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Marketing of fast moving consumer goods
– A study of viral videos with forest-related products

Konsumentmarknadsföring av dagligvaruprodukter
– *En studie av virala videofilmer om hygienpapper*

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Master Thesis, 30 ECTS credit
MSc in Forestry 11/16

Advanced level in Forest Management
(EX0753)

Supervisor SLU, Department of Forest Products: Cecilia Mark-Herbert
Examiner SLU, Department of Forest Products: Anders Roos

Abstract

The traditional forest industry is facing a change. Not only is the forest industry changing, also the world is changing in terms of threats of the implementation of new trade barriers and how companies are using marketing. Viral marketing is one of the new marketing tools that could be a solution for strengthening customers' weak connection to the forest sector's products and their brands. This study aimed to identify content characteristics that could be useful for the forest industry in this new way of conducting marketing: viral videos. Three viral video ads were used as the study's unit of analysis. From that, data was originated through two types of interviews. Thereafter, the collected information was analysed with a constant comparative analysis. The results showed that many attributes were present in the different viral videos. Finally, the study was able to conclude that multiple content characteristics were present in the viral video ads for low-involvement forest-related products that became viral.

Keywords: Brand, Branding, Facebook, Low-involvement, Social Media, YouTube

Sammanfattning

Den traditionella skogsindustrin står inför en förändring och den är inte ensam. Världen är under förändring vilket medför hot om nya handelshinder och hur företag använder marknadsföring. Viral marknadsföring är ett av de nya marknadsföringssätten och kan vara en lösning på hur man kan stärka kundernas svaga koppling mellan skogssektorns produkter och varumärken. Denna studie hade för avsikt att identifiera egenskaper i virala videos som kan vara användbara för skogsindustrin i den nya marknadsföringen. Tre virala videoannonser användes som studiens analysenhet. Videoannonserna verkade sedan som stimuli i två olika typer av intervjuer. Informationen som erhöles under intervjuerna analyserades sedan med konstant jämförelse analys. Resultaten av studien visade på att många attribut var närvarande i de olika virala videoannonserna. Slutsatsen ifrån denna studie var att flertalet egenskaper var närvarande i de virala videoannonserna för low-involvement skogsrelaterade produkter som blev virala.

***Nyckelord:** kommunikation, konsument, skogsindustri, sociala medier, toalettpapper, varumärke, varumärkesutveckling, YouTube*

Acknowledgements

Life has its ups and downs and so has the process of writing this thesis. It has felt great and it has felt terrible, but finally I reached the goal. I have finalized the thesis you are holding in your hands, but also the last part of my degree. I would like to show my appreciation to all the people who have believed in me and pushed me along the way. Thanks to all my nearest, who have supported me when needed, you know how you are. I would also like to say thanks to my supervisor and the respondents, who all have been key players and without you, I would never have been able to write this thesis.

Let the positive in life keep coming and if there is negativity keep it to the minimum and work your way through it. Smile at life and it will smile back at you.

Enjoy the reading.

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1 Introduction

The forestry industry is seen as bound to traditions and it is managed in a conservative way (Lagergren, 2016, p. 33). This means that forest corporations change slowly. Historically the industry has been more “...*reactive rather than proactive*” in its actions with reference to its response toward the environment and with that also their marketing according to Hansen & Juslin (2005, p. 194). In addition, this indicates that the industry as such changes slowly.

A traditional marketing strategy for forestry industry corporations has been based on managing resources in an efficient way, assuming a product dominant logic. In this logic, marketing communication is for the most part a one-way process, where corporations provide information to various stakeholders. During a one-way process, the information is transmitted in a linear way. Liu & Shrum (2002) describes that the sender, for instance a company, is active and the receiver, for instance a customer, is passive during a one-way communication. Traditional media, such as print, television, and radio uses a one-way communication (Liu & Shrum, 2002; Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

A more modern view of marketing, assumes a different role for consumers and a one-way communication is today (2017) not the only way for companies to get their messages out to their customers. The information and communication technology (ICT) is evolving in a fast pace especially in the recent years (Hetemäki & Nilsson, 2005; Erragcha & Romdhane, 2014). ICT refers to different ways to communicate information, for instance through radio, newspapers, television, Internet, and mobile phones (Hetemäki & Nilsson, 2005; Hetemäki *et al.* 2005). This has implied that the customers have been given more active roles as they can from here and onwards take part in the communication and influence it (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Erragcha & Romdhane, 2014). Customers have become active participants in the more modern marketing; a dialogue between different customers, the company, and other stakeholder groups have become possible due to the evolved ICT.

The changes in the communication possibilities are opening up for an evolvement of marketing for the forest sector, which is transitioning from production-oriented to becoming more market-oriented (Ince *et al.*, 2005; Baudin *et al.*, 2005). This also influences other strategic decisions, a change of the focus, from volume and cost/price, which has been in the forest industry during a long time to a broader view of “value creation”. The focus should now include more stakeholder views and value dimensions; according to Hansen (2010), it should include customers and competitors.

When communication, changes from one-way to a dialogue, new people might get interested and in itself that will affect what focus a company should have. If one customer leads the dialogue towards an environmental direction, it will attract people for instance environmentalists. A new group of people that have previously not been seen as the company’s stakeholders can be attracted.

The new stakeholders and the old ones can through the dialogue, which the ICT have made possible, exchange information that might result in new customer groups, changed preferences, product development, and improved or different sales/distribution channels. The value of a company’s communication thereby attracts focus as it can provide valuable knowledge.

1.1 Problem background

The world is changing and not only the ICT is evolving, the world trade might be standing for a shift back in time. During years, the trade barriers have been decreasing, due to different trade and joint market agreements, for instance NAFTA, EU, and ASEAN. Threats of new trade barriers are today present after UK's Brexit election results in 2016 (Hatzigeorgiou & Lodefalk, 2016) and politics in the U.S. threatening to put a border tax of 20 percent (Nilsson, 2017) on goods exported to them. These trade disturbances put pressure on the forest sector that has had a focus on volume and price. With an increase of 20 percent of the price, a difficulty appears to compete on price. How is the forest sector going to overcome this obstacle?

New marketing communication that makes the consumers active can be a solution to the obstacle. To have active consumers could influence the relationship between the customers and the companies (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2010). A co-creation of value can then be achieved (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). If this happens, it can lead to less emphasis on the price of the physical product.

“If goods are less substitutable, consumers are willing to buy foreign varieties even at a higher cost” (Chaney, 2008, p. 1707). Through co-creation of value, customers and companies can achieve products that are less substitutable. Trade barriers will then not become an obstacle in the same way, since customers will continue to buy the products.

One thing that is vital and actually the key for success in the more modern marketing is that the people are aware of the companies. Without that, there will not be any activity at all. The ICT has evolved so much that information, known as for instance cookies, is saved on a person's device when he/she is online. The cookies help marketers to understand the person, who has been online through different algorithms that analyses the person's interests (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011). For instance, if a person is searching on houses and looks at houses constructed in concrete, the algorithms understand that houses is the main thing and marketers can then market houses to the person constructed in other materials as wood or something else.

This kind of marketing that finds the right people to target at any time is possible to do through the new media. Thereby, it has caused the use of traditional media to decrease (Ingram, 2015). The new media is also known as digital media and is *“...media that publish or diffuse information in digital formats”* (Truong *et al.*, 2010, p. 711). Social media is a part of the digital media and it has millions of active users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The change of marketing and the use of social media open up for new ways to evaluate the successfulness of marketing (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). If the company looked at increased/decreased sales and new orders when they used traditional marketing, they should now broaden their focus and look at other parameters. According to Hoffman & Fodor (2010), that means a shift from just short-term to long-term goals. On social media people can like, follow, comment, share or watch videos. This should be a part of the evaluation of success; it might even be a thing to look at for new ideas, for instance product development and distribution channels that the company can use that has come from the active customer in the more modern marketing communication.

Millions of people use social media (Statista, 2017) and the users belongs to many age groups (Greenwood *et al.* 2011), it means that there are a vastly amount of information that is being shared in virtually uncontrollable ways. A video-sharing site such as YouTube is a social media. Today, we upload hours of videos on Internet every minute, on YouTube, 300 hours per minute (Statistic Brain, 2016). Even though algorithms can pick out the right people from all users online and tell the marketers whom they should target, the actual market message must have something that hooks the people so they see it. This makes it hard for companies, because how are they going to stick out from the rest, so we watch their marketing message, for example their videos instead of other video content.

1.2 Problem

The problem for the forest sector in the changing world is their customers' weak connection between their products and brands (Fischer *et al.* 2010). A lot of the forest sector's products are so called low-involvement products¹. A comparison can be made with a different sector, drinks; soft drinks are also low-involvement products. During the 1800s in the U.S., there were no big brands in the soft drinks industry. This changed as Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola became two big brands that during 1900s had about three quarters of the market together. Branding is a part of the explanation why the two brands became big (Michman & Mazze, 1998). This example illustrates how important branding is for low-involvement products. If one or a couple of brands in the forest sector takes over market shares, it will influence other companies. It means that branding of the forest sector's products that are low-involvement products is crucial, especially if trade barriers will impact prices. Today, the forest sector is mainly using traditional media to improve their branding. The ICT; however, has given new tools to improve branding. Social media platforms are a way to reach the customers, but how shall the forest sector shape their marketing so it gets proliferation by itself, viral? Viral marketing² could be a way.

Viral marketing differs from traditional marketing. It is a term that originates from the 90s (Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011). It is a phenomenon where communication is conducted on devices connected to Internet with brand building as one of the objectives (Ho & Dempsey, 2010). Scholars have since the new term and the continuous development of Internet made different academic contributions with managerial impacts. They have found that it is a form of marketing with less control compared to traditional and the control differs in three aspects; content, timing, and frequency (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Success of viral marketing depends on many factors. Researches on viral marketing have identified factors that can have an impact of the success of the viral marketing, some of these factors are presented in Table 1.

¹ Low-involvement products are products purchased intuitively. A closer definition is provided in chapter 3.2.1.

² Viral marketing is a marketing form that uses the new media to communicate with customers. A closer definition is provided in chapter 3.3.1.

Table 1. Researches on viral marketing have identified factors like

Factors	Scholars
<i>Seeding</i>	Hinz <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Ho & Dempsey, 2010; Schulze <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011; Ketelaar <i>et al.</i> , 2016
<i>Positive/negative content</i>	Berger & Milkman, 2012; Guadagno <i>et al.</i> , 2013
<i>Memorable</i>	Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Söderbäck & Tedebo, 2014
<i>Interesting</i>	Berger & Milkman, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Söderbäck & Tedebo, 2014
<i>Emotions</i>	Berger & Milkman, 2012; Dafonte-Gómez, 2014; Guadagno <i>et al.</i> , 2013
<i>Useful content</i>	Berger & Milkman, 2012

There is a knowledge gap; there has been research on viral marketing in general, but there is a gap related to how low- or high-involvement products can take advantage of viral marketing. Huang *et al.* (2013) have also pointed out that there is a need to study if there is a difference between industries and their low- versus high-involvement products. Ketelaar *et al.* (2016) suggested future research into content characteristics. To my knowledge, there has not been any research on viral marketing for low-involvement forest-related products. That means there is a knowledge gap, which I see a need to study and contribute to, so that the forest sector can improve its marketing.

1.3 Aim

The aim of this research project is to identify content characteristics, which gives potential for viral marketing of low-involvement forest-related products. To fulfil the aim two research questions have been constructed:

- What does the literature say about which factors that decide viral potential?
- What attribute/attributes does a low-involvement forest-related product viral video ad have, which can give it viral potential?

1.4 Delimitations

The research project focuses on cheap forest-related products that are used in everyday life. Since, low-involvement products can be included in different products groups, for instance building material, sanitary products or writing material, the unit of analysis has to belong to the same product group. This being said, there should not occur any conflicts concerning comparison made between how different forest-related products have been marketed. The product that will be in focus in this study is therefore toilet paper. Many people use this very common product and that is why it has been chosen.

This study does not look at the impacts viral marketing has on the increases or decreases of sales. Reason why is that sales data in many cases is seen as business secrets. To gain access to business secrets would be hard and would be seen as a requirement for evaluating the sales fluctuations.

The study focuses on content characteristics in viral video ads and do not look at seeding strategies that is known to affect whether a video ad becomes viral. For instance, the effects it may have to release video ads on different platforms or by famous celebrities. In this study, we assume it is the same, but understand that there might be differences depending on for instance amount of users and popularity of the different platforms as for example YouTube, Vimeo, and Facebook. This delimitation also means that comments and other things, for

instance, text or images that might be connected to the video ads will not be a part of this study, but as mention with the platforms, it might have had an influence on why a video became viral.

1.5 Outline

With the intention to help the reader, the outline of the thesis is illustrated in Figure 1. The thesis consists of ten parts and below Figure 1 is a short description of each part presented to help the reader to understand what to expect to find in the various sections.

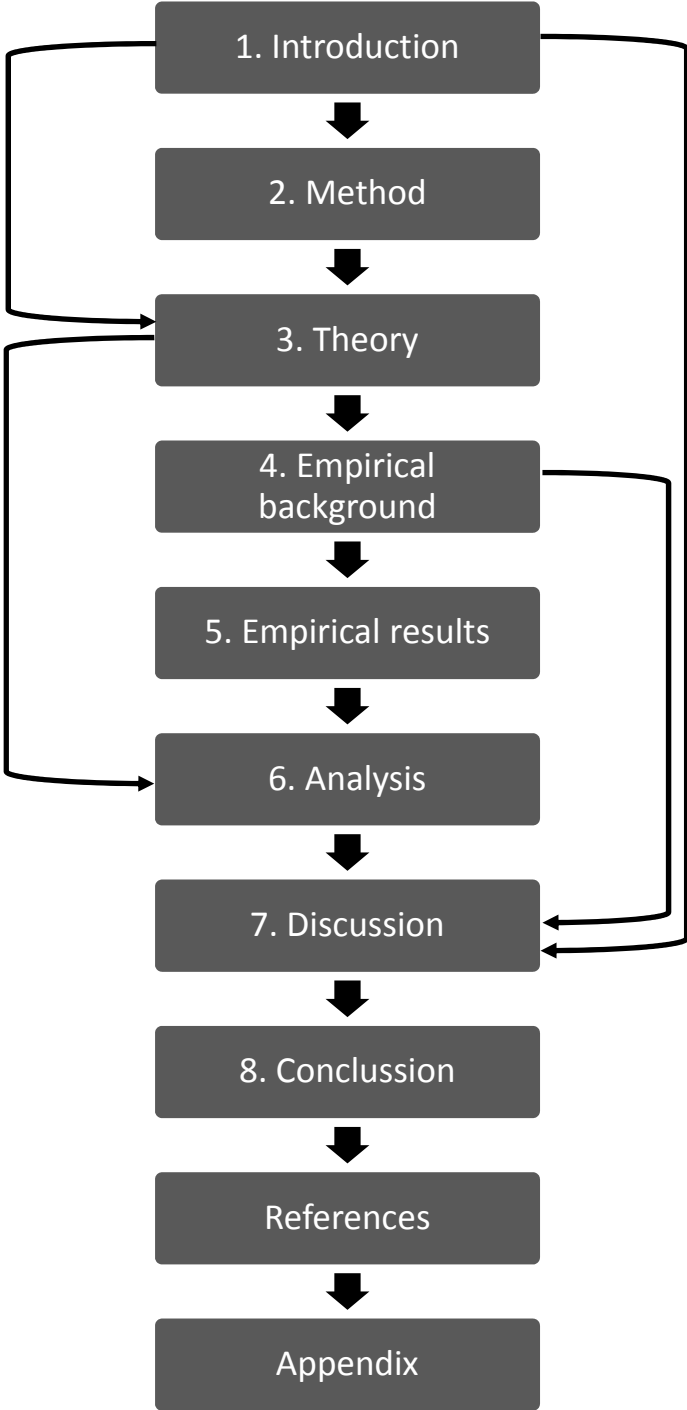


Figure 1. Illustration of the outline of the study.

1. *Introduction* describes why it has been found interesting to study the chosen area and the background to the problem that has been located. The study's aim, research questions, and delimitations are also located here. To attain total understanding of this part, the part 3. *Theory* increases the understanding of some terms.

2. *Method* presents different choices that have been present when the study was conducted. Choices concerning research design, methods of both data collection and data analysis, and what quality assurance the choices have meant and been worked with.

3. *Theory* includes terms and theoretical concepts that end up in the study's conceptual framework. The conceptual framework is used during the analysis and helps to structure parts of the information in 6. *Analysis*.

4. *Empirical background* consists of previous studies on viral marketing, which shows how and what that have been researched. The studies presented are then used as discussion partners in the discussion chapter.

5. *Empirical results* consist of data that have been collected for the study. The data is divided in three parts. First, the unit of analysis, followed by the focus groups and ends with the individual interviews.

6. *Analysis* offers the collected data in a processed form, the data has been analysed. The processed data is presented in an approach to ease the connection to the study's aim.

7. *Discussion* includes findings in the study compared and discussed with previous studies. The discussion also consists of thoughts and wisdoms from the conducted study.

8. *Conclusion* presents the important findings made in this study. It has a clear and simple structure with the purpose of concluding what the study has accomplished according to its aim. Suggestions on future research are also presented here.

References is the part of the thesis where the reader can find information that makes it possible to locate other researchers work and information that has been used in this study.

Appendicies gives information that was not presented in the thesis, but could be of interests to achieve greater understanding of specific things from the study.

2 Method

This chapter offers a presentation of the method that has been used in this study. It begins with an explanation of the research design with an illustration of the study's approach. Thereafter, follows a presentation of the literature review, choice of unit of analysis, data collection, and data analysis. Finally, this chapter ends with a subheading labelled quality assurance, covering aspects that have been taking into account to assure the study's quality.

2.1 Research design

A study may have different research designs; for instance, fixed, flexible, or multi-strategy. Each design has different advantages, for example, a fixed design is theory driven meanwhile a flexible design is not (Robson, 2011).

If a study is investigating a phenomenon, a flexible research design is suitable as it allows the writer to adapt and change the design, so that it follows the findings that he/she makes along the way. An illustration of a flexible design can have two-way arrows in a graphic version, which illustrate that there might be adaptations/changes in the study's design (Robson, 2011).

The approach used to execute this study was the following (see also Figure 2):

- 1. Literature review
- 2. Choosing unit of analysis, viral video ads
- 3. Focus groups
- 4. Individual interviews
- 5. Data analysis
- 6. Discussion
- 7. Conclusion

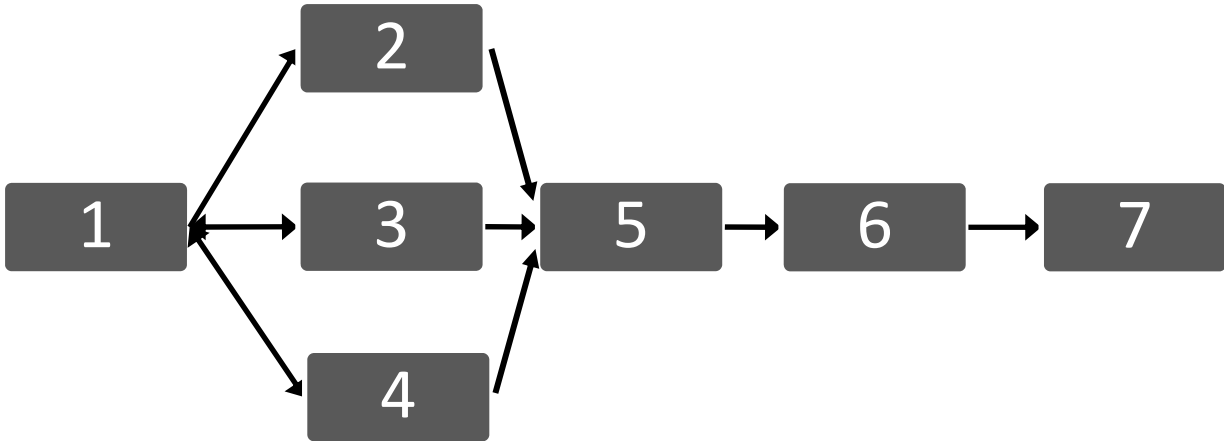


Figure 2. Graphic illustration of the approach for this thesis. The arrows between the boxes illustrate the connections and the general flow. The different boxes (1-5) are described in chapter 2.2-2.5.

This study had a flexible research design, because it investigated a phenomenon, viral marketing, where it was initially not clear what data collection technique that was suitable. The study did not follow an ex-ante selected theory. Thereby, this thesis did not have a fixed design. The aim was to identify content characteristics, factors that could be of interest for marketers when they are forming their viral marketing. Both Figure 2 and the result in this study tell us that this study had a flexible research design.

The positive aspect with the choice of research design was that the study could adapt during the process. A negative side effect with a flexible design, according to Robson (2011), is that they do not always offer grounds to generalize the results. Another thing that can be seen as a downside with this design is that bias can occur when people are involved in a research. Bias is something that can be taken into consideration when a research is done and it can thereby be reduced (Robson, 2011).

2.2 Literature review

A literature review is one of the most common procedures for determining what researchers have done in a field to the current date. According to Boote & Beile (2005, p. 3) it “...is a precondition for doing substantive, thorough, sophisticated research”. This means that literature review is essential and it should be done in all researches.

The literature review is vital in the whole phase of the study (Boote & Beile, 2005). At first, it helps the researcher to get an understanding and overview of the field that they are going to study (Boote & Beile, 2005). It is a major advantage as it helps to reveal knowledge gaps. Another benefit of a literature review is learning about the pitfalls from previous studies, to avoid making the same mistakes. This is good because it guides the researcher in ways to design the study, in aspects such as research design, what methods, and theories to use. The literature review also provides discussion partners to the analysis and discussion chapters of the study. One additional advantage to all this is that the review assists in the process of finding appropriate terminology, which aids in keeping the language understandable (Hennie, 2010; Boote & Beile, 2005; Robson, 2011). The main disadvantage with a literature review is that it can restrict you, meaning you put up boundaries and therefore is not able to think outside the box. Overall, it is mainly a good thing to do a literature review and if you are aware of disadvantages, like restrictions of thinking outside the box, you will actually find it easier to force yourself to do it.

The literature review for this study was mainly made using the web based search engine Google Scholar. According to Cooper (1998) online searches is a good way to find previous research. To complement Google Scholar, recommendations from scholars, other search engines, and books were used. Google Scholar directed the literature review to other search engines, for instance ScienceDirect and Taylor & Francis Online where relevant journals and articles were identified. The articles read had interesting references, which increased the scope to process and go through.

The literature review was initiated with the following two search terms:

- Marketing
- Viral marketing

The search led to previous research, which according to Robson (2011) contains terminology, used methods, and findings that are of interest when a new study is made. The findings provided inspiration to new search terms. The amount of search terms, continued to increase and the process could be described as similar to what is known as snowball sampling with the difference that instead of recommendations for new participants new search terms were received. Example of new search terms were: traditional marketing, new marketing, buzz marketing, word-of-mouth, branding, and low- /high-involvement.

2.3 Choosing unit of analysis, viral video ads

The choice of a study's unit of analysis is of great importance, since it affects the study's validity (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). If, the wrong choice is made the purpose of the study will not be reached; for instance, if a study's aim is to study boys physical strength and girls are chosen as the unit of analysis the result will not be seen as valid. The reason to this is that boys and girls have different genetics, and therefore, measuring girls will not tell what physical strength boys have. According to Carmines & Zeller (1979), it implies that in order for a study to be considered as valid, the study's unit of analysis must give the possibility to measure what the purpose of the study is.

In order to identify content characteristics, which give potential for viral marketing, viral video ads were chosen as the unit of analysis in this study. Viral video ads are a form of viral marketing and therefore these ads were seen as suitable for making this study valid.

Criteria for selecting which viral video ads that were going to be a part of this study were:

- Be viral, meaning it had at least 100 000 views (= seen by many, see chapter 3.3.1 for definition of viral)
- Represent a brand that sells or sold a low-involvement forest-related product (toilet paper) at the time that the video ad was released (see chapter 3.2.1 for definition of low-involvement)
- The brand was not sold in Sweden

The creation of the first two criteria had the purpose of keeping the choice of unit of analysis valid. The third criterion's purpose was to ease the collection of data. To have a brand sold in Sweden instead of one that is not, could have decreased the possibility for me to find stores in Sweden that allowed me standing in them to collect data. It could have impacted customers to change what they purchased, which could have frightened stores to let me stand in their stores to collect data.

Today, you can upload videos on many different sites. Facebook, Vimeo, and YouTube are three sites that are big and known by many people. YouTube was chosen as the site, from which the viral video ads for this study were selected. The reasons for this were that:

- YouTube is widely used
- There is no need to have an account to see a video (there are exceptions) or search for videos
- The videos uploaded on YouTube can be seen from other websites
- Many people refer to YouTube as the place to see videos
- Facebook is not known as the site where to upload videos and you need to have an account to see the majority of the content
- Vimeo might be on the upcoming, but it is not as widely referred to as YouTube

From the chosen criteria, a search on YouTube was made and three viral video ads were picked to represent this study's unit of analysis.

Three viral video ads were decided to compose the unit of analysis. Firstly, it was believed to be good to have more than one viral video ad, because not all the identified factors from

previous studies on viral marketing might appear in one viral video ad. For instance, positive/negative content was a factor. A video might be positive or negative or both, this means three videos would be a good number of viral videos. Lastly, in the approach, the study used focus groups and to avoid problems with getting participants, it was found reasonable to have three and not more viral video ads. More viral video ads would have meant that more time of the participants would have been requested, which could have made it more difficult to get participants for the focus groups.

When choosing unit of analysis it is important to be aware of which restrictions the selection may imply. The first choice made here, viral video ads, already restricted the findings that can be made in this study. It constricted the study to look at content characteristics that already are being used with or without knowledge, meaning that there might be content characteristics that will be of interest for viral marketing that through this study cannot be discovered. Since, they did not exist in the chosen viral videos or did not occur during the data collection because the viral videos did not elicit it from the respondents. The second (the video criteria), the third (where to pick the videos), and the fourth (the number of videos) choices all may have excluded factors like the first choice made when the decision of unit of analysis was made.

An important thing to mention, which according to Yin (2009, p. 88) can be an “...*undesired confusion*”, is that a study sometimes seem to have more than one unit of analysis. When data were collected in this study, it included a unit of analysis, respondents in the focus groups and individual interviews (see subheading Data collection), which should not be confused with this study’s main unit of analysis, viral video ads.

2.4 Data collection

There are different ways to collect data for a study. Data can be collected primary and/or secondary, and be either qualitative and/or quantitative. Depending on which of these ways the collection is made, different advantages and disadvantages appear for instance money, time (duration of time and time of year), and constrains (good, bad, wanted and unwanted) (Hox & Boeije, 2005).

When collecting primary data, the researcher set the boundaries and the restrictions in terms of the usefulness of the data for the study (Hox & Boeije, 2005). That was seen as advantageous and important since this study is focusing on a specific area, viral marketing of forest-related low-involvement products, which is why primary data has been collected for this study. The ICT has been changing and people’s habits of using the ICT, therefore primary data is important if the result should be of usefulness. According to Hox & Boeije (2005), collecting secondary data comes with a couple of problems. One of them is to get access to relevant data. The change of ICT; thereby, restricted this study from using secondary data.

There are different ways of collecting primary data. You can do it by yourself, hire other people to do it for you, as well as using various methods (surveys, observations, interviews, and so on). Each of these choices has their own constraints and usefulness.

In this study, primary data was collected through two types of interviews, focus groups, and individual interviews. The two types of data collection gave different inputs to the study as they were collecting data from two different populations. Three samples from the population represented online users and three samples represented buyers of the forest-related low-involvement products.

The reason why both methods were chosen is that it was seen as the most suitable way to get samples from two populations, people that are using the new ICT and buyers of the product.

In this study, collection of data has been qualitative and not quantitative; the reason why was that the study's aim was to identify content characteristics. To do that with quantitative data was not seen as possible, since it was unknown what content characteristics that would be found, to identify those beforehand or guess which characteristics that would appear did not occur as a suitable method. The content characteristics could be things that people think of or that they do not think of, so even to have a survey with an open question free for people to write the answer was considered as an inappropriate way to gather the data.

2.4.1 Focus group

In this study, one of the methods to collect data was the usage of conducting focus groups. The main reason for this was to mirror how social media works in the reality, with the difference to have it offline, with the possibility to evaluate how people react. A focus group would increase the perspectives of interpreting the viral video ads. Therefore, focus groups were seen as a way to give different nuances and interpretations of the viral video ads.

There are different ways to support the choice of focus groups in this study. Firstly, this interview type is suitable for the study, though it according to Robson (2011) derived from marketing research. Secondly, focus group is a group discussion and a way to collect data (Kitzinger, 1995; Robson, 2011; Krueger & Casey, 2014). According to Kitzinger (1995) *“The method is particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way”* (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 299). To get such information was seen as vital, because it could help supporting why a certain content characteristic was found in the viral video ads. For the third, focus groups help the researcher to observe people's behaviour that is how they react during the discussion (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Since, marketing theories can affect people in different ways, for instance emotionally and physically, it is a good thing that the researcher during a focus group can see both the behaviour and the reactions. Lastly, the focus groups are a more natural form of environment than if it would be an individual interview (Krueger & Casey, 2014).

A downside with the choice of focus groups as interview type is that there might arise a group pressure; people say what they believe other people think is right. A counterargument to this is that people will evaluate what they share on Facebook, and therefore people are exposed to group pressure also in the real life. This can be seen as an advantage and supports the use of focus groups as method. According to Krueger & Casey (2014), the focus group reflects how we act in real life. Another disadvantage with a focus group is that there might be a dominant person, who takes over, but this is something a moderator can help to avoid by helping other respondents to speak by giving them space through directing questions directly to them. Since, a focus group is a discussion among a couple of people it can be hard to conclude. To ease the problem the focus groups could be recorded, which allows the researcher to listen to the discussion multiple times.

During the data collection, the study used three focus groups with different compositions. The first group consisted of people with a variety of age whereas the second focus group was composed of younger people. Thereby, the samples in the focus groups ought to reflect how social media is used, since according to West *et al.* (2009), some of the younger users of social media do not have older people in their groups, if they do they may have restricted the

older ones by privacy settings. However, there are also people who think they should be able to be friends with everyone, no matter their ages. Even if the participants in the group are not homogenous in their way of using social media, the group members can reflect a different atmosphere, which would represent the groups that are out in the real life. The third focus groups sample also consisted of younger people. This was not decided until after the first two focus groups were conducted. The motive was to use the third group as a complement and be able to collect data from either one of the groups identified on social media that not contributed that much in the first two groups. The young group (focus group 2) expressed themselves to be restrictive when sharing/talking about videos and in an attempt to understand and complement if that was the case for all young people a similar sample was chosen for focus group 3.

The following criteria were used to identify the respondents:

- Speak Swedish and English
- Use social media

There were two reasons for the first criterion, which were; the introduction of the information to the focus groups was planned to be held in Swedish, with the aim to get the respondents to feel comfortable and free to have their coming discussions in their native language and the second reason was that some of the videos were in English. Therefore, the first criterion was seen as important to avoid any confusion. The second criterion might seem as elemental, but if the respondent's did not use social media, their views could have been seen as useless due to this study's purpose.

From these criteria, respondents were selected in Skurup, Uppsala, and Värmland. The reason to this geographic choice was the study's time restriction and the cost effectiveness to gather a group of people in a short distance to where the researcher was doing this study. This meant that the respondents were subjectively selected. It can be argued to be negative, because it restricted some people's possibility of being selected and contribute to the research. In this case, it can be argued that it was a good thing as people who know each other are almost certainly in the same social network. That would then reflect the environment of their daily lives, which therefore could decrease the interviewing effect that is the respondent would not say something just to please the interviewer, since the other participants would/could then react.

A focus group can have different numbers of respondents. A suitable size is to have between four and six people, according to Wibeck (2000). Each focus group in this thesis had four respondents. The decision to have four was in-between what was found as good size. The reason not to have five or six people was that it was seen as easier to gather a group of four people compared to the increased size.

Below follows the general set-up used during the focus groups.

1. The focus group started with an introduction to welcome and make sure the respondents knew what was going to happen, and each other's names. According to Wibeck (2000), it is important to get the participants to feel comfortable, which was the purpose of the introduction.

2. Show the first stimuli, one of the viral video ads, at a computer or similar screen
→Ask them the following question to initiate their discussion: Do you believe you would talk and/or share this video with others? If yes/no, why?
3. Show the second stimuli, one of the viral video ads, at a computer or similar screen
→Ask them the following question to initiate their discussion: Do you believe you would talk and/or share this video with others? If yes/no, why?
4. Show the third stimuli, one of the viral video ads, at a computer or similar screen
→Ask them the following question to initiate their discussion: Do you believe you would talk and/or share this video with others? If yes/no, why?
5. Ask the respondents if they want to add something.
6. Ask how the respondents see themselves as people on social media.
7. Express gratitude for their participation.

The viral video ads were shown in different orders for the three focus groups with the purpose of reducing eventual impact one of the ads could have had on the others in aspect of the discussions.

During the focus group sessions, notes were taken and the discussions were recorded with two devices. The notes were made to complement the recordings with observational data and to be able to moderate the discussion if needed. Two devices were used for recording, like a backup if one would fail by some unforeseen reason.

Ethical aspects were taken into consideration when the focus groups were conducted. The respondents had the opportunity not to participate both when they were asked to be a part of the focus groups and during the focus groups. Since a focus group is a form of discussion, a person could according to Wibeck (2000) chose not to say anything during the discussion and that gives them the possibility not to participate in parts that they do not want.

2.4.2 Individual interview

Individual interview is when an interviewer asks questions to a single respondent. It can be done in different ways: structured, unstructured or semi-structured. A structured interview is suitable when a lot of information is known about a subject and the goal is to receive answers to either count how many people who respond similarly or in what category a respondent fall into. The unstructured interview is the complete opposite and even the subject can change without the interviewer trying to steer it back. A semi-structured interview is suitable when the purpose is to receive information that is somewhere in-between what is derived from conducting structured and unstructured interviews (Leech, 2002).

During the individual interviews, a semi-structured way was used. According to Leech (2002, p. 668) “*Semistructured interviews allow respondents the chance to be the experts and to inform the research*”. That was exactly what this data collection needed. Information was known about viral marketing, but not everything and therefore the subject of the interviews was important to stay fixed while the categories were not completely clear.

The order of the questions in an interview can affect how a person responds. Therefore, it is important to consider carefully, which questions to have first respective last. To ask about age in the beginning can be good if the respondent should feel that the rest of the interview is about him/her personally. However, it might be bad too and make him/her restricted meaning that if the interview is not aiming to find out personal things about the respondent, age should be asked in the end (Leech, 2002).

An interview can be done at an appointed or not appointed time and it can be held in different environments. If the time is decided beforehand, the respondent has the possibility to prepare him-/herself. It does have pros and cons, since the respondent might overthink how to act during the interview and it can be good if the respondent is not stressed and has put aside time. Noise and disturbance from surroundings can be minimized if an appointed time to meet is agreed.

The individual interviews were conducted in stores, as that is a place where toilet paper is sold and a place to locate the population buyers. Some people live together with others and do not buy their own toilet paper, because of that it was seen as the best way to actually spot and get in contact with buyers to stand in a place where toilet paper was sold. There are different stores that offer toilet paper, for instance grocery stores, petrol stations, low-price stores. It was chosen to stand in three different grocery stores. The decision to stand in grocery stores was because it was assumed the most common place for people to buy their toilet paper. Since stores can attract different people and people do in general not have same opinions, it was considered suitable to stand in three different ones.

To be able to spot the respondents in the stores it was decided to stand next to where people could pick up the toilet paper. If people took toilet paper, they were asked if they would be willing to participate in a short interview.

When the individual interview was conducted the interviewer wore a nametag that was visible on his chest, with the purpose of giving trust, professionalism and increase the willingness from the respondents to participate. On the nametag, people could see from which university, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, the interviewer belonged to and the interviewer's name.

Notes were taken of how many people that chose not to participate, whereas for the people who chose to participate the below procedure was followed (it was made in Swedish):

1. Short presentation of the interviewer, how the interview was going to be used, and the structure of the interview
2. They were showed a stimuli, one viral video ad, on an iPad
3. The following question was asked: Do you believe you would talk and/or share this video with others? If yes/no, why?
4. The respondents were then asked if they had previously seen the video
5. Thereafter, the respondents were asked if they had social media and if they did, how often they shared or talked about a video
6. Finally, information of their age was retrieved and their gender was noted.

During the individual interviews, the respondents who chose to participate were shown one video ad and not all three because it was meant to be a very short interview. To get people to participate, it was seen as crucial to only show one clip, since when people go to the store they have most likely not planned to "lose time" for an interview. Therefore, the shorter interview the better. If the interview would have consisted, of three video ads, people might have felt stressed and the quality of their answers would not have been as good, especially not towards the end of the interview. As argued, when unit of analysis was chosen, the videos might evoke different answers, therefore the videos were rotated; after showing Viral Video 1, the next respondent was shown Viral Video 2 and then the following respondent was shown Viral Video 3 and after that, it started all over again.

The data collected from the different samples of buyers from the individual interviews represented a group that are buying toilet paper as it could be the case that the participants in the data collection of focus groups are not buyers of toilet paper.

No recording was used during the individual interviews due to three reasons. First, it is a lot of noise in a store and to hear and get a good recording would have been a challenge. Second, to ask about allowance to record an interview would have been necessary to make it ethical and it would have increased the time needed for the interview. Third, if a person knows they are being recorded it can impact their answers and it could have decreased the participation rate.

2.5 Data analysis

The data in this study was analysed in two steps. The first step was the data from the focus groups and the individual interviews. The last step was then made with the first as the base.

2.5.1 Focus group

There are many different ways to analyse data from a focus group. According to Stewart & Shamdasani (2015, p. 115), “...there is no one best or correct approach to the analysis of focus group data” they think “...the research question and the purpose” should be the deciding factor. Wibeck (2000) has the same viewpoint on how a researcher should choose analysis. Wibeck (2000) also thinks there is no standard way to analyse focus groups and that each researcher should be able to discover and try on their own. The aim of this study was to identify content characteristics and therefore it was seen as suitable to do a summary of the focus group and not a transcription. The summary was created with help of the notes and recordings from the focus groups.

The decision to make a summary can be supported by four things that Stewart & Shamdasani (2015) have as motives when they describe why to do a summary when analysing a focus group. Firstly, the study is exploratory of viral marketing. Secondly, the conclusion is quite straightforward. Thirdly, the researcher was present when all the focus groups were executed. Fourth, the research questions and aim were the deciding factor for making the choice.

As with all choices there are pros and cons, see Table 2 for some, for the decision to have a summary and not a full transcription.

Table 2. Pros and cons for using summary for data received from focus groups

Aspect	Pros (+) and Cons (-)
Time	+
Details	-
Understanding	+
Mistakes	+/-
Focus	+/-

It is less time consuming to do a summary than a transcription. The time can therefore be used wisely on something else that is of greater importance for the study. A summary does not include as much details as a transcription and things of interest could be overseen. The understanding of a summary is easier than a transcription, some sentences can mean different things depending on how they are said for instance; you are funny. It could mean it literary and it could mean the opposite, that you are boring. A transcription may have errors, missing words, unfinished words/sentences, and grammatical confusions. These errors can evoke from

the person doing the transcription, the participants in the focus groups interrupt each other and mixes up the grammar. The focus when continuing the analysis may become wrong because of effects from the other aspects mentioned (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015).

Observational data may be of good use to increase the understanding of a focus group. Body language may show emotions, engagement, and meaning of the words. Facial expressions were noted and pictures from Wood's research (2012) "*How Emotional Tugs Trump Rational Pushes*", were used to analyse which emotions they represented, see Appendix 1. Voice strength and body language were noted if they seemed to deviate from what a respondent was expressing in words.

Summaries were made with assistance of the recordings and the notes from the three focus groups.

2.5.2 Individual interview

There are different ways to analyse individual interviews. The analysis of the individual interviews was made in a similar way as the focus groups, with the difference that no recording was present. The reason to do summaries of the individual interviews were of the same reasons as with the focus groups; Table 2 that presented pros and cons for focus groups can be seen to be valid as motive also in this case.

2.5.3 Constant comparative analysis/coding

Qualitative data can be analysed in many different ways; for instance, with classical content analysis, word count, keywords in context, constant comparative analysis, and so on (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). In this study, a variant of constant comparative analysis was chosen due to a number of reasons. First, the data in the study is qualitative. Secondly, Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2007, p. 576) argue that the analysis method is the "*...choice when the researcher wants to answer general, or overarching, questions*". It is consistent with this study's aim, which is to identify content characteristics and not to evaluate why or how the specific content characteristics work. At last, the chosen method for analysis is feasible and easy to understand.

Constant comparative analysis is also known as coding and it has been described and used differently by various authors (Glaser, 1965; Thorne, 2000). In this study, the analysis has been based on how Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2007) describe this particular method:

- First, the method can be done in either a deductively, inductively or abductively way. The conceptual frameworks were used as the category's meaning a deductively approach was used.
- The next step was to go through the summaries and pick them apart.
- That followed by dividing the parts into the chosen categories (one extra pile with unidentified categories was present on top of those from the theoretical framework).
- The categories were reviewed once again to see if any changes had to be done.

2.6 Quality assurance

This study is written in English, which is a quality assurance in itself, because misunderstandings and losses caused by translation decreases. English is the main language for academic writing.

Reliability is about how trustworthy something is for a study it refers to whether; it is repeated, the same result is expected to occur. However, since there is always some kind of chance involved in a study, a repeated study is not likely to give exactly the same result. This does not mean that a study cannot be trustworthy as results can still be consistent (Carmines & Zeller, 1979).

There are different ways to make a study reliable. Four different ways have been used to make this study reliable:

1. The method in this study has been described in a simple way with ordered steps to make it easy to duplicate the study.
2. A term can have different meanings, for instance scholars often do not have the same as other people (Anderson & Bushman, 2001). Therefore, key terms in this research have been defined with the purpose to decrease misunderstandings.
3. To collect information through three different sources: literature review, focus groups, and individual interviews make the approach a triangulation. The use of triangulation is good, since it implies that you get inputs from three different angles.
4. To receive a good quality of this research a loop system has been used. This has worked as a complement to the approached method, meaning that this study has received thoughts and critic during the working process. It has been received during meetings with supervisor, during seminars and when ideas have been discussed with others. When such have been received, adaptations and considerations have been made. This has been an on-going process and therefore could be seen as a loop system.

In conclusion, a couple of different measures have been made to ensure this thesis quality. The next chapter is a part of the quality assurance and includes explanations of different terms used in the thesis.

3 Theory

In this chapter, theoretical perspectives are presented that built the base and became this study's conceptual framework. The conceptual framework is illustrated as an image in the end of this chapter to give a visual and clear picture of what could be of interest for viral video ads.

3.1 Marketing

There have been researches on marketing during many years. It is a good thing, but according to Savitt (1980), the study of marketing history has been rare, which is a disadvantage since it helps to tell, "... where it is [?] and what it is [?]" (Savitt, 1980, p. 52). If scholars do not know the answers to these questions, confusion and disagreement may appear. That is a fact, and "*The marketing concept has been misunderstood and misused over the years*" (Houston, 1986, p. 81). The quote is from an article by Houston (1986) and it supports Savitt (1980) that marketing history is important as it helps to understand where and what marketing is. Today, the American Marketing Association (AMA) defines marketing as:

"Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (AMA, 2017).

A historical study of how to define marketing has been done by Ringold & Weitz (2007). They concluded that AMA was best suited to make an appropriate definition of the concept. Thereby, this study chose to use the definition showed above by AMA.

Marketing can be split into two parts, which is the traditional and the new. One of the things that separate the two is the delivering. The new one is delivered through digital devices and the traditional through different ways; for instance, post, television, and printed material. The various delivery systems offer different possibilities and limitations to the communication (Donna & Novak, 1997; Winer, 2009; Truong *et al.* 2010).

3.2 Brand

Branding is a part of marketing and a way for a company to become known and recognized by their customers. There are different ways to do this and to have a brand is the first step (Rosenbaum-Elliott *et al.*, 2015).

Brand, what is it? There are many different definitions of a brand and that is something De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley (1998) looked at. They discovered that scholars used it in different ways and found twelve themes that they considered to be a part of what brand is, see Table 3.

Table 3. Twelve themes connected to brand, based on De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley (1998, p. 426) with minor modifications

Themes	Antecedents	Consequences
1. Legal Instrument	Mark of ownership. Name, logo, design. Trademark.	Prosecute infringers.
2. Logo	Name, term, sign, symbol, design. Product characteristics.	Identify, differentiate through visual identity, and name. Quality assurance.
3. Company	Recognisable corporate name and image. Culture, people, programs of organisations define corporate personality. CEO is brand manager.	Evaluate over long time horizon. Product lines benefit from corporate personality. Convey consistent message to stakeholders. Differentiation: proposition, relationship.
4. Shorthand	Firm stresses quality not quantity of information.	Rapidly recognise brand association. Facilitate information processing, speed decisions.
5. Risk reducer	Confidence that expectations are being fulfilled.	Brand as a contract.
6. Identity system	More than just a name. Holistic, structured with six integrated facets, including brand's personality.	Clarify direction, meaning, and strategic positioning. Protective barrier. Communicate essence to stakeholders.
7. Image	Consumer centred. Image in consumers' mind is brand "reality".	Firm's input activities managed using feedback of image to change identity. Market research important. Manage brand concept over time.
8. Value system	Consumer relevant values imbue the brand.	Brand values match relevant consumer values.
9. Personality	Psychological values, communicated through advertising and packaging define brand's personality.	Differentiation from symbolism: human values projected. Stress added values beyond functional.
10. Relationship	Consumer has attitude to brand. Brand as person has attitude to consumer.	Recognition and respect for personality. Develop relationship.
11. Adding value	Non-functional extras. Value satisfier. Consumers imbue brand with subjective meaning they value enough to buy. Aesthetics. Enhanced through design, mfr., and distribution.	Differentiate through layers of meaning. Charge price premium. Consumer experience. Perception of users. Belief in performance.
12. Evolving entity	Change by stage of development.	Change by stage of development.

From the 12 themes previously explained in Table 3, De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley (1998) were able to illustrate how brands work, see Figure 3. The themes range from concrete to abstract. The theme logo can be seen as concrete whilst the theme relationship can be perceived as abstract.

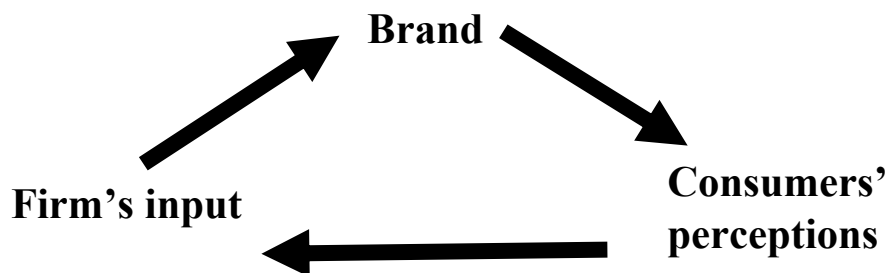


Figure 3. Model of what Brand is (De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998, p. 428).

As the illustration shows, both the firm and the consumers affect a brand in a circular way. Kotler (1997, p. 442) described brand as “...a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors”. Erdem *et al.* (2006) used this description in a recent article and Rosenbaum-Elliott *et al.* (2015) had a similar view of brand with the difference that they mentioned that we (understood as people) were a part of the brand. The conclusion of this is that brand is a combination of what information a company convey to us and how we understand it, which means that a brand can change over time.

3.2.1 Different brands, high- and low-involvement

Brands can be divided into two groups and in one of those; our decisions are made mostly by intuition. That is the low-involvement group and the other one is high-involvement. Involvement has been seen to vary according to three factors see Table 4 (Zaichkowsky, 1985, p. 342).

Table 4. Factors that affect a person’s involvement during a decision (based on Zaichkowsky, 1985, p. 342 minor modifications)

Factor	Description
Personal	Inherent interests, values, or needs that motivate one toward the object.
Physical	Characteristics of the object that cause differentiation and increase interest.
Situational	Something that temporarily increases relevance or interest toward the object.

The factors shown above do affect the involvement, but there is still an availability to divide decisions into two groups, high- versus low-involvement. If we concentrate on the physical factor it can be divided into many factors, see Figure 4. Due to this, we can make a general difference between products that are high- versus low-involvement brands. Most of the forest-related products are low-involvement products, since they are not very expensive and they are frequently bought for example tissues, toilet paper, matches, and, newspapers.

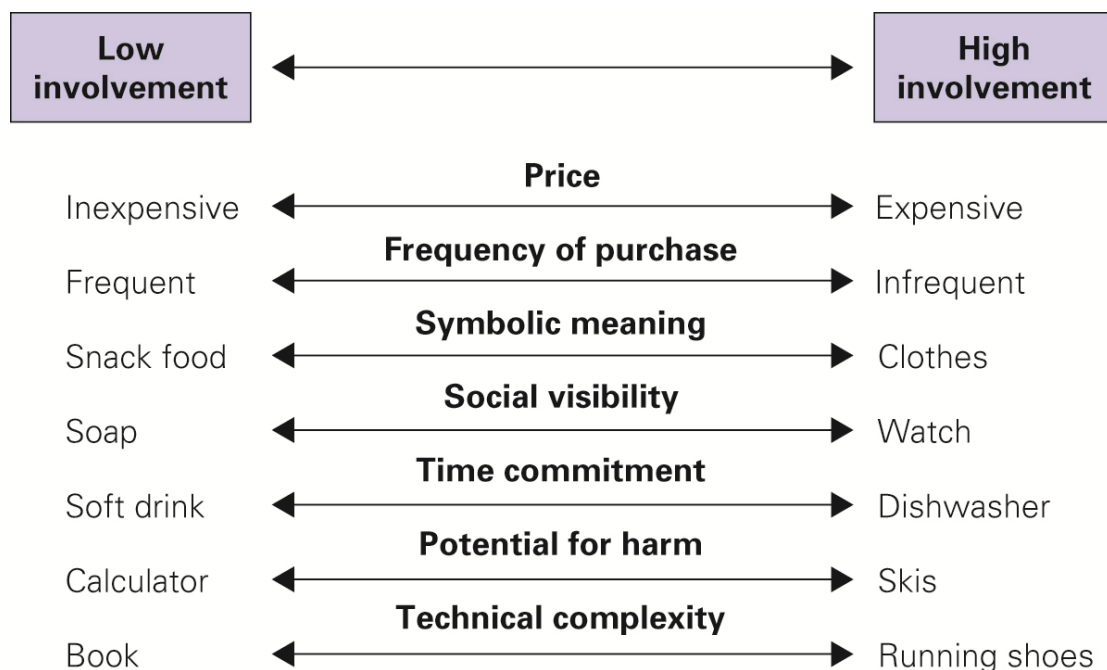


Figure 4. The figure illustrates how a product can be seen to be either high- or low-involvement brands (Rosenbaum-Elliott *et al.*, 2015, p. 13).

The differences illustrated in Figure 4 have an important signification. Heath (2001) concluded that learning about brands for customers is often of low concern due to equivalent performance of different reputable brands. This leads, according to the author, to a buying process mainly controlled by intuition instead of rationality. Heath (2001) also mentions that the short-term memory has space to store about six different things. Memory wise consumers have seven brands plus or minus two in a category that is high-involvement compared to four plus or minus one in categories that are low-involvement (Rosenbaum-Elliott & Percy, 2015, p. 14).

3.3 Communication

Littlejohn & Foss (2008) have found that there are many different definitions of communication and they argue that it is impossible to find a single definition that would be suitable for different scholars to use. Different definitions suit different works and they could help to answer a variety of questions (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). A definition of communication that suits this study is:

“The transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills, etc.” (Berelson & Steiner, 1964, p. 527).

There are many ways to communicate, for example through sound, image, video, body language, scent, design, colour, and text (Eksvärd, 2011). In communication, a message is sent, and that is done in various ways conscious or unconscious, obvious or discreet, clear or blurry, direct or indirect, and linear or circular, or in other connecting ways.

There have been various ways of researching the subject and the technology has opened up for new ways. Marketing is fundamentally a company’s way to communicate their message to customers. The changes in the ICT have caused the companies to rethink and they have started to communicate through viral marketing.

3.3.1 Viral marketing

What is “viral”? When talking about marketing, scholars use viral to describe something that has been distributed online and that it is either/or a combination: contagious, a virus, have exponential growth, rapid infection, shared or seen by many people (Leskovec *et al.*, 2007; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Berger & Milkman, 2012; Guadagno *et al.*, 2013; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). As seen, there seems to be different ways “viral” have been used/described, and for that reason, it was regarded as crucial to define what viral means in this thesis.

To be able to define “viral” there is one more thing that is vital to discuss, time. Time can be seen to relate to some of the words used by scholars above, for instance contagious, rapid, and exponential growth. From this viewpoint, it can be argued that it is important to have time included in the term “viral”; otherwise, all online contents would get viral after a while. In defence to this point of view, you could argue that many things are online and are being uploaded every minute, for instance videos. Thereby, there is not enough time for people to digest everything, meaning that some things will disappear because of the richness of items and therefore not get viral. In this study, it is not seen any relevance to restrict the term “viral” with a time factor. A time factor would make the term difficult to use, though it would require a description of when or how the time aspect is taken in to consideration and would make it harder to compare different academic works.

In this thesis, “viral” is defined as online content that has been seen by many people. Seen by many people is in this thesis 100,000 and above. There are researchers for instance Dafonte-Gómez (2014), who used “viral” by looking at how many times an online content had been shared. However, here viral will be decided after numbers of views, because shared does not have to mean it is viral and the knowledge of how to get such information is unavailable to this study because of time limit, money and technology.

When discussing digital media, different concepts come up. Viral marketing, viral advertising, buzz marketing, new word of mouth, electronic word of mouse and so on. This is a result of the quick development of digital media. It started on stationary computers that were at a fixed position. After a while, the Internet was introduced on these computers however, since the introduction a lot has changed and nowadays people are using Internet on all different kind of devices, such as smartphones and iPads. The different concepts related to digital media vary in definitions and how they have been used by academics. Below are a few examples:

“...viral marketing is nothing more than “a new interpretation of the good old word-of-mouth-paradigm”” (Woerndl et al., 2008, p. 34).

Viral marketing – different kind of viral marketing email, sharing on social media (Leskovec et al., 2007).

The virtual marketing is different than, for example, marketing that is only in newspapers. One difference is that the consumers have a possibility to be in higher control (Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011).

Social media is a form of word of mouth with a big difference from word of mouth when people meet in person, the spread when done on a social media have the possibility to get much greater (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

“Viral ads are online ads that become viral because of consumer action” (Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011, p. 220).

“It is human nature to be more interested in what a friend buys than what an anonymous person buys, to be more likely to trust their opinion, and to be more influenced by their actions.” (Leskovec et al., 2007, p. 3).

As seen above the digital media has brought a variation of aspects, in conclusion, it is all different ways to explain communication and how and why they have been used to fit different studies or purposes.

3.4 Content characteristics of communication

In research aimed for marketing and for other types of communication for instance rhetoric, content characteristics have been identified to have an impact on communication. In this subsection a selection of the characteristics identified during the literature review are presented.

3.4.1 Emotions

Emotions are affecting our actions and can be a part of marketing (Botha & Reyneke, 2013; Deppe *et al.*, 2005). Emotion can be defined as “...*socially meaningful expressions, which depend on shared customs, uses and institutions*” (Fattah & Fierke, 2009, p. 70). There are many different emotions, for instance fear, anger, surprise, disgust, and enjoyment (Ekman, 1992). According to Biscaia *et al.* (2012, p. 228), “...*emotion is a response to a stimulus event*”. Ekman (2003) tells us that a trigger, stimulus event, for emotions may vary between people.

“*We know that consumers tend to dedicate more time to activities that are more pleasurable*” (Ariely, 2000, p. 246). This means that emotions, which evoke consumers to feel pleasurable are good.

3.4.2 Storytelling

If a company conveys a message through a story, they are using the marketing theory storytelling. Storytelling is more effective than not using it (Kim *et al.*, 2017). We have used stories for ages. It has been a way to convey knowledge among us (Yoder-Wise & Kowalski, 2003). Lagergren (2016) describes in her work that stories can be build up differently and argues that it can be a way to show facts and information in an understandable way that makes it memorable.

3.4.3 Symbolic

Symbolic can be done in different ways and it is a method to send a message (Rosenbaum-Elliott *et al.*, 2015). It can be done through metaphors, signs, objects, and colours (Eksvärd, 2011; Cohen, 1985; Williamson, 1978).

Not everybody understands symbolic in the same way. For instance, metaphors are tricky to translate and their meanings can be totally misunderstood if translated, and colours may symbolise different things in different situations (Eksvärd, 2017). People generally associate the colour pink with breast cancer. Today, farmers can support both breast cancer and prostate cancer while they pack their silage. Pink plastic is symbolising breast cancer and blue is symbolising prostate cancer.

3.4.4 Culture

We are living in a multicultural world. People have different skin colour and different traditions. Barack Obama is a person that Eksvärd (2017), uses as example to explain how he during his speeches talks about culture for instance his black father and white mother as a way to connect with people.

3.4.5 Good cause

There is research indicating that consumers choose a brand that does a good cause before a neutral brand (Barone *et al.*, 2000). There are different kinds of good causes; examples of these are social, environmental, and ethical. A company can communicate that they do a good cause in different ways; there are signs that can be placed on packaging, their brand can be displayed on different places and they can say it straight out. An example of a social and ethical good cause is to donate money to, for instance, research on breast or prostate cancer.

3.4.6 Length (time)

The duration of a video affects people's perception of it (Söderbäck & Tedebo, 2014; Goodrich *et al.*, 2015; Jeong *et al.*, 2011 & Jeong, 2015). The length of a marketing message has been changing over time. When companies started to convey their messages on television, the length was about 60 seconds (Jeong, 2015, p. 2). According to Jeong (2015), it had that length since it was identical to the length of marketing messages on the radio at that point in time. During the years, this has changed and messages on television do now vary in length, they can be 15 seconds, 30 seconds and so on (Jeong, 2015; Jeong *et al.*, 2011). The messages on Internet have been seen to vary from as low to 3 seconds to longer (Goodrich *et al.*, 2015, p. 42). The length for a viral video ad has not been something that scholars have done much research on (Goodrich *et al.*, 2015). In a study by Söderbäck & Tedebo (2014), a viral video's length was discovered as a factor that could be of interest to study. Research has concluded that a video's length impacts the persuasiveness and the effectiveness of a marketing message (Jeong, 2015; Tucker, 2014).

3.4.7 Humour

Humour is known for its positive affect when used in marketing, because an interest appears. If the humour includes violence, it can make the marketing even better (Brown, 2010). There are different ways to define humour. In this study, it is defined as "...any communicative instance which is perceived as humorous" (Martineau, 1972, p. 114). Recent research have used Martineau's quote to describe humour too (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006).

Humour has been seen to vary depending on age; children may have different humour than adults. Humour can also vary in its form; it can for instance be visual, audible, physical, or a combination of various forms (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004). Humour has also been seen to vary from country to country, for instance the U.S. and United Kingdom where humour differ of type and its role (Toncar, 2001).

3.4.8 Sound

Sounds have an impact on communication, and there are different ways to use it. Sound can hinder and enhance what is communicated. An example of this is; think of a horror movie. Turn the sound of and the scary scenes will not feel as scary anymore, they might even feel silly or stupid without the sound (Eksvärd, 2011).

The sound as our tone of voice affects the communication. What we say gets different meanings depending on how we use our voice. An example is that when you to tell somebody "You are funny", your voice is the clue to figure out if what is told is the literary meaning or the opposite (Eksvärd, 2011).

3.4.9 Positive/negative contents

Contents in a communication can be perceived in different ways positive, negative, and neutral. Studies have shown that positive contents is more likely to be spread than negative, but depending on how positive or negative it is perceived can make some negative content to be spread more than the positive. It is a psychological term called arousal that is a part of this explanation. A content can evoke more or less of this arousal when positive/negative contents is seen and that can make us spread negative contents that has more arousal compared to a positive contents with less arousal (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Guadagno *et al.*, 2013).

3.4.10 Memorable

If the content is memorable, it increases the possibility that it is spread. There are many different reasons why the content can be memorable, it can be how the communication is expressed, if it is humour or something else (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Söderbäck & Tedebo, 2014). In Söderbäck & Tedebo (2014), a couple of different connections to memorable were made. They did for example mention that the respondents perceived the videos as memorable when they were perceived as very funny, strange, different, recognisable theme that the respondents knew from previously (Star Wars) and if something affected them.

3.4.11 Interesting

If something is perceived as, interesting it has a higher probability to be spread (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Söderbäck & Tedebo, 2014). Berger & Milkman (2012) mentioned one article about love and one about a celebrity as interesting. Söderbäck & Tedebo (2014) argued that videos were interesting if something was recognisable and if something unpredictable happened.

3.4.12 Useful contents

Contents in a communication can be perceived as useful. If it is, it increases the probability that it is spread. Useful content is something that is presented in way that it can be practically used (Berger & Milkman, 2012). An example of that could be a demonstration of how a tree is cut down where the steps can be followed.

3.4.13 Commercial-free

If a communication is understood as free from commercial, it affects how the message is perceived in a positive way and can have a direct impact on how it is spread (Söderbäck & Tedebo, 2014). An example of something that often is perceived as commercial-free is programmes that are broadcasted on television. Programmes usually includes product placements which is a kind of marketing are not perceived as commercial, but the commercial breaks are and many people leave for instance to the bathroom at that time.

3.5 A conceptual framework

The conceptual framework in this thesis builds on the content characteristics presented above. Figure 5 illustrates the conceptual framework as a picture.

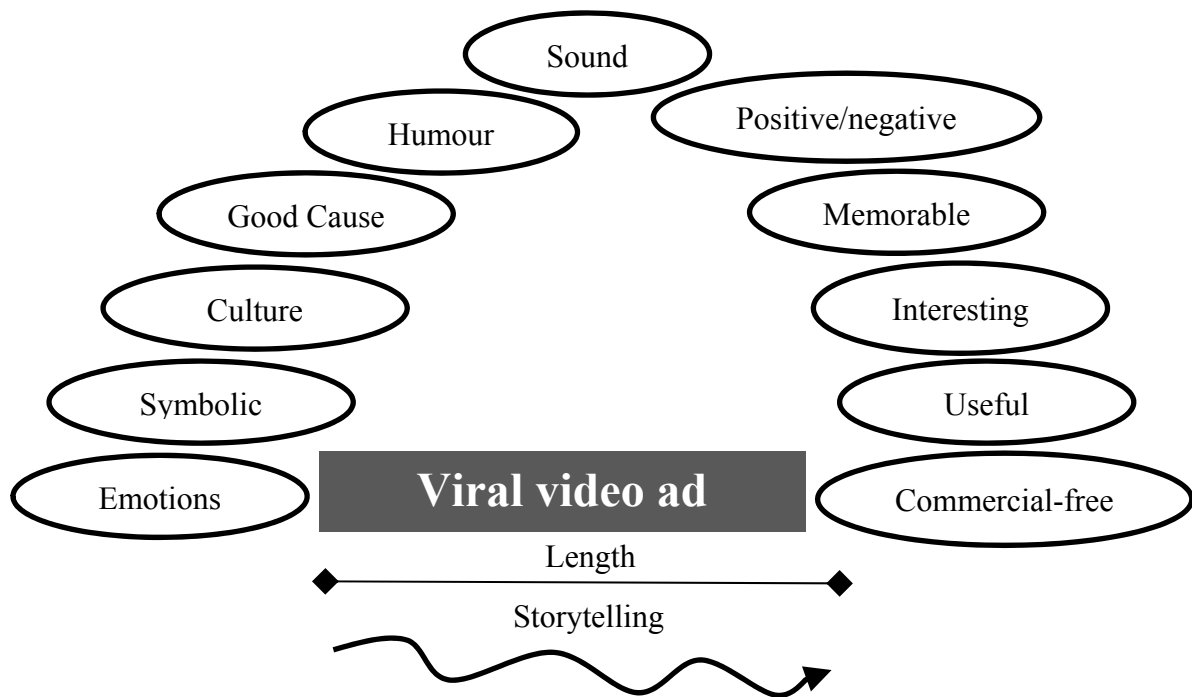


Figure 5. Illustration of the conceptual framework.

The figure with the conceptual framework illustrates how different factors/characteristics can affect a viral video ad. It is used as a frame for analysing the empirical data concerning the perception of a viral video ad. The middle-part of the model symbolizes the viral video ad and the bubbles and lines refer to different parts/content characteristics. At the moment, which parts/content characteristics that is/are present in a specific viral video ad, is unknown. The illustration serves as a tool in order to see and recognize what possible could be found in a viral video ad.

4 Empirical background

The following chapter gives information about what and how a couple of researchers have researched viral marketing. The purpose of this chapter is to provide discussion partners to the discussion chapter. The empirical background chapter is divided into how the studies were conducted; use of respondents respective when something else instead of respondents was used as the main method. The articles within each of the two subsections are presented in chronological order based on their date of publication. The researches reach over a period of nine years, from 2006-2014.

4.1 Use of respondents

Ho & Dempsey (2010) studied viral marketing by a survey on undergraduate students with a mean age of 22. The survey consisted of different question and the study showed that “*Internet users, who are more individualistic and/or altruistic, tend to forward more online content than others*” (Ho & Dempsey, 2010, p. 1000). Addition to that the authors found that there is a need to identify key motivators of why people share things online.

Huang *et al.* (2013) made a study on viral video ads that were located on a Chinese video-sharing site. Three videos were used and they belonged to different product categories. The respondents in the research were showed one video each and were ask to make notes. The information was later analysed by coding. The respondents consisted of students with a mean age of 19. The research showed “*...that attitude toward the VV [viral video] advertisement is the major factor affecting video sharing, but attitude toward the brand also has a significant impact on sharing activity*” (Huang *et al.*, 2013, p. 36). Another thing that was seen was that violence and nudity had an effect on sharing, but it could affect the brand negatively.

Guadagno *et al.* (2013) did a research with videos on undergraduate students with the mean age of 19 year. The research consisted of two studies, the first one had ten videos and the second one had four videos, the videos were not commercials and they did not fall into the same categories. The conclusion of the study was that strong affective responses (for instance emotions) could lead to a video become viral.

Söderbäck & Tedebo (2014) did a research including viral video ads 2014. In their study, they gathered primary data through focus groups and an electronic survey on Facebook. Their respondents in the focus groups consisted of university students in Uppsala. The study looked at three different viral video ads that they picked from YouTube. The viral video ads were marketing for different products and brand-categories: bottle water/water company, donation/non-governmental organization, and car/car brand. The study concluded that out of the viral video ads, which were studied, multiple content characteristics were present. However, not all videos contained the same ones. At last, one thing that the authors concluded was that some of the content characteristics could be seen as similar or even synonymous.

4.2 Not use of respondents as the main method

Porter & Golan (2006) did a study on different advertising, television advertisement, and viral advertisement. The advertisement they had collected was coded and compared with each other. A couple of findings were made. One of the finding was that provocative content was seen as more important in viral advertising than in traditional. Different things were explained to be provocative, for instance sex, nudity and violence. One explanation to why more content that is provocative was found in viral advertising could according to the authors be that a

different regulation for traditional- and viral advertising was current. Another finding was that humour was a content that was found in almost all advertisements that were viral.

Berger & Milkman (2012) did a research by studying New York Times webpage to see why some online content became more viral than others did. They collected primary data through a web crawler (information from a website is saved). The information was then coded and that showed that positive content was more viral than negative, but that it was not only that which affected how viral something became. Berger & Milkman (2012) followed up this by doing tests on respondents and found that arousal (psychological term) was a factor too. In their article, they also mention that different content can be perceived as for instance positive and that there might be an overlap of some of these content characteristics.

5 Empirical results

In this chapter, the empirical results of the study are presented. The presentation is divided into three parts. First, the viral video ads representing this study's unit of analysis are presented. Secondly, follows the focus groups that were a part of the data collection. Lastly, the third part consists of the individual interviews, which was also a component of the data collection.

5.1 Unit of analysis

Three viral video ads were found that fulfilled the criteria that were constructed for selecting a suitable unit of analysis. See Table 5 for the details of the selected viral video ads.

Table 5. Description of the viral video ads that were a part of this study

Viral video 1 (VV Rustic)	
Name	Quilted Northern Rustic Weave Artisanal Toilet Paper
Length	43 seconds
Views	766 897 (2017-04-25 19:10)
Uniform Resource Locator (URL)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRIbtabKRfM
Published	Published 1 April 2016
Viral video 2 (VV Dad)	
Name	Angel Soft® "Just Dad - Shaving" Commercial
Length	15 seconds
Views	535 555 (2017-04-25 19:10)
URL	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwR9ddhRGIs
Published	Published 9 January 2017
Viral video 3 (VV Emma)	
Name	Emma, Le Trefle
Length	38 Seconds
Views	12 059 458 views (2017-04-25 19:10)
URL	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRDSj62tlvQ
Published	Published 7 March 2013

As Table 5 shows, the viral video ads represented three different brands, had different lengths, had different publication dates, and different number of views.

Here follows a short description of the plots of the viral video ads. The first video, VV Rustic, shows how toilet paper used to be made, while people in modern life, today, used the old paper, and show how they feel about it through their body language. A storyteller describes the toilet paper and the people in the VV Rustic do not speak at all. The second video, VV Dad, shows a father who demonstrates for his daughter how to shave. Both the father and the daughter shave their legs in the clip; they cut themselves, and use toilet paper to stop the bleeding. A storyteller describes how to raise a child and the father and daughter talks to each other. The last video, VV Emma, shows a family with the man complaining on his partner by saying her name, Emma, every time she uses paper and shows her how to use an iPad instead. The clip ends with the man on the toilet, there is no toilet paper left, he shouts Emma, and he gets an iPad with an image of toilet paper tossed in under the door.

5.2 Focus groups

The results from the focus groups are presented in the order that they were conducted. Observe that the viral video ads are presented in different orders in the focus groups. They are done that since the respondents drew parallels between the viral video ads.

5.2.1 Focus group 1

The first focus group was held in Skurup on 2017-04-25, see Table 6 for respondents.

Table 6. Focus group 1 was made in Skurup and had four respondents

Name	Occupation	Age
Cecilia Svensson	Self-employed	60
Åsa Ekblad	Politician/Student (Political Science)	33
Annika Svensson	Student (Social Work)	35
Eva Tunstig	Economist	57

As Table 6 shows, there is a spread of the age in focus group 1 and they had all different occupations. The respondents consisted of only women.

VV Emma was the first stimuli material showed to the group and it offered a variety of discussions. Firstly, the respondents showed happiness with their body language while watching the clip. After that, the group talked about the clip and all of them thought it was humoristic and that it had some kind of point. What the point was, was discussed and they all thought in some way that the technic cannot take over everything, for instance they discussed that we will need paper. Another thing that two of the respondents mentioned as the point of the clip was the repetition; the name Emma was heard many times and they started to wonder if that was the brand name and therefore the point of the clip. Following, the gender was something that was perceived as humoristic and a part of the point in the clip, with reference to that, the women in the clip who used paper and the man who needed it in the end. At last, all the respondents would have spread the clip in some way.

The second stimulus was VV Dad. The respondents' first reaction to this was surprise that it was already over, they thought it was too short and had trouble to get the point. After seeing the clip again, they talked about that they thought it was missing something and would not share, talk, like or comment it. It was according to the focus group missing one of these things: humoristic point, catchiness, and a point that affect or as in the VV Emma a repetition. Another thing that they thought was wrong with the clip was that the message to shave legs, it did not occur right. Even though they did not think, the message occurred to them they saw some points with the father helping his daughter.

The last stimulus in focus group 1 was VV Rustic. A happy mood spread in the room and all the respondents started with interest to discuss what they had seen. Many aspects and details was discussed or mentioned, for instance: comic, rustic, curiosity, handmade, genuine, little boy, beautiful paper, repetition, memorable, pain, educational, fact-filled, nostalgic, happiness, inspiration, positive, negative, information, new and the clips tone. The respondents thought it was a good clip and would have spread it in some way.

In general, the group saw themselves as people who spread clips in different ways (share, like, talk, comment, tag, or send). They did it in different amounts weekly.

5.2.2 Focus group 2

The second focus group was held in Uppsala on 2017-04-27, see table 7 for the respondents.

Table 7. Focus group 2 was made in Uppsala and had four respondents

Name	Occupation	Age
Christoffer Stampe	Student (Science in Forestry)	26
Anton Paulsson	Forester	26
Roger Nilsson	Self-employed/Sales	26
Hanna Blomberg	Student (Agricultural Science)	24

It is apparent from this table (7) that the respondents are of the same age. The occupation is varied, 50 percent of them are working, and the other half is studying. One fourth of the respondents were female.

VV Dad was the first stimuli material showed for focus group 2. The group had some thoughts about the clip. At first they seemed surprised of the length and when asked about if they would talk or share it (by sharing, liking or commenting or sending), the respondents were unanimous in the view that they would not do it because it was short. Another thing that they discussed about the clip was that it might send the wrong message: should women shave their legs. The men in the group did not think the clip suited them and the female respondent thought the clip was a little funny.

The second stimulus was VV Rustic. Laughs and smiles from the focus group appeared under and after the clip. The clip opened up for different aspects to discuss. At first, the majority of the respondents would have spread the clip in some way, either in a group or to certain people. Secondly, they thought it had humour and a few respondents thought it was sarcastic. Further, they perceived the VV Rustic as memorable. At last, they talked about that it was natural or in other words handmade and that they did not perceive the clip as a commercial.

The last stimulus was VV Emma. Everyone had seen it before and some of the respondents had spread it when they saw it. They thought the clip was old, but a little funny and had a good point; toilet paper is something that we will always use.

The VV Emma stimuli lead the respondents back to their first stimulus VV Dad. It became clear that the respondents had perceived it differently concerning what product that was promoted. Was it the razor or toilet paper? After discussing them, they all seemed to agree that, it was toilet paper and not the razor. Even though they had different perceptions of the stimuli, they perceived it clear that it was a commercial because of the big brand name in the end.

In general, the group respondents saw themselves as restrictive concerning spreading things. They saw themselves as the generation that had been active and spread a lot before. Now they felt that they had eyes on them from relatives and potential work colleagues/chiefs. They wanted to neither “poison” their friends’ different feeds (for instance Facebook) nor be connected with wrong things. To conclude this, the focus group thought of how they marketed themselves and how their actions affected their friends’ feeds. They spread things a few times a month.

5.2.3 Focus group 3

The third focus group was held in Värmland on 2017-04-29 and the group composition resembled the age structure of focus group 2 with a difference that they were a little younger, see Table 8.

Table 8. Focus group 3 was made in Värmland and had four respondents

Name	Occupation	Age
Hampus Tillberg	Student (Science in engineering)	27
Johanna Nyman	Student (Economics)	23
Petter Tillberg	Student (Science in engineering)	21
Klara Tillberg	Student (Medicine)	24

As Table 8 shows, the respondents had similar ages and that all of them were students. Focus group 3 consisted of an equal amount of women and men.

The focus group was full of energy and the first stimulus for the focus group was VV Rustic. The respondents laughed and smiled during the clip and it opened up for a couple of views and discussions. First, the majority of the group thought it was humoristic and they would have spread it in some way, through either tagging or sending in a group. Since it was a commercial one of the respondents argued not to spread it because of the person's dislike of commercials, but tagging a person could be an action after all. Another respondent also thought it would be a funny thing to tag people, who he or she thought would appreciate to see VV Rustic. The respondents picked out specific parts of the clip that they used to describe why to spread the clip or buy the product. The parts they mentioned were for instance, "extra virgin" and "bark". After this, the focus group discussed their different choices of toilet paper and which ones they preferred. Before the next stimuli material, the oldest respondent in the focus group expressed that he did not want to be associated with toilet paper and saw himself as restrictive of what he shared. The purpose of social media had according to the respondent changed from a place to send messages into something else.

The second stimulus for the focus group was VV Emma. After the clip, there was a common sense not to spread VV Emma if they would have gotten in contact with it, among the respondents. A couple of things were mentioned of why this was not popular by the focus group and comparison was made with VV Rustic. To begin, they perceived the clip as too ordinary; they felt it was like a television commercial in for example France. In addition, not everyone in the focus group understood the clip. That lead some of the respondents to share their viewpoint that the underlying message of the clip was that we will always need paper. The message was then argued about, since the respondents knew other ways to clean themselves after using the toilet. Finally, a comparison with VV Rustic was made and they argued that the first one was right in time (natural, organic), felt hipster, had association factors and the VV Emma felt like commonplace with a wrong message.

The last stimulus in focus group 3 was VV Dad. The respondents expressed that it was short and they wanted to see it again. After seeing the VV Dad again, they had their views clear. None of them would spread the clip. A reason to this was that it was too short. Another was that it was too obvious that it was a commercial, with a logo and the toilet paper was displayed to clearly. They started despite that, to discuss with intense of which direction that is the right way to shave, with the fur or against it. Finally, they connected back to the other clips and they still remembered details from the VV Rustic and said that it was not obvious that it was a commercial and could just have been an "ordinary" clip, whilst the other two felt like commercials.

The majority of the focus group spread videos weekly or monthly. The things that they spread were funny, with animals, informational, or educational. The oldest respondent did it less often; he estimated that he did it at top once a quarter.

5.3 Individual interviews

Six stores were contacted until allowance to conduct interviews in three out of the contacted stores was received see Table 9. The approach used for the interviews followed the interview structure presented in subsection 2.4.2 Individual interviews.

Table 9. Contacting stores to get allowance to do individual interviews in them

Store	Response	Note
Willys (Ystad)	No	Storeowner wanted an ok from head office of the concern, since toilet paper was a tricky product. Head office was not reached.
Ica Kvantum (Ystad)	Yes	Storeowner gave allowance.
Ica Maxi (Gnista, Uppsala)	No	Storeowner needed a written query to process the allowance. Time was restricted.
Stora Coop (Boländerna, Uppsala)	No	The storeowner did not allow it.
Coop Konsum (Västertorg, Uppsala)	Yes	Store manager gave allowance.
Willys (Kungsgatan, Uppsala)	Yes	The storeowner gave allowance.

As shown in Table 9 two stores in Uppsala and one in Ystad were used for the individual interviews. The results from the stores are presented in Table 10. The interviews were conducted on different days of the week, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, but at similar times of the day.

Table 10. Individual interviews in stores

Store	Respondents		Gender (participate)	
	<i>Participate</i>	<i>Not participate</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Ica Kvantum	10	2	2	8
Coop Konsum	3	-	2	1
Willys	12	3	5	7
	25	5	9	16

A closer inspection of Table 10 shows a couple of things. Firstly, the overall response rate was high, 83 percent of whom were asked chose to participate, and secondly out of those 64 percent were women. Lastly, Coop Konsum had the highest response rate, but the fewest respondents.

The age of the participants varied during the individual interviews. At the different stores, the mean ages were 44, 34, respective 56. Figure 6 shows the ages of all the participants from the individual interviews.

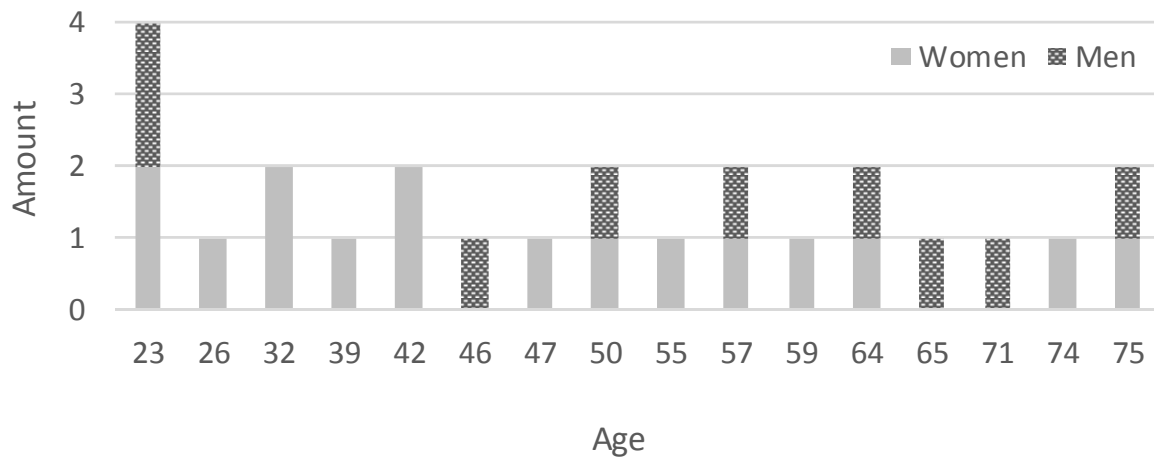


Figure 6. The staple diagram shows the age distribution of the participants from the individual interviews.

A closer inspection of the Figure 6 reveals that there were respondents from all age decades from twenty up to seventy. The age decades have approximately the same amount of participants in them too.

In response to the question (if the participants would talk and/or share the video with others? If yes/no, why?), 11 of the 25 participants answered that they would do so and why respective why not can be seen in Table 11. The most popular clip to share or talk about was VV Emma and VV Dad was the least popular clip to talk about/share, only one would have done it. Some interviewees thought the “product” was bad in the VV Dad since the people in the movie cut themselves with the razors. The brand in the VV Dad clip sells toilet papers and not razors, so that was an interesting observation.

Table 11. Information that was collected during the individual interviews

Viral Video	Respondents	Comments
VV Rustic	7	Birch, bad product, humoristic, art, history, timing that the clip is viewed, trend, thoughtful, intelligent funny
VV Dad	8	Not interest of shaving legs, to ordinary product, to ordinary thing, silly, commercial, funny, political, interest of product, feminism, exchanged rolls (dad shows son to shave beard), political, historic
VV Emma	10	Comic, typical boys, simple solution, clever, logic, humour, commercial, educational, funny, good message (do not judge to quickly), good twist, trendy, how it looks today, revenge comedy

A closer observation of Table 11 reveals that there was one fault during the data collection. The VV Emma was at one moment showed twice after each other. That explains why VV Rustic has fewer respondents than the VV Dad and VV Emma most. This is not anything that has impacted the responses as the respondents only saw one viral video ad each.

6 Analysis

The analysis is presented in two steps with the purpose of making it easy to connect it to the study's aim. First, follows the individual analyses of the three stimuli, which have been used in the thesis. For each of the stimulus, both the focus groups and the individual interviews have been presented. Finally, the last step (subsection, A comparison of the three viral video ads) puts the three-stimulus analyses into one analysis thereby displaying the bigger picture. In each one of the sections, the conceptual framework and the theory under content characteristics of communication have been used in order to analyse the empirics.

6.1 Stimulus

The three stimuli are analysed separately in this section, the structure of analysis during the respective stimulus is following the thirteen content characteristics presented in chapter 3.4. The first stimulus, VV Rustic, is presented in a different way compared to the others. The underlying reason is to enhance the understanding of the analysis. In the end, there is a table that summarizes the VV Rustic analysis, as its format might be perceived as too much text to read and difficult to take in.

6.1.1 Viral video Rustic

The respondents showed *emotions* while watching the video and the discussion following the clip was filled with a lot of energy. This connects to the theory by Botha & Reyneke (2013) and Deppe *et al.* (2005) that focus on the role of emotions. Respondents in the focus groups talked about the emotions they perceived from watching the little boy looking at the rough toilet paper and the woman who seemed to be in pain/discomfort after using the paper. The individual interviews also gave some laughs or giggle when watching the clip and their comments could also be connected to emotions. For instance, at first, it was mentioned by the interviewees that it was a bad product due to the emotions exhibited by the woman in the clip after using the toilet paper. Secondly, words such as funny and humoristic were also mentioned by the interviewees when describing the structure of the clip.

Of the respondents, none specifically mentioned either that the clip was a story or that the clip included *storytelling*. However, they did indirectly talk about it or make comments, which indicated that VV Rustic had storytelling properties. An example of a comment made in this instance was that the clip had a historic message. The VV Rustic showed the brand's history without using numbers as the way to present the message, they showed how the toilet paper had changed, and the tone in the clip had an old touch. Another example is that the respondents from the focus groups remembered many details from the clip and used it in their discussions, that is, knowledge, and information from the video had been remembered. To conclude, these examples are consistent with what both Yoder-Wise & Kowalski (2003) and Lagergren (2016) have been referring to as storytelling. Thereby, based on the discussions among the respondents there were several comments indicating that the VV Rustic clip was perceived as having a story to be told.

Symbolism was present in the video ad at many places (for example in the toilet paper made of bark that is associated with forest). Here follows some of the things that the focus groups and interviewees in the individual interviews picked up. At first, they thought the clip showed that the brand had a long history. They perceived the clip as nostalgic, and that it symbolised the current time. Another thing that was seen as symbolic was the guy, who produced the paper. Respondents thought that he was a hipster, the way he made the toilet paper, his beard,

and his shirt. These traits are something that many people connect with a hipster look. The shirt and the beard were also looks that respondents associated with forest. At last, the specific words “extra virgin” and “bark” were mentioned and described as metaphors for fresh/clean respective forest. To summarise, symbolism was definitely a part of VV Rustic. It was clear that both the metaphors and objects as Eksvård (2011), Cohen (1985) and Williamson (1978) associates with symbolism existed in the discussed clip.

The VV Rustic included people with different skin colours. It was not presented in an obvious way, even though it was one sequence of the clip. This was not something that people talked about, but they mentioned that the clip was right in time. References to right in time and that people could associate with the clip could be a sign that *culture* was a part of the clip. None of the respondents had different skin colours, but they were having friends with other skin colours and that could be a reason for why they were able to associate with VV Rustic. The visual appearance of people with various skin colours can be seen as similar with how Eksvård (2017) described Obama’s use of culture in his speeches. Obama referred to different skin colours in his speeches in order to connect with his audience and get them to listen. It was possible for Obama to do this, as his father was black and his mother white. This can be seen as comparable with what is seen in VV Rustic.

A *good cause* was not something that was either discussed or seen in the VV Rustic. Also, the *length* of the stimulus was not brought up in the discussions about the clip. However, the length was indirectly not seen as a problem as all the focus groups compared VV Rustic (and VV Emma) to VV Dad and argued that VV Dad was too short. The fact that length was not specifically expressed in the VV Rustic discussions indicated that the time did not have a negative impact on this stimulus. As seen by Jeong (2015) the length of marketing messages have varied and Söderbäck & Tedebo (2014) found that length has an impact on how viral videos are perceived.

Humour was a content characteristic mentioned and found to be important in the clip. It was thought to have sarcasm, intelligence, and to be entertaining. Humour could accordingly to Buijzen & Valkenburg (2004) be either visual or physical. In VV Rustic, the look of the little boy was part of the visual humour noted by the respondents and the pain the woman had after using the toilet paper represented the physical humour.

VV Rustic had a guitar *sound* in the background, which seemed to enhance the video’s message. Without the sound effect, the video would have felt silly. According to Eksvård (2011), sound could hinder a message; however as the sound in this clip was perceived as justified and made the clip more interesting the sound in the clip was well suited. In addition, listening to the storyteller’s voice was comfortable. From this observation of the respondents/interviewees, it is possible to make a link to tone of voice and as Eksvård (2011) said, the tone affects communication, in this case in a positive direction.

The respondents expressed multiple signs of that they perceived the clip as *positive* and it gave them a lot of energy to talk about the clip. Since, many of the respondents seemed positive about the clip; it can be a content characteristic that made the clip viral accordingly to Berger & Milkman (2012) and Guadagno *et al.* (2013) researches.

VV Rustic had many things, which people remembered and the clip was *memorable*. In the focus groups, this was revealed as the groups had several items to talk about concerning the clip and they recalled things that they took up at different times during the whole session.

During the individual interviews, the respondents also mentioned specific things from the clip, which meant that also they perceived the clip as memorable. A straightforward link to the theory about why the clip was memorable is that the hipster theme was recognisable and it contained humour, as presented above. A recognisable theme is consistent with Söderbäck & Tedebo (2014) and humor with Kaplan & Haenlein (2011) respective Söderbäck & Tedebo (2014) as attributes that make something memorable.

The VV Rustic was perceived as *interesting*, because respondents, as mentioned above, associated the man with a hipster. Another aspect that made the clip interesting was its unpredictability, for example, the ending with a toilet paper roll of bark from a birch. These two aspects are consistent with what Söderbäck & Tedebo (2014) argue as interesting.

In the stimuli, information was given of how toilet paper was made many years ago. Some of these parts could be of *practical use*. Also, the information regarding the source (trees) of toilet paper was made and could be practically used in arguments. These two items can both be seen as coherent with Berger & Milkman (2012).

VV Rustic was regarded as an ordinary clip and people did not directly think of it as being a commercial. They thought it felt commercial-free, as the focus in the clip did not occur to be on the brand's actual product. The perception of the stimuli could be compared with a television programme and therefore perceived as *commercial-free*.

In conclusion, of what have been written in the paragraphs above a table has been created to visualize the existence of the content characteristics in VV Rustic, see Table 12.

Table 12. A summarizing of content characteristics in VV Rustic

Content characteristic	Present
Emotions	Yes
Storytelling	Yes
Symbolic	Yes
Culture	Yes
Good cause	No
Length	Yes
Humour	Yes
Sound	Yes
Positive/negative content	Yes
Memorable	Yes
Interesting	Yes
Useful content	Yes
Commercial-free	Yes

Table 12 clearly concludes that VV Rustic had all of the mentioned content characteristics except one, good cause. The VV Rustic was the viral video ad, which was perceived as most popular by the respondents in the focus groups and second by the interviewees.

6.1.2 Viral video Dad

The content characteristics found in VV Dad are presented in Table 13.

Table 13. An analysis of VV Dad

Content characteristic	Present	Comment
Emotions	Yes	Present in the video ad and by the respondents
Storytelling	Yes	Storyteller in the video ad and images of how to raise a child
Symbolic	Yes	The father's actions symbolised what the storyteller was telling.
Culture	No	
Good cause	No	
Length	Yes	Respondent perceived it as too short.
Humour	No	Mentioned by respondents as missing.
Sound	Yes	Music and voice
Positive/negative content	Yes	Perceived as wrong message/confusing and therefore negative. One respondent perceived it as positive because of the presence of feminism (dad helping daughter to shave compared to helping a soon to shave).
Memorable	Yes	Respondent recalled information in the clip.
Interesting	No (Yes)	In general no, but one thought, it was interesting. Respondents mostly perceived themselves as the wrong recipient.
Useful content	No	Discussion about how to shave properly got up, but was not seen as useful.
Commercial-free	No	Brand, logo, and products were too obvious and conspicuous.

The Table 13 illustrates that the video ad approximately have half of the content characteristics present. The VV Dad felt for the majority of the respondents as sending the wrong message and misunderstandings about what product the brand was selling. Something that all perceived was that it was an obvious commercial and that it was too short.

6.1.3 Viral video Emma

The content characteristics found in VV Emma are presented in Table 14.

Table 14. An analysis of VV Emma

Content characteristic	Present	Comment
Emotions	Yes	Present in the video ad and by the respondents.
Storytelling	Yes	Story about a family.
Symbolic	Yes	Technical things will not change everything.
Culture	No	
Good cause	No	
Length	Yes	Perceived as good.
Humour	Yes	Had humour with a twist, logic and gender. It was a visual humour.
Sound	Yes	Voice, music and other sounds
Positive/negative content	Yes	The message that the video ad gave.
Memorable	Yes	Details and story.
Interesting	Yes (No)	The clip was seen as educational with a good point. Focus group 3 did not agree that it was a good point; they saw other solutions, which did not include toilet paper. They also perceived the VV Emma as ordinary.
Useful content	Yes	Good point and educational.
Commercial-free	No	Logo, product, and structure of clip.

Table 14 displays that many of the content characteristics were present in VV Emma. Only three out of the thirteen characteristics was clearly not present in the video. The remaining ten was to some extent part of the video; however, whether interesting was present or not could be arguable. The reason why interesting was discussable was because one focus group, did not fancy the clip at all and perceived it as completely ordinary. Accordingly to the theory (Söderbäck & Tedebo, 2014), an unpredictable item could make a video interesting. However, besides that one focus group the remaining respondents perceived VV Emma as unpredictable, which explains why it was decided to mark interesting as present in the stimulus.

6.2 A comparison of the three viral video ads

The VV Rustic was the viral video ad, which was found to contain the most content characteristics of the three stimuli used in this study, see Table 15. A comparison of how many times the different viral video ads had been viewed when they were chosen for this study revealed that VV Emma had most number of views, VV Rustic came second and finally VV Dad had the least views. The VV Emma was the oldest clip, which could be an explanation of why it was still popular by the respondents, but as previously mentioned by one focus group; it was old. The VV Rustic and VV Dad were released only nine months apart; thereby, it can both based on the respondents' comments and the views clearly be seen which one that was most popular, VV Rustic.

Table 15. A comparison of the three viral video ads

Content characteristic	VV Rustic	VV Dad	VV Emma
Emotions	Yes	Yes	Yes
Storytelling	Yes	Yes	Yes
Symbolic	Yes	Yes	Yes
Culture	Yes	No	No
Good cause	No	No	No
Length	Yes	Yes	Yes
Humour	Yes	No	Yes
Sound	Yes	Yes	Yes
Positive/negative content	Yes	Yes	Yes
Memorable	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interesting	Yes	No (Yes)	Yes (No)
Useful content	Yes	No	Yes
Commercial-free	Yes	No	No

It can be seen from the data in Table 15 that all the viral video ads contained more than 50 per cent of the identified content characteristics. Interestingly, all the viral video ads had many different attributes, which can be seen in the subheadings 5.2 and 5.3 that lead the analysis to the identification of the content characteristics. The attributes were many and the answer to the research question “What attribute/attributes does a low-involvement forest-related product viral video ad have, which can give it viral potential?” can be found in chapter 5.

A couple of other observations from the data in Table 15 deserve to be highlighted. First, the content characteristic good cause was not present in any of the video ads. It led to the conclusion that it was not an essential characteristic for making any of the video ads viral. Another observation was that culture was only present in one of the stimuli. It is somewhat surprisingly as today’s world is becoming more and more diversified. Lastly, only one of the stimuli was perceived as commercial-free. The reason for this might be that it is difficult to make videos that are perceived as commercial-free as we, consumers, are aware of the continual presence of commercials in our everyday life.

In all the focus groups, emotions were shown either by the respondents while watching the stimuli or during the discussions afterwards. The stimuli arose different intensities of emotions and VV Rustic was the clip that spread the most happiness and triggered the most intense discussions.

Humour was something, which all of the respondents in the focus groups brought up in their discussions in one way or another. The humour appeared from the respondents to vary in its form, just as described by Buijzen & Valkenburg (2004) it could, for instance, be visible or audible. It was also clearly something mentioned as impacting their willingness to spread a video ad. Also the interviewees were of the same opinion.

In general, the group of respondents, younger individuals (around age 26) were the most restrictive people when it came to spreading viral videos. Those who were a couple of years younger respective older were in general more willing to spread videos. This could be because people around the age of 26 were those who had recently graduated or were about to finish their education and thereby either had or were looking for jobs. These people seemed to be concerned about how they would be perceived when spreading things, since it would become part of how they were marketing themselves.

All in all, the results from the analysis provide important insights into viral video ads for low-involvement forest-related products. Not only one content characteristic seems to be enough for a video to become viral that is a combination of a couple content characteristics appears to be required.

7 Discussion

The discussion chapter consists of two parts. The first section covers the empirical results and the analysis. In the second part follows a discussion about the method used in this study.

7.1 Empirical results and Analysis

The current study found that many content characteristics were present in the different viral video ads see Table 15. This is consistent and in line with findings in previous studies, for example, Huang *et al.* (2013), Berger & Milkman (2012), and Porter & Golan (2006). This indicates that viral marketing for a forest related low-involvement product is similar to findings made on viral marketing in general.

A lot of the research made on viral marketing has mostly included young people, for instance the researches by Ho & Dempsey (2010), Huang *et al.* (2013), and Guadagno *et al.* (2013). Their choice of respondents is understandable, as they can make a strong argument supporting their choice that is that younger people is the group who mostly used Internet. Therefore, they became a suitable group from which the data could be gathered. Especially, the usage of students appears to be particularly popular. The use of Internet is nowadays not something that is restricted to solely one generation (Greenwood *et al.* 2011). Therefore, it could be valuable to redo some of the existing research and see if the findings would be the same when including other generations as well. In this thesis, none of the mentioned studies was re-done; however, this thesis did study a more age-diverse population. This research was not focused at comparing generations or other types of populations, but one interesting observation concerning this matter was made. The respondents around 26 years of age seemed, in this research, to distinguish themselves from the others with their perspective of spreading online content and their general appearance online. This finding could imply that it would be interesting to follow up with a study that focuses on age aspects and other life style or demographic variables in relation to perception of viral videos.

In Berger & Milkman's (2012) study, it was pointed out that various content characteristics could be overlapping; also, Söderbäck & Tedebo (2014) did a similar observation in their study. Similarly as with these studies, some of the factors in this thesis's theoretical framework can be seen as similar or as overlapping. The explanation why the same occurred in this study as in the previous studies can be explained. Not all the content characteristics in this study have previously been used in one and the same study. Instead, the factors in this study have been compiled from various studies/places. This was not seen as a problem when this study was conducted, but similarities/overlaps among the content characteristics is an interesting observation. Here follows an example of two content characteristics, which can be seen as overlapping. A person puts hand washing liquid in a dishwasher and the kitchen gets flooded. This can be perceived as both humorous and memorable. The reason why, is that it can be seen as a visual humour that it is unwise to use hand washing liquid in a dishwasher and therefore also memorable.

Humour can be different in various countries as described by Toncar (2001). Thereby, humour can be classified differently (as humour or not humorous) depending on who the respondents are and where they come from. The focus groups and the respondents thought differently about the viral video ads, which they were shown, not everyone found the same viral video ad humorous. This highlights an important aspect for future research to study, since Porter & Golan (2006) found humour in almost all-viral advertisement. If the purpose of a viral video ad is to be humorous with violence and nudity, and people do not understand/like this sort of humour, the viral video can harm the brand according to the research of Huang *et al.* (2013).

It has been suggested that provocative contents, such as, sex, nudity, and violence is more present in viral marketing than traditional (Porter & Golan, 2006). This does not appear to be the case in the viral video ads used in this thesis. It was nothing that was controlled for in this study, but neither sex, nudity, nor violence appeared in any of the viral video ads that were used. VV Emma had a man sitting on the toilet, but only his waist and upwards was visible. In the other two viral video ads, a tiny bit of skin (bare legs) was shown as well as some body language illustrating pain was present, but none of this or anything else was perceived as particularly provocative. This could indicate that either there has been a change of what marketers believe that people want to see or regulations of viral marketing have changed.

7.2 Method

The method in the study consisted of one minor error caused by the human factor; however, it should be emphasized that it was not assumed that this error had any impact on the results of this study. The error appeared when the individual interviews were conducted. It was that one stimulus was shown twice in a row. The error had no impact on the result, since the respondent was not affected. The error resulted in a difference of how many respondents, who got to view respective stimuli. Nevertheless, it was not something that impacted the overall results of the study. The fact that an error occurred showed how important it is to be observant when data is analysed and presented. The observed error shows that this study was observant in the presentation of the empirical results and the analysis.

In the method, it was described that two recording devices were going to be used during the focus groups. It can be seen as wise, since after one of the focus groups it was discovered that one of the recorders had failed. In conclusion, it is important to have a backup and not totally rely on one recorder during interviews.

During the data collection, the individual interviews did all offer different numbers of respondents. One of the stores, Coop Konsum, where the individual interviews were conducted had far less respondents compared to the others. There are plenty of reasons why this was the case. First of all, the store was considerably smaller in comparison to the other two. Secondly, there was another store situated within walking distance from the store, which was not the case with the others. Thirdly, it was raining heavily on the day that the store was visited, whereas there was no rain on the days when the interviews in the other stores were conducted. To summarise, which reason that had the greatest impact is unknown. The day and time that the different interviews were conducted was similar, so that would not provide any explanation.

The method of analysis was consistent with, a lot of literature that is referred to in this thesis. It is an indication that a good choice was made. One aspect that this study unfortunately did not analyse in detail was how the different samples distinguished from each other in terms of how the content characteristics in the viral video ads were perceived.

A unique aspect in this study was that the population who actually was buying the products (brands) was a part of the study. This was not the case for any of the other studies, for example the studies by Huang *et al.* (2013), Guadagno *et al.* (2013) Söderbäck & Tedebo (2014), which have been cited in this thesis. However, there is not anything implying that this choice of sample made any difference to the results of this thesis, as it was not analysed in detail, as it was not part of the research questions. Even though that particular aspect was not studied in detail this thesis still contributed with valuable information for marketers.

8 Conclusions

This chapter conclude what the research has resulted and gives suggestions on future research.

8.1 Results

As previously mentioned the aim of this study was to identify content characteristics, which gives potential for viral marketing of low-involvement forest-related products. To fulfil the aim, two research questions were used. The first one summarized what the existing literature has found to be the factors deciding whether something has viral potential or not. Several factors were identified (in relation to marketing communication) and were in this study categorized into thirteen content characteristics. The second research question of this thesis was to identify which attributes that were present in low-involvement forest-related viral video ads, which can contribute to its viral potential. It was found that significant amounts of attributes were present and multiple content characteristics occurred in each one of the viral video ads included in this research. The finding that multiple, and not only one, content characteristics were identified in each viral video ad has important implications for developing an understanding of why some video ads of low-involvement forest-related products become viral.

To develop a full picture of content characteristics for how video ads of low-involvement forest-related product become viral, additional studies using a larger data sample (more ads) would be required in order to allow statistical generalizations. However, the purpose of this study was not to make generalizations, instead this study was designed to be beneficial for marketers with a context bound understanding of characteristics of viral videos. If they keep the finding from this study in mind when deciding how to design their video ads it will most likely imply that they will have a higher probability of creating an ad that becomes viral.

8.2 Recommendations for future studies

Further research is needed to expand the use of this research. Content characteristic have been identified. However, which one/ones that are essential and/or may harm each other has not been in focus nor answered in this research. To study in more detail and to find the interdependencies as well how people prioritize the content characteristics would be of great interest for marketers when they produce video ads with the aim of them to become viral.

Below follows some more suggestions on future research:

- Study the population that is buying the products/brands, which are present in the viral marketing? Compare this with the group that do not buy the products/brands.
- What are the differences between the law that regulate traditional marketing and viral marketing?
- Describe the various content characteristics in more detail and how they could be distinguished from one to another with the purpose of avoiding overlaps/conflicts.

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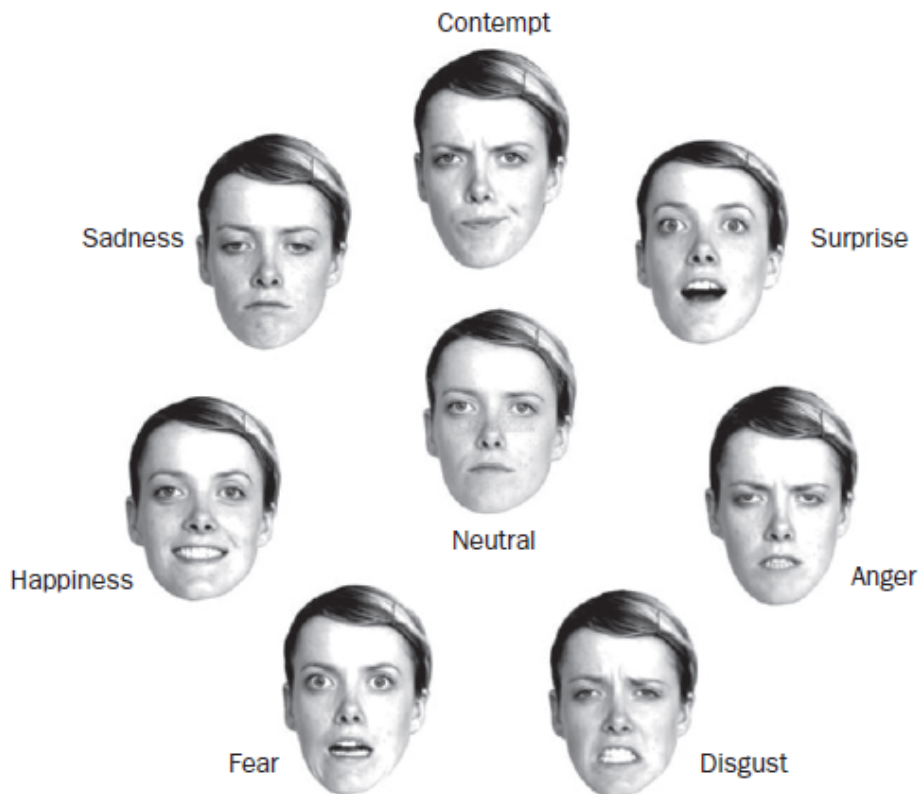
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Appendices

Appendix 1.

Facial expressions.



BrainJuicer © 2006

FaceTrace, BrainJuicer's measure of emotion (Wood, 2012, p. 33)³

The figure above illustrates the seven universal facial expressions as well as a neutral face (Wood, 2012). The head in the middle of the picture shows the neutral facial expression. It can be described as a relaxed face with no tensions. At the bottom right corner of the figure, disgust and anger are shown. Those can be described with the corners on the mouths bended down with tense eyebrows (the disgust's eyebrows are pulled up a little higher and more together than those of anger's). In the top right of the figure, surprise is illustrated whereas fear is found in the bottom left of the figure. Both of them have opened mouths, surprise's mouth is more opened than that of fear. The facial expressions both have quite tense eyebrows. Further, the figure illustrates contempt and sadness. Their eyebrows are pulled together, contempt more than sadness. Contempt has a resolute look with one of the corners of the mouth pulled to the side. The mouth of sadness is a little more relaxed. Finally, the facial expression happiness is illustrated with a big smile showing the teeth and with slightly lifted eyebrows.

³ Wood, O. (2012). 'How Emotional Tugs Trump Rational Pushes'. *Journal of advertising research*, 52(1), pp. 31-39.

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