity of objectives is important as clients are often unsure about the role of digital marketing communications. Cruz and Fill (2008) do discuss objectives in terms of its relationship to measurement, also found in this study. They also make connections to brand awareness objectives but not in terms of clarity and in the design of creative campaigns.

The ideas of multi-media platform flexibility agrees with Mills (2012), clarity of customer insight with Yarrow (2014); Carida and Colurcio (2013); Yang (2013) and technological capabilities Long and Wong (2014); Chalermsook et al (2013); Kaplan and Haenlein (2011). On the other hand, the nature of creative learning and its effect

on campaign design has not been made before in the extant research into virals. In general, the points above are being empirically confirmed for the first time through creative managers' voices, in this study.

These text units also illustrate specific constructs and norms (following Guest et al, 2012) which participants employ to define virals – the search for disruptive creative ideas, concepts which are compelling which also operate as a conversation generator (in agreement with Notarantonio and Quigley Jr., 2009), allow personal plaudits for the transmitting consumer (consistent with Jose-Cabezudo and Camarerero-Izquierdo, 2012) while activating traits of a shared social fabric (e.g. assumptions of scale in ad production, usurpation of product category norms as in the Old Spice fragrance viral etc.). There are three factors here which are distinctive in relation to prior research – the disruptive concept, the compelling creative facet and consumers' shared social knowledge. They require further development to advance the understanding of viral creative design.

Finally, the figurative aspects of the text (e.g. "continue the conversation", "people's attention") and then iconic features of the quotes (e.g. "art", "brand", "PR thing", "cultural reference") exemplify definitional relationships of inputs and outputs, i.e., in this context, creative factors and its effects. Therefore, creative managers' working construct of virals include general aspects and specific creative features, which together constitute creative inputs and the effects thereof. However, these facets of participant concepts all need to be integrated; linked to each other to make a cohesive whole. This latter point is an important new insight from this research.

6.3   *Definitions of Virals as they Developed into Final Version:*

In order to provide a reference point for the remainder of the analysis and as a basis for future research, the participants' conceptions are distilled into one.

Iterations Distilling Creative Managers' Conception of Virals
Version 1: Virals are -   A type of marketing communications employing a disruptive element/creative appeal, drawing on a pre-existing, shared consumer knowledge, predisposition, behaviour, which is capable of compelling attention, satisfies information needs and generating talkability and thereby transmission.
Version 2: Virals are -   A type of marketing communications which has a disruptive creative appeal, employing shared knowledge, predisposition, behaviour among consumer, which is capable of compelling attention, satisfies information needs and generating talkability and thereby transmission.
Version 3: Virals are -   A type of marketing communications utilising a compelling, utilitarian, disruptive creative appeal, draws on shared consumer predisposition, knowledge or behaviour, is capable of satisfying information needs and generating talkability and thereby peer-peer transmission.
Version 4: Virals are -   A type of marketing communications utilising a compelling, disruptive creative appeal, draws on shared consumer predisposition, knowledge or behaviour, which generates exponential online sharing, satisfies information needs and generating talkability and thereby peer-peer transmission.
Final Version: Virals are a type of marketing communications utilising a compelling, disruptive creative appeal which captures positive consumer interest, activating their shared characteristics to generate exponential online transmission within a limited timeframe.

6-3 Iterations of Creative Managers Definitions of Virals

The final version above is the first full, empirically validated definition encompassing pre-launch and post-launch stages of viral campaigns. From the literature review a definition was developed to clarify and fill gaps in prior versions, framing the empirical phase of this study.

Marketing communications messages targeting online audiences, placed by organisations and/or their agents which then go on to achieve exponential peer-peer transmission within a limited timeframe.

That was an improved conceptualisation against prior proposals. However, this final version from participants' viral definition is quite different, substantially richer and encompassing.

6.4 *Creative Concept Characteristics and Emotion in Virals:*

This model developed from the literature was confirmed by the data but emotion was not the principal creative criteria. Emotion was found to be important but it did not have the primacy of place; humour was not in this space either – both contradicting the majority of the literature (Binggeser et al, 2015; Botha, 2014; Brozek, Lehner and Schoditsch, 2013; Cohen, 2013; Henke, 2013; Nelson-Field, Riebe and Newstead, 2013; Strapparava, Guerini and Ozbal, 2011) and seminal papers (Golan and Zaidner, 2008; Porter and Golan, 2006; Lindgreen and Vanhamme, 2005). As a result, Figure 6-1 uses the model developed in the literature review, here updating it with findings in this study, indicating the reduced level of influence which emotion has, compared to the prior research.
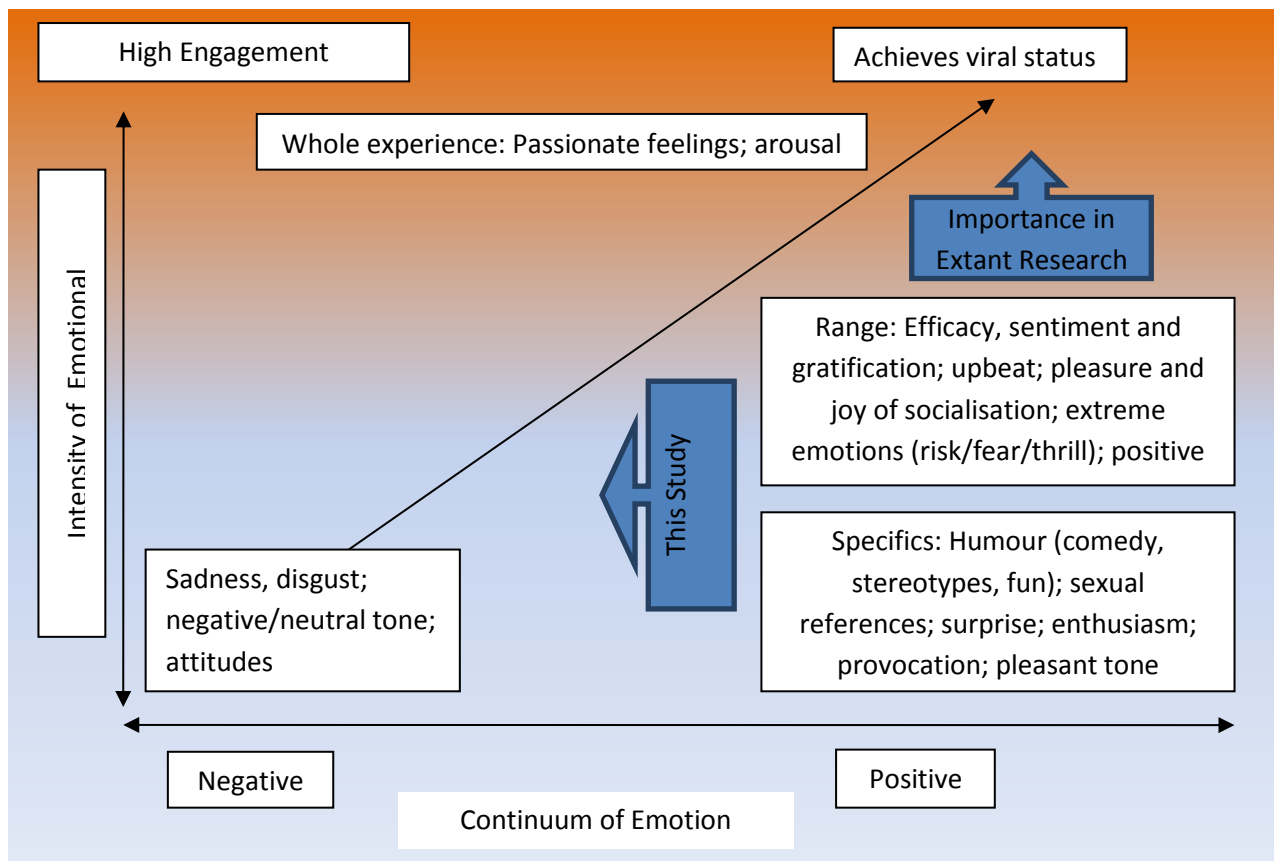
Figure 6-1 Revised model of impact on viral sharing: evaluation of range and specific emotions in relation to type and intensity.
Source: Raghubansie, 2017

It was observed in the literature review that the largest number of advertising/marketing studies related to the use of emotions. Those were studies of viral outputs themselves, not of the creative design of such messages; therefore descriptive of the finished article not necessarily depth of insight into the thinking behind the virals. Emotions, in particular humour and sexual appeal are standard in many creative communications – it is not distinctive to virals though Golan and Zaidner (2008) argue that it is heightened. Porter and Golan (2006) also show that provocation was a critical factor. Those views are not evident in the data collected through this research. Campaign design has changed from nine years ago.

However, it is the case that emotions are evident as an appeal in virals as noted in prior research (Nelson-Field, Riebe and Newstead, 2013; Lindgreen and Vanhamme, 2005). As in the vignette on a global car brand viral campaign below, positive emotions are far more valued over negative ones consistent with Binggeser et al's (2015) model of upbeat versus downbeat emotions (also supporting the study of

games from Cohen 2013). The reference to fictional hedonism in an online viral "retreat" supports prior work too (Lee and Lee, 2012; Chiu, et al, 2007; Holt, 1995).

> "Campaigns that are branded on emotion have more chance of maximising that effect. [*name redacted*] launch - an emotional insight was that these men are going through a mid-life crisis. So … this is a new car and this is your hit. …use email as you would take the piss out of each other all the time, around the water cooler. We did a fake holiday destination - mid-life crisis retreat where these guys can go and get it out the system – get a pony tail, ride a motorbike, drink cocktails, get some tattoos, behave stupid get it all out their system. If you are talking about what makes that effect - part of it is novelty value and social currency. As long as it is with the brand values brand heritage, as long as you are not using something that is obscene, culturally dissonant". (T2 – Creative Director)

This story about "taking the piss" captures the joy of viral campaigns repeated by different participants supporting Brown, Bhadury and Pope's (2010) argument that comedic violence is helpful in enhancing message interest, brand recall and sharing intent. "Not using something that is obscene" supports Eclker and Bolls (2011) argument for creative outputs with a pleasant tone but the process by which such a tone is arrived at is context specific. Some cases showed the opposite being effective. Participants consistently discuss finding the appropriate influencer, the intended consumer supporting Petrescu et al's (2016) finding that such attitudes are key to viral adoption (also the seminal work of Phelps et al, 2004).

The contention of Schlegelmilch and Ollenburg (2013) that risk/fear and thrills were key motivators was unsupported. Likewise, Shifman's (2012; 2013) "normal" individuals with masculine stereotypes is not borne out but the suggestions for quirky storylines, comedy and straightforwardness are supported.

In summary, it is not as straightforward as employing particular aspects of raw (Porter and Golan 2006) or more extreme humour for example – the most watched viral of all time is based on the beauty of colour. Similarly, there were cases of "negative" emotions which participants raised – one globally successful viral campaign was based on the theme of stupidity and its consequences. It could be concluded then that it is

the engagement with the creative which is considered in the concept design not a clear binary negative/positive emotion criteria for idea screening. This agrees with the findings of Henke (2013) and Botha (2014) and shows in this study there is less focus on embedding and leveraging particular types of emotion but more on understanding consumers in relation to the creative idea and to what extent they are likely to be emotionally engaged. Such a view is in the minority in the current research but Strapparava, Guerini and Ozbal (2011) do provide support for this finding in their decision tree for sharing virals which has a wider range of factors.

> If you look at Old Spice... If you think about poking fun at yourself; if you think about the reputation that had and not running away from that. … The reality is nobody thought of Old Spice like that. The fact that it is they who would make a joke about it and embrace it and send it out. And that makes it cool. (T8)

This quote from an agency which specialises in video illustrates the complex interplay among emotion, brands risk-taking, depth of insight, production values and the core creative idea. The data mainly shows valuable insight at the micro level of creative development from a process and creative decision-making viewpoint, not only finished virals.

Therefore, a novel and important finding in this study, is that the creative idea is more important than emotion. It was not specifically risqué ideas (Ferguson, 2008), or did it always have to be particularly imaginative contrary to Dobele, Toleman and Beverland (2005), nor repeated, stereotypical, gender based or unusual stories (Shifman, 2012). A well-targeted email was equally capable of being developed into a viral campaign.

6.4.1 Appeals at the Core of Viral Campaign Design:

However, other factors are uncovered in this study which provides a more holistic vision of how the end creative article is arrived at. Sound planning and consumer insight are as important as any other aspect of campaign design. There is too a link made in relation to conventional advertising response to virals. Specifically, ads made for TV had to find a way to counter the viral effect. They had to develop creative ideas

which are similarly engaging. This is a new perspective added to the literature. TV is now produced considering opportunities for an after life as virals.

Participants' idea screening criteria show three factors here which are distinctive in relation to prior research – the disruptive concept, the compelling creative facet and consumers' shared social knowledge. One Head of Digital (T1) discussed the a leading chocolate viral case showing that the simulated digital "breaking" of the viewer's "screen" was the novelty aspect; it disrupted consumers' shared expectation of how an advert relates to the physical screen. The Sony Balls campaign for its TVs (T2) usurps expectations of the scale of the shoot in its relationship to the coloured objects – tower block flats.

> "Instead of saying that [*name redacted*] is a bunch of idiots just throwing money at the screen to make me buy it, you say [*name redacted*] is an amazing creative organisation and that's why I want to be something to do with them" (T2 – Creative Director)

To be disruptive, it has to appeal to a pre-exiting shared social knowledge, interest, habit, expectation. For example, the Old Spice viral case (T5, T8) takes a novel approach bravely, parodying itself. The creative idea is category disruptive in its usurpation of the conventions of typical fragrance advertising; its production – multiple and random shots – also; it went against its own customer base to attract a new audience.

> "Had they just made an ad that was not taking the mickey about Old Spice in lots of those shots or like a Gillette commercial of chisel-jawed men and so I think it would not have gone anywhere". (T8 – Digital Director)

In other words, the production, the conception, the media and the creative characteristics as a whole, form a supportive relationship to the central disruptive idea, to generate compelling messages. In this case, compelling refers to the sense of enthralling, gripping, captivating and engrossing which can be achieved in multiple ways. It could be valuable information, consistent with Wiedeman (2008). These are illustrated in the cases participants referred to but also in a publicly known Monopoly

viral case which is set against the convention of a known, physical board game, as consumers can play online but also in a "real" environment (Google Maps).

> "Basically, it's Monopoly. It's the world's most famous board game. The thing about monopoly is that everybody knows how to play it. Kids have played it with their parents; parents have played throughout their lives. Its quiet a broad audience it is a mass-market. We suggest you imagine your own your own street. They wouldn't be thinking as Google Maps; they would be thinking I own my street. They would be saying I built a sewage system on my own street or on my teacher's street, for example".

> "The night before it arrived CNN and ABC in the US did about 2 or 3 minutes features on each. It was the best advert we could possibly have. The CNN one was such a fantastic description of the game. They said look we've got access to the early version, they said. We can see that somebody has built a sewage on the President's avenue. The agencies understood the social power of the Press' opinion. Then it ended with the journalist saying so it launches tomorrow. Let the land grab begin! We could not have done a better commercial for our own game. It was fantastic". (T5 – Creative Director)

The viral campaign story above speaks to the concept of ease access (Hennig-Thurau et al, 2004), roles of influencers, here CNN/ABC (Rosen, 2000; Gladwell, 2000), being first in the use of Google Maps (Pousttchi and Wiedemann, 2007), and its shareability (Eilers, 2003; Helm, 2000) are discussed in common with much of the prior research, particularly the diffusion strand (e.g. Goel, Watts and Goldstein, 2012). The data also makes consistent reference to perceived exclusivity of content and features ("eraly release version") which allow interactivity (Carida and Colurcio, 2013; Lewis et al, 2005; Phelps et al, 2004). However, while they are important to the creative manager, they are not given the pre-eminence which past research suggests (Carl, 2006; Kaikati and Kaikati, 2004). A typology is therefore constructed (Figure 6-2) to reveal the important creative factors as viewed by the participants in this study.
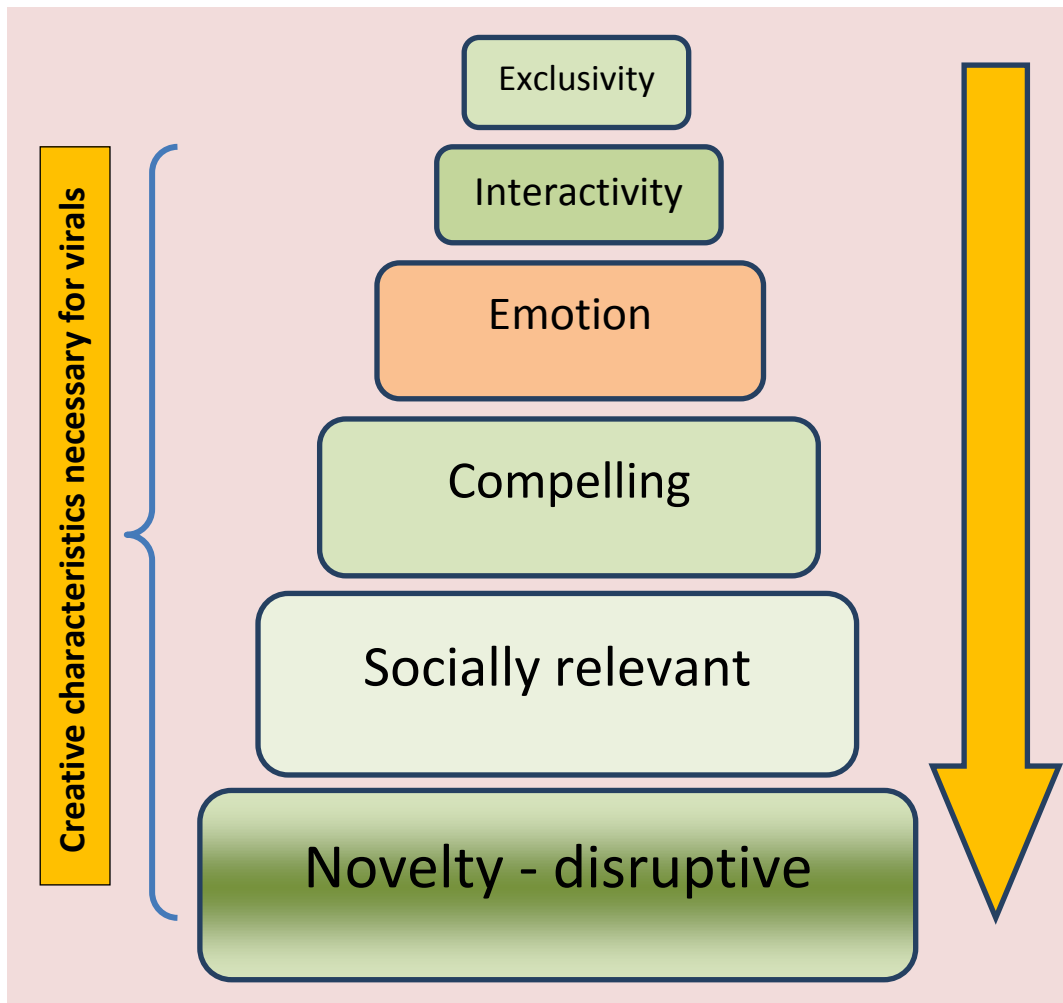
Figure 6-2 A Typology of Ranked Viral Creative Characteristics for Campaign Design (The size of box indicates importance in participants' views. Source: Raghubansie, 2017)

Emotion could be seen as part of the compelling aspect. However, it is such a central element in the extant research and in viral creative design that it is necessary to set it in context. Besides, these factors while given greater degrees of importance by participants are all related and important in the overall consideration of creative concepts which are appropriate in the design of virals.

The distinction of Cruz and Fill (2008) and Woerndl (2008) had a bi-fold characterisation – deliberate/unintentional, even though they were unaware of each other. This is seen in this study too. However, the key finding is that this is an artificial distinction – if the ideation characteristics are used to evaluate a campaign which is intended and which is unintended to go viral, it will be found that the campaign meets the tests. In other words, the use of the stated intention (or lack of awareness of intent) to classify types of virals is inadequate.

The evaluation models developed within this study begin to produce some insight into criteria which can be used to design and decide on what goes into a viral campaign. This can take some of the uncertainty and confusion as noted in Ferguson (2008) and Liu and Qu (2011) around what makes creative characteristics suited to virals.

6.5 *Customer Behaviour and Virals:*

Supporting Aral and Walker (2011b), studies of consumer profile are important (Phelps et al, 2004). There was little if any concern with gender or age (Arkoudis and Samanta, 2012; Bagga and Singh, 2012) as a key element of desiging virals (contrary to Feroz and Vong, 2014). Those who do recognise and share the interest in and the power of video are more willing to share (Gurau, 2008). The suggestion that the viral consumer needs to be sought was not borne out (Williams and Trammell, 2005). The audience is a growing one and was not the focus of much attention from participants except in so far as keeping up with them, supporting Carida and Colurcio (2013) and Camarero and San Jose (2011).

> "I've read of some software recently which I suppose a big kind of software which can do social media manipulation which creates many, many accounts using artificial intelligence protocol; so it populates lots of different accounts and set up realistic consumer profiles and clearly that stuff is a development and that's frightening and immoral. Basically, I think that if you are in the underling truth of what you're saying; if it is true, if you want to say something great about your business and that great thing is missing something absolutely true…. It requires so much energy to sustain something which is not powered by consumers themselves. You can spark it off but it's incredibly difficult to keep it going and that is based on some real activity, initiative that you're doing". (T5 – Digital Creative Director)

The type of campaign and impact can be different but appropriate for specific target audiences. Participants in this study were interested, however, in the intelligence that allows them to profile not just before but during campaign live, instantaneously as it

were. This was demonstrated to the researcher at one of the largest online organisations in the world, an excerpt of which below.

"We have a very sophisticated way of doing it. The video platform that we use tracks every user interaction, everyplace that the video is embedded. It works the same as YouTube player would and we can track how long a user spends on the video. What bit they would switch of at. Whether they click through to find out more. Whether they're replaying the video. We track everything really".

"We have an in-house technology team… We react very quickly. With more platforms coming out very quickly we have to react very fast. We have to make sure our technology and our reporting system is responding to the data…."

"We will do audience research for every campaign that we run for a brand. We run demographic surveys and find out exactly who it was that was viewing the content. We've had plenty of campaigns aimed at mums. Mums are a huge demographic for us". (T9 – joint participants Digital and Content Manager)

Prior research has captured post event behaviour but not live viral campaign data as found in this investigation. This activity allowed monitoring of active participation but also passive broadcast patterns (Aral and Walker, 2011b) to make adjustments which would enhance peer adoption. Monitoring customer behaviour occurs at both pre campaign development, during research, pilots, at launch and in parallel (where multiple virals are provided).

"The viral effect that you are talking about gives you an opportunity to do six different things without paying for media. If one of them takes off, then you get the media you would have got in the first place". (T2)

This is a different view from current advertising techniques – virals are a tool to achieve creative freedom. It is a tool to test ideas – if one becomes a viral, then it is always a worthwhile investment. In other words, sharing power and providing options to consumers.

"There is a lovely phrase I can't remember who the original quote came from. 'We think ourselves as marketers and they as the consumers. But they don't live in our world; we live in theirs'. I think that that's a really important thing to remember especially how we have to give part ownership of these brands to consumers. And those ingenious brands who do are starting to make [incumbents] really, really suffer". (T5)

Besides, given that this study takes a B2B perspective, the role of intermediaries is captured at the pre-campaign phase (see interview excerpt from the leading viral agency in the global market place). Participants focus on locating appropriate intermediaries ("work with influencers"), profiling which media platforms (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook) and their organisations, their needs ("relevant to their audience"), meeting them, deleting, adding and then co-producing a plan viral distribution from teaser stage to post-launch buzz. Some of this is paid for and some free.

"[If] targeting a very niche audience and we have to go out there and recruit sites to make sure that if we need to deliver a certain amount of views… So that is why the more niche the brief is the more sites we have because you realise if you go with a site with a very big audience it's generally quite broad so that is why we have to be more particular about the site we work with. Where the audience is very tightly targeted". (T9)

There is one aspect of these conceptions which is new – consumer choice of parallel potential viral creatives.

A further four ideas reinforce prior research. These are the search for unique customer audiences (Lewis, et al, 2005; Godin, 2000), the growth in consumer power (Hayes, King and Ramirez, 2016; Golan and Zaidner, 2008; Rosen, 2000; Rogers, 1995), viral appeals to ego (Boase and Wellman, 2001) and virals as reflections of consumers' identity (Jose-Cabezudo and Camarerero-Izquierdo, 2012; Taylor, Strutton and Thompson, 2012). There is consistent commentary on the consumer/ intermediary being positive when they are able to engage with virals as part of their own native content (webpage, interests, usual activity patterns etc.), agreeing with Petrescu, Kargaonkar and Gironda (2015). In other words, awareness of sales intent exerts a negative influence as Hsieh, Hsieh and Tang (2012) found.

"If there is a way you can say it to consumers here [is] some curative advertising you may like this and your age and gender you choose you can choose whether you want to watch a funny viral video and you get something, whereas you don't get shoved. If they do not match the advertising to the identity of the consumer and you don't feel it is relevant then the consumer will try to get rid of it or they will go somewhere to consume media because there's so much choice that you don't have to sit and watch". (T10 – Managing Director)

It is the case that this study supports the work of Palka, Pousttchi and Wiedemann (2009), Liu and Zhou (2012); Yang and Zhou, (2011) and Zernigah and Sohail (2011) who show that attitudes are important. The addition to their work is that the attitude is only a starting point; it has to be developed into a brand and customer partnership to sustain virals or there will be failure.

Most of the extant research into motivation focus on the end consumer (Lee, Ham and Kim, 2013; Miquel-Romero and Adame-Sanchez, 2013; Ho and Dempsey, 2010; Lewis et al (2005) and Phelps et al (2004)) but participants in this study are also very much interested in the needs of their intermediaries (organisations, websites and individual influencers). They themselves are also intermediaries on behalf of the client paying for the campaign.

"We will not sponsor stories on Facebook environment. We will work with influencers on a Facebook group. We will have them see that content that is relevant to their audience. They will decide if that piece of content is relevant to their audience or their wall. It is not like a sponsored story". (T9)

To some extent then, there is departure from the findings of Coyle, (2011), Huang, Chen and Wang (2012) and Pescher, Reichhart and Spann (2014) among others, as the agency can "watch live" what the consumer is interested in at that specific time of day and insert their viral into a space that aligns with that interest. In essence, they are building the model based on deep insight on each campaign on an individual basis. That does not mean that models (e.g. Yoshida et al's, 2013, market mavens) are not helpful; it is viewed as a starting point. For participants in this study, a customer with

high social capital is good but some intermediaries do not have that but know the technical web and where to release content that can spread exponentially, contrary to José-Cabezudo and Camarero-Izquierdo (2012). While it is acknowledged that planners use target audience profiles (TAPs), in the case of virals it is more intense, under constant supervision and live but also they have co-production and dissemination agency (consistent with Hayes, King and Ramirez, 2016; Lindgreen, Dobele and Vanhamme, 2013; Camarero and San Jose, 2011; Petrescu and Korgaonkar, 2011). See Figure 6-3 for a summary of distinctive findings from study related to customer behaviour.
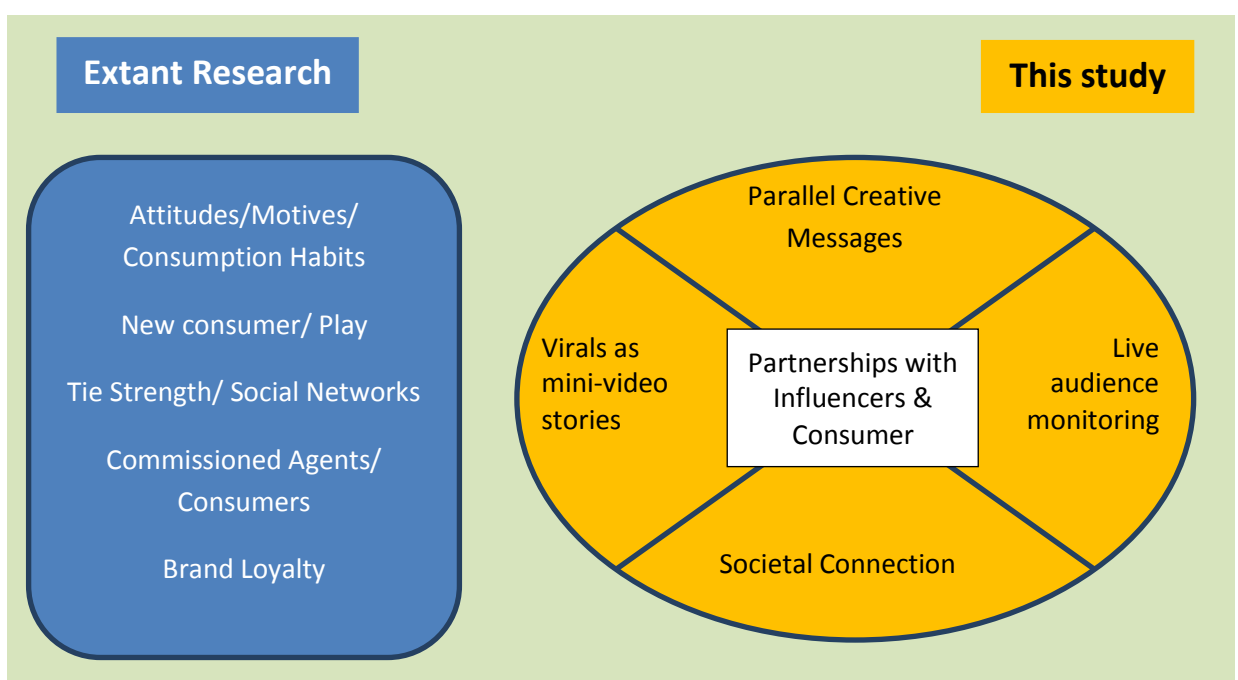
Figure 6-3 Comparison of Extant Customer Behaviour Factors
(Source: Raghubansie, 2017)

6.6 *Product Category and Virals*

A key conclusion from the data analysis relates to product category. There is well-established research into this area (Feroz and Vong, 2014; Vellar, 2012; Salo et al 2011; Kirby and Marsden, 2006; Sun et al, 2006; Schindler and Bickart, 2005; Kaikati and Kaikati, 2004; Kirby, 2004). This study supports prior research – that high levels of involvement with certain consumption categories meant that some consumers were considered as influencers (Garcia 2012; Taylor, Strutton and Thompson, 2012; Harvey, Stewart and Ewing, 2011).

Like Henke (2012), low involvement customers were not excluded but necessary in the research participants' views. They also agreed that the product category did not exclude certain brands from commissioning viral campaigns (disagreeing with Stampoulidou and Pantelidis, 2012; Woerndl, 2008 and Kalyanam, McIntyre and Masonis, 2007). Southgate, Westoby and Page (2010) were the only ones who did not find that product category was important. This study supports their conclusions but is contrary to most of the prior work. It is the creative angle that was adopted for the product that was important – e.g. insurance and the "stories about things left in the car on valentine's night" (T 11).

6.7 *Persuasion in Viral Creative Concept Development:*

Contrary to a number of studies, there is little focus on persuasion (Yamakami, 2013; Cheung et al, 2009; Eccleston and Griseri, 2008; Shimp, Wood and Smarandescu, 2007; Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czaplewski; 2006). The focus is creating virals not to persuade but to attract through the delivery of content that is relevant such that there is a mutually beneficial relationship as illustrated for the campaign for a global condom brand.

> "We had hundreds of films submitted about different scenarios in which people had the unexpected occur and how people are not planning for this experience but it might happen. But they were funny touching and everything else [name redacted -brand] loved them. They bought 35 of them. They had different stories, different cast, slightly different messages but same story, same message as well different groups all over the world. Teens in different experiences. A geekier teen that could be seeded to a gaming audience. Young boys who are less likely to be successful with girls. There are stories about the popular kid. They could reach different subsets of teenagers with very targeted stories specific groups". (T8)

Ethos is important as an appeal but so too are logos and pathos when related to the creative idea, the brand values and the objectives of the campaign, agreeing with the work of English, Sweetser and Ancu (2011). Incentives and free materials are not a

major part of the consideration when designing virals contrary to a well established stream of consumer behaviour and viral research (Cho, Jisu and Faber, 2012; Roy (2014); Arkoudis and Samanta, 2012; Toubia, Stephen and Freud, 2011; Wallsten, 2010; Wiedemann, Haunstetter and Pousttchi, 2008; Pousttchi and Wiedemann, 2007).

> "You know there is no incentive or anything. That's why you have viral campaigns. We have come up with something so interesting". (T1)

6.8 *Technical Features in Designing Virals:*

Very little if any findings from the data is about the technical production of virals contradicting Cheyne, et al (2013) on message length, readability the focus (i.e. technical features). In fact, one creative director captured the variation in creative production when he spoke at length about the most viewed viral campaign for an international electronics company. That particular message is actually 2 and half minutes long, contrary to the established idea of the "15-second" window and the lower attention spans of the "immune, new consumer" (Yarrow, 2014; Romero et al, 2011; Morrish, Miles and Deacon, 2010). The Old Spice (The Man Your Man Can Smell Like) message is 32 seconds. Participants' views and the campaigns therefore show a more diverse creative environment, against Nelson-Field, Riebe and Newstead (2011) call for shorter virals.

The idea of beauty was particularly important in the production of virals among established, bigger clients consistent with Hsieh, Hsieh and Tang (2012) who studied persuasion and multi-media effects (and Notarantonio and Quigley Jr., 2009; Eccleston and Griseri, 2008).

> "What is amazing is the creativity of it. It's not the budget. The idea of throwing balls down the hill in slow motion is a beautiful idea… They are either low budget, handmade or amazing, with Rooney or Ronaldinho and everything… They have divided into these two camps of creativity or scale. And this is great because they [traditional TV] became big and fat and lazy". (T2 – Creative Director)

Creative directors were keen to discuss external recognition of the art of their work (T2 and T5). Such recognition ("creativity or scale") is an important aspect of creative design evident in the established advertising literature (Hackley and Tiwasakul, 2011). Participants' discussions of production values were not set in the context of making the messages but in terms of achieving the disruptive effect that virals are intended to achieve (e.g. "breaking" the screen, "flying" out, tipex a screen character).

6.9 *Summary of Creative Aspects of Working Concepts:*
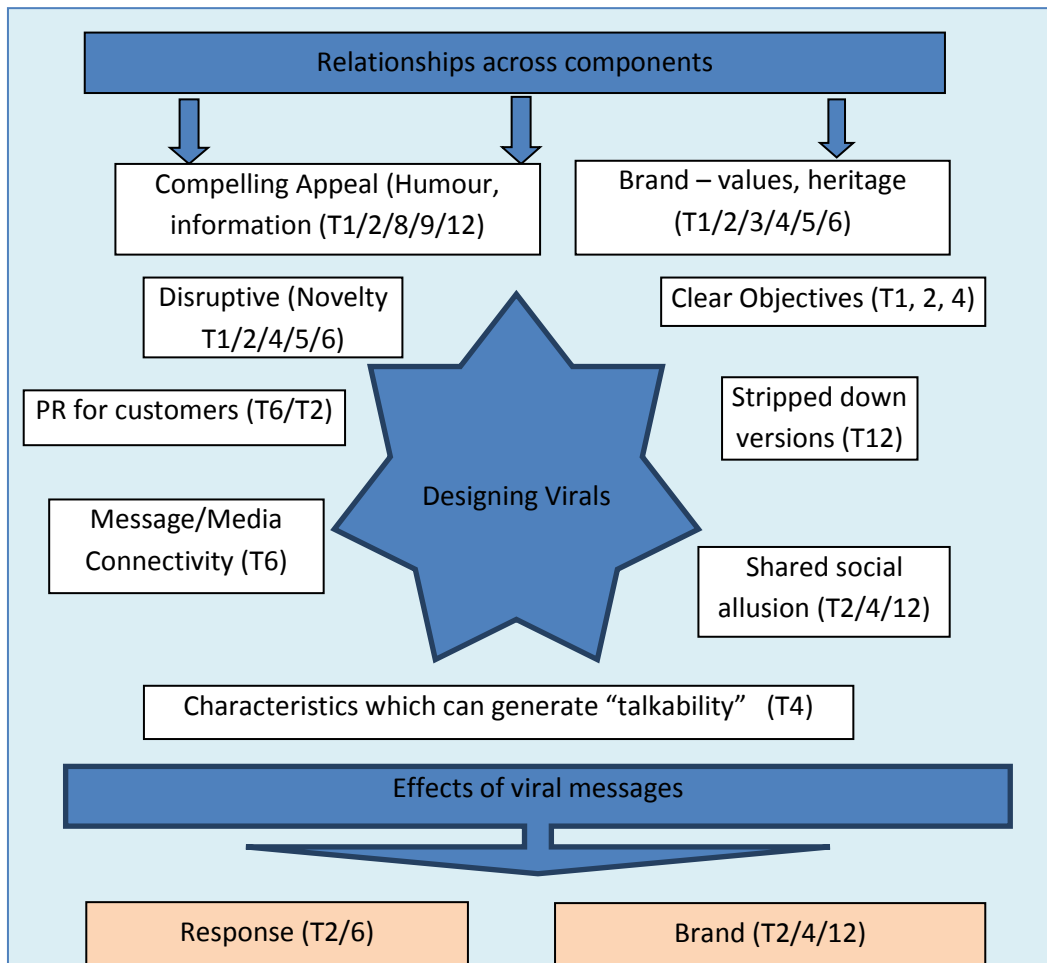
Figure 6-4 Model of Core Creative Components for Virals (Key: T=Transcript; Def = definition) Source: Raghubansie, 2017

Based on the analysis of normative perceptions among participants of how they understand viral campaigns, the link to objectives, to creative characteristics and customer behaviour, a proposal is made for a new synoptic model of core creative components in the development of virals (Figure 6-4). The new headline point here is that these creative choices have to operate together; i.e. there is a connection among the elements which produce viral messages. These concepting strategies, then work together to enhance consumer conversations, the results of which produce the viral effect; the effect that can be categorised as response (e.g. volume of spread) and impact on the brand (e.g. awareness, reinforcement). The last point – effects element – reinforces the work of Cruz and Fill (2008) in their classifications of cognitive, behavioural and financial objectives. However, it is important to conclude that the creative design decisions are being empirically validated in this study for the first time.

The model reflects a summary of participants' general conduct but also precise campaign illustrations, the feelings, the notable actions undertaken by individuals, the tales they tell to bring the phenomenon to life as they see it (Boyatzis, 1998). This is consistent with analytical guidance that enhances the rigour of making sense of participants' construction of their lived reality (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). This conception addresses strategic messaging choices but also relationships, tests that can be applied to creative ideation, the effects of such campaigns and its corollary evaluation criteria. In other words, research objective 1 and 3 – to evaluate creative manager's practice and theorise these for brand owner, agency and academic use. This model does not detail diffusion aspects because this study is primarily about creative decisions. The viral diffusion aspect is largely beyond the creative influence of the agency. However, the relationship of the dissemination perspective to creative design is important and included later in the analysis and discussion below.

6.10 *Viral Campaign Differences:*

What process do they adopt to create such campaigns? Impact on current models? Links to stages of advertising campaign development?
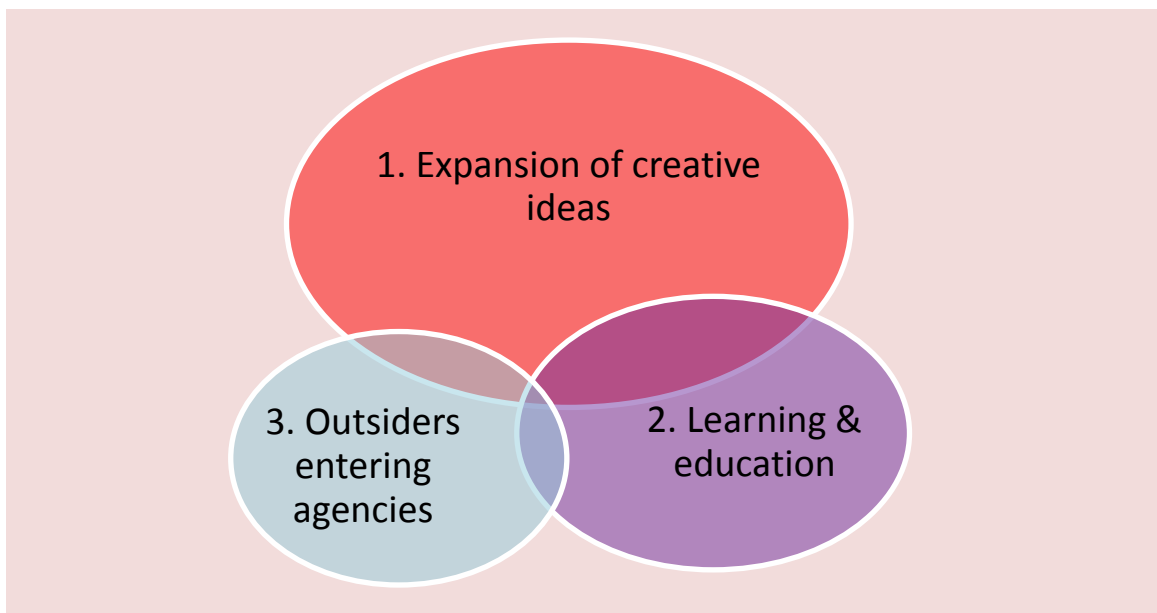
Figure 6-5 Impact levels of innovations influencing viral campaign development. Source: Raghubansie, 2017

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There are three major changes across the campaign development processes which are summarised in figure 6-5. These cut across the design and development phases of virals. In the definitions above, it is clear that creative managers are particularly focussed on the core concept at the centre of virals. Specifically, the range of possibilities has expanded dramatically to discover "something interesting", several versions of the same, "creative novelty", which tap into a shared aspect of social knowledge or expectations.

"Democratisation of creativity" and multiplicity of viral creative ideas provide an original perspective to allow creative and brand managers to plan for, commission and evaluate multiple, unusual campaign concepts (contrary to Eckler and Bolls, 2011; Brown, Bhadury and Pope, 2010).

> "But it is not just a democratisation of content it is the democratisation of creativity…. It is about democratisation of power and creativity. The brands that realised; that are taking advantage of it and tapping into it and they've done an amazing job of seeing what the future can be". (T8 – Digital Director)

It is also manifest that with virals, the standard coupling of creative director and designer is not followed. In fact, the roles of specific individuals who specialise in digital are across agency teams and roles (e.g. the viral campaign idea for a major global toy manufacturer came from the technologist). This is discussed further in the next chapter under changing creative roles.

> "We have a group that are called the ideas team rather just a creative team working on something instead at very early stages you get all the specialists are involved. So creative technologists would be involved for example. There would be a technology leader. There would be an information architect person. Maybe also a designer. [Before] I was a one – man creative team at the time…"
>
> It's a really good way to work. I think it wouldn't have happened without that ideas team. There would have been all these unknown quantities that would have made it last too long. (T5 – Digital Creative Director)

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Often they are not traditional "insiders" but people who bring skills from computing, games, information technology, with different insights, competences and processes. They can be a unifying as well as a divisive force. The third point relates to the latter to some extent as they have an educational role operating as internal consultant to creative, planning, account management etc. Critically, they also offer "training" to clients in order to build understanding but also to demonstrate potential effects and issues (developed further below).

6.11 *Designing Virals for Diffusion:*

"In the analytics you can actually see the spikes and the difference. (T6) The average person on Facebook has 135 friends. So as soon as you say you like it, with my 135 friends, 5 of them will make a comment, 5 of them will say something to my face next time they see me, 5 of them will go and look at the panda thing but they won't mention it to me and the others might miss it because they're too busy looking at other stuff, but they might see it later on". (T12 – Digital Director)

"Some of that is just the constructive mechanisms of sites like YouTube which are self-fulfilling prophecies. If something becomes popular, it becomes more noticed and then it becomes more popular. The sites are actually built to encourage this. It is not a human behaviour; it is actually a digital construct to make that happen and therefore generate their own excitement, if that makes sense". (T1 – Head of Digital)

The ideas of epidemiology in marketing (e.g. virality, contagion) are evident from the discussions above but the perspectives are not especially focussed on the established themes of infection, pandemics, virulence etc. (Zhang et al, 2016; Li, Lee and Lien, 2012; Liu-Thompkins, 2012). The focus is more on consumer insight. The commentary around online media platforms provides support for the SPEED framework – in particular the aspects of stealth, preparation and exposure. It is by far the theme which dominates extant research (e.g. Zhang et al, 2016; Mehta et al, 2015; Iribarren and Moro, 2011; Ackerman, Ben-Zwi and Wolfovitz, 2010). Explosion happens if the ranking on the platform makes virals "self-fulfilling prophecies". The nature, behaviour and effects of a virus, the metaphor will be separately analysed later but here, it is to

locate the distinctive features related to the concept (following Rajagopalan and Subramani, 2003).

Reference is also made to as "silent" customers who "who go look at the panda thing but they won't mention it". Therefore, the universe of customers is larger than that which is actively visible or captured. The interesting point here is that such a view is largely absent from current research. Besides, being silent does not mean inactive; intermediaries are silent but active. Petrescu and Korgaonkar (2011) make a passing reference in their definition; Kirby, (2004) sees it as part of leveraging PR with offline media; Groeger and Buttle, (2013) in relation to WOM. Only Graham and Havlena (2007) touch on connecting both off and online, supported by this study.

That example and others point out that it is a search not just for virals but for all other communications and in the case of 1 agency, even further – a business model (observed by Chaffey and Ellis Chadwick, 2016; De Propris, 2013; Porterfield, Bailey and Evers, 2010; McDonald and Wilson, 2002).

Diffusion is by far the theme which dominates prior research (e.g. Zhang et al, 2016; Mehta et al, 2015; Iribarren and Moro, 2011; Ackerman, Ben-Zwi and Wolfovitz, 2010). Related to the diffusion platforms, the literature has a strong stream of papers on WOM (Mc Connell, Huba and Kawasaki, 2007; Sernovitz, 2006; Balter and Butman, 2005; Eilers 2003; Nantel and Senecal 2002; Arndt, 1967), eWOM (Hennig-Thurau et al, 2004; Kirby 2004) and in particular PWOM (Nelson-Field, Riebe and Newstead, 2011; East, Hammond and Wright, 2007; Graham and Havlena, 2007; Romaniuk, 2007) and NWOM (Garcia 2012; Sansoni, 1999; Engleman, 1996; Anderson, 2008).

Given that the views of the participants in this study were hitherto unrepresented in prior research, it is evident that their approach is to mitigate NWOM at the creative development stage. They then manage post-launch through social media as customer service to accentuate PWOM and to address NWOM head on, agreeing with Wallsten (2010) and Liu and Qu (2011), the latter of whom argue that brands must prepare a "viral engine" to support the post-launch phase. Creative managers support positive messages in virals as suggested by Nelson-Field, Riebe and Newstead (2011) and Garcia (2012).

Another approach is to dissuade clients (directly or in campaign demos) who are not ready to embrace the opportunities and potential challenges of virals. The final mitigating strategy is the pre-launch education role which the digital creative managers play within the agency and for clients. This finding is also unrepresented in previous studies.

6.11.1   Influencers in Viral Campaign Design:

How is the role of influencers in viral advertising affecting the campaign development process?

Seeds are opinion leaders who engage in social communication with others (Gladwell, 2000). The most evident difference between conventional marketing communications and virals is in the role of the influencer.
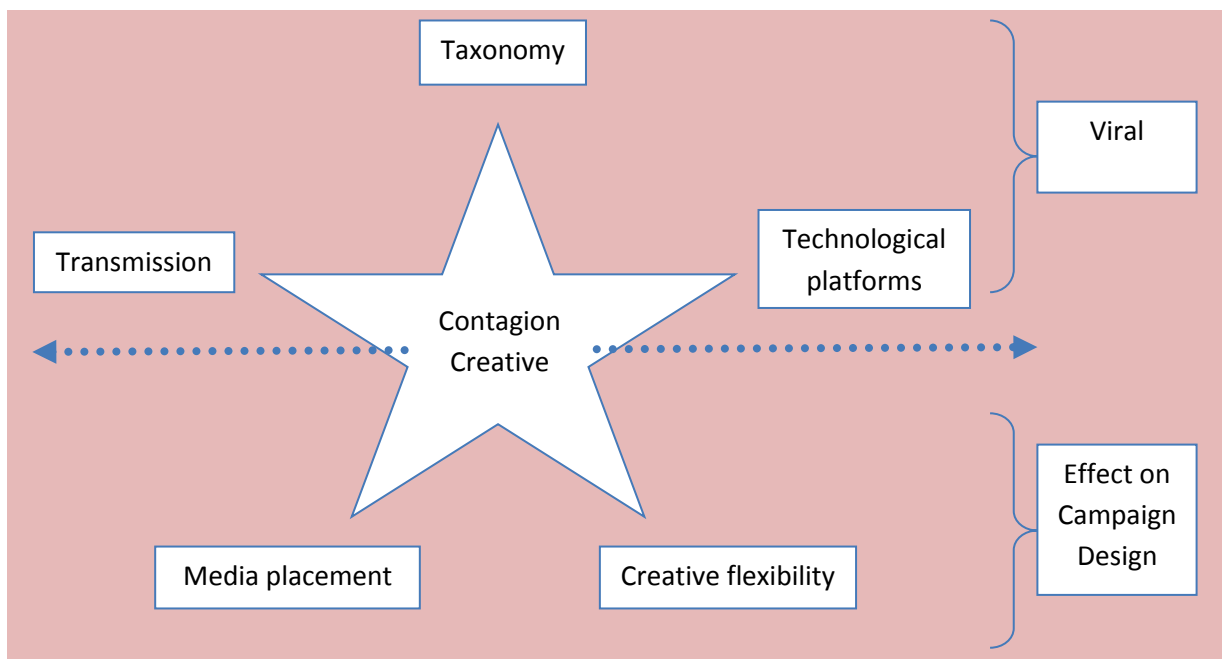
Figure 6-6 Sub-themes of the diffusion construct and impact on viral campaign development. Source: Raghubansie, 2016

This is the reason that the majority of computing and engineering studies of virals is dedicated to this area (Serrano, Iglesias and Garijo, 2015; Silva et al, 2013; Goel, Watts & Goldstein, 2012). Given the relative novelty there is a narrow group with the expertise to service advertising agencies to seed content. This has resulted in the development of some specialist media agencies which concentrate on seeding viral

ads. The number of seeds could be dramatically higher than was possible in the offline world. As one participant put it:

> "You get lots of bloggers involved and get them to talk about it. There's a massive blogging community as well... Obviously the more the bloggers write about it, the more they put the right keywords in and everything, the higher the actual keywords that you target to will hit on Google. You know we've learned how to look for bloggers." (T6 – Content Manager)

Virals produce enormously rich data to evaluate the role of influencers and it is clear that participants recognised this but they were more focussed not just on the seeding role but more on the nature of shared interest as a social group in order to develop a creative concept which would connect. The data confirmed that this is equally important for creative managers dedicating attention and resources to creating networks and working with other agencies to establish intermediaries who can publish virals in multiple online locations at a given time.

One participant noted that she moved into advertising from Public Relations (PR) and was able to develop the processes for seeding as it was not part of the agency practice before. Those networking skills (identifying, developing and employing seeding agents) made the difference to how successful they have been with campaigns in product categories that have been seen as difficult (such as insurance, medicine, motoring).

> "We have like a content calendar which has events coming up in the industry what subjects people are talking about and we plan our content according to them as well. And then we feed in our ideas as well so it is kind of a collaborative you know, team with everyone" (T6)

This last quote captures much more than a media channel function for seeding agents but an emerging partnership which achieves the objectives of those influencers and of the advertising agency. The linkage to the heritage of PR is also a valuable one, noted in the definitions section above.

6.12 *Summary of Managerial Understanding of Virals and Impact on Messaging Decisions*

To conclude this chapter's analysis and discussion, a model is developed to contrast traditional campaign development and those for virals. It condenses the creative decisions, the customer behaviour and the diffusion considerations into three key areas:

- Managerial influence
- Creative iteration
- Customer input

Compared to traditional TV advertising for example, managerial influence in the agency and from the client side is lower. The level of control over the creative ideas is less even though they still make approval decisions. The knowledge of emerging technologies is often inadequate; thereby ceding authority to the digital creative. At the pre-launch phase, the deployment of independent intermediaries shifts power away from both agency and client. After the campaign is made public, in comparison to traditional forms of marketing communications, it is largely uncontrollable how consumers interact and transmit messages.

With virals intermediaries are involved in dialogic exchange, sharing ideas which feed into the work of creative teams as well the typical feedback on campaigns post launch. Brand managers and creative managers have less control but more insight into how campaigns can be developed and are developing. Consumer influence is particularly powerful. These conditions support virals.
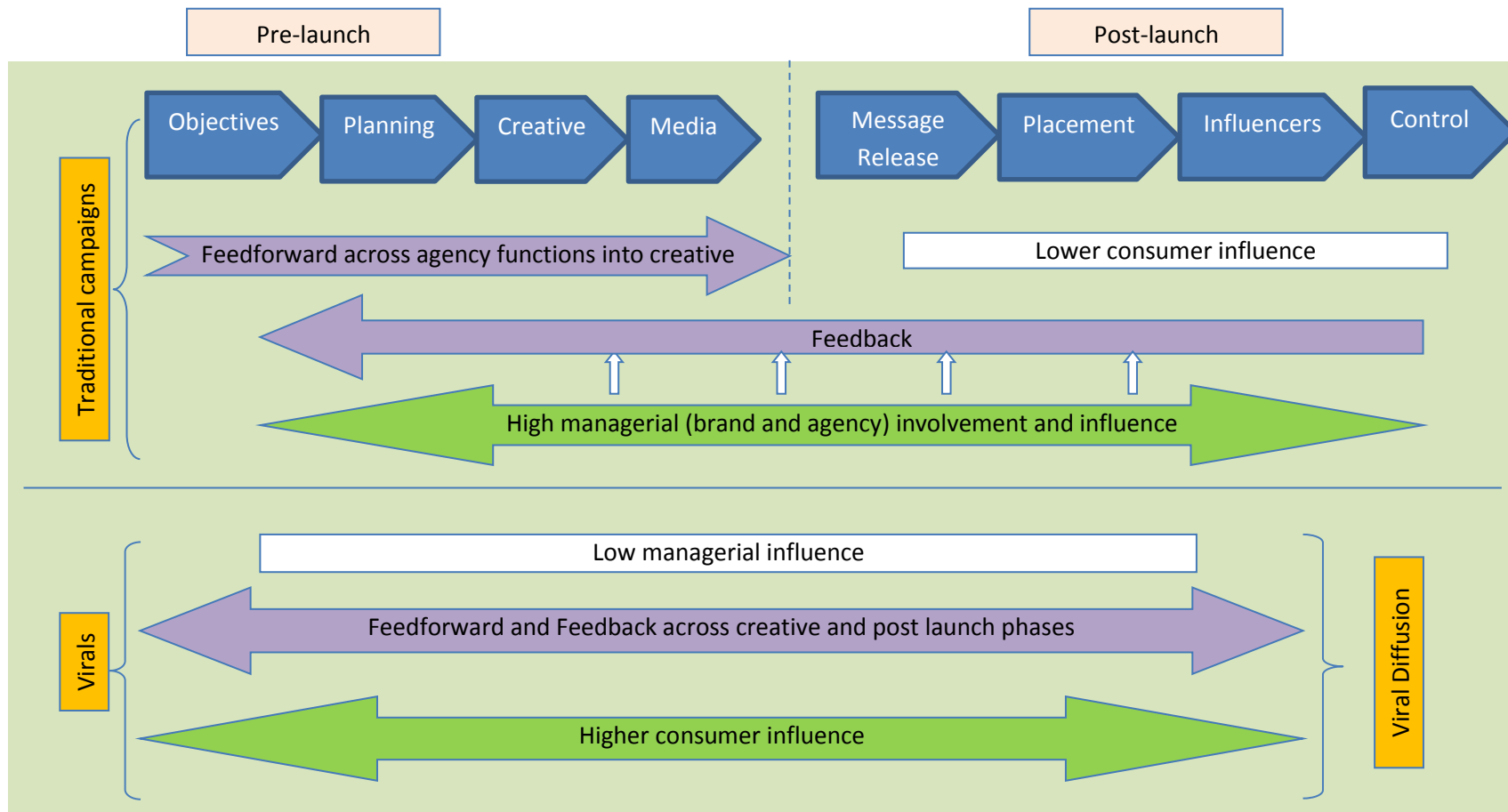
Figure 6-7 Model of creative iteration and influence comparing traditional and viral campaigns. Source: Raghubansie, 2017.

6.13 *Chapter Summary:*

This chapter evaluated the codes and main themes emerging from the data related to the viral creative concept. It encompassed creative managers' working definition of virals; the appeals they employ; why they develop the messages in specific ways; how these interact with current creative models; the way creative ideas respond to demands of message transmission and then assessed these areas against prior research to extend current theory but to also produce new insight. Finally, it summarises the overarching strands into a model of creative iteration and influence showing how virals are distinct as a marketing communications phenomenon. In other words, it addressed research objective one and its related questions:

RO1: To capture and codify the views of creative managers on the concepts and messaging strategies considered and implemented in viral marketing campaigns

1. How and why do creative managers' conceive of their practices of viral advertising in the way they do?
2. How do they construct such campaigns and what are the implications for current models?

This and the next chapter together produce theoretical insight and new conceptualisations of virals. Chapter 7 will consider in greater detail the changes at a higher level – the role of creative teams, working holistically etc. – the broader cross campaign and cross-agency changes that virals have introduced into current ways of working. It will summarise how the study has met research objective two and its related research questions.

RO2: To explicate, classify and explore the changes in advertising campaign planning processes which digital phenomena such as viral marketing have introduced.

7 CHAPTER SEVEN: IDENTIFYING, EXPLICATING AND EXPLORING CHANGES IN CAMPAIGN PLANNING PROCESSES

"What we do is quite specific for our publisher base and for our advertising… Look we have a native format that consumers like because it is relevant; because our users request the advertising. Our users request advertising and they press a button and say yes I want to view the advertising. They opt in to view that… They request to opt in, then they select which ones they actually want to engage in. That gives a story that allows us to charge a premium and not be in the conversation about trading desks and banners and video ads. So all the agencies trading, they are trying to reduce the price of media because you're trying to make things as efficient as they possibly can. Whereas we are in a slightly different case where we are trying to give media a premium by making it more relevant to the users by making it opt in".

(T9 – Managing Director on how digital allows a new approach to creativity but also a new value chain, a new business model)

The vignette above sets out the far reaching implications for the management and structure of creative planning, consumer engagement, media management and business modelling as a whole. That is the subject of this chapter, articulating the main insights into creative management of viral campaigns. The synthesis concentrates on factors which support the core creative concept – planning models, particular organisational approaches and how creative roles are evolving to meet the characteristics of virals.

7.1 *Introduction*

It follows an interpretivist, realist philosophy adopting qualitative procedures (as discussed in the research methodology in chapter 4) to uncover how creative campaigns for virals are conceived, designed, implemented and evaluated by the creative managers tasked with its production (chapter 6). In this way, it also shows how advertising agencies are changing in response and therefore how managers need to adapt their understanding and practice in commissioning work. Thematic analysis is conducted abductively (Boyatzis, 1998), with

themes emerging from the data during the data analysis process, coding and then pattern identification (chapter 5).

Research questions:

1. What is the nature of the changing role of advertising creative intermediaries resulting from digital marketing phenomena such as viral marketing?

2. What are the barriers and constraints which creative managers encounter and why and how are creative teams evolving solutions?

3. Most digital advertising agencies are small or medium-sized enterprises and tend to be independent, how are they managing the speed of technological and industry changes and why is in the manner in which they do?

Sub-questions to answer the above:

• What process do they adopt to create such campaigns? Impact on current models? Links to stages of advertising campaign development?

• How is the sender and receiver relationship changing in response to viral advertising?

• Keeping up with technology? Why in this way?

• What roles do they play? How is this different from before?

• Does agency size and age matter?

• How are media channels affecting creative decisions? Why?

7.2 Research Findings at the Pre-launch Phase

Chapter 5 provided a coding framework which essentially summarised the data set into meaningful categories. That formed the basis for further refinement in the analysis and the discussion. Chapter 6 evaluates data analysis matrices and key text units to uncover research participants' concept definition, the nature of creative design for virals and the shift to agency/customer partnerships across the lifecycle of viral campaigns. Figure 7-1 below captures what has been explored so far. In the Literature Review chapter this diagram is used to show how little attention has been dedicated to the pre-launch campaign phase. The blanks are being filled in from this current research. For example campaign structure appears in this research but with a different perspective. So, the note says "yes" but how and why is addressed in this study.

Brand owner/ Advertising agency Domain

1 Client

Sender → Encoder →

Viral campaign - Pre-launch Phase

Noise

Channel

Customer Domain

Decoder → Receiver →

Viral campaign - Post-launch Phase

2 Account Management | 3 Account Planning | 4 Creative | 5 Media Planning

Summary from this study, pre-launch:

Creative concept is at the heart
Appeals are audience-led
Novelty & disruption are critical
Link to pre-existing social connection
Multiple/Parallel creative outputs
Video as generational literacy device
Product category and involvement levels do not limit
Insight and digital technology are continuous
To produce virals agency departments work together
Brand owner/agency domain is shared with customers
Virals require clients to cede power to agency and customer
The sender could also be a customer
Intermediaries and consumers can encode messages
Platforms are controlled by consumers and intermediaries
Noise is filtered by customers (native content)
Consumers substitute for media buyers

Summary of Extant Research (post-launch):

Unpredictable – Data helps;
Continuous monitoring and improvement - Yes;
Perceived user-friendliness - Yes;
Format of delivery used by the consumer - No;
Campaign structure; Multifaceted and interactive – Yes
Products (utility, simple, shareability) - No;
Systems to launch and sustain the campaign - Yes;
Campaign objectives - Yes;
Imaginative ideas -fun, risqué, novelty - Yes;
Idea assessment - Yes;
Access to free materials - No;
First in category - No;
Negative or positive (mental process, fluid context) -Yes;
Targeted placement - Yes;
Access, leverage of network /influencers - Yes;
Sender incentives and volume - No;
Cross-platform technology - No;
Nature of the transmission - Yes;
Measurement data - Yes

Figure 7-1 Comparison of this research with extant studies of viral characteristics post-launch phase. Source: Raghubansie, 2017

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7.3 *The Basic Model*

The participants' views in this research challenges the Sender – Receiver model (Shannon and Weaver, 1949). As a general conclusion is that the communications interaction is not linear; it is not even circular. It is synchronous. Noise is not limited to the channels but across all actors. There is feedback across the range of actions. In other words, it is not based on the transmission or interruption model (Godin, 2001). Much of this has been confirmed by previous studies (example Hsieh, Hsieh and Tang, 2012; Eckler and Bolls, 2011). However, in this study it comes to life in the campaign creation stage.
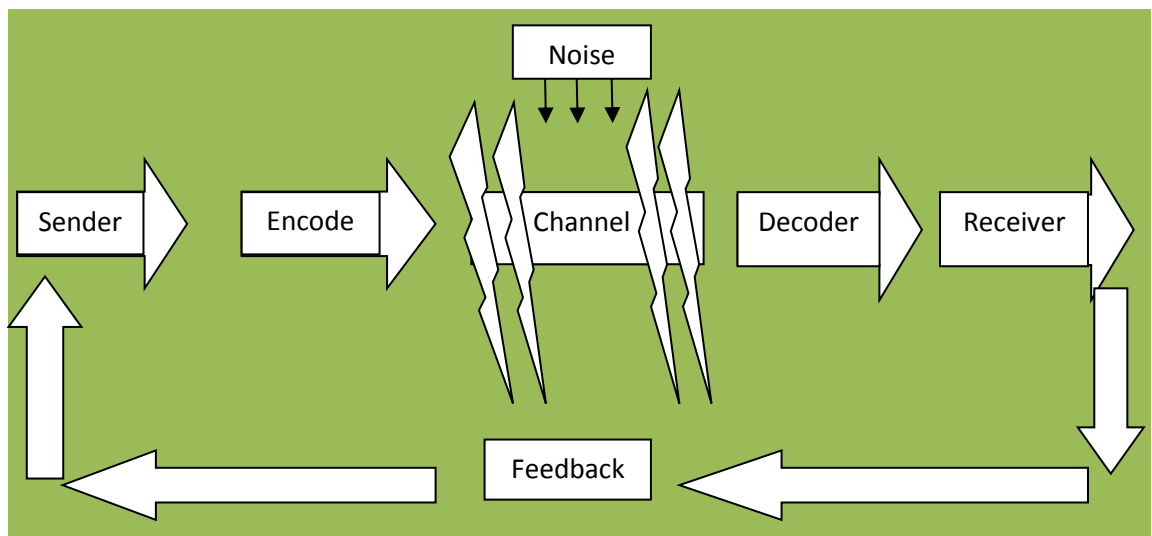
Figure 7-2 Shannon and Weaver (1949) Informational Model of Communication

7.4 *Objectives and Viral Campaign Planning:*

Since there is no study in prior research from the brand owners' perspectives and of creative intermediaries, there is little discussion of using objectives to guide the viral campaign development. Cruz and Fill (2008) make reference to objectives in terms of a type (awareness) and as a tool of evaluation. However, the data here produces consistent commentary on the objectives of the campaign and the brand as a guiding principle of creative design.

"That will be more appropriate when you are looking at more traditional organisations say [redacted leading cosmetics brand], they will tend to start with a big idea and then have their own strategy around that entire idea and is top-down led in that case and that fits into a bigger picture". (T11 – Digital Creative Manager)

The objective is clearly set at the initial stage but will change as the campaign creative options are developed.

"It depends on the objective of the client and their audiences that they want to reach, if it's a younger audience they want to reach. Companies such as [redacted leading jeans brand] are quite digitally led, below the line events, Apps and so on". (T11)

However, after the viral is launched, its post-launch trajectory becomes difficult to predict and requires constant monitoring as observed above under the diffusion section. It is then often in the hands of the consumer to determine what direction it will take.

"Does it sell more [redacted chocolate brand]? I suppose that you have achieved brand awareness and positive attitudes to the brand; that is the job done". (T1)

7.5 *Standard Advertising Campaign Development versus Virals*

In Table 7-2 below the right column is updated with findings based on data from this research, the others from previous work. The standard model is typically based on delivering a message to a consumer at a time predetermined by the brand. Phenomena such as virals are capable of showing how a more fluid approach can be effective. For example, those specialist digital agencies interviweed provide invaluable guidance to brands in terms of what they can achieve with tools such as virals.

> "Quite a bit of handholding. They [clients] come to us because we are the experts in this particular area… So for us turning back to them and saying this is what you have to do. It is quite alarming to them. So, we have to educate them about what they need to do… Yes it is completely new and yes we have never had a master agency kind of relationship. There are some who are willing to take that journey down the road with us". (T4 – Head of Digital)

Key: Agree with prior research ⬭   New Insight ▭

Stages	Standard Advertising Plan	Virals based on current research	Data from this study
Client Objectives	Clear and relatively certain	Clear but unsure (Kirby and Marsden, 2006)	Noted above. It can be different but it is has to be clear at the start, then managed to adjust launch and post launch.
Account management	Comparative control of factors affecting relationship	The online consumer sphere means sharing power (Bhat and Abulaish, 2013; Horovitz, Petrecca and Howard, 2008)	Acknowledged as such but need to use digital creative to supplement managerial and client knowledge.
Planning	Established protocols to develop insights	Evident research data but emerging methods (Deuker and Albers, 2012)	Most participants were absolutely clear on the importance of understanding target audience behaviour but also generalised, shared psychographic interests. Problems with processing much data for small agencies.
Creative	Considers regulations (e.g. audiences, watershed)	Relatively open and pushing boundaries (Porter and Golan, 2006; Golan and Zaidner, 2008)	Major theme recurring – it is not relatively open, it is considerably more flexible. The criteria against which those possibilities are tested are developing (some noted above).
Media	Agreed by client and agency	May or may not be agreed (Aral and Walker, 2013; Chiang, Huang and Yeh, 2013; Boyd and Crawford, 2012)	Unless, it is a big brand, there is little interest in spending large budgets on buying media. Controlled influencers play a major role but increasingly this is moving to a co-operative model of "native content", rather than a purely

			commercial transaction. Other influencers are often beyond the reach of the agency but are monitored and can be interacted with.
Channels	Fixed (offline and online)	Fixed or unfixed (online) (Miles, 2014; Leskovec et al, 2007)	Multi-modal but can be fixed progressively rather than beforehand.
Others			
Timing to launch	Teaser before or after	Teaser before or after (Kirby and Marsden, 2006; Kirby, 2004)	Possibilities open – pilot, parallel ideas soft launched, monitoring interest before deciding on when or what to launch. Reverse engineering as appropriate from TV to online or vice versa.
Reach and frequency	Agreed targets set	Benchmarks but possibilities unlimited (to people with Internet access, technological capacity – Jankowski, 2013)	Virals can have enormous reach and frequency but that is not necessarily what the brand wants. Account managers and planners diverge from this view as might sometimes focus on a narrow, targeted group of customers.
Resources	Relatively fixed	Partly fixed (Yang, 2013, Liu-Thompkins, 2012)	Generally, the creative is where the resources are directed. It is not media but the size of the brand and its objectives determine what will be set.

Table 7-1 Comparison of standard advertising plans, virals and the views of creative managers

Four participants have moved from traditional agencies into newly formed organisations because they would like to adopt different ways of working. They felt frustrated at the pace of change within the agencies organised into holding company groups. It is also the case that these smaller agencies are working with larger ones to help them meet the needs of their clients as the more established appear to be slower in responding. In this way, they are also attempting to influence the process of change which they believe is more appropriate for digital advertising. This is a code which consistent emerged across the interviews.

"It is about flexibility... You are never going to get to the end of it". (T2)

Participants argue for a cohesive integration of creative ideas, broader organisational (agencies and brands) values and the processes adopted to manage viral campaigns. The boundaries of creative campaign development are blurred and blurring as teams become more fluid. One regional, independent agency provided a clear example of how this is happening:

"Process has changed because the short listing element is definitely in-house through social media. So, previously where you create a shortlist of agencies you want to deal with. You've got a client who's trying to identify you or you have got somebody in the organisation who you are trying to showcase to. You [the client] have an obligation to see what they've done, where it's appeared, who they are and then contact them and then start. That whole thing ...which can take weeks. Whereas now you can go to LinkedIn and you could straight away identify who'd worked on specific campaigns". (T7 – Creative Technology Head)

The model below is from the literature review chapter showing teams as largely distinct units, fulfilling their respective roles and boundaries between client and agency are set with the account manager as gatekeeper. This study shows that the agency departments and the relationship with the client is based on osmosis and cross-team working contrary to Mallia and Windels (2011), reflected in the porous boundaries among teams within agencies but also with clients (Figure 7-3).
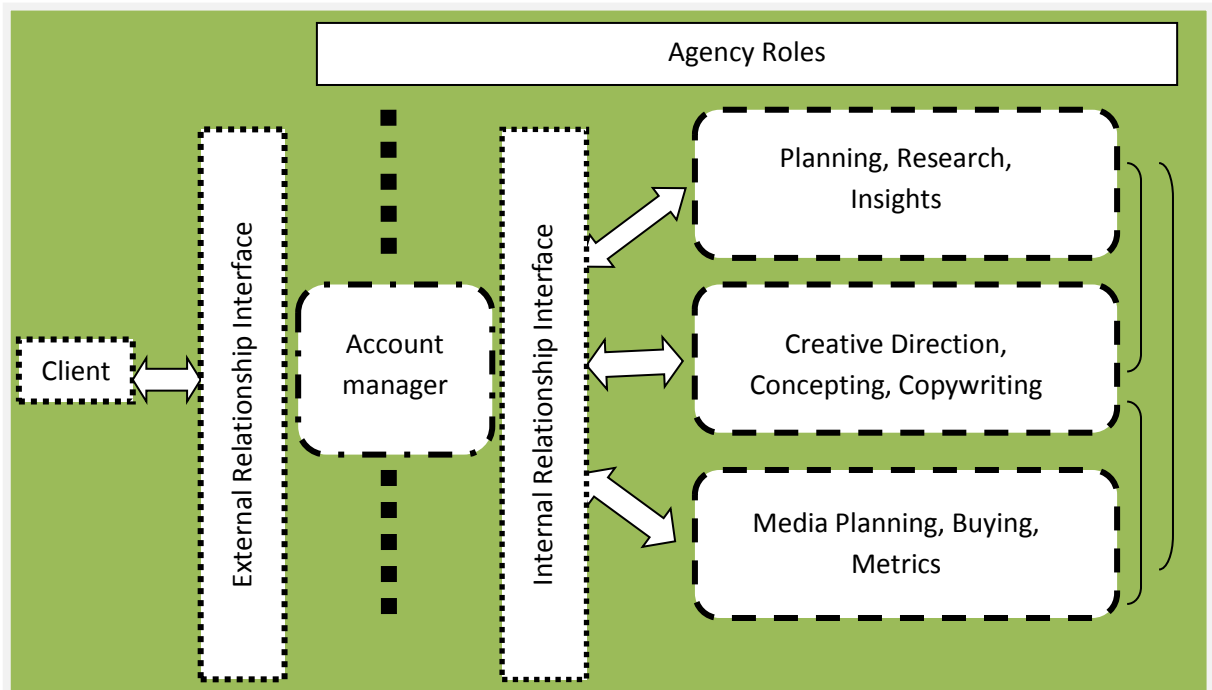
Figure 7-3 Empirical Findings on the Roles, Boundaries and Relationships in Creative Process for Virals: Source: Raghubansie, 2017

7.6 *Changing Roles of Creative:*

What roles do they play? How is this different from before?

In the introduction chapter there is a section on creative role evolution in a digital environment. This is then developed in chapter 2, positioning virals among exisiting theory, setting traditional creative roles within the advertising agency.

Traditional Creative Profile	Creative Role Changes based on this Study
Creatives traditionally are recruited from a relatively closed industry with UK red brick universities, particularly Oxbridge dominating the pool. Typically there are certain disciplines – Latin, history, literature – from which staff would be drawn from (McLeod, O'Donohoe and Townley, 2009).	Creatives have to adjust to non-industry people coming into agencies and into teams. While this study did not examine the influence and nature of creative conflict, it is evident that the new, outsiders have served as a stimulus for tension with traditional agency teams. This is especially clear for those people who are in digital roles, which have to be across agencies. There is a consistent theme among most of the transcripts, particularly from the smaller agencies, where creative managers are deliberately attempting to shed established (institutionalised) ways of working diverging from Broschak and Niehans, (2006). Working across networks within the agency and across the broader industry is essential to be able to connect with emerging technologies but also to extend learning opportunities and expanding creative possibilities.
In the last 6 decades creative concepts have been vested in the creative team led by the Creative Director/ Writer having substantial control and decision-making power (Hackley and Kover, 2007).	Creative concepts are coming from others in the agency. An excerpt was presented in the last chapter, about the role of an "ideas" team. This is now the accepted model on which digital teams operate.

The dominant models these managers employ are well established. The lessons of Ogilvy on writing, from Bernbach on creative ideas (Thomas and Harden, 2008), Katz and Lazarfeld (1955) on influencing, communication model of Shannon and Weaver (1949), the established roles of TV, print and radio respectively (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016).	Creatives now have to learn constantly as the dominant models are in flux. There are no clear set of practices which can be employed. "They've been so spammy that they [agencies] cannot recover from what they have done or they just do not know how to do it. Even PR agencies, that do just offline, if they don't have any digital knowledge". (T6)
Creatives have to work with clients to understand their needs and create a campaign in conjunction with their account management and planning counterparts (Hackley 2010). Takemura (2012) briefly touched upon this digital education role but only in passing.	Clients have to be taught as they do not have the knowledge or do not have the latest development. "You always find in digital that you have to educate the market, which is also your internal audience as much as you are developing the campaign itself" – (T1) "As with other clients they don't really understand it. We have to create documents to teach them. You know train them sometimes. We really like to educate as well. So, we educate our bloggers as well as our clients". (T6)
Large media budgets allow for greater blanketing of market with messages. Media is extremely poweful and usually account for more than 60% of total budgets (Hackley 2010).	In the last chapter substantial space was dedicated to the creative idea. Given the reductions in budgets and the declining influence of media buying, the viral concept(s) is even more crucial. The job of the digital creative takes on more significance.

	"Social media you can gave incredibly limited budget and if it is done successfully it can have massive success". (T4)
Teams input into the campaign at various points and while they will work across the agency, they have clarity around their functions in those units in supporting the campaign (see Figure 2-4).	Account management, planning, creative, digital and media work together from the inception and throughout the campaign development to produce a set of ideas.

Table 7-2 Comparison of Traditional and Digital Creative Roles

As observed in Figure 7-3, the distinctions are less clear among account management, planning, creative and media teams going against Hackley and Kover (2007) and Truong, McColl and Kitchen (2010). There is a comparative narrative that runs through the transcripts of traditional and current approaches leading to the idea of a dynamic context – which brings both opportunity and instability previously observed by Webster and Ksiazek (2012). The notion of constructing rules to meet an evolving working environment, especially among younger, newer agencies forms a trace across the transcripts agreeing with Takemura (2012) and Grabher (2002). Figure 7- 4 summarises the evaluation above on the role of the digital creative in viral design.
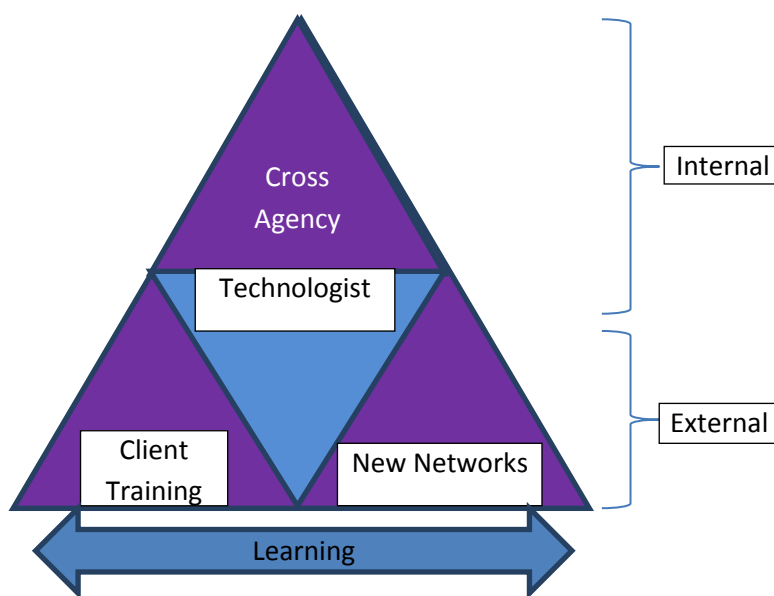
Figure 7-4 Summary of Digital Creative Role in Viral Campaigns. Source: Raghubansie, 2017

"It is tricky, how does a brand leopard change its spots?" observed one interviewee when asked about the responses of larger agencies and large brand owners when presented with a digital advertising solution.

There is a heightened hazard when clients "say we want to be like Old Spice [the viral campaign]. Then when you share some ideas; they say not quite like that. Then there is a retreat and then it is back to what is known" (T8). There are other associated themes – partnership, diversity and the creation of new paradigms. This expert role marks a potentially distinctive function for viral creatives, with implications for agency management and the collaborative spirit of advertising agencies.

7.7 *Virals Require Technology Currency:*

Keeping up with technology? Why in this way?

The analysis in this section considers the ways in which participants think of technology and its role within the agency and in viral campaign development. There is a connection with the sections above on roles of creatives and with the section on agency characteristics. Given that virals utilise social media platforms and shared consumer knowledge and interests, it is essential for the creative developing such campaigns to remain current with technologies current, emerging and future. While most professionals are engaged in continuous development of knowledge and skills, among the participants, those who have a role as head of digital or technology in the agency are especially tasked with this function. This is in order to fulfil the training and education roles noted above. The creative department has to transfer authority and influence to other parts of the organisation in the production of virals.

> "It is a slightly an unwieldy animal but no more so than TV was 50 years ago. And it is new and the critical thing is there are many people flaunting themselves as social media gurus. For me you cannot be a guru for something that is only a few years old. There are some people who professing to know a lot about it and it is the case of the blind leading the blind". (T4)

This is a crucial alteration connected with virals – a devotion to progressive learning, something which Takemura, (2012) partly addressed in his work. They need to keep up with current and emerging technologies, have a major role in training other people across account management, planning, creative and media.

> "So, you have a swamp of data and no real understanding of it. I mean there are people who do understand. But there is so much of data, that it is [important to] make sense of it". (T4)

This educational responsibility is fundamental to virals addressing the first research question supporting an evolutionary view of the role of creatives (Hackley and Tiwsakul, 2011).

7.8 *Sender and Receiver Relationships in Viral Campaigns:*

Virals make the communication cycle simpler and shorter as they connect directly and quickly. In examining the campaign development process, the sender's objectives are essential in guiding the messages; the receiver's likely reaction ("talkability", "personal kudos") in decoding, but also their responses to the media channels employed ("multiplatform") (Shannon and Weaver, 1949). A key point is the relatively low level of processing costs to the consumer – virals tend to be light and fun. It is also clear that this process is in a constant cycle of feedback across the whole campaign life at pre-launch and post-launch phases, across all the creative teams. It is more iterative, more carefully monitored and dependent on data; sometimes live which delivers insight into likely cultural cues but also links to native content, where and when it is happening online.

Encoding includes the compelling idea but also social relevance, emotions, value to the consumer but the data shows a variety of considerations which are similarly imperative:

> The power of the creative concept in starting discussions
> Elasticity (e.g. manifold versions/ plots) of the creative to enhance eWOM
> The match of the concept to technology platform
> Flexibility of the idea to crossover social media (e.g. YouTube, Vine, Facebook, traditional press)
> The internal resources and skills of the agency to manage the diffusion platforms, the creative concept and the volume and speed
> Most important, the strength of the creative to become a form of social coinage allowing peer to peer value exchange (friendships, ego needs, personal PR)

These are new insights into viral creative management. There are numerous creative ideas but when assessed against the potential of the media and technology to enhance transmission, they are rejected.

Example - the encoded message is classified as developing discussions slowly than a competing message. However, the first has multiple possibilities for stories which the

decoder is more likely to play with post-launch. Momentum is gradual but then accelerates progressively.

> "An interesting piece of content we worked on was like on Valentine's Day what it would be that women leave in their cars ... You have to find a twist [to each story] you know". [T6]

The core idea is critical but so too is the resource of the agency. One famous example for a global brand overwhelmend the host site because demand for their game was too high too early (T5). Publicity quickly became negative, damaged the brand and the agency. It is evident that assessing the viral concept is more multi-layered and complex than current campaign management research shows.

Senders are willing to engage with their customers early in the encoding stage. Consistent with current research power is with the so called new consumer (Dellarocas and Narayan, 2006), including the inherent dangers of such ceding of authority.

> "We were fine if Hackney Council did not like it [the ad] but when the Big Issue took issue. It's quite a hard organisation to criticise. I have a few friends who work for them. The Sun, you can ignore but not the Big Issue.... That was a bit difficult". (T2)

Feedback is constant; messages are recoded and old and new messages are delivered (Shannon and Weaver, 1949; consistent with Porter and Golan, 2006). Participants note that they spend considerable time observing the web habits of consumers prior and during campaign launch, including big data. One of the largest data companies is the parent company of one of the first and largest viral agencies – they showed their data office where staff "look" at the internet all day and night. If a story about whales is getting hits at dinner in South Korea, the ad would be positioned to an adjacent site where consumers could access it.

This is consistent with Southgate, Westoby and Page (2010) who showed that current, conventional measurement tools are relevant to virals. The differences are the quality, volume and continuity of data availability, collection and assessment. This study has provided a particular perspective on the data management debate – how it is

employed by creative managers in producing campaign ideas but also how and why they manipulate such data at pre-launch, launch and post-launch phase.

7.9 *Zone Construct of Viral Campaign Conception:*

As a summary of the insights generated through the data analysis, the views of creative managers are synthesised to develop a theoretical construct for understanding the design processes for the creation of virals. It is a comprehensive conception, articulating three connected zones of campaign planning and design. For the first time it is from the creative perspective, capturing design considerations (creative zone) but also diffusion (transmission zone) and affects (viral zone). Critically, it also embraces the roles and the key people involved across the zones; it shows the nature of their relationships, the scope of their actions and how these affect virals. It not only nurtures insight into campaign creation but also advances process and agency management.

It could be argued that this model should come at the end of the analysis. However, the Zone Construct helps the reader to get an insight into the full analysis at this point of the data assessment. It does draw from the participants' definitions which touch on all the aspects of the phenomenon. It also reflects current knowledge and insight into the phenomenon but also new conceptual insight consistent with the research aim. It also sets up the evaluations and conclusions to follow in the subsequent sections and chapters.
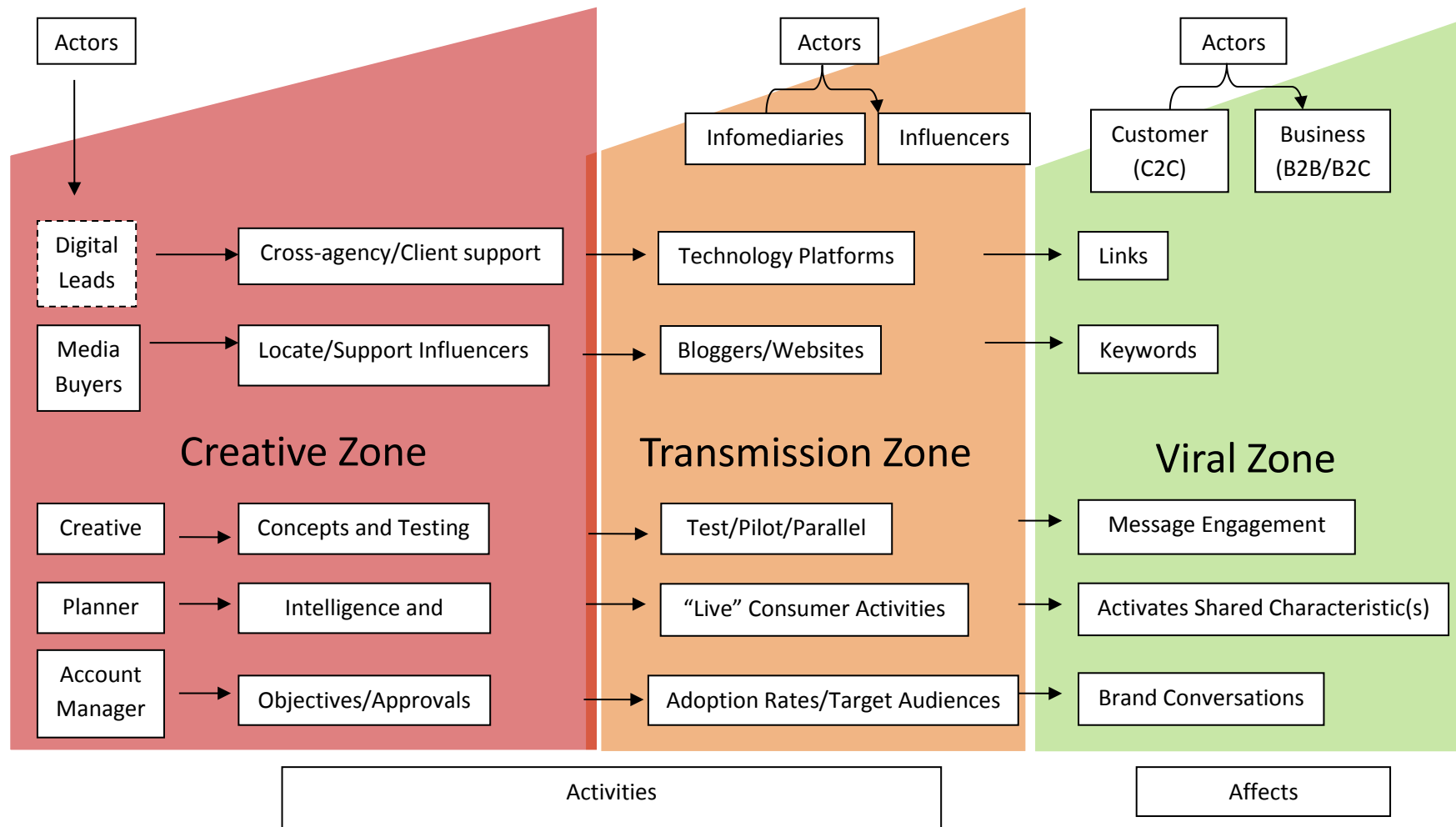
Figure 7-5 Zone Construct of Viral Campaign Development: actors, activities and affects. Source: Raghubansie, 2017.

7.10 *Limits to the Creation of Virals:*

What limits viral creativity? Solutions to these?

Creative topicality and freedom emerged from T1, forward to T4 where it emerged again but constraints from brand owners was a limiting factor to creative freedom in digital creative campaigns was much stronger; the data collected from T2 is quite focussed on insight and understanding creative platforms, target audiences and how to leverage technology across the various departmental functions within the agency (diffusion platforms and more flexible creative management model). On reflecting on the notes and the data, it was decided that the model has to be explored further and it was taken forward in T5. While the analysis starts with broad strokes, it begins to fragment the data into meaningful categories which can be further evaluated to develop more complex evaluations of particular strands emerging from the interviews (Matrix below).

	Less likely to be Viral	Mixed economy	More likely to be Viral
Level of restraint	Control	Transition	Flexible
Constraint Location:			
Agency	Larger, agencies, part of groups are more reluctant	A mix of the others are open to alternatives	Most of the smaller, newer agencies are able to deliver but need the larger ones too
Brand	Participants confirm managerial concern	A few categories are early adopters	Even products (e.g. car insurance) which lack "viral" qualities can become successful
Creative Team	Reluctant but acknowledge need to accommodate digital capacity	A few are discussing new models	Multi-modal: digital lead across agency, within creative team, specialist division

Table 7-3 Creative Freedom Matrix for the relationship between constraints on creative flexibility and viral failure or success

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The complexity among the concepts located here start to indicate approaches to place this phenomenon in the extant theory base, to identify creative process innovation and insight into the implementation, evaluation and creative management changes within advertising agencies.

	Less likely to be Viral	Mixed economy	More likely to be Viral
Level of restraint	Control	Transition	Flexible
Constraint Location			
Agency	Larger, agencies, part of groups are more reluctant	A mix of the others are open to alternatives	Most of the smaller, newer agencies are able to deliver but need the larger ones too
Brand	Participants confirm managerial concern	A few categories are early adopters	Even products (e.g. car insurance) which lack "viral" qualities can become successful
Theoretical link: Institutionalisation. Theme 3 – organisational behaviour	Sub-theme 1 – Conservatism	Sub-theme 2 – Agency Management changes	Sub-theme 3 – Industry restructuring
Creative Team	Reluctant but acknowledge need to accommodate digital capacity	A few are discussing new models	Multi-modal: digital lead across agency, within creative team, specialist division
Theoretical link: creative production. Theme 4 – viral characteristics	Sub-theme 2 – Roles of digital creatives	Sub-theme 2 – Roles of digital creative	Sub-theme 3 – Conceptions of new creative ideas

Table 7-4 Creative Freedom Matrix relationship to theory and effect on virality

The nature and attitude of clients commissioning virals was a consistent issue of discussion in the interviews. Those with certain organisational characteristics – being open, treating the agency as an equal, strong consumer orientation and engagement with technology are more likely to commission and approve virals than those with the opposite characterisitcs. The typology below is also the first of this kind to capture these characteristics from the creative viewpoint. There are organisations which could

be placed in the sanctuary category and they make up the majority of firms. The learning ones are those making the transition and those that win are in the release quadrant as they have given over much influence to the consumer. Others are engaging well but still in control where possible.
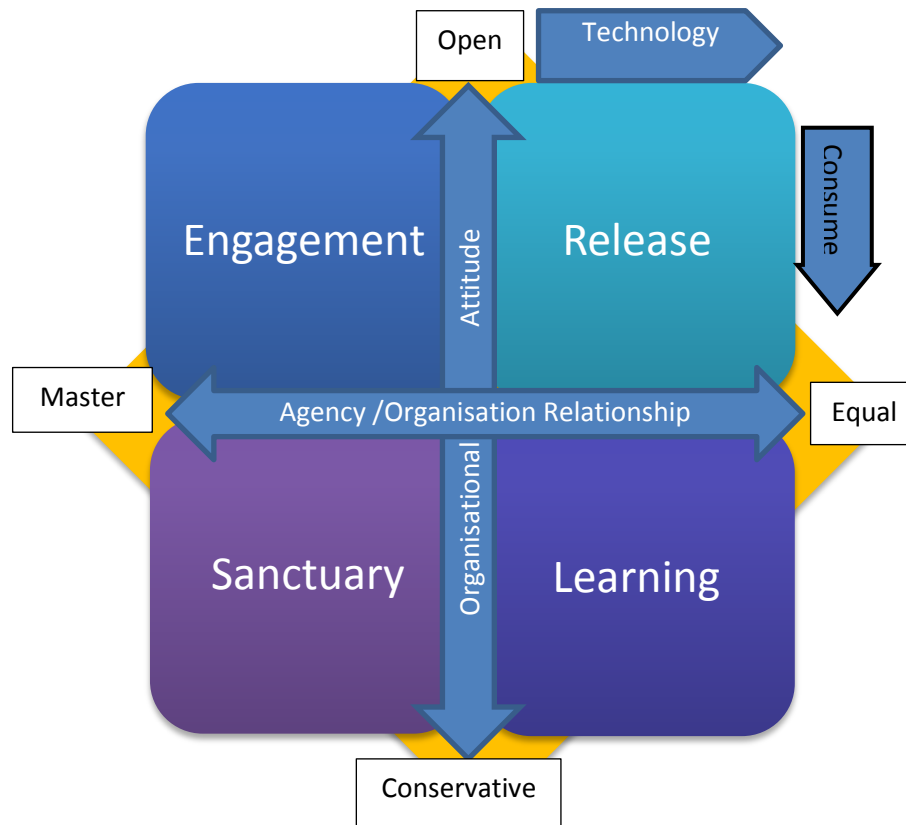
Figure 7-6 A Typology of Organisational Strategies for Virals. Source: Raghubansie, 2017

The nature of brands commissioning virals has substantial impact on whether a viral campaign can be developed or its likelihood of success. A model of such organisational conditions supportive of virals is developed below showing three key factors – measurement, learning attitudes and decision-making style. Creative managers take a pragmatic approach to addressing these characteristics – educating, counselling and refusing if needed.
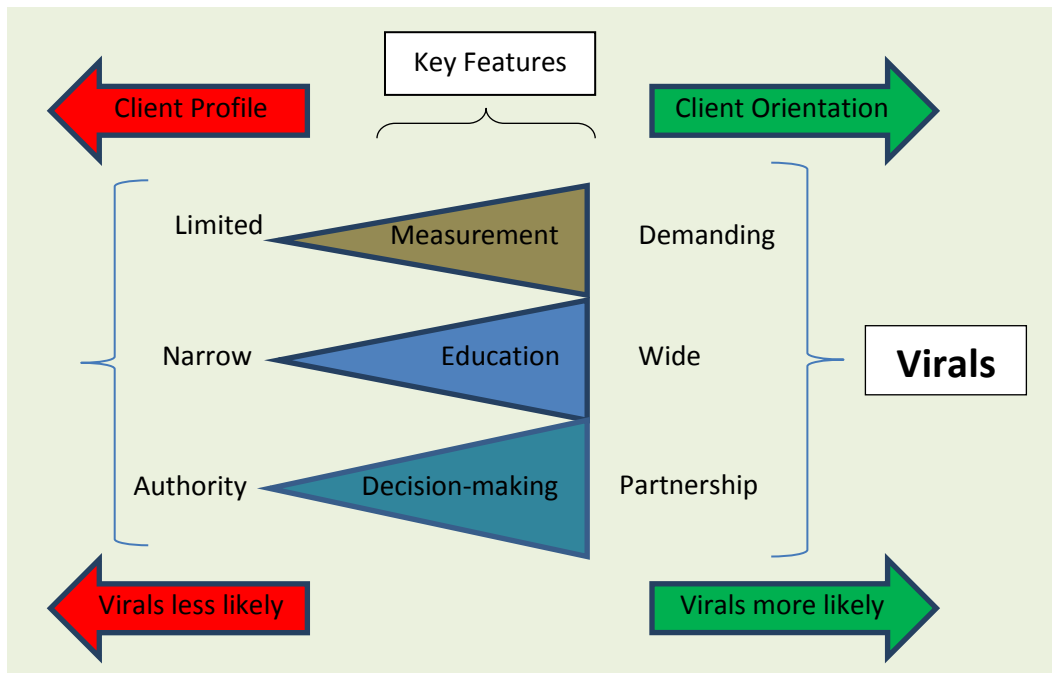
Figure 7-7 Model of Organisational Conditions Conducive to Virals. Source: Raghubansie, 2017

7.11 *Impact of media channels on viral creative decisions:*

How are media channels affecting creative decisions? Why?

From the evaluation above, it is clear that virals present multiple opportunities for creative materials to be developed and run in parallel. This idea of digital media as a pre-test laboratory is evident in a number of ways – testing ads, seeking co-creation, developing concepts etc.

> "It is not like a book. It does not end. You can always evolve; taking things to the end and see what comes out... keep running and running with it and never stopping." (T1)

> "It is about how you interact with that medium – launching apps, podcasts, and videos to back up events. I suppose it is the cherry on the cake" (T3 – Head of Marketing)

Creative managers believe that digital advertising makes creative work a series of stories which the target audience can engage with; a very different perspective from the literature (e.g. Truong and Simmons, 2010; Tellis, 2004). The possibilities for

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further dissemination of those stories are exponential based on the media channels available and the ability of that creative concept which is capable of mobility across media platforms.

Consumer freedom is a common theme in the data where they have multiple options in media consumption. The choice among target audiences to engage with a brand relies with the consumer, with software providing content to the consumer when they require it. These technologies are effectively digital butlers delivering to the needs of individuals what they want then they do. Participants pointed to the cultural relationship of this behaviour to the consumers' consumption of media and goods and services.

There are too substantial implications for the whole function of media buying and media planning within agencies. As phenomenon such as virals become more established, budgets and associated power move elsewhere.

> "It used to be just basically an opinion based thing as to where you will buy media from. And I think that is less and less the way the media is bought. It will all be bought programmatically through demand type platforms where there is very little [people input] actually going into it".

> "The size of the team doing that sort of thing I would think, will shrink hugely. Agencies are going to be more about… I think they will all have a technology play.… The media buyers will be all on those platforms. So the role is going to change quite significantly yes, yes. If you look at the planners/ buyers they are actually being phased out; no one is actually planning media". (T9)
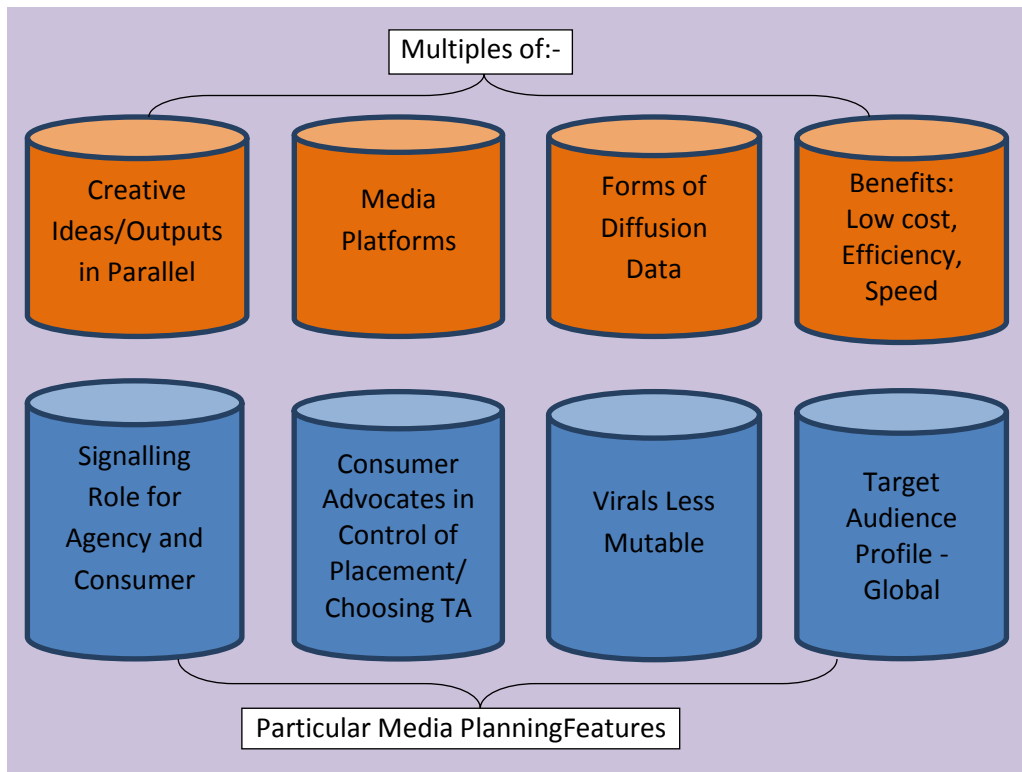
Figure 7-8 Differences in role of Media in Viral Campaigns. Source: Raghubansie, 2016

This research agress with prior work that unlike traditional communications, the agency itself may take on the signalling role of, for example a TV station because it can upload ads to the Internet (D'Alessandro, Peltier and Dahl, 2012). Kirby's (2006) suggestions are empirically supported in terms of transmission speed; intermediaries cost sharing; ad radically lower delivery costs as ads are not posted; time saving at campaign launch, allowing messages to achieve coverage very quickly; essential if early awareness objectives are to be met and competitors left little time to respond. One creative director went so far as to say:

> "They can guarantee five hundred thousand hits on YouTube. They had ways of seeding the campaign, not by using any others. By seeding it to certain chat things in China, metatags into it, descriptors, in a certain way and certain websites. They [can] prove it by making their own videos, fake ads they had made for their creative book". [T2]

The researcher concluded in the literature review that the consumer does not re-encode the viral message; it is not for the most part changed. They may add a few

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comments and forward or link to their social media. Besides, unlike conventional WOM, it is also recorded, the transmission, the commentary, the re-transmission, all (Deuker and Albers, 2012). The empirical stage supports the conclusion in the literature review, the differences in virals are:

- Speed (of transmission and feedback and therefore action)
- Richness of data (multiple media platforms, predictions of success or failure)
- Multiple stakeholders (not just a narrow field of seeds)
- Scale (local, regional, international)

7.12 *Effects of Agency Size and Age on Production of Virals:*

Does agency size and age matter?

The London dominance of the industry continues. However, there is a marked departure with those interviewed from outside London do not view their location as a disadvantage for networking, skills or competitiveness. The less complicated the structure of the agency, the better it is able to be responsive to digital opportunities and threats such as virals. One Head of Digital commented on successful campaigns:

"People that are doing well, they are almost not corporate entities". (T4)

Data collected from new agencies show this as liberating; the traditional agencies who outsource digital work to specialist SME agencies, do not agree. However, this may be coming from the brand owners themselves. Most brands are not prepared to give away control, consistent with previous research (El Gohary, 2012; 2010).

Figure 7-9 below is a summary of participants' views on the main enabling and constraining characteristics relative to size and age of the agency which help or hinder its production of virals. This is the first time that these characteristics have been recorded in this way, based on empirical data produced from the managers responsible for virals themselves.
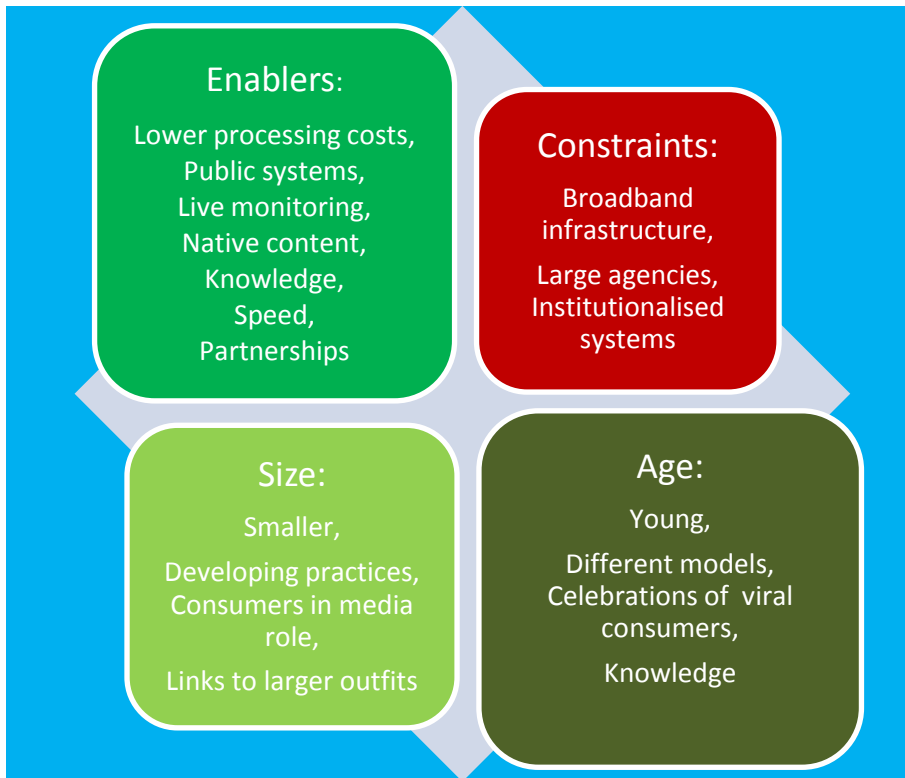
Figure 7-9 Typology of Enabling and Constraining Agency Characteristics Viral Campaigns.
Source: Raghubansie, 2017.

7.13 *7Cs Theoretical Model of Viral Campaign Creative Development: Context and Influences*

Having evaluated the data against the research objectives over these two chapters, aspects of design and creative management of virals have been progressively set in context of past research, illustrating the theoretical insights from this investigation, both agreeing and novel. The 7Cs Model of Creative Development (Figure 7-10) integrates these into a comprehensive construct uncovering creative management issues from the agency/brand level, to the more profound concepting considerations. In essence, there are two main aspects – agency management issues, the focus of this chapter and creative concept development, the focus of the last chapter.

Agency Management:

Contagion considerations; the company profile; creative campaign management; creative model

Creative Concepting:

Creative planning; creative message strategies; creative ideation tests

The construct's power arises from the integration of prior research and here, presenting for the first time the pre-launch, antecedent perspective, the voice of creative managers as they decide on what the campaign would look like and how it will be launched. It then merges the pre-launch factors (based on this study) and the post launch factors (based on prior research). It is a comprehensive new picture – evaluating brand, agency, creative, diffusion and customer factors.
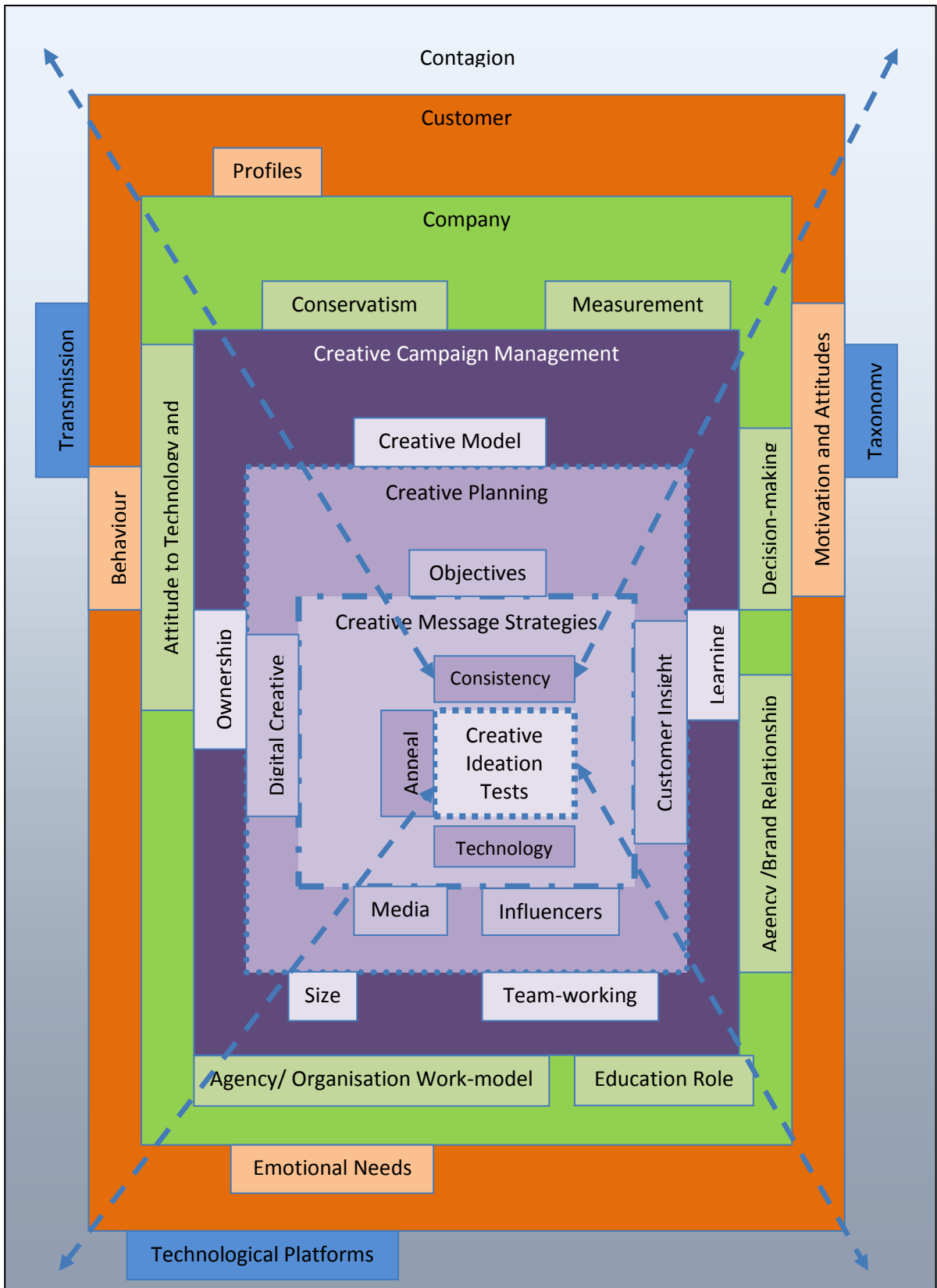
Figure 7-10 7Cs Theoretical Model of Viral Campaign Creative Development: Context and Influences. Source: Raghubansie, 2017

7.14 *Chapter summary:*

This chapter built on the previous which considered research objective one and its related research questions. Here research objective two was addressed, articulating the main insights into creative management of viral campaigns, setting it in the context of prior research and conceptual frameworks.

> RO2: To explicate, classify and explore the changes in advertising campaign planning processes which digital phenomena such as viral marketing have introduced.

Chapter seven considered higher level changes – the role of creative teams, working holistically etc. – the broader cross campaign and cross-agency changes that virals have introduced into current ways of working. Across the last two chapters the whole research: its codes, themes and sense-making are evaluated and synthesised to produce theoretical models that meet the third research objective, to make conceptual contributions to the literature. The next chapter takes the headline findings from this research to set out the main conclusions and findings.

8 CHAPTER EIGHT: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS and DISCUSSIONS

This exploratory study has followed an interpretivist, realist philosophy adopting qualitative, semi-structured interviews to uncover how creative campaigns for virals are conceived, designed, implemented and evaluated by the creative managers tasked with its production (chapters 5 and 6). In this way, it also shows how advertising agencies are changing in response and therefore how managers need to adapt their understanding and practice in commissioning work (chapter 7). This chapter summarises main findings of the study.

8.1 *Introduction*

The primary data is from interviews with creative managers, across the UK drawn from large, medium, small, corporate, independent, established and new agencies. There are more than 72,000 words in the data set; therefore, the voices of the participants are presented in excerpts which provide insight into how they perceive aspects of their creative lives and how their organisations, consumers and clients are changing in a digital environment (Cresswell, 2013). These are closely linked to specific themes and sub-themes that contribute to the achievement of the research aim and objectives (Silverman, 2016).

Research aim:
> The overall goal of this research is to produce insight into the impact of virals on advertising creative campaign planning models and management processes.

8.2 *Summary of Data Codes*

There are five main themes with three sub-themes (Figure 8-1). The conceptual stream to which these related are noted in the end column. Set against the research aim, viral characteristics (theme 4) and advertising planning (5). However, togtether they form a summary picture of the research.

Theme 1 Creative factors influencing diffusion			Overall theoretical category
Sub-theme 1 Transmission – the acts involved in sharing viral ads	Sub-theme 2 Technological Platforms – email, facebook etc.	Sub-theme 3 Taxonomy – the sub-structures underlying the distribution	Contagion modelling
Theme 2 Customer behaviour			
Sub-theme 1 Behaviour – actions taken before receipt of a viral ad, during and after	Sub-theme 2 Media consumption – the patterns of media usage	Sub-theme 3 Emotional desires – motives for engaging with viral ads	Motivation and attitude theory
Theme 3 Organisational behaviour			
Sub-theme 1 Conservativism and Evaluation – client mindsets in choosing to engage and in assessing campaign impact	Sub-theme 2 Agency management changes – forms of organising agencies for virals	Sub-theme 3 Industry re-structuring – evidence of where and how the industry is changing with new entrants, challengers	Institutionalisation

Theme 4 Viral characteristics			
Sub-theme 1 Creative considerations – decisions of how and what to include in the advertisement and the campaign plan.	Sub-theme 2 Roles of digital creatives – comments about the jobs which art directors, artists etc do.	Sub-theme 3 Conceptions of new creative ideas – the processes of creating, screening and developing ideas	Creative production
Theme 5 Advertising planning			
Sub-theme 1 Planning processes – ways of organising work within advertising agencies	Sub-theme 2 Insight – research and understanding to guide creative decisions	Sub-theme 3 Objectives – determining what is the purpose of the viral	Advertising models

Figure 8-1 Themes and Sub-Themes from the Research

8.3 *Research Objective 1:*

To capture and codify the views of creative managers on the concepts and messaging strategies considered and implemented in viral campaigns

The principal impact of virals is at the ideation stage of message development – there is a far wider range of concepts identified, tested, set in parallel to each other. Virals have produced a freedom to experiment with concepts, expanded further by technological platforms. Considerable attention is focussed on the core idea (its abiltity to generate viral diffusion). The second, related impact is not just social media but the range of these, and more powerfully, how these are innovatively employed to extend the virality inherent in the core idea.

8.4 *Research Objective 2:*

To explicate, classify and explore the changes in advertising campaign planning processes which digital phenomena such as virals have introduced.

The previous chapter is mainly dedicated to this RO. The main insights generated essentially question the basic model (Shannon and Weaver, 1949). Sender/ receiver interaction is earlier and constant, sharing the media role and ideas are subject to agency resources; objectives are more important that in the literature; viral campaigns depart from the conventional campaign in many regards; the data confirms the importance of technological sharpness; the creative role is changing to a more cross-agency one; much more measurement and speed; these are linked to media where there are major changes (multiple campaigns, platforms). There are agency traits which enable and constrain the production of virals relative to their size and age. Likewise, consistent with prior research, brand profiles can also facilitate the production of virals and the types of strategy they employ to respond to virals (engagement, release, sanctuary, learning). The Zone Construct models the above insights into a three stage formulation of campaign considerations at different management stages of the campaign. The full range of factors are further theorised in the 7cs model of campaign management showing the planning factors across diffusion,

company profile, creative campaign management, the creative model; creative planning, creative message strategies, creative ideation tests.

8.5 *Research Objective 3:*

To develop theoretical models for understanding viral marketing campaign creation and extend extant models of advertising creative process and agency management.

In addressing ROs 1 and 2, there are theoretical insights developed and added to the extant research throughout the thesis. In so doing, RO 3 is also fulfilled and summarised here in this chapter. In the final theoretical construct at the end of this thesis, the findings of the research are encompassed. Before that is presented, the main conclusions and findings are summarised below.

8.6 *Life as a Creative Manager in a Digital World:*

Creative managers now work with a far more diverse range of people from within and without the industry. They perceive this as an opportunity to move from a narrow, institutionalised pool of talent.

The dominant models of the last six decades have been swept away. Creative managers have to adapt as they are not the fount of creativity; concepts are coming from others in the agency. This leads to tensions and making reasonable adjustments of rules.

Creatives now have to learn constantly as their ways of working is in flux. There are no clear set of practices which can be employed. Some are willingly adopting a more open, learning oriented mind-set; others are being pushed along as is the case with their clients. All of this requires the digital creative to play a powerful educational role and expert role for agency, colleagues and clients.

The luxury of large media budgets, mass audiences is over. The concept at the core of the campaign becomes more important and therefore the life of the creative manager is more tumultuous as there are no easy answers. As consumers take power and

choose their media consumption and media platforms, digital messages need to be crafted to match those choices.

Creatives have to work across teams from the inception of a campaign and throughout until the campaign is over. They cannot leave it to account management as it was before, or to planning; they have to be there to educate, to identify creative opportunity, to connect with an insight.

This research shows that the life of the creative manager has a very different rhythm from before. Previous research did not focus on the realities of those who produce virals but on the ads themselves and how consumers interact with them.

8.7 *Comprehensive Definition of Virals*

This research produces a definition that encompasses the prior research, addressing gaps prior to the empirical phase, and then clarifying this further after the data analysis. This study has now contributed the pre- launch perspectives of virals in addition to the post-launch studies which dominate the exisiting cannon.

> Virals are a type of marketing communications utilising a compelling, disruptive creative appeal which captures positive consumer interest, activating their shared characteristics to generate exponential online transmission within a limited timeframe.

8.8 *Emotion and Virals*

Emotion was found to be important but it did not have the primacy of place; humour was not in this space either – both contradicting the majority of the literature (Binggeser et al, 2015; Botha, 2014; Brozek, Lehner and Schoditsch, 2013; Cohen, 2013; Henke, 2013; Nelson-Field, Riebe and Newstead, 2013; Strapparava, Guerini and Ozbal, 2011) and seminal papers (Golan and Zaidner, 2008; Porter and Golan, 2006; Lindgreen and Vanhamme, 2005). Therefore, an important finding in this study is that the creative idea is more important than emotion.
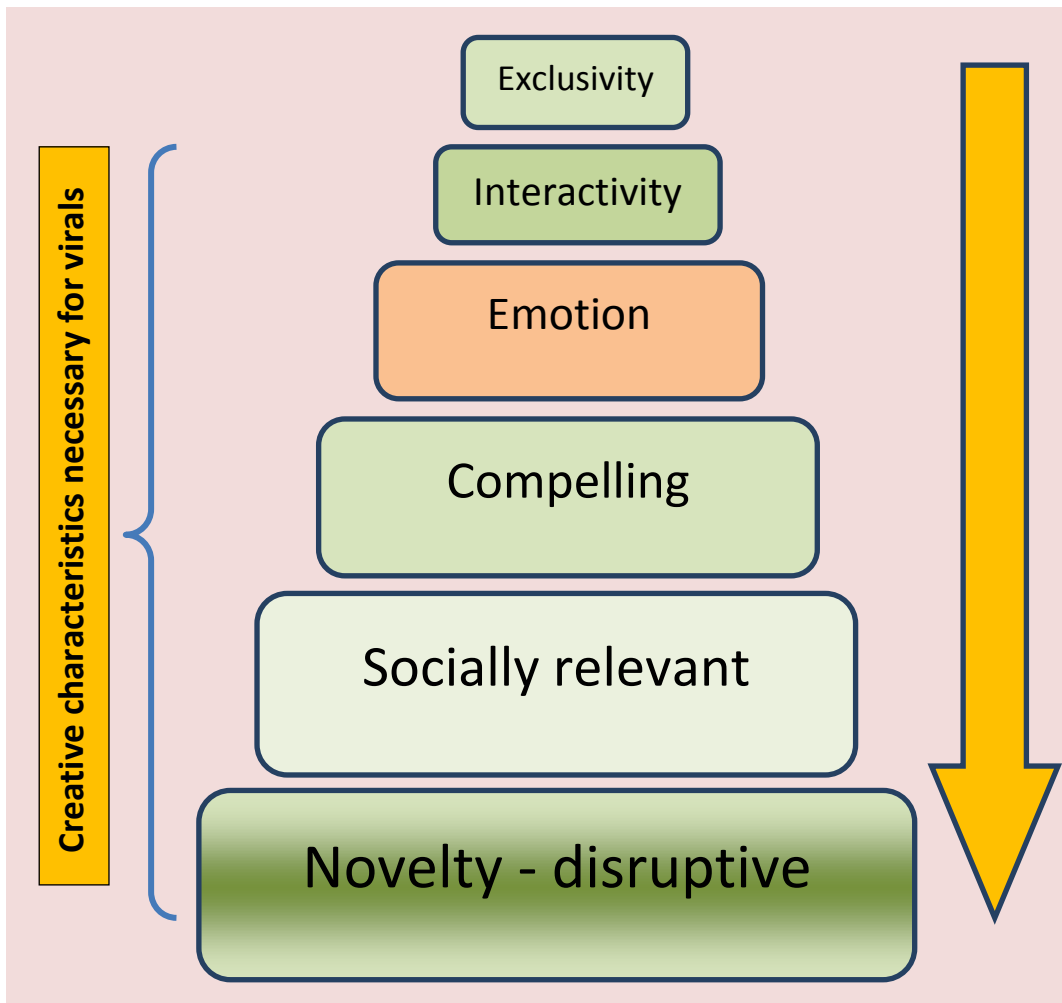
Figure 8-1 A Typology of Ranked Viral Creative Characteristics for Campaign Design (The size of box indicates importance in participants' views.) **Source: Raghubansie, 2016**

8.9 *Persuasion in Viral Creative Concept Development*

The data in this study shows little focus on persuasion (Yamakami, 2013; Cheung et al, 2009; Eccleston and Griseri, 2008; Shimp, Wood and Smarandescu, 2007) but more on creating virals that attract with content that is mutually beneficial, agreeing with Petrescu, Kargaonkar and Gironda (2015). All appeals are valid – ethos, logos and pathos agreeing with the work of English, Sweetser and Ancu (2011). Incentives and free materials is less important compared to established consumer behaviour and viral research (Cho, Jisu and Faber, 2012; Roy, 2014; Arkoudis and Samanta, 2012; Wiedemann, Haunstetter and Pousttchi, 2008).

8.10 *Technical Features in Designing Virals*

Very little if any findings from the data is about the technical production of virals contradicting Cheyne, et al (2013) on message length, readability the focus (i.e. technical features). These concepting strategies work together to enhance consumer conversations, the results of which produce the viral effect. These creative design decisions are being empirically validated in this study for the first time.
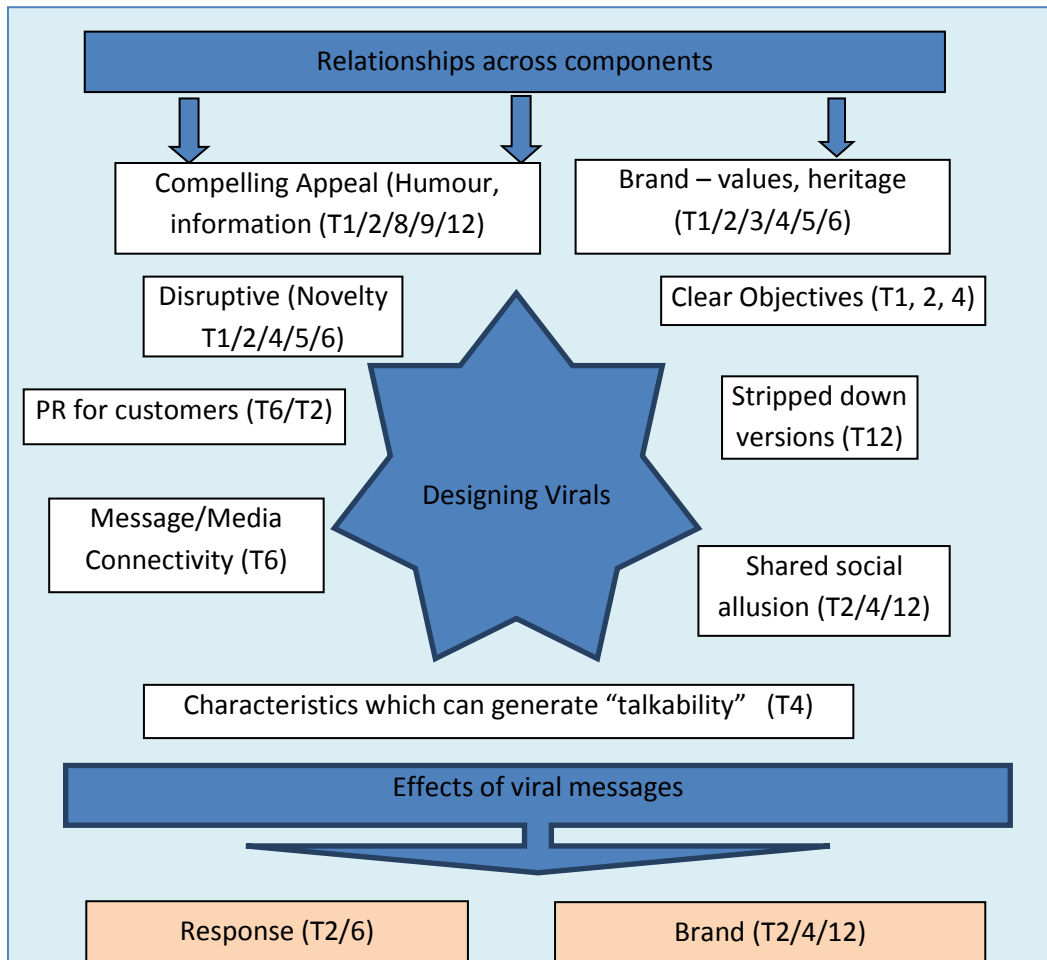
Figure 8-2 Model of Core Creative Components for Virals **(Key: T=Transcript)** Source: Raghubansie, 2017

8.11 *Viral Campaign Differences*

There are three major changes across the campaign development processes. The range of possibilities has expanded dramatically to discover "something interesting", several versions of the same, "creative novelty", which tap into a shared aspect of social knowledge or expectations.
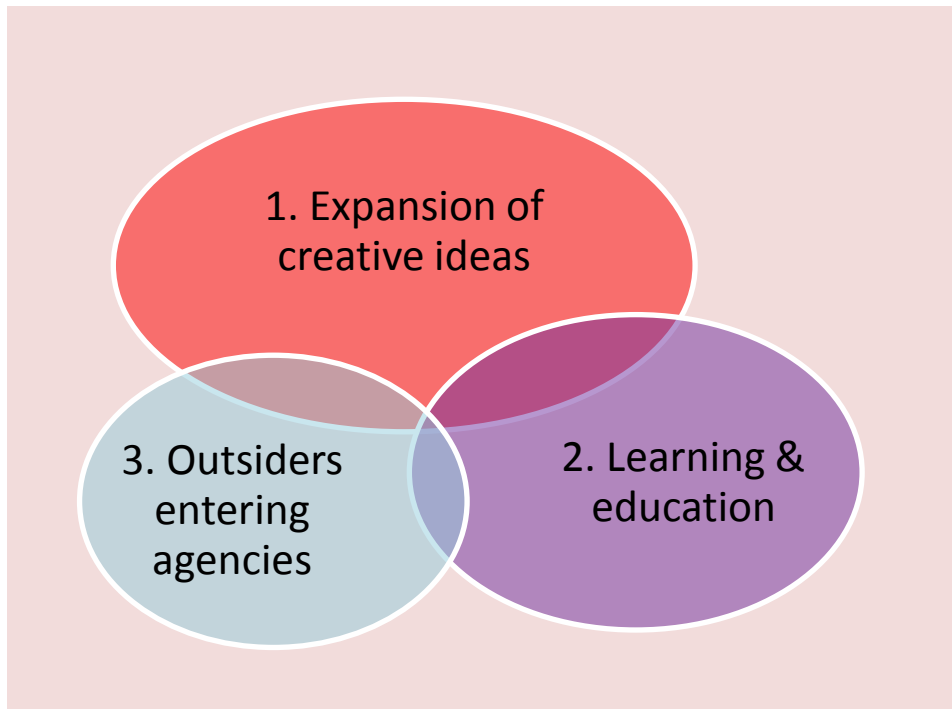
Figure 8-3 Impact levels of innovations influencing viral campaign development. Source: Raghubansie, 2017

A model of creative iteration and influence comparing traditional and viral campaigns is developed. Three key areas:

- Managerial influence
- Creative iteration
- Customer input

Managers have less influence, consumers more and the cycle of feedback is much more iterative.

8.12 *Virals and the Interruption Model of Advertising*

Virals move substantially away from the conventional (Godin, 2001). It is more about employing native, relevant content which is attractive in itself to generate consumer support. The basic Shannon and Weaver (1949) is fundamentally challenged. This idea is developed across all the sections in the last two and this chapter.

8.13 *The Viral Consumer:*

The current level of consumer understanding has not been witnessed in advertising before (Aral and Walker, 2011b; Phelps et al, 2004). Viral diffusion behaviour is tracked quite literally live (seeding or sharing) (Aral and Walker, 2013; Jankowski et al, 2013). There is agreement with prior research on consumer power (Hayes, King and Ramirez, 2016; Carida and Colurcio, 2013) but also ease and convenience. Consumers are readily available, contrary to Williams and Trammell (2005), but the search for unique customer audience groups is supported (Lewis, et al, 2005; Godin, 2000). Entertainment, high video consumption and reduced cognitive pressure, instant social connections, viral appeals to ego (Boase and Wellman, 2001) and virals as reflections of consumers' identity (Jose-Cabezudo and Camarerero-Izquierdo, 2012; Taylor, Strutton and Thompson, 2012) are also supported. There is disagreement with current research as there was little concern about gender or age (Feroz and Vong, 2014; Arkoudis and Samanta, 2012). Having consumers with high social capital is helpful but some intermediaries with lower social capital know the technical web and where to release content that can spread exponentially, contrary to José-Cabezudo and Camarero-Izquierdo (2012).

8.1 *Sender and Receiver Relationships:*

Three aspects are new from this study, summarised in Figure 8-4 below.
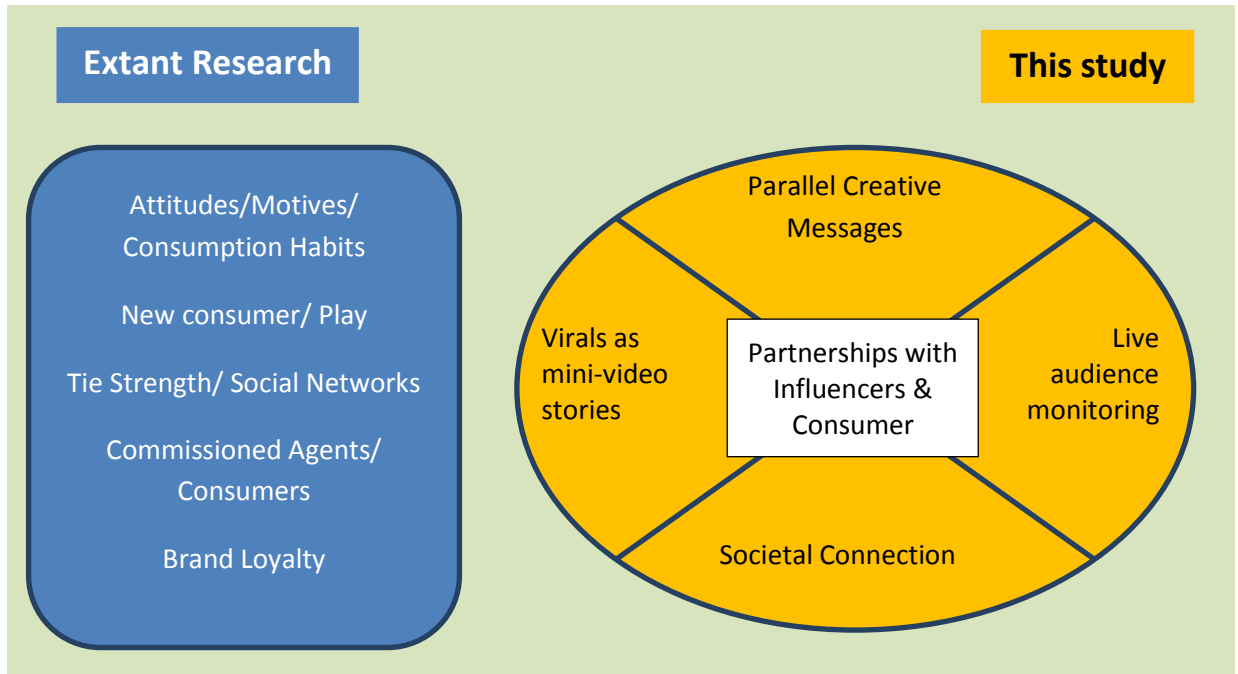
Figure 8-4 Comparison of Extant Customer Behaviour Factors. Source: Raghubansie, 2017

8.2 *Virals: Effects on Agency Teams:*

The second and third key campaign planning effect virals have produced is across agency teams. Virals require flexible, permeable interaction across sections within communications agencies (contrary to Cheong, De Gregorio and Kim, 2010). There is a wider range of people involved compared to the traditional writer/creative director or the creative team – media, creative, planning and account management have to work much more closely and democratically. Contrary to McLeod, O'Donohoe and Townley (2009) the creative department has to cede power and influence to other departments of the agency when developing virals.

The third is the need to connect with a wider network externally. In order to satisfy the diversity of ideas virals require and the innovative application of technological platforms for diffusion there is extensive acquisition of knowledge, particularly for digital creatives. Takemura (2012) only briefly touches on this issue in his study. They

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then have a dual educational imperative for colleagues and clients consistent with the evolutionary view of the creative role developed by Hackley and Tiwsakul (2011).

8.3 *Virals and the Planning Process:*

It is important to note that while virals have brought intensity and diversity, the planning process at its core is essentially intact (Baskin and Pickton, 2003), suggesting that some extant research has exaggerated the arguments for dramatic change. Creative managers consistently show that the essence of the brand's values frame the campaign. This is a powerful finding since clients and agency staff feel beleaguered by escalating technological developments; that they must sign up to the latest fad. Brand characteristics as decision-making metric is comforting territory for managers on both agency and client side.

The recursive process of client briefing, consumer research, creative messaging, discussions, media monitoring and evaluation are actually reinforced by the richness of data provided by digital media and virals. Virals are part of delivering customer-friendly content, good customer service; about creative partnership with skilled intermediaries and consumers.

8.4 *Standard Advertising versus Virals*

The standard model is typically based on delivering a message to a consumer at a time predetermined by the brand. Phenomena such as virals are capable of showing how a more fluid approach can be effective, based on greater respect for consumers.

8.5 *Objectives and Viral Campaign Planning:*

Clarity of objectives as a guiding principle of creative design is supported. It is interesting to note, that while objectives are typically crystallised in this manner in conventional campaigns as an accepted norm, with regard to virals this is not the case. The objective is clearly set at the initial stage but will change as the campaign is developed, launched and its post-launch trajectory becomes clear.

8.6 *Questioning the Core Assumptions*

The paradigm funnel showed no article that specifically questions the assumptions underlying virals. This study does do that, showing the passive and active nature of the metaphors.

8.7 *The "Typical" Digital Agency: a New Model*

There is discussion above about the nature of dedication to the viral concept. Interesting to note, that the virals have typically come from smaller, independent agencies with less finance than the more established holding companies. They also tend to accommodate the creative who works across functions. Among medium-sized to large agencies, the suspicion around digital "outsiders" is still there even while it is expected that digital will become integrated into the normal work of agencies.

Being small or independent, an argument could be made that they produce virals to maximise their resources. In this study, there is more time and funding put into the creative idea (Figure 5.5). This inverts the dominance of media budgets.

Allocation of Resources   Free Platforms

Media Buying

Production

Creative
Team

Production

Media Buying

Creative Team
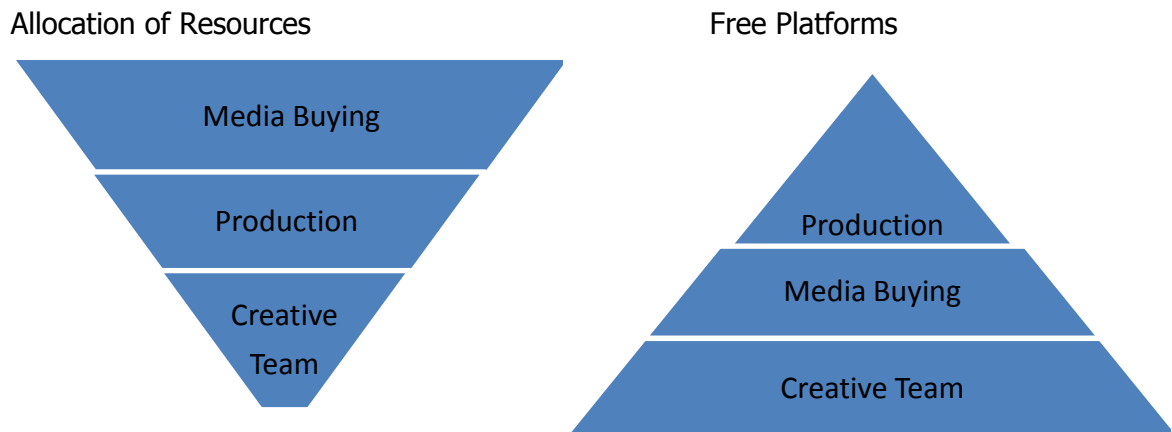
Figure 8-5 Showing shifting funding patterns. Source: Raghubansie, 2017

8.8 *Digital and a New Approach to Ad Testing:*

A similar theme to the funding model above has manifested in the creative process as well (contrary). It is best captured in the commentary of a Creative Director, "In a way, they had reverse engineered. They had thought of doing the online recruitment first; then it finally led to the TV ad".

Traditional Advertising Testing	Virals
Cinema Test groups Consumer research National, regional	Online channels with control, focus groups Multiple online diffusion – social networks, closed consumer groups Worldwide

Table 8-1 Viral Testing Process

8.9 *Digital and Media Buying:*

Much of the media decisions are taken at the campaign pre-launch and launch stages. This study shows that "megabuzz" (following Horovitz, Petrecca and Howard, 2008) is critical to diffusion. In the case of virals, they essentially eliminate the role of agency media buyers, transferring this to intermediaries and then mainly to consumers.

Virals are time efficient, providing a competitor edge. It is very difficult to change virals, so the message is largely preserved despite the channel through which it is transmitted and re-transmitted multiple times. All of this, as a form of eWOM is traceable allowing agile responses very quickly.

8.10 *Virals for Diffusion:*

While no previous study has investigated creative managers' views on how agencies utilise data generated from virals, this study shows that they do recognise the value of diffusion data. They are leveraging influencer networks to place virals in numerous websites at a given time (Zhang et al, 2016; Aral and Walker, 2013). They are interested in diffusion data patterns but also what it says about creative collaboration with consumers. The other insight from this research, contrary to most prior research (e.g. Miles, 2014), intermediaries are not simply reactive but working in a deeper, involved partnership with creative teams.

The ideas of epidemiology in marketing (e.g. virality, contagion) are evident from participants' but the perspectives are not especially focussed on the established themes of infection, pandemics, virulence etc. (Li, Lee and Lien, 2012; Liu-Thompkins, 2012). There is support from the data for the SPEED framework – in particular the aspects of stealth, preparation and exposure.

8.11 *Virals and Product Categories:*

This study does not support the view that particular product categories, such as insurance, medicine, motoring etc. are difficult (Eckler and Rodgers, 2014; Cheong, De Gregorio and Kim, 2010). Southgate, Westoby and Page (2010) were the only ones who did not find that product category was important. It is the creative angle that was adopted for the product that was important – e.g. insurance and the "stories about things left in the car on valentine's night".

8.12 *Technology Currency:*

Within the agency, the need to stay in touch with the latest developments in communications technology is argued by participants. For teams to locate the latest disruptive element, to provide a compelling story, they need to be able to access the latest developments.

8.13 *Limits to Digital Creativity:*

Brand conservatism and fear is common among organisations, placing them in the sanctuary category, making up the majority of firms. The learning ones are those making the transition and those that win are in the release quadrant as they have given over much influence to the consumer. Others are engaging well but still in control where possible.
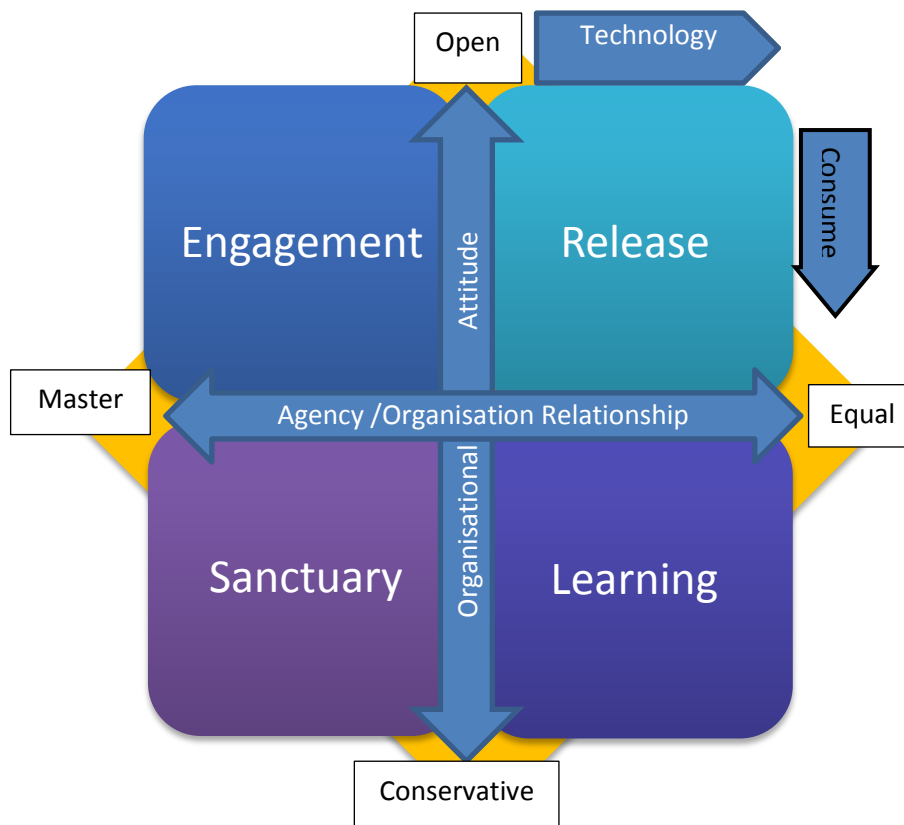
Figure 8-6 A Typology of Organisational Strategies for Virals. Source: Raghubansie, 2017

A model of such organisational conditions supportive of virals is developed below showing three key factors – measurement, learning attitudes and decision-making style. Creative managers take a pragmatic approach to addressing these characteristics – educating, counselling and refusing if needed.
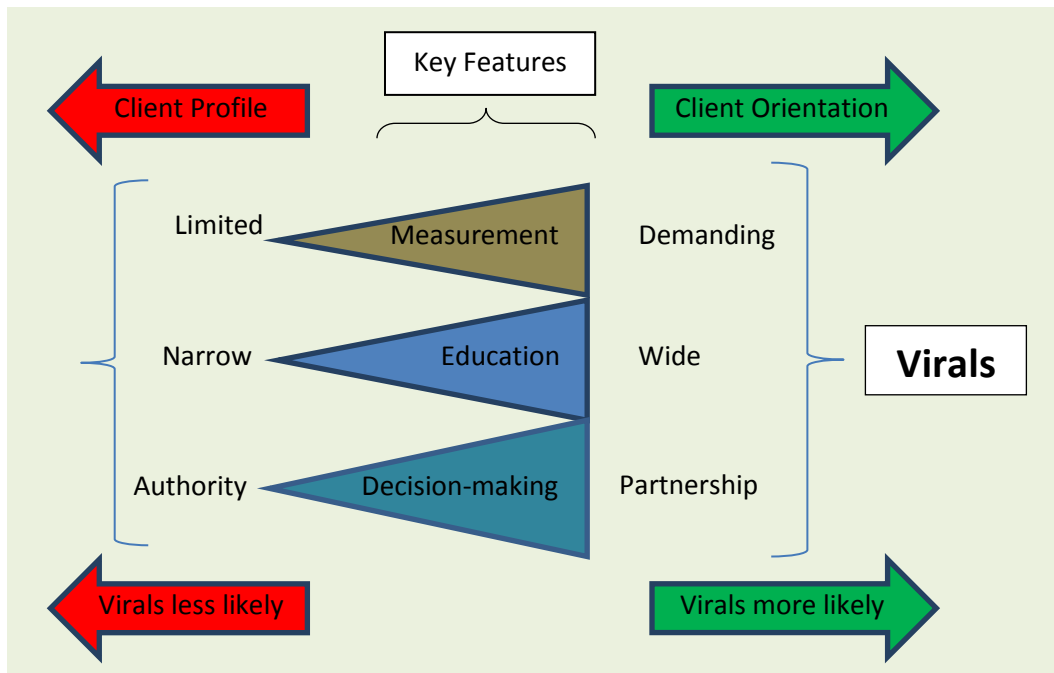
Figure 8-7 Model of Organisational Conditions Conducive to Virals. Source: Raghubansie, 2017

8.14 *Effects of Agency Size and Age:*

The larger, more traditional agencies are growing their capacity; catching up with the smaller, independent agencies in their production of virals. Indeed they have been and are likely to acquire some of the medium and small agencies. It is evident that digital agencies have both a competitor and cooperative relationship with larger more established groups. Agencies are changing from the view that digital has to be a distinct role. It should be integrated into the work of the broad agency offer. It is now being conceived as a "norm", critical not discretionary.

8.15 *7Cs Theoretical Model of Viral Campaign Creative Development: Context and Influences*

Agency teams direct considerable attention to the location and development of an idea which has the potential to "go viral". That has led to shared generation of the campaign across the full agency, in contrast to the conventional power vested in the creative teams. Innovations in campaign development activities, in cross-team relationships and of agency structures has resulted from this change. The search for an engaging concept for the viral creative has noticeably expanded the options available to agency teams, such that multiple campaign options are available pre, during and post campaign for potential development.

The viral creative lead is crucial to the larger life of the agency introducing new ways of working, connecting with external networks, bringing latest thinking to clients and colleagues. Creatives with viral responsibility and digital take a lead role in educating internal and external stakeholders.

8.16 *Chapter Summary:*

This chapter built on the previous three which considered research objective one and two and their related research questions. The data has shown a different model emerging both from a concepting and creative management perspective. From the agency side – objectives, brand values, incorporating responses to individuals, and from a consumer – intelligence, creative ideation that meets their interests, co-production and inexpensive participation opportunities. This study also finds that contrary to some prior research – the core ideation of creative concepts (brand values, objectives, audience research) – remains very much intact.

9 CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS and FURTHER RESEARCH

This final chapter initially discusses the conclusions from this investigation, including the definitive overarching conceptual model (see Figure 9.1). The chapter also sets these against the overall aim, the objectives and the research questions investigated. In doing so, it will also articulate how this investigation into creative managers' views of the impact of virals on their campaign development processes has provided a distinctive contribution to the theoretical understanding of digital and conventional models of campaign creation. It will also illustrate the key insights for managers and researchers. Towards the end the limitations of this research are outlined. These are consistent with limitations typical of exploratory, abductive, semi-structured research in the realist tradition. It will then end by summarising additional areas which merit further research.

9.1 *Summary of Research:*

This aim of this thesis is to generate insight into the wide-ranging impact virals have on advertising campaign planning, management processes and models as seen by the producers of virals. It has been argued that qualitative research does not every time produce a clear end point for an investigation; however, it is important to locate the parameters within which to articulate the applicability of the research conclusions (Creswell and Miller, 2000). This could be argued means that point is when the results become generalizable (Bryman and Bell, 2015). However, following interpretative espitemology, abductive approaches and qualitative procedures, investigators are unable to make potent assertions about explanations of wider population behaviour (Cresswell, 1998). The ontological view of a realist is not to seek such an objective but to produce insight into underlying models, i.e. to frame concepts (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015). This does not mean that conclusive research should not follow; but that the subject should be theorised before evaluating its generalisability across the broader population of interest (Silverman, 2016).

Therefore the focus of this thesis has been to uncover the working models of practitioners as they develop and manage virals, produce conceptual insight and

produce theory which can support academics and managers in their understanding and decision-making. To achieve this research aim, the study satisfies the epistemological, ontological and methodological principles, approaches and procedures harmonise with the realism research paradigm.

The data collection tool is also consonant with these metholodogical decisions, employing semistructured interviews in order to generate rich understanding of the nature of the phenomenon, showing where, how and why various aspects are connected (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). As a consequence of this approach, the study has been able to probe, clarify, follow-up, locate and present the conception of virals among creative managers (Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury, 2013), the creative appeals they consider, how they integrate insight into brands and consumers, the nature of influence that digital platforms have in the design process and the ways in which agencies are managing disruptive phenomenon across the conventional roles. This perspective is absent from current research within the UK, set against a background of a long recession and dramatic change in media technology and forms of marketing communications. The context is particularly important in considering the relevance of this study and the conclusions therein (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Besides, in assessing the quality of this investigation, such context is essential to evaluate contingent validity (Healy and Perry, 2000), which is pertinent compared to conventional internal validity (Creswell and Miller, 2000). The former is about generative instruments set in the context of factors operating in that particular situation (Bell and Bryman, 2015). Following from the research methods argued, data analysis process justified, the subsequent coding framework and analysis it is evident that this research has investigated viral phenomenon within particular environments (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Langley, 1999). It is therefore appropriate to assess these conclusions by this quality benchmark (Mays and Pope, 2000).

Following from the discussions above, virals are conceptualised, the advertising campaign process for virals theorised and set against extant models (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015). From the philosophical paradigm underlying this study, the purpose of these constructs is to develop principles and codify these such that current knowledge is extended but also that further applications can be made from them (Silverman, 2016). In other words, the proposed frameworks do not reflect a

discovered "truth" but an exploratory construction of reality as construed by participants in their own contexts (Corbin and Strauss, 2014).

These theoretical constructs are the end product of this specific investigation (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). As such, it is the final boundary of the study, an appropriate point of conclusion (Rowley, 2012). However, it does demonstrate that the study has achieved what it set out to do – to produce theoretical enhancements that extend current understanding of virals. As such at this point, the researcher began to develop explanatory and more deductive outputs (Mays and Pope, 2000).

9.1.1 Summary of Research Objectives and Process:

It is relevant at this point to recap the research process before summarising the results yielded. The subject of study required attention, given its high visibility and potential value to business. The study began with a review of the current work – 1) background of the subject, 2) the current theoretical constructs and 3) the extant research into the topic. The background was necessary as there is a complex and confusing set of phenomena which are as yet lacking in clarity and distinction; i.e. to clarify what was the scope of the issue being investigated (Nairn, Berthon and Money, 2007; Boote and Beile, 2005). The outcome of that was a narrower focus but also a discovery that the two core areas underpinning the topic – epidemiology and marketing in this context – were themselves lacking clarity of definition (El-Gohary, 2010). Finally, a comprehensive state of the art review was conducted to identify the main strands within the conceptual and empirical research on virals (Breazeale, 2009). From these three evaluations, the research gap was identified; the research aim, objectives and questions were developed (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015; Berthon, Nairn and Money, 2003).

9.1.2 Research objectives:

RO 1: To capture and codify the views of creative managers on the concepts and messaging strategies considered and implemented in viral marketing campaigns

Questions related to RO2:
How and why do creative managers' conceive of their practices in the way they do?
How do they construct virals and what are the implications for current models?

RO 2: To explicate, classify and explore the changes in advertising campaign planning processes and roles which digital phenomena such as viral marketing have introduced

Questions related to RO2:
- What is the nature of the changing role of advertising creative intermediaries resulting from digital marketing phenomena such as virals? Why in this way?
- What are the barriers and constraints which creative managers encounter and why and how are creative teams evolving solutions?
- Most digital advertising agencies are small or medium-sized enterprises and tend to be independent, how are they managing the speed of technological and industry changes and why is in the manner in which they do?

RO 3: To develop theoretical models for understanding viral campaigns, agency management, creative roles in campaign planning and extend extant frameworks

Questions related to RO3:
- What are the established models of advertising campaign management, creative development and planning?
- How and why are these extant concepts changing based on the viral campaigns? How and why are there new aspects emerging based on the empirical data in this study?

9.2 *Summary of Analysis Process:*

The aim and objectives unify the study. The methodology chosen was qualitative employing semi-structured interviews as noted above. This was appropriate as the creative perspective on virals is under-theorised; the concepts underpinning the phenomenon had not been examined within the context of the advertising creative production (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Virals also represent a relatively new, modern and dynamic phenomenon, operating in marketing communications agency environment that is often a live campaign. These characteristics are more suited to less structured tools of investigation (Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury, 2013).

The research design is reinforced by advertising campaign development theory and current conceptions of virals, as did the interview schedule (Yin, 2015). The empirical data was collected from participants across a range of organisations which reflected the types of agencies involved in the development of viral campaigns (Morse et al, 2002). They were selected as they provided the lived context in which the phenomenon is based (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). The interviews followed a pattern of theoretical sampling (Corbin and Strauss, 2014).

Data was collected from 12 semi-structured interviews with heads of digital, creative directors in a range of agencies across the UK, producing a large data set exceeding 72,000 words. It was collected sequentially over an extended period of time allowing the researcher to progressively assess the main idea, codes, patterns and themes emerging from the text, evaluated in this study as a substitute to understand their experiences (the subject of much of the analysis and discussion and coding framework chapters) following Ryan and Bernard (2003).

Following an abductive thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012), the unit of analysis was the campaign development process employed by creative managers. The data was analysed using Word and Excel. The initial processing of the data was based on current ideas from the literature (role of social media, influencers and viral characteristics) (Saldana, 2009). Codes were proposed, clarified by further data collection, then elucidated further into patterns, themes and sub-themes forming the main constructs to understand the design and development for virals (Boyatzis, 1998). The analysis shows multiple patterns in the data set, including overarching

themes but also sub themes which produce deep insight (Walker and Myrick, 2006) into how virals are conceived but also details of ideation tests, creative management decisions, media influence and brand attitudes to this particular marketing communications tool.

These insights have been developed by analysing each interview with creative directors and heads of digital individually, followed by identification of codes, defining these, summarising the core ideas, then progressing to explore further in the next data collection event (Jones and Alony, 2011). Within-interview analysis was undertaken individually, and then compared to those before to advance the quality of insight being produced into the social, cultural and creative setting in which virals are created (Cresswell, 2013). Reflexively, there were iterative analyses, thereby constructing a more profound, fuller depiction of how virals are developed by agencies (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). Such an exploratory approach continued recursively across all events until it was becoming clear that there were fewer and fewer new codes emerging (Corbin and Strauss, 2014).

In each transcript is an initial processing summary prepared after the first point of reviewing the data and researcher reflections (Saldana, 2009). The next heading is a summary of the key ideas and then a table showing word count, codes and new codes for all transcripts (see Appendix Transcripts). Below that is a table with the list of codes in respective order, their definitions, notes and analysis, then the transcript itself showing the sections of text and codes related to the relevant text unit/quote. As interviews progressed, codes were merged, some deleted and further defined for a more accurate reflection of the participant views about the subject of investigation (Silverman, 2016).

Further cross-interview evaluation was then conducted across all the 12 data sets to generate axial codes, finetuning the insight into initial constructs, to produce additional findings, generating twelve major patterns (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). These were then further refined to produce the main constructs which structure the analysis (Mays and Pope, 2000). These are closely related to the data using quotations and relevant cases (Morse et al, 2002). Consistent with qualitative analysis process, worksheets and matrices were produced to manage the volume of data but also to make sense and to examine relationships which explain the phenomenon (Guest, MacQueen and Namey,

2012). It allowed further development of theoretical insights, and enhancements to current propositions (Garcia et al, 2009). As a result, some of the findings begin to emerge and are discussed (Creswell and Miller, 2000). In other words, the thematic constructs are refined and authenticated using the data set (Healy and Perry, 2000). In summary, the results allow the construction of models and theoretical constructs which generate insight into how agencies create viral campaigns.

To summarise, this thesis has met the research aim using qualitative methods, in particular semi-structured interviews following a realist philosophy. Across the entire study, the researcher has followed and reflexively referenced the criteria outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994) to ensure the quality of the project. The guidelines of Creswell (1998) and of Corbin and Strauss (2014) were followed to ensure processes were consistent.

9.3 *Conclusions:*

This research confirms virals as a unique form of marketing communications connecting conventional and digital. The creative, organisational and learning insights found provide new opportunities and challenges for agencies.

Following on from the preceeding chapters in this thesis, the creative design and management models are presented in a Culumative Theoretical Construct for the Creative Design and Management of Viral Campaigns (Figure 9-1). Given the philosophic background of this study is based on realism; the construct integrates new insights and established ideas. It is not intended to be an absolute truth but a close relationship to the reality as expressed by participants in this study.

This final model intends to show influence and core considerations from a cross campaign view (strategic antecedents influencing campaigns – areas that help construct a creative strategy such as customer behaviour, the sender brand values, the taxonomy of diffusion channels). Given the iterative nature of viral design, it is not chronological but illustrates how each aspect of the model supports/obstructs the others covering broad agency characteristics, to cross-campaign issues and micro-level creative decision-making. All of these connect to the research aim, objectives and to the prior analyses, essentially merging models developed from the data into a cohesive whole. It is the culmination of this study and a natural closure to this investigation. It also produces what the study intended to uncover – theoretical working models, novel and extending prior established concepts.

In the encoding stage, the creative antecedents for viral campaign development are outlined as found in this research. Two agency organisational concerns – management and planning; then two creative design areas of activity – creative messages and creative ideation, are brought together to capture the full concerns of this study – creative decision-making processes and emerging agency campaign management models. Therefore, this final theoretical construct achieves the study objectives.

Pre-launch Phase of Viral Creative Design

Strategic Antecedents Influencing Viral Campaigns

Customer Behaviour: - Live Intelligence, Pre, During, Post-launch

Sender Brand: - Heritage, Attitude, Work-model, Learning

Channels for Diffusion: - Influencers, Technology, Taxonomy

Encoder Creative

Management | Planning | Creative Messages | Creative Ideation Criteria

Brand/ Agency Domain

CD/Writer — Creative Model — Bespoke
Big — Size — Small
Group — Ownership — Independent
Centralised — Location — Dispersed
Fixed — Teams — Porous
Narrow — Learning Role — Wide

Unsure — Objective — Clear
Medium — Customer Insight — High
Control — Media — Low
Low — Influencers — High
Narrow — Digital Creative Role — Wide

Appeal
Technology
Consistency
Imaginarium
Multiple
No end
Freedom

Brand value fit
Shared social denominator
Compelling
Disruptive
Talkability
Value – Emotion/Info
Platform friendly

VIRALS

Creative Antecedents for Viral Campaign Development

Figure 9-1 Cumulative Theoretical Construct for the Creative Design and Management of Viral Campaigns. Source: Raghubansie, 2017

9.4 *Positioning the Research:*

Extant Research	This Study
No representation of creative managers	Sample of managers from large, medium, small, global, local, old, new, group based and independent
Consumer oriented (B2C)	Managerial and brand perspective (B2B)
Dominated by artefact content analysis and computer simulations	Empirically grounded
Narrow focus on diffusion planning	Broader Campaign planning including diffusion
Computing and engineering perspectives focus on manipulating platforms	Creative and advertising perspective examining the role of people
One study identified with a related investigation and this is in Turkey (Gecti and Dastan, 2013).	Focus on the UK Advertising Industry: - The UK advertising industry is one of the most important in the world.
Dominated by questions of how many and what	Why and how
Mainly quantitative, conclusive (secondary data)	Exploratory, qualitative (primary data)
Dominated by social network and consumer behaviour theory	Theory discovery, building on communications and advertising models
Conceptions based on post-launch outputs	Conceptualised at pre-launch phase and during/post

Table 9-1 This Research Compared to PriorWork

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9.5 *Contribution of the Study:*

As observed in the table above which positions this study in relation to prior work, in its conception, there are distinctive features relative to exisiting knowledge. This thesis has captured and codified conceptual constructs which fill gaps in the literature, allowing academics and managers to understand how viral campaigns are developed.

Theoretical Model:

In the final Cumulative Theoretical Construct for the Creative Design and Management of Viral Campaigns (Figure 9-1) is an overarching conceptual contribution which for the first time represents agency management, brand and creative considerations at both the pre and post-launch campaign phases. In addition, this research has a range of distinguishing features which evidence a contribution to knowledge.

Contribution to the Field of Marketing Communications:

In representing voices absent from the current research different perspectives lead to the development of specific constructs which produce new insight into particular aspects of virals, which led into the final model:
- from producers of virals addressing pre, during and post launch factors a definition that substantially enhances current understanding of the concept
- comparative model of conventional and viral campaigns illustrating differences
- zone construct of viral campaign design articulating the three main stages of creative decision-making
- a model of critical factors favourable to virals
- characteristics of agencies which produce such campaigns
- model of the changing nature of relationships with agencies
- a viral creative role construct demonstrating how professional responsibilities have evolved
- creative appeals underpinning virals, significantly departing from extant work

Extending Current Research:

The study has illuminated and enhanced the accuracy of a range of terms which are competing with each other, have specific differences and often used incorrectly as substitutes – stealth marketing, buzz marketing, undercover marketing etc. including clarifying for the first time a distinct definition of viral marketing based on prior research.

Developed the SPEED framework to extend insight into the biological characteristics to which campaign success have been attributed.

Given the lack of research which questions the deep assumptions on which the phenomenon is based, this study undertakes an evaluation of the root metaphors underpinning the phenomena, producing a more accurate and comprehensive conceptualisation.

Data as live: most of the current research suggests that data be used to identify influencers, to determine budgets, to locate network dynamics but in this study, it was important for all these points but more relevant to identify opportunities to co-create with the consumer/intermediary.

Specific factors:

- Creative Appeals – Role of Emotion: extant literature suggests that these, in particular risqué, comedic violence, edgy emotions are the dominant appeals. However, this study shows that it is not the case – it is the unique employment of a disruptive, socially connecting appeal that makes a creative idea attractive to creative managers and emotion is one of those.
- Consumer power – the research supports much of the prior work which showed that identity, ego, influence, play, entertainment, co-production etc. are key aspects for consumer engagement with virals.
- Role of intermediaries: demonstrates that extant work fails to acknowledge the active nature of the relationship between and among agencies and influencers. It is much more than a distribution role but of partnership and satisfaction of mutual interests.

Challenging Advertising Campaign Planning Models:

Traditional conceptions of communications agencies, creative teams, agency management and the basic communications model have been challenged by the findings from this study. The dominant linear campaign development process is more like a helix and spiral model. There is room for entry, exit and re-entry for consumers – randomness and future campaign divergence (anticipated and serendpitous). In other words, the campaign is co-produced with the audience; taking unpredicted directions. The teams which produce advertising are no longer within their precincts, but operate across agency departments.

Methodological Contributions:

The utilisation of the paradigm funnel to evaluate the canon has tested and extended the adoption of a more rigorous, structured approach to locate gaps at several levels of the research subject.

Qualitative – the extant research is skewed towards simulations, quantitative content analysis and surveys – this study explores questions not just of what but of why, producing deeper insight than available before. Business and marketing are dominated by the positivist paradigm. Given the current speed of change, particularly in the digital technologies, there is a need for deeper understanding of such phenomena and to more closely observe how new models of working are emerging. This thesis has extended the realist qualitative approach.

Originality of the research design – across the range of creative functions within an agency at the pre-launch phase. The involvement of a range of creative roles has produced results applicable to the full campaign design process – from consumer, computing diffusion, creative and artefact production. In the extant research there is 1 notable exception in Cruz and Fill, (2008). However, their paper concentrates on measurement.

Video – the use of video recording for the data collection was a valuable decision supporting memory recall, reflexivity, context assessment and a richness of detail.

The work represented in this thesis forms a base for other researchers to move forward.

9.6 *Managerial Implications:*

How is the sender and receiver relationship changing in response to viral advertising? The sender/receiver relationship continues to be the fundamental base of communication theory. It has been changing as media technology has evolved, especially so since the World Wide Web and peer-peer websites have become established. Virals as a cross media phenomenon (both "old" TV and "new" online) paints a picture of the minutae of changing practices in campaign creation. Juxtaposed to normative modes, the receiver is prominent pre, during and post launch; reflexive to audience content consumption, often synchronously.

How are media channels affecting creative decisions?

Virals use different delivery means, is time efficient, has different consumer trends, is cheaper and generates data to monitor and change media choices. With virals, sharers replace the media buyer. As noted above, current media buying is in mortal peril. Finally, data is voluminous and consistently available across all phases of campaign development. This is both an advantage and a management problem.

How is the role of influencers in viral advertising affecting the campaign development process?

Having looked at the actual diffusion behaviour of viral influencers, prior research models them as receptors employed by agencies. This study, taking a deeper look at the how and why they do engage, provides a more complex picture. It is an active relationship where influencers and agencies operate as partners, influencing each other. Their objectives are based on mutality for agency, brand and influencer. Otherwise, it tends to fail.

9.7 *Limitations of the Research:*

There are various limitations to this research, like all qualitative studies it does not provide representativeness but that was not its purpose. Consistent with other exploratory studies and the state of research into this phenomenon, the aim is to develop conceptual insight. It is based on empirical data which can develop theory for future substantiation studies. There are a number of issues:

1. As a cross-sectional, qualitative research, it is exploratory in nature and so the results are indicative in situ. Therefore generalisation is not possible. However, this type of research produces insight into thought processes and conventions of practice, the main focus of this study. This research clarifies composite models of how these managers conceive of their own realities. Consequently, there are conclusions that are the foundations of future investigations.

2. Participants come from Coventry, Exeter, London, Staffordshire, not showing the complete picture of the entire country, even London acoounts for more than 80% of agencies.

3. The research concentrated on one function in the agencies but other departments may reveal contradictory perspectives or bring a different meaning on the same issue offered now.

4. Virals, observed as the most "extreme" (relative to mass impact and return on investment) and bridging a gap to "old" TV; it is a particular example among a range of new digital creative forms.

5. Qualitative data sets are large and in this case more than 80,000+ words, consume substantial time to manage, to organise but this means that the data receives careful and extensive consideration. There is a risk of more errors but also openings for both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Findings may be extracted outside what the data contains. This investigation however, has some prior theoretical frameworks arising from research that have been used to inform the decisions taken.

6. Treatment of the data can be reductive; however, qualitative faciltates intimacy with the text exploring initial concepts and interactions among them.

7. The environment of the study might be overlooked, despite its importance in sense-making. In this research, the situation is indispensable to understanding the how agency teams and roles are mutable, the context in which creative artefacts develop.

8. Employing computers to process such volumes of data is demanding; however, it is a ready tool to manage a range of analytical approaches.

9.8 *Future Areas for Investigation:*

From this study, we now have a picture of both pre, during and post launch phases of designing and managing viral campaigns. This comprehensive view can now be further extended, tested and evaluated for further clarification.

This study develops ideation tests and a range of models for virals which can be further explored in narrower studies.

Further investigation of how digital media is informing creative design.

This research collected views from the intermediaries in the creative process; there is scope for brand owners but also still for consumers' views.

Explore the new "partnership" model for intermediaries, including the linkage to public relations.

The learning aspect of digital is open to new research opportunities. There is clearly tension among and between teams.

The co-creative approach is evidence of interactive relationships with customers. Further research into how this affects creative decisions is important.

The sample could be expanded to include a wider range of participants and geographical coverage. The research methods chapter illustrated the problems of participant recruitment, so quantitative study is challenging with such a time-poor population. A possibility is access through professional events and associations where survey research can be implemented.

The argument that digital will be "part of the furniture" suggests that capabilities are being integrated. So, how is this influencing agency roles across teams?

How are the industry networks changing to meet this new context?

How are agencies owned by large holding groups continuing to operate like independents and the effectiveness of this?

9.9 *Chapter Summary:*

This final chapter set out the conclusions, the contributions to knowledge that this study makes and the managerial implications. The research has generated insight into the challenge that virals have for the basic advertising campaign planning models, reinventing them, the management processes across roles and teams and the creative appeals which are used to construct the idea at the heart of virals. It has provided managers with a clearer definition and fuller understanding of the phenomenon, models for commissioning agencies for such work, typologies for assessing their own readiness and strategies which match their own values and characteristics.

The boundaries of this investigation are then discussed, noting the limitations of its design and its findings. It is essential to contextualise the research in order that the conclusions and implications are not taken beyond what is intended, linked to the study aim and the research objectives. It is one step in the production of knowledge and therefore the final section set out avenues for further research. At the macro level, there is a range of of issues which merit further investigation and corroboration of the findings. The concepts and models arising from the data analysis and the final theoretical construct require additional testing for future development.

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