A New Perspective on Viral Marketing
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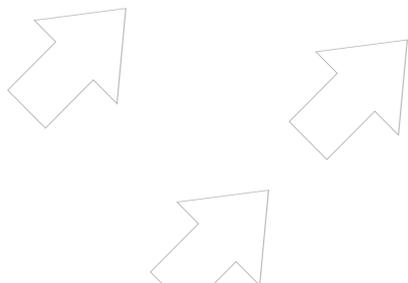
Resume

Dette speciale går tæt på viral marketing i en dansk kontekst og undersøger, hvordan en afgrænset population kan nås med en viral kampagne. Det gøres igennem en analyse af mulighederne for at markedsføre www.studentoptions.com til danske studerende gennem en viral kampagne. www.studentoptions.com er en hjemmeside, hvor studerende kan købe Microsoft software til reducerede priser.

Specialets analyse tager afsæt i både en teoretisk ramme og empiriske data. Den teoretiske ramme består af teori om viral- og buzz marketing, diffusion theory, interviews med viral marketingeksperter og litteratur om postmodernismes betydning for marketing. Den empiriske dimension består af en spørgeskemaundersøgelse med 2.780 danske studerende og individuelle interviews med otte opinionsdannende studerende, der alle bruger meget tid på internettet. I tråd med rapportens videnskabsteoretiske tilgang, der er inspireret af kritisk realisme, sættes teorien og empirien i spil via en abduktiv analysemetode.

Analysen viser, at mange studerende, også de opinionsdannende, piratkopier software, hvilket sætter spørgsmålstegn ved deres interesse i www.studentoptions.com. På trods af dette anbefales det alligevel at gennemføre en markedsføringsindsats, og vi konkluderer, at en viral kampagne vil være en velegnet metode til at lancere og markedsføre hjemmesiden. Da studerende ofte er tilbøjelige til at videresende artikler mere selektivt end filmklip og jokes, anbefales det, at den virale kampagne udformes i tråd med en public relations orienteret tilgang. Rapporten bidrager desuden med konkrete anbefalinger vedrørende en sådan kampagnes formål, budskab, USP og sprednings-metoder (diffusion).

På baggrund af analysen konkluderes det, at afgrænsede populationer kan være problematiske at nå via traditionelle virale kampagner i form af filmklip og billeder, der spiller på grov humor og sex. Kampagner, der følger en public relations orienteret tilgang, har derimod større sandsynlighed for at nå ud til medlemmer af populationen, da sådanne kampagner oftere videresendes selektivt. Rapporten anbefaler derfor kommunikatører og marketingsbranchen at overveje, hvilken form for viral kampagne der er bedst egnet til at formidle deres budskab. En anden af rapportens mere generelle konklusioner er, at virale kampagner der skaber værdi, og er relevante for modtageren, har størst sandsynlighed for at blive videresendt.

Abstract

The report explores viral marketing in a Danish context with focus on the possibilities for reaching a limited population with a viral campaign. This is done through a case study of the launch of www.studentoptions.com, a website selling Microsoft software to students at reduced prices.

The analysis is based on theory on viral and buzz marketing, diffusion theory, literature on post modernity's impact on marketing and interviews with viral marketing experts, as well as a survey with 2.780 Danish students and individual interviews with eight opinion leading Danish students, whom all spend a lot of time on the internet.

The conclusion is that viral marketing is a feasible method for marketing the website and following this, a plan of how a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com could be designed, is provided. In relation to reaching limited populations with viral marketing, it is concluded that this can be difficult via traditional viral campaigns based on film clips and jokes. Instead it is suggested that limited populations should be targeted with a public relations approach to viral marketing. Additionally, it is concluded that campaigns aimed at limited population will be most successful if designed to create relevant value for the receivers.

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Preface

This report is written between August 2005 and February 2006 in Copenhagen, by Louise Elver Hansen and Agnete Sylvest Jensen.

In the process of writing the report we have had many interesting and valuable meetings and encountered a number of interesting people that have all added to our report. First of all, we have had long and valuable conversations with our supervisor, Professor Kim Schrøder, Communication, Roskilde University, and have benefited from his thoughts and inputs. Additionally we have had a number of meetings with a team of people at Microsoft Denmark; Information Worker Product Solutions Manager Jakob Sand, Account Manager Mikael Dahlsgaard and Marketing Specialist Ulla Mikkelsen that have all given us their thoughts on our work, throughout the process. Furthermore both Claus Moseholm, Business director at GoViral, Kim Frederiksen, co-founder and SEO expert of Addvisors and PhD student in Integrated Communications, Simon Torp took the time to talk to us and have helped us grasp the universe of viral marketing, and how it is done in Denmark. We owe all of the above a big thank you.

Furthermore, we want to thank the eight informants that set time aside for letting us interview them, and all of the 2.780 students that answered our survey. And finally, thanks to Chris and Henrik for their patience.

All elements of the report have been created in very close collaboration between the two of us, and none of the chapters are written by one person only. However, following guidelines we state that: Agnete has written chapter one, three, five, seven and nine and Louise chapter two, four, six and eight.

The report contains 81 pages of 2400 characters each, including spaces.
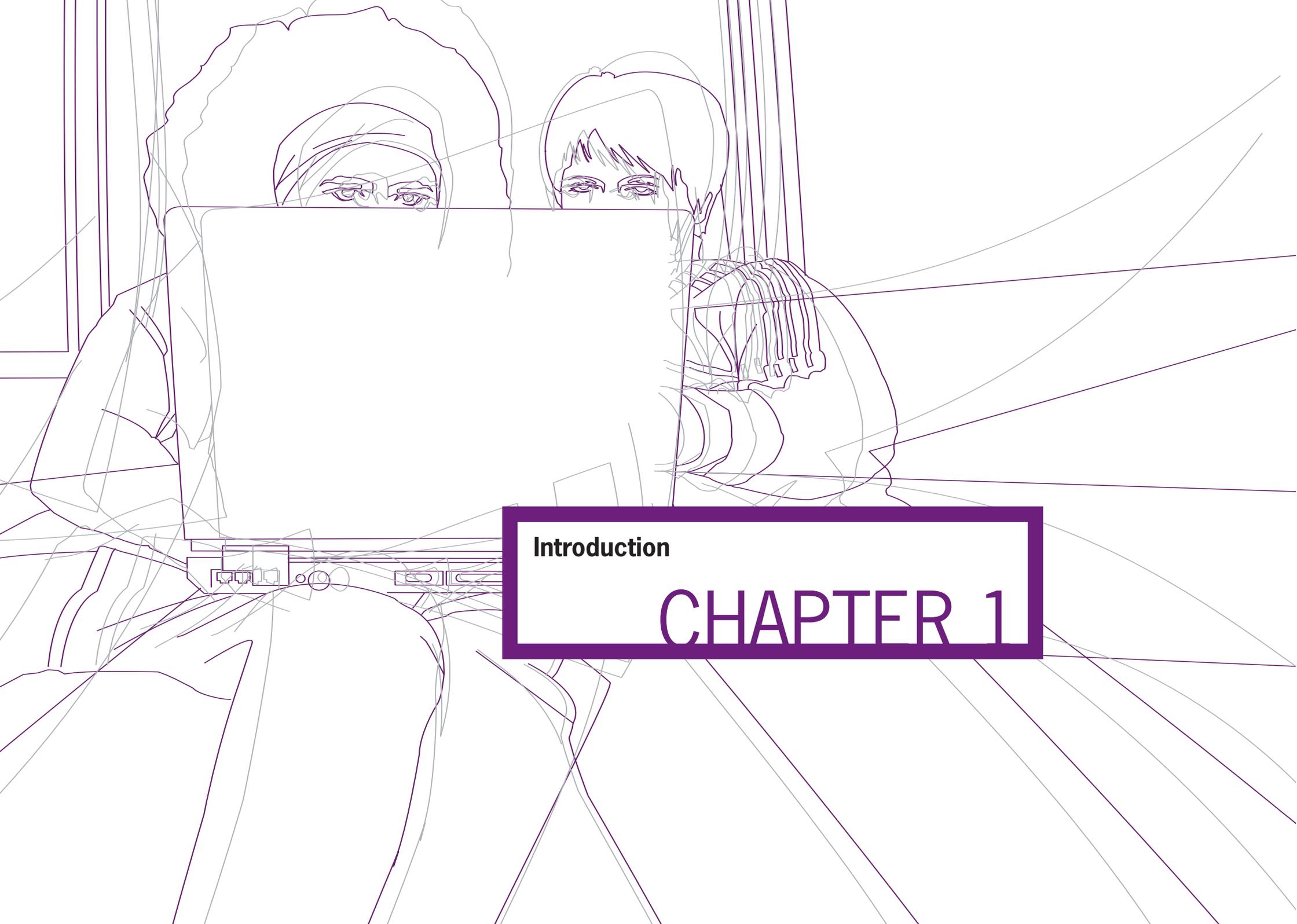
Introduction

CHAPTER 1

Chapter 1: Introduction

The initial motivation for the report at hand is a shared interest in communications and marketing targeted at innovative first-mover consumers. In traditional marketing literature these consumers are classified as innovators and early adopters, often acting as opinion leaders showing the way ahead for the more mainstream consumers.[1]

Marketers and communicators have at all times been interested in reaching and affecting these consumers. However, the societal changes of the past decades have created new challenges for marketing, advertising and communications. The influential consumers are becoming increasingly important, and it is therefore extremely important to nurture this group of consumers. In order to understand the necessity of this, a thorough understanding of the field that today's communication campaigns operate within is required.

Marketing in a new Millennium

As Firat et al.[2] and Cova,[3] we find that the field communication campaigns operate within is best conceptualized in light of post modernity. According to Harvey, one of the most notable aspects about post modernism is the total acceptance of the ephemerality, fragmentation, discontinuity and chaos.[4] Similarly Giddens argue that the late modern[5] society is marked by globalization and characterized by a fragmentation and breakdown of traditional societal bounds and boundaries. This break from traditional social structures arguably means that individuals in the late modern society are increasingly reflective and constantly question their own choices. This creates insecurity for the individual and a greater need for trust is identified. According to Giddens, this is relevant on an intimate level as well as on a more institutional level.[6] Following Giddens' terminology, Falkheimer argues that in the late modern society, public relations play a larger role. In Falkheimer's words;

> "Public relations som institution expanderar genom den senmoderna utvecklingen. Den ökade o säkerheten, reflexiviteten och detraditionaliseringen gynnar mötligheterna och behoven av strategiskt kommunikativa insatser, då organisationer av olika slag får ett ôkat behov av både proaktiv och reaktiv public relations."[7]

In line with Falkheimer stating that there is a greater need for public relations in the late modernity, we will argue that the past decades' increased globalisation and technological development have meant that the consumer of today experiences a great information overload and that this creates new challenges for marketing. It has become harder for marketers to get messages through to the right target audience through advertising via

traditional one-way communications mediums such as newspapers, billboards and television. With regards to television advertising for instance, Kaikati & Kaikati list three main reasons as to why the effect of traditional television advertising has decreased. Initially they argue that there is a growing criticism towards the advertising industry in general and that it is evident that major budgets for traditional television advertisements are not cost-effective. Secondly, audiences have become increasingly fragmented, and this makes it harder to track down the potential customers. And lastly the birth of digital video recorders has meant that it is possible for consumers to completely skip commercials.[8] We believe that these changes are not only applicable for television advertising, but can be seen in relation to the advertising industry in general. As Kaikati & Kaikati we conclude that in order to get through to increasingly fragmented audiences, it is necessary for marketers to explore new methods.

A marketing method that has been subject to much discussion in relation to reaching the postmodern consumer is creating two-way relations with consumers. In line with Firat et al., Cova argues that one of the main characteristics of the postmodern consumer is a lack of commitment and a quest towards experiences[9];

> "They (postmodern consumers, ed.) want to become part of processes and experience immersion in thematic settings rather than merely encounter finished products and images. That is why, in its new framework, marketing has to include the consumer not as a target for products but as a producer of experiences. The essence of postmodern experience is participation; without participation, the consumer is merely entertained and does not experience."[10]

As Cova calls for participation and giving consumers experiences, he argues for the obsolescence of traditional advertising, as he believes it misses the fundamental point of being an interactive experience of joint creation of meaning for the customer. Thus Cova is a fond advocate of relationship marketing,[11] which he believes meets the needs of the post modern consumers.

However, Cova wrote this in the mid nineties, when relationship marketing was a buzzword and seen as the solution for marketing management. Ten years on, and loyalty cards and memberships deals are omnipresent within most products and services, making the attractiveness of this decline considerably - and consequently often met by passiveness. In our view, the post modern consumer is marked by a great degree of reflectivity and individuality and is thus only interested in a membership of something – or relation to a company - if it provides direct tangible value for him/herself. Furthermore, people, and the younger audiences in particular, show a growing ignorance towards being told how to act by advertising and larger corporations. This is founded in scepticism towards big business and corporation,[12] and can imply that creating a relationship with consumers is becoming consistently harder. In line with this, many recent studies point towards the fact that consumers are much more likely to take advice from friends and acquaintances than from authorities or advertising campaigns.[13]

1 Rogers, 1995, Metz, 2004

2 Firat et al, 1994: 47

3 Cova, 1996: 2

4 Harvey, 1989: 307

5 Contrasting to most other post modernist writers, Giddens do not use the word post modernism for the society, as he views this as a term situated within the arts. Giddens therefore refers to the society as being in a state of late modernity.

6 Giddens, 1990: Chapter 1

7 Falkheimer, 2002: 32

8 Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004: 7-8

9 Cova, 1996: 4

10 Cova, 1996: 4

11 Relationship marketing is a form of marketing which emphasizes the importance of the relationships developed between an organisation and other parties including customers, partners and the trade. (Pickton & Broderick, 2001: 720)

12 Salzman et al, 2003:1, Metz, 2004: 2, Moseholm, 2004, Langer, 2001: 253

13 Salzman et al, 2003:1

Because of these developments, a growing number of companies and agencies are nowadays turning to new marketing forms that revolve around word of mouth and the creation of a buzz. The rise of these new marketing forms has been subject to much marketing literature, where they have most often been termed 'word of mouth marketing' or 'buzz marketing'. However, the terms 'stealth marketing' and 'viral marketing' can also be found referring to word of mouth inspiring activities.[14] Throughout this report, any marketing efforts aimed at creating a buzz - making consumers talk about a product or brand - will be classified as buzz marketing.

Viral marketing

In essence, buzz marketing is about initiating a positive buzz that will spread exponentially from consumer to consumer. When a campaign is released, marketers have limited control of it. It is therefore crucial to initiate messages to people who are likely to adapt quickly to new products and services and who are likely to spread the campaign in their circle of acquaintance to the more mainstream consumers.[15] The people, who are able to do this are the first-mover consumers or in theoretical terms, innovators and early adapters functioning as opinion leaders. Their ability to 'spread the word' in a trusted manner make them a crucial tool in modern marketing.

One of the latest additions in this respect is viral marketing. Simply put, viral marketing is buzz marketing on the internet. Within the terminology of viral marketing the innovative first-mover consumers are referred to as e- fluentials and tech-fluentials.[16] We believe that a thorough understanding of and insight into the e- and tech-fluentials is crucial in order to successfully implement viral campaigns. Our academic interest for making this report lies in researching into the possibilities within viral marketing and how to target e- and tech-fluentials. This interest forms the foundation for our research problem. In order to be able to study this, we have carried out a case study of the potential to virally solve a specific communication problem faced by the software company Microsoft Denmark.

www.studentoptions.com

Our choice to work with this case was made by what Flyvbjerg refers to as Information Orientated Selection.[17] This implies maximising the utility of information from small samples or cases that stand alone. In Flyvbjerg's words cases are selected:

> "… på grundlag af forventninger om informationsindhold, baseret på allerede eksisterende data samt på vurderinger ved involverede nøglepersoner og forskere."[18]

In late August 2005 it came to our knowledge that Microsoft Denmark's department for the public sector and education was looking to launch a website, www.studentoptions.com to students with a viral campaign.

Microsoft in Denmark had no previous experience with viral marketing. By this time we had spent some time researching into opinion leadership and theory about innovators and early adopters. We found that the challenge Microsoft Denmark was facing, made it possible for us to work with literature on this subject – and at the same time apply it in practice. Microsoft Denmark gave us the opportunity to research into how the website for students could be launched with a viral campaign, and provided us with access to internal networks and regular meetings. We found that this relationship was beneficial for us, as we could work in depth with a particular case and have access to the information we needed from the company. Furthermore, we found it interesting to work with www.studentoptions.com before the launch as we felt this gave us the opportunity to affect future decisions.

Problem Identification

Following the above, the aim of this report is to research whether www.studentoptions.com can be successfully launched in Denmark with the use of viral marketing and, if so, researching how to do this, providing a suggestion for a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com. This will ultimately provide us with a deeper insight into our field of interest, namely how viral marketing can be applied in targeting a specific audience and how e- and tech-fluentials actively can be used in this. Our research problem is therefore defined as:

> *Research Problem*
> Is viral marketing a good strategy to market www.studentoptions.com to Danish students and, if so, how can such a campaign be designed? - Subsequently, how can a limited population like this most appropiately be reached with a viral campaign?

In order to research this we find it crucial to research the IT-practices and pirating behaviour of Danish students. It is also important to understand the perception students hold of Microsoft. Furthermore, we find a thorough understanding of viral marketing - particularly in a Danish context - and the concepts of e- and tech-fluentials, necessary. Finally, we believe it is essential to identify and research the behavioural patterns of the e- and tech-fluentials among Danish students in order to explore the opportunities for creating a viral campaign focusing on these two groups of consumers. Our research questions are therefore as follows:

Research Questions

- What are Danish students' IT-practices and pirating behaviour?
- What is Danish students' opinion of Microsoft?
- What is viral marketing and how is this used in Denmark?
- How are e- and tech-fluentials characterized and defined, theoretically?
- What are the characteristics of e- and tech-fluentials among Danish students – with particular emphasis on their IT-practices, pirating behaviour and perception of Microsoft?

14 Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004: 6, Torp, 2005

15 Salzman et al., 2003: 3-4

16 Burson-Marsteller, 2000, Burson-Marsteller, 2005

17 Translated from: Informationsorienteret udvælgelse, Flyvbjerg, 1991: 150

18 Flyvbjerg, 1991: 150

Meta Theoretical Prepositions

Before plunging headlong into examining the viral potential of www.studentoptions.com the meta theoretical prepositions that constitute the foundation of the report is discussed. As appears, our prepositions are inspired by moderate constructivists' approaches within humanities and, in particular, what is referred to as critical realism within social science.

Reality

Fundamentally we believe that reality exists regardless and independent of our recognition of it. By applying the vocabulary of critical realism we can express our perception of reality more detailed; namely as a fusion of different 'layers'. These layers can be divided into three domains. An empirical domain that contains the events we experience direct or indirectly. As our experiences are not always concurrent with what actually takes places, we find that reality also consists of an actual domain that contains the events that actually take place, regardless of whether we experience them or not. Finally, reality has a real domain which contains the mechanisms that produce the events that take place and the events we observe.[19]

View of Human Nature

This view on reality inflicts that the empirical observable events are generated by 'underlying' mechanisms. These mechanisms should not be conceptualized as regularities in an absolute sense as they are influenced by social agents. The mechanisms/structures and social agents are thereby interdependent, as the mechanisms frame the social agents' actions and at the same time are reproduced or changed through the social agents actions.[20] The underlying mechanisms are therefore better characterized as tendencies.[21]

Aim of Research

As we find that reality contains 'underlying' mechanisms, we also believe in a 'hidden' truth.[22] Consequently, we perceive research as a quest to approach this truth. To search for truth is in the terminology of critical realism an attempt to 'gräva djupara' into the layers of reality in order to approach the mechanisms that produce the empirical observable events.[23] Or paraphrased: To search for explanations that in some way can be generalised.

Truth-likeness

We need to emphasis that even though we believe in the existence of a hidden truth, we do not find it possible to determine whether an explanation is in correlation with the truth in an absolute sense. This is because we perceive the relation between knowledge and reality as ambiguous, as our knowledge of reality is constructed. The reason for this is that our knowledge is filtered by our traditions, rules, myths - and language in particular. And these notions do not have characteristics or meanings that are given ones and for all, but are constructed and therefore changeable in time and place.[24] But since reality exists, some explanations are in agreement with

reality to a larger degree than others. We therefore operate with a less definite truth criterion that coheres with the criterion critical realism term truth-likeness (sanningslik).[25]

It is important to stress that regardless of the 'truth- likeness' of a person's interpretation of reality, the interpretation is 'real' for the person who expresses it. A 'wrong' interpretation of reality can thus be as valuable for the researcher as a 'right' interpretation, because:

> "…det kan vare en väsentlig aspekt av fenomenet självt att det uppfattas på dette felaktiga sätt."[26]

In addition to the criterion of truth-likeness, we operate with a validity criterion of practical application. This means that we consider an explanation valid if it can be used to throw light upon a specific situation or problem. Logically, there are severe differences between what kind of explanations that are useful for people in different context. Therefore, that an explanation has 'practical application' in one situation does not necessarily mean that it will also have 'practical application' in another. 'Practical application' is not a criterion of absolute truth. Neither can an explanation be regarded as truth only because it has practical appliance for some people.[27]

Practical Implications

These prepositions provide the background for all our methodical choices which will be thoroughly described throughout the report. On an overall level, they imply that we take point of departure in reality as it is interpreted by the involved individuals, in order to explain the viral potential of www.studentoptions.com. We have therefore produced a survey and individual interviews with respondents and informants from the target audience for www.studentoptions.com. Our job as researchers is to get behind the interpretation of reality of the respondents and informants in order to transcend the empirical layer and thereby approach the deeper layers of reality. This means that we have to interpret interpretations of reality and are thereby in theoretical terms 'caught' in the double hermeneutic circle.[28] To ease this process we will draw on the knowledge that already exists of reality. In the scientific optic, this knowledge is contained in theories.[29] We have therefore already discussed the conditions that influence individuals in the post modern society and will later on involve theories on buzz and viral marketing as well as diffusion theory and interviews with viral marketing experts. These theories will be used as a tool to guide the interpretation of our respondents' and informants' interpretations of reality.[30] This will ultimately – on the premise that our attempt succeed - provide us with a more thorough understanding of the empirical observable events. Furthermore it will allow us to 'sophisticate' the theories, because we have obtained an understanding of their ability to throw light upon a specific situation or problem.[31] This way of unifying the empirical data and theoretical framework is commonly referred to as an abductive analytical mode. We will get back to this mode later on in chapter five, prior to the actual analysis. To do the theoretical framework justice we need to point out that it also has provided the background on which we have constructed the survey and interview guide, respectively.

19 Danermark et al., 2002: 47-48

20 Danermark et al. 2002: 69

21 Danermark et al., 2002: 345

22 Danermark et al., 2002: 63

23 Danermark et al., 2002: 48, 71

24 Schrøder et al., 2002: 45, Danermark et al., 2002: 57-58

25 Schrøder et al., 2002: 45, Danermark et al., 2002: 53-54

26 Danermark et al., 2002: 71

27 Danermark et al., 2002: 53-54

28 Schrøder et al., 2002: 51, Danermark et al. 2002: 65, 340-341

29 Danermark et al., 2002: 225

30 Danermark et al., 2002: 266

31 Danermark et. al, 2002: 181, 188

Chapter outline

The pivotal point of this report is thus to examine whether it is recommendable to use viral marketing to market www.studentsoptions.com to Danish students and if it is, to study how a viral campaign can be designed successfully. In the following, the different chapters are briefly outlined in order to give an overview of the report.

The second chapter serves as a case description and is a thorough presentation of www.studentoptions.com, as we find that this is important in order to fully answer the research questions.

The third and fourth chapters form the theoretical and empirical foundation of the report. In Chapter Three the concept of viral marketing is presented, and different aspects of it are explored and discussed. This is based on theory of buzz and viral marketing and qualitative interviews with viral marketing experts; Business Director Claus Moseholm, GoViral, Co-Founder and SEO expert Kim Frederiksen, Addvisors and PhD student in Integrated Communications, Simon Torp, respectively. Chapter Four is a discussion of the target audience for www.studentoptions.com. This discussion contains theoretical reflections about the target audience for viral marketing campaigns in general as well as a definition of the target audience for a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com. Furthermore, the empirical data about the target audience is presented in this chapter. This consists of a survey among students with 2.780 representatives and eight qualitative interviews with students that are either e- or tech-fluentials.

The chapters five to eight focus on the analysis and discussion of our research problem. In Chapter Five our approach to the analysis is presented, and in Chapter Six it is discussed whether viral marketing can be used for marketing www.studentoptions.com with success. In Chapters Seven and Chapter Eight we discuss how such a campaign could be created. In Chapter Nine we sum up the report in relation to the initial research question. After the conclusion we present a brief for a viral communication campaign for www.studentoptions.com and a press release to accompany this. Finally we have included an article, presenting our conclusions to a broader audience.
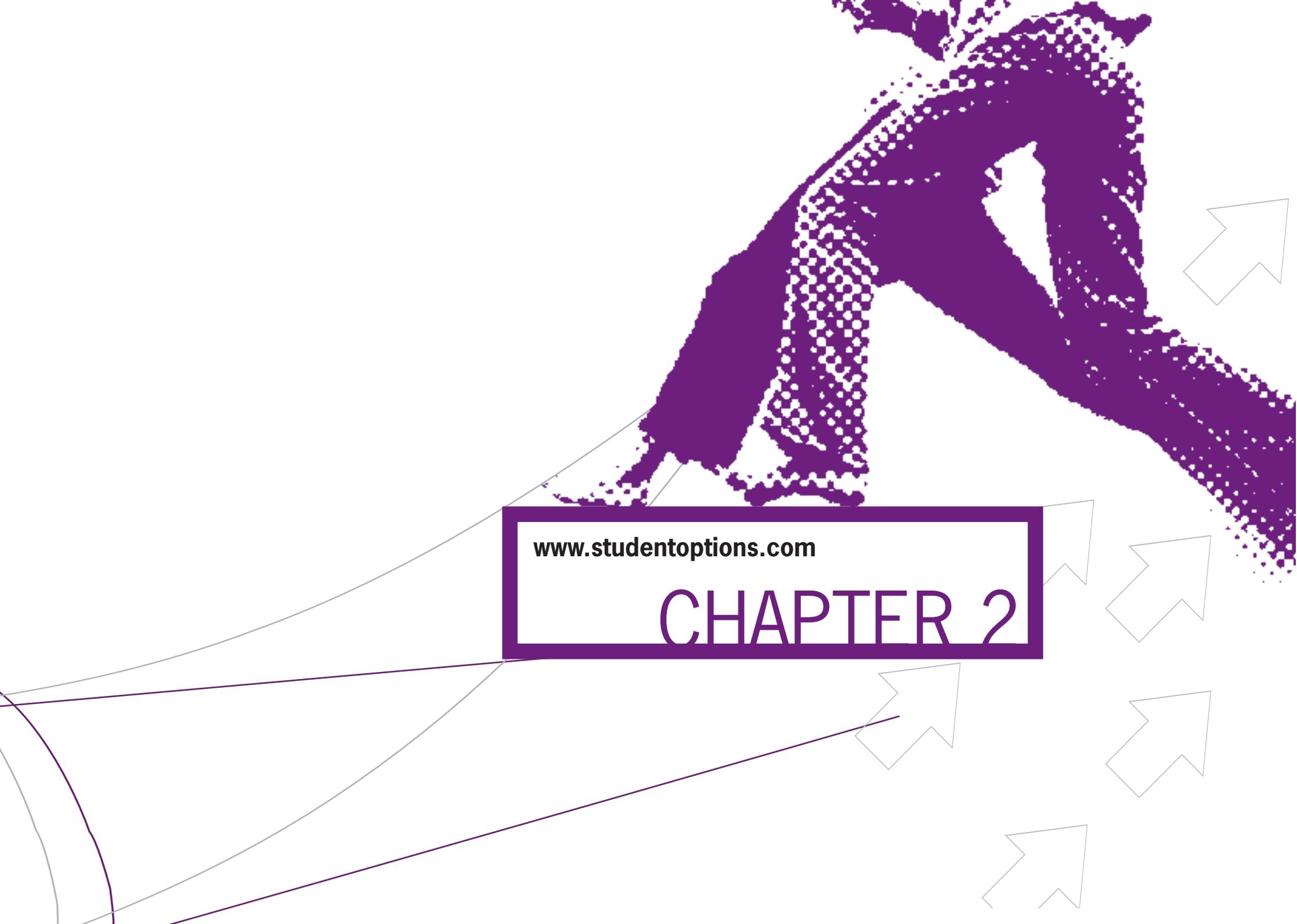
CHAPTER 2

Chapter 2: www.studentoptions.com

In order to research the opportunities for a viral approach to launching and marketing www.studentoptions.com in Denmark, this chapter is a short introduction to the website; its functionality and its product offering. www.studentoptions.com is a European initiative from Microsoft. The website offers an opportunity for students to buy Microsoft software at reduced prices, allowing for a discount of 80 to 89 percent. The Danish part of the website is set to launch in mid February 2006. The geographical implementation of this initiative is national, and it has gradually been rolled out in different countries so far including France, United Kingdom, Finland, Austria, and Ireland, and is set to launch in five other countries in 2006, Denmark being one of them. However, the commercial experiences have not been positive in any of the above countries.[32] Microsoft Denmark is therefore looking for new ways to promote the site and see a viral marketing campaign as a possibility. This implies relying on students to recommend the site to one another.

Microsoft Corporation[33] is the largest provider of computer software in the world.[34] All software is developed on a global level and the national offices around the world are purely concerned with marketing, sales, service and support. Even though the national offices are subject to strict corporate guidelines, Microsoft allows for localised bespoke marketing approaches that can be tailored the specific countries sales and cultural requirements.

The website

Microsoft Denmark is responsible for the launch of the Danish www.studentoptions.com and aims to tailor the specific marketing towards Danish students. However, the back end construction of the site does not allow for national adjustments, which means that Microsoft Denmark's only online concession is to translate the site into Danish.[35] Focus is therefore on the marketing of www.studentoptions.com, and this report concentrates on the possibilities for marketing the site with a viral campaign.

www.studentoptions.com is Microsoft Denmark's first concerted effort in targeting students – and one of the first efforts in targeting consumers in general. Traditionally, Microsoft Denmark has been engaged in B2B (business to business) marketing, and hardly any efforts have been directed at the consumer. However, B2C (business to consumer) marketing[36] is becoming an increasingly viable opportunity for Microsoft Denmark, and is an activity that is now being explored.

www.studentoptions.com is open to all students of 18 years or over at Danish education institutions, but is primarily aimed at higher education students.[37] Upon entering the site, students are required to identify themselves as students. After this, access to the site is allowed and software can be purchased with a discount of up to 89 percent of the recommended retail price. When software is purchased through a secure payment mechanism, it can be downloaded directly on the computer, and is automatically installed.[38] On an overall level, purchasing software on www.studentoptions.com is as easy as it can be, and we find that the site is functional and easy to navigate.

Product Promotions

The primary products of the site are The Office Suite and the new Microsoft programme, OneNote 2003. Microsoft Denmark believe that the site should be marketed with one of these two product offerings as the main sales push, which we find is suitable in order to target students.

The programmes in The Office Suite are used by most students[39] and Microsoft Denmark suspects many pirated versions of The Office Suite are in circulation amongst the students.[40] The standard Office Suite contains the text programme Microsoft Office Word, the calculation programme Microsoft Office Excel, the presentation programme Microsoft Office PowerPoint and the mail programme Microsoft Office Outlook. The professional edition furthermore includes Microsoft Office Access for databases, Microsoft Office InfoPath for collecting and managing information for many parties, and Microsoft Office Publisher for layout and publishing.[41] www.studentoptions.com offers students the opportunity to buy The Office Proffessional Suite for 674 DKK instead of the normal recommended retail price of 5.000 DKK. Cost is obviously a major decision factor when students buy into a product. We therefore assume that the special offer for The Office Suite will be able to generate traffic to the site.

The other option that Microsoft Denmark sees as a potential driver for generating traffic to www.studentoptions.com is OneNote 2003. This is a software programme developed to optimize note taking techniques. Using Microsoft's own words, OneNote:

> "…enables you to capture, organize, and reuse your notes electronically on laptop computers, desktop computer, or tablet PCs. OneNote 2003 gives you one place for all your notes, and the freedom to organize them the way you want. It also helps you capture information in multiple ways and then organize and reuse that information according to your needs, helping you work with your notes and information more productively."[42]

OneNote was launched in February 2003 and retails for 128 DKK at www.studentoptions.com. Apart from an agreement with Toshiba allowing OneNote as standard software on all new laptops, there has been no real

32 Kamilla Jørning Roost, Sales Representative, 14.10.2005

33 Microsoft Corporation will be referred to as Microsoft throughout the report

34 http://www.microsoft.dk

35 Kamilla Jørning Roost, Sales Representative, 14.10.2005

36 Kamilla Jørning Roost, Sales Representative, 14.10.2005

37 Kamilla Jørning Rost, Sales Representative, 14.10.2005

38 Nick Stone, Digital River, E-commerce company responsible for www.studentoptions.com, 17.12.2005

39 App. A3, slide 6

40 Jakob Sand, Information Worker Product Solutions Manager, and Ulla Mikkelsen, Marketing Specialist, 20.09.2005

41 http://www.microsoft.com/danmark/products/office2003/

42 http://www.microsoft.com/office/onenote/prodinfo/faq.mspx

43 Lone Lyth, Product Manager, 17.10.2005

marketing push towards launching OneNote in Denmark and the programme is under-used with low product awareness.[43] As OneNote 2003 is not widely known in Denmark, we give space to a short description of the programme here.

Besides easing the process of note taking, OneNote 2003 can be specifically beneficial for students. For instance, the programme simplifies the process of structuring and organizing notes and eases the note sharing as notes can be emailed directly into the email in the receiver's inbox. If installed on a Tablet PC, OneNote also allows the user to handwrite notes and drawings on the screen – thereby making the program as versatile as writing directly onto paper. However, the use of Tablet PCs in Denmark is very limited, and using a normal PC or laptop without tablet hardware, the software does not support drawings, tables, equations etc. Therefore Microsoft Denmark does not want to emphasize this aspect of the programme when promoting OneNote 2003. Consequently we find that the students studying humanities and/or social science will have more use of OneNote than students studying natural science, as the latter need more graphs and drawings in their note taking.

Before exploring the opportunities for marketing www.studentoptions.com virally, we will focus on viral marketing as a field, and the target audience for the website.
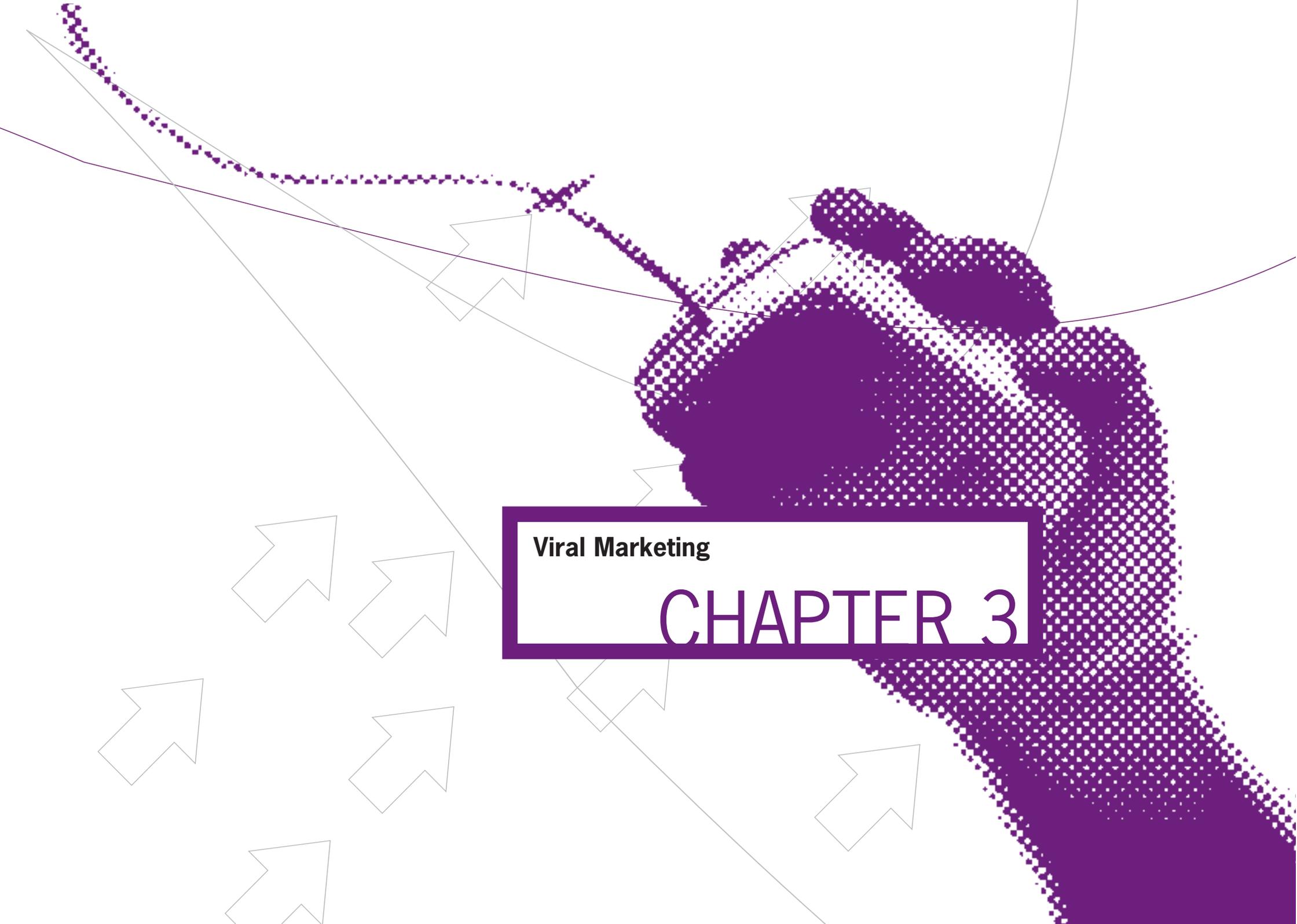
Viral Marketing

CHAPTER 3

Chapter 3: Viral Marketing

This chapter provides an overview of the field that marketing companies operating with viral marketing act within. Initially we define the concept of viral marketing. Following this we, in relation to the marketing www.studentoptions.com, discuss the benefits and critiques of viral marketing, as well as how to successfully spread viral campaigns. This chapter is mainly based on literature about buzz and viral marketing and interviews with Kim Frederiksen and Claus Moseholm.

Definition of Viral Marketing

Following Kaikati & Kaikati, Goldsmith and many other authors, we understand viral marketing as one of a numerous different forms of buzz marketing. The aforementioned all define viral marketing as *"...simply word of mouth via a digital platform"*[46] Viral marketing as a marketing strategy aims at getting individuals from a target audience to electronically forward a message to someone in their social network. As other buzz marketing methods, viral marketing evolves around the creation of a buzz and the principle that a recommendation from a friend is the most trusted. Wilson explains viral marketing in the following way:

> "Viral marketing describes any strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message's exposure and influence. Like viruses, such strategies take advantage of rapid multiplication to explode the message to thousands, to millions."[47]

We find Wilson's explanation of viral marketing adequate for describing the basic principle of viral marketing. However, in our understanding, the fact that messages are passed on electronically rather than from face to face is what differentiates viral marketing from other forms of buzz marketing. Electronically in this sense means that the messages are passed on via the internet, via short text messages on phones or in other electronic formats. Subsequently we define viral marketing in the following way:

> Viral marketing can be understood as a marketing strategy that encourages individuals to electronically pass on a marketing message to other via new media, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message's exposure and influence. The marketing message can take any shape, providing it can be transferred to the next person via new media and without face-to-face interaction.

As it is necessarry for the success of www.studentoptions.com that traffic to the website is generated, we find that the internet is the natural place to seed a campaign. Our focus for this report will therefore be on viral marketing on the internet. There are many opportunities for different forms of viral marketing campaigns on the internet, as web-based viral campaigns can be anything from a short film, a punch line, a link to a website, a picture of someone or just an informational email.

Benefits of Viral Marketing

Following our post modern approach to the field of marketing we believe there is a great need for large corporations such as Microsoft to revise the resources spent on 'big and clever' advertising. The growing number of media channels has meant that it is harder to track down increasingly fragmented audiences,[48] and along with the growing scepticism of advertising messages, this calls for a new approach to marketing bespoken the individual consumer. We find that viral marketing is a very viable alternative in this respect and below we account for some of the benefits of viral marketing.

A core element in viral marketing is that online internet users pass on a message to friends and acquaintances. Providing that the message takes form of a recommendation, this will be of much greater value to the recipient than third-party recommendations via traditional mass media. As the sender is in the recipient's personal network, it is likely that the recipient will have a greater degree of trust in the content of the message. Marketing via viral campaigns is therefore often directly able to influence consumers' purchase behaviour.[49]

Another benefit of viral campaigns is that the message can spread much faster and have a much greater and wider exposure than other forms of buzz marketing. As viral marketing is technology based, consumers can reproduce and forward information to an infinite number of people instantly and with a much greater speed than traditional methods of buzz marketing allows.[50] The speed aspect of the spread is considered one of the key differences between viral campaigns and other buzz marketing approaches.[51]

Additionally viral marketing is often praised for, and commonly used as, a tool for driving traffic to websites.[52] With regards to the launch of www.studentoptions.com to Danish students, it must be emphasized that buzz marketing in general is considered useful for reaching new target groups,[53] and that the viral electronic version of buzz marketing therefore seems an obvious choice for creating awareness and interest about www.studentoptions.com.

Much literature points to the fact that viral marketing is suitable for launching new products or services. Rosen and Fattah both state that it is important that a product is fresh and different in order to market it virally.[54] As www.studentoptions.com is only launching in February 2006 and is a new service, the above could be an argument for using viral marketing to market the website. Furthermore the above implies that OneNote would be the most applicable product to use for generating traffic to the site, as this has not yet been marketed in Denmark.

46 Kaikat & Kaikati, 2004: 9 & Goldsmith, 2002: 3

47 Wilson, 2000: 3

48 Kaikati & Kaikati, 2005: 8

49 Goldsmith 2002:21, Fattah 2000, Moseholm 2005

50 Fattah 2000, Moseholm 2004, Goldsmith 2002:21

51 Beckmann and Bell 2001: 2, Goldsmith 2002: 3

52 Goldsmith 2002: 75

53 Ellergaard & Lundsgaard 2002

54 Rosen, 2000: Chapt. 16, Fattah, 2000: 2, Burson-Marsteller, 2003: 1+4

Salzman argues that it is important to assess the perception of a brand when using any form of buzz marketing. By passing a message on to others, the sender himself becomes an ambassador of the brand. Therefore it is important that a brand is not perceived negatively by the target audience when using viral marketing.[55] Consequently we find it important to research into Danish students perception of Microsoft. Finally, viral marketing is believed to be working best when applied to a homogeneous customer base,[56] and as the target audience for www.studentoptions.com in Denmark is limited to the population of Danish students, we find this to be in favour of applying viral marketing to the marketing of www.studentoptions.com in Denmark.

Viral marketing is inexpensive compared to traditional forms of marketing and advertising.[57] This is mainly a consequence of advertising online being much cheaper – or even free – compared to a page in a newspaper or a slot in television. However, the price is dependent on what type of viral campaign is being produced. Obviously the cost of producing a short film is considerably higher than that of an article or similar, and as the budget for marketing www.studentoptions.com is limited we find that this is an important factor to take into account.

Finally Kaikati & Kaikati argue that the status-enhancing capabilities and the physical intimacy that is inherent in viral marketing makes it more suitable for high-involvement products.[58] We therefore find it important – through our empirical research - to determine whether software is a high-involvement product for Danish students.

Critiques of Viral Marketing

A critique that is often directed at viral and buzz marketing is that there is less control over the spread of the message than there is in more traditional forms of marketing[59] and as such it cannot be ensured that the intended consumers will be exposed to the message. It can, however be argued that viral campaigns has a higher degree of control than traditional word of mouth based buzz campaigns.[60] This is because the imagery will continue to be the same in a viral campaign, whereas what people tell each other face to face may gradually change as the message is passed on.

Another critique is that the actual effects of the initiatives to create a buzz, whether consumers do actually start talking and whether or not a buzz is generated, is difficult to measure.[61] With respect to this, Moseholm stresses that an advantage of viral marketing is that it is possible to track the viral campaign and see how it has spread and to whom.[62] This requires a technical tracking system that most agencies specializing in viral marketing have and offer their customers as a service. The possibility of tracking campaigns provides viral marketing with a key advantage compared to other forms of buzz marketing, enabling measurement of the success of a campaign.

A last disadvantage inherent in the nature of viral marketing is an inclination to backfire unpredictably. This is because integrity and honesty may be manipulated, for instance if the sender of the campaign is not made explicit, consumers may feel fooled, which can initiate a backlash.[63] Another disadvantage is that more and more people connect themselves to the Internet everyday, and consequently the number of emails people receive is increasing, thus damaging the concept of viral marketing, by increasing the likelihood of it being filtered off and perceived as spam.[64]

Summing Up

Summarizing the above, we feel that theoretically viral marketing can prove an effective way of launching www.studentoptions.com in Denmark. First off all, it seems obvious to launch the site on-line as one of the key competences of viral marketing is exactly to generate traffic to websites. Second, the nature of viral marketing means that the campaign can spread very quickly. Thirdly, we feel that a viral campaign is eminent for creating awareness and interest and that it furthermore is a good way for launching new products or services, such as www.studentsoptions.com. Finally, the budget for launching www.studentoptions.com is limited and compared to other forms of marketing a viral campaign is cheap. The critiques of viral marketing; that it is difficult to control and measure and that it can be perceived as spam are not disadvantages that make us disregard the concept of viral marketing, as we find the benefits of viral marketing to be greater.

Spread of Viral Campaigns

Claus Moseholm and Kim Frederiksen both state that for a viral campaign to be successful the most important element is that it is done creatively enough to be funny or surprising and give the sender a reason for passing on the viral message.[65] Moseholm also states that the seeding[66] of a campaign is just as important, as the right influential people need to be exposed to it in order for a campaign to spread.[67] In the following we therefore look into the content and seeding of viral campaigns.

On an overall scale, Wilson identifies six elements that should be present in a successful viral campaign, the more elements a campaign include the more powerful it is. We find that his points can work as a useful overview and have therefore included them below:[68]

1. Valuable, but limited give-aways such as services or products to catch attention.
2. A simplified message, making it easy to transmit and replicate.
3. Ensure that it can easily scale from small to very large.
4. Take advantages of common human motivations and behaviour (the desire to be cool, loved, popular etc.).
5. Planting the message in existing communication networks between people.
6. Planting the message in others websites.

55 Salzman, 2003: 75 & Bahl, 2004: 2

56 Fattah 2000: 2

57 Kaikati & Kaikati 2004: 17, Fattah 2000, Goldsmith 2002: 17

58 Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004: 6-7

59 Kaikati & Kaikati 2004: 16, Fattah, Goldsmith 2002: 30+86

60 Beckmann and Bell 2001: 3

61 Kaikati & Kaikati 2004: 17

62 Moseholm, 2004

63 Kaikati & Kaikati 2004: 18

64 Fattah 2000, Goldsmith 2002: 119, Kaikati & Kaikati 2004: 21

65 Moseholm, 2005: 4, Frederiksen, 2005: 2

66 With seeding is meant the media plan for a viral campaign, on which sites it is posted and which segments that it is directed at.

67 Moseholm, 2005: 4

68 Wilson 2000: 4-6

Wilson's first point, recommending limited give-aways is often emphasized in literature on viral and buzz marketing. Metz, for instance, argues that people start talking when presented with something unexpected and being positively surprised.[69] An example of this could be allowing consumers triability, by for instance letting them download the first chapter of a book or try a software program for 30 days, which according to Metz is a successful way of getting consumers engaged in a product or service.[70] He argues that;

> "…the key (for a successful pass along rate) is to give away something of value. Some industries have a more inherent pass along content like music, entertainment and software industries: however, no matter what the industry, information can be given away. Relevant or timely information, actionable tips, late-breaking news, shopping specials, research and studies work well. Personality tests, fitness quizzes or compatibility questionnaires have an entertainment value. Jupiter Media Metric (220) estimates that seven people in ten that receive a link from a friend will pass it on to another friend."[71]

The above implies that it does not matter greatly what is given away. As long as it is relevant and of interest for the receiver there will be good possibility that the recipient will forward a link to others. Alternatively to giving anything tangible away, value can also be created by making a campaign very entertaining or funny.

Perry & Whitaker also argue that the most important thing for ensuring spread of a viral campaign is to make sure that the content of it is satisfactory and interesting enough to encourage the recipients to pass it on to others.[72] Their argument is that it is important to avoid apathy from the recipient's side and that the most efficient way to do so, is to ensure that the viral is relevant and engaging for the recipient with a 'what's in it for me' element.[73] Fattah similarly concludes that for a viral campaign to be effective it is crucial to provide value for sender, recipient and vendor.[74] This coheres with Frederiksen who states that the most important thing when creating a viral campaign is to ensure that it creates value for sender as well as receiver in order to provide enticement enough for them to make them forward the message.[75]

Wilson's second point refers to the fact that messages need to be clear and simple in order to be transmitted and replicated easily. This point is commonly emphasised in traditional communication literature[76] and similarly in most literature on viral and buzz marketing, as a clear and simple message is easier for recipients to understand correctly and quickly, without requiring a great deal of involvement beforehand.

Wilson's third point that the message that is sent out needs to be able to scale easily from small to very large, refers to the fact that it is important to ensure that a file or an email can be opened no matter which setting the receiver's computer is set to.

Goldsmith emphasizes Wilson's fourth principle, acting on basic human motivation and behaviour and argues that this is the main reason for recipients to pass on viral messages:

> "The main reason for our passing on a viral marketing message to someone else refers to the psychogenic need, stemming back to our need to communicate with other people. The majority of us long to be accepted as part of a group. Whether that group, be it the family, friends, colleagues at works or wherever, the motivation to gain acceptance is paramount in achieving our satisfaction. If we can pass on something to someone else that will be of benefit to their work, make them laugh or even give them the chance of winning something, then there is a greater possibility that we will become more popular with those people."[77]

Rushkoff offers a similar approach to the explanation of successful viral campaigns. He finds that people use media as mediums to interact with one another. Therefore, the more opportunities a media provides for making people talk to one another, the more successful it is. This, he argues, is true for all kinds of media, including the internet and thereby viral campaigns:

> "…creating online content, your success will be directly dependent on your ability to create excuses for people to talk to one another."[78]

Rushkoff calls this criterion "social currency"[79] and argues that the more social currency a campaign contains, the more likely it is, that people will share and forward the campaign. Similarly Moseholm has argued that a core element in viral campaigns is to give consumers something to talk about.[80]

Wilson's fifth and sixth points about planting the message in existing communication networks between people and other's websites refers to the final element of seeding a viral campaign. Following Perry & Whitaker a differentiation between indirect and direct launch pads can be made with regards to seeding viral campaigns. Seeding through direct launch pads suggests that emails are sent out directly to opinion leaders, acquaintances, email databases or similar. This creates a short blast of high volume referral as it ensures that the message goes directly out to the first round of recipients.[81] Indirect launch pads on the other hand, refers to seeding via own or others' websites, user groups, chat rooms, message boards – platforms where communication is broadcast from one to many. Perry and Whitaker argue that this is a more sustainable way of seeding even though it can be slower to take off as it does not reach the recipients directly in their inbox and they consequently may not act on it at all.[82]

In Denmark it is illegal to send out mails to recipients that have not agreed to this beforehand. Consequently, both Moseholm and Frederiksen seed viral campaigns on sites that are relevant for the target group of a given viral campaign.[83] As this more subtle way of seeding on indirect launch pads is the only legal way to seed

69 Metz, 2004: 6

70 Metz, 2004: 3

71 Metz, 2004: 5

72 Perry & Whitaker, 2002: 37

73 Perry & Whitaker, 2002: 42-44

74 Fattah, 2000: 2

75 Frederiksen, 2005: 2

76 Krag Jacobsen, 2003: 29-41

77 Goldsmith 2002: 32

78 Rushkoff, 2000

79 Rushkoff, 2000

80 Moseholm, 2005

81 Perry & Whitaker, 2002: 73

82 Perry & Whitaker, 2002: 78-81

83 Moseholm, 2005: 3, Frederiksen, 2005: 3

campaigns in Denmark, this is also how we expect a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com to be seeded. Frederiksen describes the seeding process at Addvisors:

> "Vi går ud og køber plads på udvalgte medier – hvis nu vi skal fange gravide mødre, så ville vi tage fat i Netbaby for eksempel, eller et eller andet. Et sted hvor vi ved, målgruppen bevæger sig. Nummer to er, at vi har en skare af sites selv, vi kan seede tingene på, der rent faktisk har trafik. Og den tredje ting er, at vi har samarbejdspartnere, hvor vi kan seede ting billigt eller helt gratis. Og vi har også en fjerde ting – går ud og tilmelder os konkurrence-sites eller joke-sites. Eller alle de steder hvor vi ligesom kan komme ind og ligge gratis."[84]

Moseholm's description of the seeding process at GoViral is slightly different from the above:

> "…Og når vi seeder, så er det både på det, vi kalder non-kommercielle og kommercielle sites. Og det vil sige, non-kommercielle, det er faktisk ligesom at lave pr. Du har en historie, der er god nok, og så kommer den i. Kommercielle, det er mere som at købe en annonce, men du køber den så ikke ude i bannerafdelingen, du køber en placering inde i det redaktionelle miljø…"[85]

In the above statements, Frederiksen and Moseholm set out differing approaches to viral marketing. Even though they are both commercial, Moseholm seems to follow a more subtle approach and use indirect advertising in the form of pr, as well as the more aggressive advertising approach that Frederiksen describes. However, both explanations cohere with Wilson's argument about getting in places and on sites where the target audience is already present.

A way of differing between different sorts of viral campaigns based on the contents of the campaign is described by Perry & Whitaker. On an overall scale, Perry & Whitaker argue that viral campaigns have to create an emotional response in order to motivate the recipient to continue the spread of the message. They identify three main categories for viral campaigns; educational, entertaining or rewarding.[86] All three categories reflect elements that help involve and engage recipients. Here it must be emphasized that the three categories are far from mutually exclusive and that more than one element can easily be present in the same campaign. Similar to this, Ellegaard & Lundsgaard argue that viral campaigns in general fall within one of two categories; they are either advertainments (a mix of advertisement and entertainment) or can be classified as infomercials (a mix of commercial and information). The argument is that a viral campaign needs to have either entertaining or informational aspects added to the core message to be successful.[87]

Seen in a Danish context, both Moseholm and Frederiksen emphasize the entertaining element much more than the educational. Moseholm states that creativity from the creators' side is a crucial factor in order to make a campaign stand out and engage the recipients.[88] With regards to large corporations such as Microsoft,

Frederiksen highlights another important point. He argues that making a large corporation hidden behind a viral campaign most often results in the recipients realizing this and consequently feeling kept in the dark and offended. Thus, he suggests that large corporations should aim at being present and visible in their own campaigns as opposed to pretending to be something else.[89]

Summing Up

In the above we have highlighted important elements for viral campaigns to be successful and break through the increasing communication flow that also affects people's inboxes. Obviously careful seeding is crucial in order for a viral campaign to get exposed to as many people as possible. However, in order for the receiver to pass on the viral campaign, the originality of the content is the principal factor. We have shown that a value creating aspect can be detected in most literature and by specialists within viral marketing. Value, as such, is a broad term, but in a viral perspective this should be understood as either something really entertaining, or something that creates value for the receiver by being relevant and interesting for him/her. This will make the initial recipient forward a message to acquaintances as he will then be able to provide the next recipient with something valuable. This can be understood as a way of playing on basic human desires, creating excuses for people to interact and provide both sender and receiver with something valuable, be it tangible or in-tangible. Two other factors that we feel are of importance are Wilson's second principle about keeping the core message as simple as possible, in order to make it sticky and actually have an effect on the recipients. Furthermore for large corporations, it is important not to hide behind a viral campaign and pretend that they are not the actual senders, as this will make people feel offended or cheated.

As stated, viral campaigns are most likely to be successful if seeded within a homogeneous target audience. We believe that the target audience for www.studentoptions.com, Danish students can be said to be relatively homogeneous as most are either in their twenties or late teens and all are undertaking education - and consequently on a relatively tight budget. We also expect that the majority of the target audience use computers for their studies. Obviously an extensive knowledge of the target audience is crucial for a viral campaign to succeed and take off.[90] Therefore the following chapter will discuss the target audience for viral campaigns and define the target population and strategic target group for the viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com.

84 Frederiksen, 2005: 7

85 Moseholm, 2005: 3

86 Perry & Whitaker, 2002: 53

87 Ellegaard & Lundsgaard, 2002: 123-125

88 Moseholm, 2005: 2+3

89 Frederiksen, 2005: 8+9

90 Goldsmith 2002: 29

Target Audience

CHAPTER 4

Chapter 4: Target Audience

Like most other communicators of today, we do not perceive consumers to be defenceless individuals incapable of resisting marketing messages. Neither do we think that they comprehend messages exactly the way they are intended. We lean towards authors like Sepstrup, who argue that consumers are goal orientated and seek to problem solve. By this we do not mean that individuals are overly rational or necessarily succeed in meeting their goals.[91] Furthermore we believe that the way people make use of information is connected to their specific life situation. Or in Sepstrup's words:

> "Det enkelte menneskes mål, behov, forudsætninger og begrænsninger er udgangspunktet for anvendelse af information. Individets mål hænger sammen med dets livssituation, herunder fx tidligere anvendelse af information, andre erfaringer og karakteristika som uddannelse, social placering, køn og alder."[92]

The better a piece of information coheres with a consumer's particular situation, the better the chances that the consumer understands the information as intended. The communication process can therefore be perceived as a negotiation process between senders and receivers.[93] The better a communicator understands his or her audience and the more homogeneous the audience is, the better the chance of creating a message that fit most individuals' particular situations. The focus of this chapter is therefore to explore the target audience and understand this in depth.

The chapter begins with a presentation of general characteristics of the primary target audiences for viral campaigns; the e- and tech-fluentials. This discussion is based on theoretical reflections on viral and buzz marketing. As most of the literature is written in an American or English context we have included expert interviews with Frederiksen and Moseholm in order to get an understanding of the Danish target audience for viral campaigns. Additionally, the literature has a vague theoretical foundation and we are therefore using it with some precaution. We have therefore included traditional diffusion theory to create a theoretical platform for understanding the target audience. After this, the target audience for www.studentoptions.com in Denmark is defined, by specifying the target population within the target audience and within this, the strategic target group. Finally, we introduce the report's empirical foundation which consists of a survey with respondents from the target population and interviews with informants from the strategic target group.

E- and Tech-fluentials

The crucial element in viral marketing is to make the right people buzz about a campaign, initiating just that snowball-effect that, when it gets a life of its own, effectively is a viral campaign.[94] It is therefore important to initiate the campaign by targeting the internet-users that will spread the message to a big network. In the following we will define this group of people and specify some of the characteristics that make them stand out from the masses.

According to Moseholm, Frederiksen and Torp, viral marketing is suitable for most audiences. Consequently none of them defined a specific group that was more suitable to operate with than others.[95] However, Moseholm argues that some people are more active online than others, and states that the most active people often are men between the ages of 18 to 35. He uses the term online influentials to refer to this group of people.[96] Likewise Frederiksen argue that 'younger people' are the most active online and therefore more likely than others to stumble upon and forward a viral campaign.[97] This coheres with Metz who argues that some audiences are more buzz-prone than others, but without specifying who these audiences are.[98]

In an American context, the global public relations company Burson Marstellers has defined the prime carriers of viral campaigns and divided the online influentials into two main groups; e-fluentials and tech-fluentials. E-fluentials are defined as people who:

> "…shape the opinion and attitudes of the Internet community…. [They] are much more active than other Internet users in terms of their online influence, using e-mails, newsgroups, bulletin boards, and other online vehicles to convey their messages."[99]

Tech-fluentials are a sub-group within the group of e-fluentials and the typical tech-fluentials are defined as:

> "…self-appointed marketers and newsmakers who try products first and actively network to share their information far beyond the scope of their individual contacts."[100]

91 Sepstrup, 1999: 43-44

92 Sepstrup, 1999: 43-44

93 Sepstrup, 1999: 33

94 Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004: 2

95 Torp, 2005: 2, Moseholm, 2005: 1, Frederiksen, 2005: 1

96 Moseholm, 2005: 1

97 Frederiksen, 2005: 1

98 Metz, 2004: 4

99 Burson-Marsteller, 2000

100 Burson-Marsteller, 2005

More specifically, the two groups of people are characterized in the following way:

E-fluentials[101]	Tech-fluentials[102]
Send e-mail to companies	Chief Opinion Leaders
Send e-mail to politicians	Quality- and Function-focused Shoppers
Send e-mail to well known news and media companies	Design Conscious
Make friends online	Fast and Mobile
Provide feedback to Web sites	Accessibility Online and Offline
Forward news and Web site information to others	Community-oriented Citizens
Participate in chat rooms	Information Spreaders
Post to bulletin boards	Highly Active and Engaged Internet Users
Post to newsgroups	Knowledge Hunters and Gathers
Post to listservs	Futurist

As the table shows, the e- and tech-fluentials have the same level of social activity and share almost the same characteristics. The main differences between them are that tech-fluentials are more technologically orientated and interested than e-fluentials. The e-fluential, on the other hand, is considered to be more of a social all-rounder. In broad terms we feel that the distinction between e-fluentials and tech-fluentials can be conceptualized using Rosen's terminology of social and expert hubs. E-fluentials can be described as social hubs – opinion leaders that have a high social status and therefore are looked to and listened to for guidance. Tech-fluentials as expert hubs - people with a specialized knowledge within a specific field which causes a large number of people in their network to follow their advice within a given field.[103]

According to Moseholm, the notions of e- and tech-fluentials are mainly used in an American context. The Danish market for viral marketing is more in line with an UK-tradition where these notions are not as commonly used.[104] Furthermore, we find the supporting research and validity of the theory on e- and tech-fluentials insufficient, and are aware that our use of the concepts from an academic point of view can be questioned. However, we believe that it is beneficial for our research to be able to redefine the concept of online influentials and to differentiate between the social all-rounder e-fluential and the more specialized tech-fluential. This is important as we find it necessary for a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com to communicate to both types. It is important to communicate to the IT 'geek' (tech-fluential) in order to win acceptance, as these people are often asked for IT advice by their network. At the same time, it is important to communicate to the 'trendsetter' (e-fluential) because their opinions are listened to, their behaviours copied and they generally tend to start trends.

As the e- and tech-fluentials show many traits that are similar to the traditional innovator and opinion leader, we in the following review and discuss the main principles of the diffusion theory.

Diffusion Theory

We base our approach to diffusion theory on Rogers' classic work, Diffusion of Innovations, as it is perceived as being the most comprehensive and cogent presentation of diffusion theory.[105] Rogers defines diffusion as:

> "…the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over a period of time among members of a social system."[106]

Translating the above to a viral terminology, diffusion can be understood as the actual forwarding of a viral campaign. In other words, it is what happens in the period when a person is initially presented with a viral campaign until he/she send it out to his/her network. Rogers defines an innovation as:

> "…an idea, practice or object that is perceived to be new by an individual or other unit of adoption."[107]

In our case, the innovation is the website. The aim of a viral campaign will be to market the website in a way that ensures that the existence of the website is communicated between as many members of the target audience as possible. Therefore it is crucial to launch the website to individuals that will forward the website to as many members of the target audience as possible. People who are able to do this hold credibility within their respective networks, are listened to and respected. Rogers characterizes these people as opinion leaders who 'spread the word' to the majority or mainstream consumer.

101 Burson-Marsteller, 2000

102 Burson Marstellers, 2005

103 Rosen, 2001: 47

104 Moseholm, 2005: 4

105 Windahl and Signitzer, 1992: 58

106 Rogers, 1987: 79

107 Rogers, 1987: 79

According to Rogers, opinion leaders constitute the critical mass for marketers to target, not only when launching new technological innovations but also when trying to introduce new trends; whether it is services, clothes etc.[108] Rogers defines opinion leadership as:
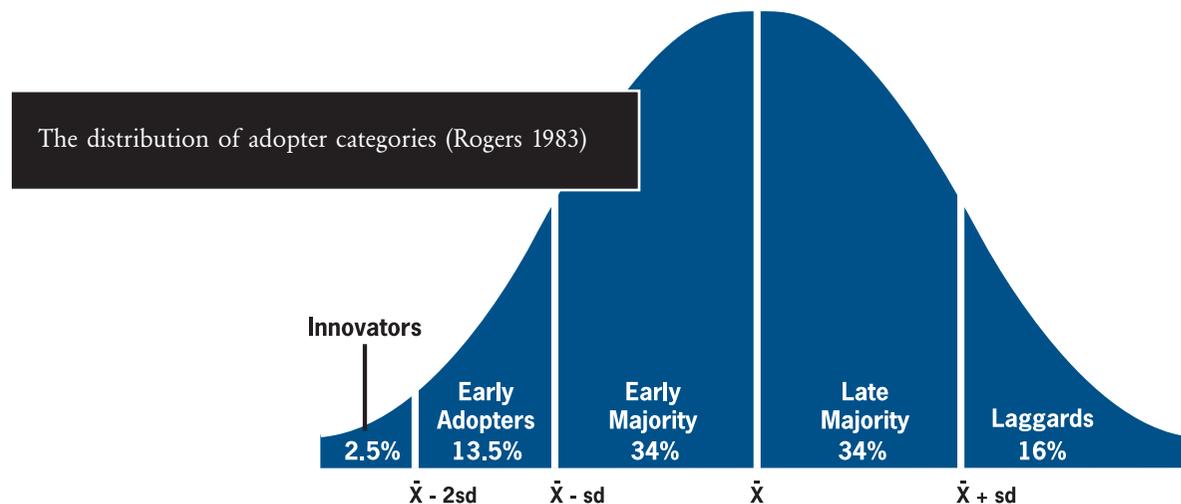
> "…the degree to which an individual is able to influence informally other individuals' attitudes or overt behaviour in a desired way with relative frequency."[109]

Though opinion leaders have many personality traits in common, there are differences among types of opinion leaders. Some cling on to an existing system, whilst others have a desire for consistent changes and are quick to adapt to new services and products.[110] www.studentoptions.com is a new service and it is therefore likely that it is the second type of opinion leaders that will appreciate the website first. Such opinion leaders can in Rogers terminology be characterized as innovators or early adopters.[111] Innovators are:

> "..active information-seekers about new ideas. They have a high degree of mass media exposure and their interpersonal networks extend over a wide area, reaching outside of their local system. Innovators are able to cope with higher levels of uncertainty about an innovation than other (…). As the first to adopt a new idea in their system, they cannot depend upon the subjective evaluations of the innovation from other members of their system."[112]

Early adopters adapt to new ideas at a slower rate than the innovator, and are more in touch with the mainstream consumer. In general, they are characterized as *"respected locals rather than cosmopolites. They tend to be the people to whom others turn for advice."*[113]

In Rogers' terminology the innovator and early adopter constitute two of the five adapter categories. The other three are: Early majority, late majority and laggards. Rogers groups consumers into these categories in accordance to the speed with which they adapt to new products and services, arguing that innovators are the ones to adapt first, then early adopters and so forth.[114]

The distribution of adopter categories (Rogers 1983)

Innovators

Early Adopters 13.5%

Early Majority 34%

Late Majority 34%

Laggards 16%

2.5%

$\bar{X} - 2sd$ $\bar{X} - sd$ $\bar{X}$ $\bar{X} + sd$

This detour through diffusion theory provides the theoretical background for understanding e- and tech-fluentials in more theoretical detail; namely as opinion leaders functioning as innovators or early adopters. We will now focus on the specific target audience for www.studentoptions.com.

Target Audience for www.studentoptions.com
Within communication theory there is a lack of consistency regarding the terms – and the content of the terms - used to describe the people that communication campaigns aim at influencing. In order to avoid confusion of the terms we use, we specify our understanding of the different terms, prior to defining the different groups of people, a campaign for www.studentoptions.com should influence.

As previously described, any Danish student over the age of 18 can buy software at www.studentoptions.com. We refer to these people as the target audience for the campaign. Though this group of students is relatively homogenous, we still assume that people who attend high school, business school, short-term training or higher education respectively, hold different sets of values, and are in different places in their lives. We therefore select an even more homogenous group of people within the target audience to be the focus of our campaign. Following

108 Rogers, 1995: 324

109 Rogers, 1995: 232

110 Rogers, 1995: 26-27

111 Rogers, 1995: 27

112 Rogers, 1995: 22

113 Windahl and Signitzer, 1992: 63

114 Rogers, 1995: 37, Windahl and Signitzer, 1992: 62-63

Windahl et al. we call this group of people *"...whose behaviour, attitudes, or knowledge we want to influence, directly or indirectly..."* target population.[115] As www.studentoptions.com primarily addresses students in higher education, this group of students appear an appropriate target population to select. Additionally, most of these students have left home, need to buy computers and software themselves and are often on a tight budget. We therefore find that they will benefit from the website, and feel that this is a good group to target. The initial target audience for the campaign is therefore limited to the target population which can be defined as:

Danish students in higher education

In order to target these people with a viral campaign, we need to go through the e- and tech-fluentials among them, as these are the first to adapt to new services and products and 'spread the word'. This means that a viral campaign must target these people specifically, in order for them to spread the message to the remaining target population by passing on a link. Windahl et al. refers to this group as the receiver group,[116] however we find this term slightly confusing, as the people who actually receive the campaign's message will not necessarily be the same the campaign originally was intended for. We therefore refer to this group as the strategic target group. The strategic target group which the campaign should aim at targeting directly is defined as:

E- and tech-fluentials among Danish students in higher education

Respondents from the Target Population

In essence, a viral campaign should be indirectly aimed at the target population via directly targeting e- and tech-fluentials, who will spread the message. Though the campaign is directed at the e- and tech-fluentials it is crucial for the success of it, to explore the target population's IT habits and opinions of Microsoft. To obtain this knowledge we have produced a survey with representative from the group. We chose the survey method as we had specific queries we wanted to research. Following Henning Olsen, we perceive the survey method suitable for obtaining this knowledge:

"Surveydata (…) er egnede til repræsentative kortlægninger af udbredelsen af klassificerbare fænomener."[117]

Our survey has been developed on the basis of our theoretical framework. More specifically the survey explores:

- Danish students' relation to, and opinion of, Microsoft
- Danish students' IT and software habits
- Danish students' use of the Microsoft Office Suite
- Danish students' pirating habits and their opinion of pirating and illegal downloading.
- How important IT is for Danish students, their IT consumption patterns and how they obtain information about IT
- Demography: Are there tendencies regarding education institutions, subject of study or gender?

In the survey we have included 19 questions with closed answer categories and one question with a more open answer category.[118] Prior to launching the survey, we made a smaller mock test by presenting the survey to people from our own network. The test gave us valuable feedback, which we applied to the survey before posting it on the online survey supplier, SurveyMonkey. The survey was open for about a month; from the 20.09.2005 to the 28.10.2005. It was distributed electronically to the respondents through their education institutions. In order to initiate this, we contacted the head of selected lines of studies on selected education institutions (the selection criteria was to obtain as much diversity as possible), to have permission to contact their students. Following this, a webmaster or secretary forwarded an email from us to the students' mailing list. The email contained a short explanation of our situation and the purpose of the survey, a request to answer the survey and a link to it. It was not everywhere we were allowed to use the mailing lists, and here we placed a link to the survey on a notice board on the institution's intranet. Some institutions allowed neither and we therefore have no answers from for instance University of Southern Denmark. Additionally, we emailed the survey to people from our own network with a personal request to the receiver to send the email on to his/her friends and acquaintances in higher education, in order to start a snowballing effect. The survey can be found in Appendix A2, and the statistics from the survey in Appendix A3.

Quality of Survey

Before we apply the survey results in the analysis and discussion, we will examine the quality of them by discussing their validity. Like Schrøder et al., we understand validity as a measurement for:

> "…whether a study has accurately captured that which it intended to investigate, how 'true' the findings are."[119]

In order to judge the truth-likeness of the survey answers we find it necessary to review the construction of the survey. Months after, we still find the textual construction of the questions and answer categories clear and rather easy to interpret. With regards to the answer categories, we likewise find all categories – except one – exhaustive.

115 Windahl et al., 1992: 12

116 Windahl et al., 1992: 12

117 Olsen, 1998: 14

118 Olsen, 1998: 23

119 Schrøder et al., 2003: 24

The exception is question number eight about music. In retrospective, we should have included more answer categories to this question. Because of the lack of categories, we have chosen to disregard the answers to this question. Additionally, we find it plausible that some respondents have feared it could have consequences for them, if they stated on an online survey that they pirate copy software and find pirating acceptable, and could therefore have manipulated their answers. Thus the 'actual' number of people who pirates may be larger than the survey answers indicate. We will keep these sources of error in mind when analyzing the results. But all in all we perceive the validity of the survey results sufficient.

Having discussed the validity of the survey we have gained knowledge about some parts of the quality of the survey answers. In order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the quality, we also need to consider the representativeness of the results. Again we lean towards the definition provided by Schrøder et al., and perceive representativeness as a measurement for:

> "…whether the findings from studying a relatively small number of individuals apply to other individuals within the total population of a country, an organization or a community."[120]

In order to comprehend this, we need to look upon the number of respondents and the spread in their demography. The total number of respondents came to 2.780. According to Henning Olsen, researchers normally work with a population of 1.000 to 1.500 individuals – and populations above 2.000 is *"...et særsyn i dansk forskning."*[121] We therefore perceive the number of answers on the survey, as satisfying. The spread between gender is fairly divided – 40 percent of the respondents were males and 60 percent were females. So is the spread between the educational institutions the respondents' attend, and a range of universities and Business Schools in Copenhagen, Lyngby, Aarhus and Aalborg respectively are represented. Additionally, the respondents vary with regards to the subject they study: The subjects social science, human science, science, medical science, computer science and architecture are all represented. We therefore find the representativeness of the survey sufficient which implies that the respondents' opinion most likely correlate with the general opinion of Danish students in higher education.

A final quality element is that of reliability which we perceive as a measurement for scientific workmanship, or in Schrøder et al.'s words:

> "…reliability has to do with whether the procedure used in gathering and analyzing one's data is systematic and consistent, so that arbitrariness is avoid."[122]

In order to live up to this criterion we have emphasized laying out all methodical considerations and thereby hopefully empower the reader to call our bluff.

Informants from the Strategic Target Group

As a viral campaign primarily is directed towards the e- and tech-fluentials, we find it crucial to obtain a thorough and detailed understanding of these people in order to be able to communicate successfully with them. As we only had sporadic knowledge of these people beforehand, we have researched into the e- and tech-fluentials through a qualitative research design, as we find qualitative methods to be superior to quantitative in delivering such knowledge.[123] Our aim with the research has been to understand the informants' situations and behavioural patterns. We have therefore chosen to produce individual interviews over for instance focus group interviews as individual interviews have:

> "…til formål at indhente beskrivelser af den interviewedes livsverden med henblik på at fortolke betydningen af de beskrevne fænomener."[124]

And focus group interviews contrarily are:

> "…gode til at producere data om sociale gruppers fortolkninger, interaktioner og normer, hvorimod de er mindre velegnede til at producere data om individers livsverdener."[125]

In line with Kvale we perceive the interviewer as a 'traveller' who creates knowledge in the interaction with the informant – and we accept this knowledge as a construction.[126] In ontological terms, however, we do not agree with Kvales understanding of 'reality' as being a linguistic construction.[127] Instead we perceive reality as existing independent of our recognition of it.

The informants have been selected to participate in the interviews in accordance with a strategy referred to as strategic selection.[128] Bengtsson et al. describes this strategy as:

> "Genom det strategiska urvalet försöker… forskaren få fram en bredd, en variationsrikedom hos det studerade fenomenet."[129]

In other words we have emphasized to interview informants who differ in gender, age, educational institution and subject they study. We have used our own network to get in touch with the informants. In order to interview a representative group of people, we have aimed at getting informants from as different personal contacts as possible. Our enticement to call and request an interview with an informant came from having their names and

120 Schrøder et al., 2003: 23

121 Olsen, 1998: 19

122 Schrøder et al., 2003: 23

123 Olsen, 2002: 36-43

124 Kvale, 1997: 19

125 Halkier, 2003: 15-16

126 Kvale, 1997: 18

127 Olsen, 2002: 35

128 Olsen, 2002: 83

129 Bengtsson et al. in Olsen, 2002: 83

numbers from a friend of theirs that had recommended them to us. To ensure, that the informants actually were e- or tech-fluentials, we had an initial phone conversation with them, asking ten screening question. Two of the questions were about sending emails, however there is not necessarily a correlation between forwarding many emails and being an e- or tech-fluential. By forwarding a great amount of emails, the sender risks that his or her emails will be perceived as spam and consequently not taken seriously. Thus the number of emails a person sends is not in itself enough to characterize a person as an e- or tech-fluential or regular internet user.[130] Three questions were about their IT knowledge. Again these questions are not enough to typecast a person, as individuals can hold a specialized IT knowledge and be innovators within IT, without necessarily being tech-fluentials. This is because the aspect of spreading knowledge to others is important for both the tech- and e-fluential, but not necessarily for innovators.[131] We have therefore categorized people as either e- or tech-fluentials or regular internet users based on our general feeling from the telephone conversation with them - and not solely on their specific answers. The screening questions have been developed on the basis of our theoretical framework and can be seen in Appendix A4.

In total, we met and interviewed ten potential informants. The first interview was used as a mock interview, and provided the background for slight adjustments to our interview guide. We have therefore excluded this in our analysis. Additionally, we have chosen to leave out another of the interviews, as one of the informants appeared to be unreflective and had difficulties expressing his opinions and thoughts. We finished with eight interviews with different informants: four whom we classify as e-fluentials, and four whom we classify as tech-fluentials. It is an ongoing discussion in method literature how many informants should be interviewed in a study.[132] As our aim with the study is to approach the mechanisms from the underlying layers of reality and to produce truth-like explanations that can be generalized in some way,[133] we find it essential to keep interviewing until no new knowledge is obtained from the interviews.

Having interviewed the eight informants we feel that we have exhausted the field. This indicates that the representativeness of the interviews is satisfying. Additionally the informants differ a lot from each other with regards to gender, university, subject and age, which higher the representativeness. However, they are all from the Copenhagen County and this fact narrows our research field to this county. But more essential with regards

to the representativeness, the survey depicts severe differences in the students' attitude towards Microsoft. Students attending Roskilde University and students attending the two architecture schools are the most negative and least positive towards Microsoft.[134] None of our informants attend these educational institutions, which of course would have been recommendable and would have lifted the representativeness. However, students at Copenhagen University hold almost the same view on Microsoft as these students,[135] and two of our informants attend Copenhagen University. All in all we find the representativeness – the degree to which the analysis of the informants apply to other Danish students in higher education defined as e- or tech-fluentials[136] – relatively satisfying.

The interviews have been loosely structured around an interview guide, using The Funnel Model as described by Halkier.[137] This model uses the advantages of both the tight and loose structure as it allows a certain freedom for the informant to discuss as he/she likes, as well as making sure that specific questions are answered[138] which enables comparisons across the interviews.[139] The interview guide contains specific questions that are developed on the base of our theoretical framework. The questions are centred around the informants' whereabouts on the internet, use of and opinion about well-known and new websites and their forwarding- and pirating behaviour. Additionally, we have included a more open-ended exercise inspired by the use of projective methods in order to *"...provokere tankegangen udover det dagligdags, umiddelbart tilgængelige."*[140] The exercise was a discussion of four viral campaigns we showed the informants:

- A short film for Danish tele company, TDC
- A short ,'funny' and very alternative music video with Adolph Hitler imitating the pop song 'Born to be Alive', without any particular sender
- An excel ark where you fill in information about yourself, press start, and an offensive message pops up
- An animated short film for OneNote that has previously run in the UK.

We asked the informants of their thoughts about the virals and how they thought they would react if stumbling upon them themselves. This was primarily done in order to get a feeling of which kind of viral campaigns they liked and disliked. Initially we thought that talking about a concrete example of a viral campaign would be less complicated for the informants than talking in more general terms. This preposition seems to be true for most informants. This exercise furthermore functioned as a test of their reaction to Microsoft OneNote.

130 Perry & Whitaker, 2002: 83-84

131 Salzman et. al 2003: 39

132 Olsen, 2002: 80-85

133 For a more thorough discussion of this, see Chapter 1 on meta theory.

134 App. A3, slide 18

135 App. A3, slide 18

136 See definition of the criteria above.

137 Halkier, 2002: 45

138 Halkier, 2002: 45

139 Miles and Huberman, 1994: 17

140 Røbke, 1991: 108

In order to make the interviews ready for the analysis we have first transcribed them with regards to the recommendations, used by Mostov et al.[141] With inspiration from Potter & Wetherell, Mostov et al. have listed the following recommendations for transcribing:

1. Transcribe as close to the spoken language as possible.
2. For every contribution, it must be marked with who is speaking.
3. Should someone interrupt the discussion with a short comment, the contribution is put in braces in the place, when it is said.
4. If a person is interrupted, the symbol '//' marks the end of the interrupted contribution and in the beginning of the new contribution.
5. The symbol '?' is used when a word is unclear.
6. The symbol '(...)' marks a remarkable pause.
7. The symbol '...' is used for a smaller pause.

We referred to the above recommendations throughout the process of transcribing, which has meant that all interviews have been transcribed in a standardized way, easing comparison between them and the final analysis of the interviews. Having transcribed the interviews, we coded them according to the subjects covered in the interview guide and to a preliminary structure for the analysis. During the process of coding we discovered more details and added more codes to our code list. The first and the final code lists can be found in Appendix A6. Following Bryman we perceive coding as part of the process of analyzing the interviews,[142] and therefore prioritized the coding process; first coding together, then apart and finally together again to ensure that we had applied the same coding patterns and understood each other's codes.

Having produced the interviews, we are able to judge the validity of them; namely whether we have captured what we intended to investigate – how 'true' the findings are.[143] This criterion is first and foremost a measurement for whether the informants have answered 'truth-likely' on our questions.

As parts of the interview were about sensitive subjects,[144] it was highly important that the informants felt secure and comfortable during the interview in order to increase their likelihood to answer truthfully. As all informants let us in on their pirating behaviors – and our general feel from the interviews were that the informants felt comfortable in our company - we conclude that the informants have answered as truth-likely as they could. It is also important that the informants answered the exact questions we were posing, and not what they thought, they were asked about. In order to ensure this, we emphasized posing precise questions. Transcribing the

interviews, we observed that we seldom had to repeat or rephrase a question and that the informants answered the questions. This points to the fact that the interviews live up to this criterion. A final indication of the truth-likeness of the interviews is the degree to which we have managed to comprehend the informants' specific situations and behavioral patterns. This is problematic to know for certain, however our feel from the transcriptions is that the interviews have balanced between the tight and the loose structure and that we have kept open to the opinions voiced by the informants.

Like the survey data, we have emphasized to live up to the criterion of reliability by laying all methodic choices regarding the interviews open and thereby facilitate the reader to call our bluff.[145] We also find it important to note that both of us have coded all transcripts thinking that two pair of eyes is better than one, and thereby minimized the risk of overlooking important elements and over-interpretating the irrelevant.

Profiles of Informants
As previously stated all informants are from the County of Copenhagen. They are between the ages of 21 to 27 and attend Copenhagen Business School, Copenhagen University, The IT University, Denmark's Design School and Denmark's Technical University respectively. The subjects they study vary from computer science over languages to communication and design. For a full presentation of each informant we refer to their answers on the screening questions as well as the transcripts of the interviews, all placed in Appendix B. However, in order to give an overview and an idea of each informant we have included profiles of each of the informants below. We have given each presentation a heading to ease the memory of the different presentations. It is important to underline that the heading only represent parts of the informant's personality traits and that this is not an expression of the informant's complete personality. We are aware that the presentations will tend towards stereotyping where complexity of personality traits is being reduced. However, we find that the benefits of making the presentations are greater than the disadvantages.[146] In order to protect the informants', their names have been changed.

Nina, e-fluential: The DJ
Nina is 24 years old and studies Modern Culture at Copenhagen University. She lives alone with her cat in a flat at Christianshavn, Copenhagen. Nina spends a lot of time in front of a computer, especially on the internet, and has a large social network she keeps contact with both online and offline. She is also very passionate about music and works as a DJ and club organizer when not studying. She appears hip, talks and laughs a lot and seems familiar with being around many people. It is easy to envisage her controlling the music in a club.

Anders, e-fluential: The Football Fan

Anders is 25 years old and is writing his thesis in Communication and Language at Copenhagen Business School. Anders lives with his girlfriend in a terraced house, Valby, and besides his studies he is working as a webmaster 20 hours a week. In his spare time he plays both football and basketball. This takes up a lot of his time, as he also follows the sport news on the internet every day and is playing the football game Hattrick on the internet. Anders is also interested in music and computers and uses the internet as a tool for shopping, news and general information seeking on a daily basis.

Signe, e-fluential: The Socialite

Signe is 22 years old and studies HA Comm. at Copenhagen Business School. Signe has previously studied to be a multimedia designer. She lives in her own flat in Inner Nørrebro, Copenhagen, and has been living there since she graduated from high school. Signe lived in Japan from the age of 7 to 16 and went to a boarding school in Denmark in her high school years. In Signe's own words her interest are "sport, music, film and the classic: food, family and friends". Signe plays water polo and is also very interested in clothes and fashion and is going for an internship at Channel in Tokyo in the Spring. Signe has a lot of friends both in Denmark and abroad and keeps in touch with them all via the internet. Besides that, she is also very sociable with her water polo team.

Sacha, e-fluential: The Literature Enthusiast

Sacha is 27 years old and is writing her thesis in Danish at Copenhagen University. Sacha lives alone in a studio flat in Amager. Her mum owns the flat and Sacha has been living there for several years. Besides writing her thesis, Sacha is also working in a kindergarten 20 hours a week and also does Pilates. Sacha has a great interest in literature and alternative music. As well as spending time with her many different friends, listening to music and reading books takes up a lot of her spare time. Sacha also spends a lot of her time on the internet, chatting and mailing with her friends, some of which she has made online.

Pia, tech-fluential: Many Irons in the Fire

You do not have to talk to Pia for long to discover that she has extremely many irons in the fire. And she manages them all. Beside from studying, she works as a web trainee and as a student adviser. Pia uses a lot of her time at her computer and on the internet, reviews concerts, writes poetry, has a large social network which she nurses unquestionably and so forth. And she does not appear stressed. She is very talkative, reflexive, and knowledgeable and has an extreme surplus in all aspects. Pia is in her last year of studying Design and

Communication at the IT University. She is also very interested in poetry, literature and music – especially Danish music. Pia is 24 years old and lives alone in her own apartment in Nørrebro, Copenhagen.

Per, tech-fluential: A Font of all Knowledge

Besides his studies, Per works freelance as a webdesigner and also has a blog with more than 2,000 clicks daily - also updated by Per daily. Per comes across as very knowledgeable. In his spare time he is reading books, watching movies and playing computer games. He is also designing websites as a hobby and likes going for a drink with his friends. Per is a bit of a collector and enjoys having the best and latest within IT and hi-fi in general. When we visited him he had just purchased a new big television on the internet and was very exited about going to buy the new X-box 360 at the day of its release two weeks later. Per is 25 years old and in his fourth year at Denmark's Design School where he studies Industrial Design. Per lives together with his girlfriend in a flat in Østerbro, Copenhagen.

Mads, tech-fluential: King of the Student Halls

Mads is extremely interested in - and knowledgeable about – software and hardware. He spends a lot of time at his computer and on the internet and is often asked for technical advice with regards to IT. Furthermore, he has a large social network, which seems very important to him. Mads keeps contact with his friends and acquaintances online - but even more so offline. He lives in student halls which seems an important part of his identity. Mads is very talkative and is the person in charge of the bar at the student halls where he lives, where he also spends a lot of time. Mads studies engineering at Denmark's Technical University and is 24 years old.

Christian, tech-fluential: The Programmer

Christian is passionate about computers. He studies computer science at DTU and works as a programmer in a large IT company. His major interest is computers which also seem to be an important element in his communication with friends. He is knowledgeable about computers and spends a lot of time by his computer. Christian is 21 years old and lives in student halls of residence in Lyngby.

After the presentation of the report's theoretical framework and empirical data, we will begin the analysis and discussion in the following chapters.
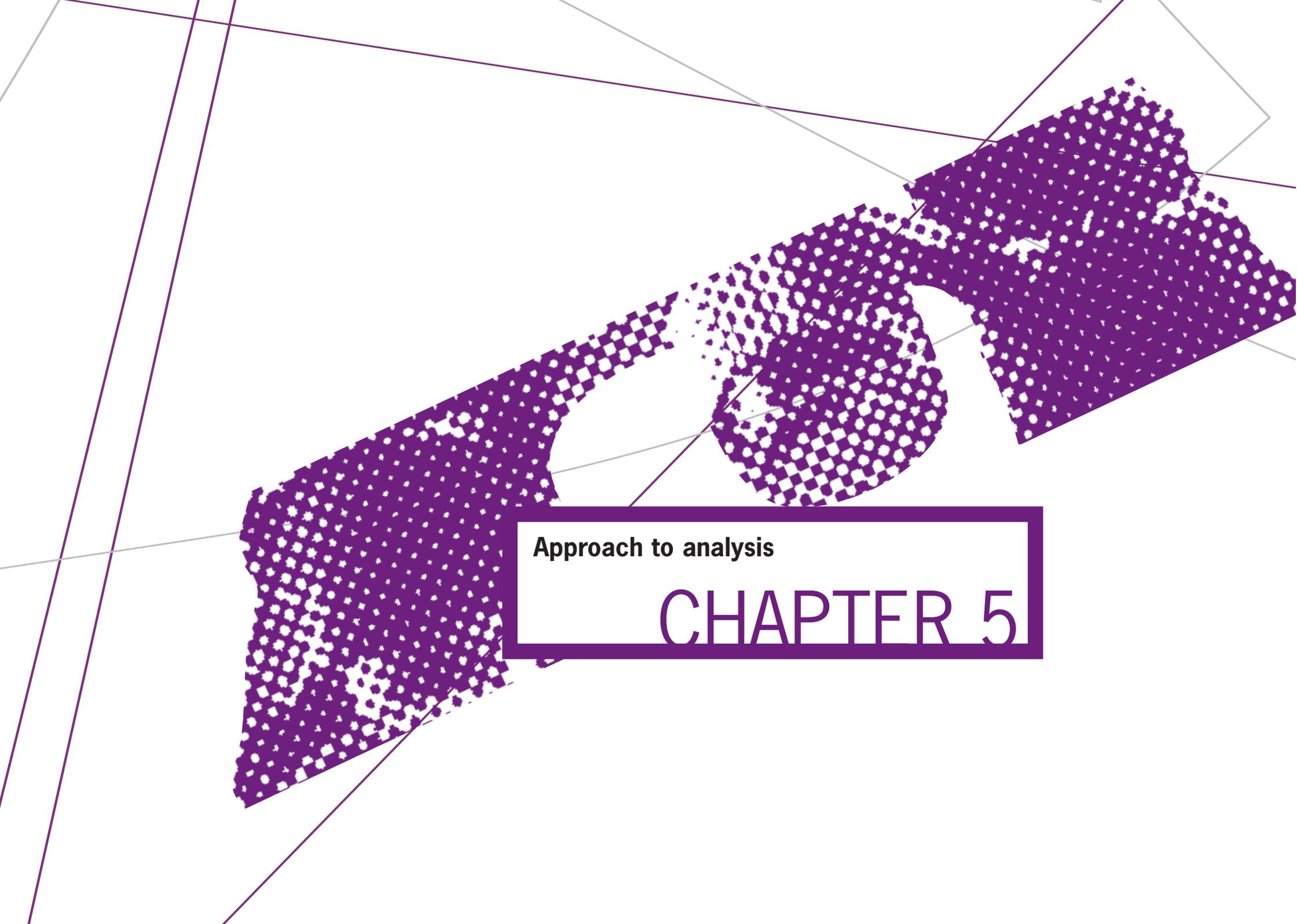
Approach to analysis

CHAPTER 5

Chapter 5: Approach to analysis

Before we begin on the actual analysis and discussion of the viral potential of www.studentoptions.com, we lay out our appoach to the analysis. We will therefore present our view on the dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative data and our argumentation for combining them. Additionally we present our analytical mode and outline the disposition of the analysis and discussion.

Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Data

As argued in the previous chapter we have examined the aspects we needed to clarify in relation to the target population through a survey and the aspects connected to the strategic target group via individual interviews.[147] This means that some of our data has been produced through the use of a quantitative research strategy and others through a qualitative research strategy.

We are well aware that a number of researchers perceive the two strategies to be so different as to not be possible to unite them properly in one study. An often used argument for this point of view is that qualitative and quantitative methods do not comply on a meta theoretical level, because the two strategies have fundamental different ontological and epistemological prepositions.[148] However, we have a different view on the dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative strategies and find it possible – and in some cases also advisable – to combine them and thereby allow the strengths of each strategy to 'capitalize' upon the weakness of the other.[149] Our advocating for a combination of the two strategies is reasoned in a perception that the strategies are different, but not fundamental different. Like Bryman we believe that the divisions between the research strategies are 'much more free-floating than is sometimes supposed'.[150] Additionally, we agree with Dey that neither quantitative nor qualitative data exist 'out in reality' but are being produced in the meeting between a researcher and the studied. And that both quantitative and qualitative data are concerned with numbers and meaning:

> "…meanings cannot be ignored when we are dealing with numbers, and numbers cannot be ignored when we are dealing with meanings."[151]

The same arguments are also highlighted by Bryman.[152] Stretching it to the limit, we feel that the division between quantitative and qualitative research is not necessarily more fundamental than the division between two methods within one research strategy: For instance the division between observation and individual, semi-structured interviews.

To summarize, we have applied a quantitative strategy to produce knowledge of one area of our research (the target population) and a qualitative to produce knowledge of another area (strategic target group). This way of combining the strategies coheres with the approach Bryman[153] terms the complimentary approach.[154]

Analytical Mode

Besides the empirical data, the analysis is also founded in our theoretical framework. Following our meta theoretical approach we perceive abduction as the most suitable way of unifying these two elements. This means that we will interpret by relating an empirical observation (statement from a respondent or informant) to the theory on viral marketing. This will help us get 'behind' the observation and thereby (ideally) produce new and more thorough knowledge of the observation. Likewise, we will be able to 'sophisticate' the knowledge about viral marketing inherent in the theories, as we have tested the theories' ability to throw light upon a concrete situation.[155]

Such interpretations are possible but not logically valid because they conclude more than the empirical data substantiate.[156] However, as we aim to transcend the empirical domain and get deeper down in the layers of reality in order to approach the 'underlying' mechanisms that generate the empirical observable events,[157] we find it necessary to have this further step at our disposal. Additionally, we have argued that the notion of 'absolute truth' is absurd. This understanding inflicts that we do not find it possible at all to interpret in a logically valid way. We do however believe that an outer reality exists independently of our recognition of it. Therefore we find that some explanations are more truthful than others and consequently operate with the concept of truth-likeliness. Our aim with the analysis and discussion is therefore to generate a truth-like explanation of the viral potential of www.studentoptions.com.

Disposition of Analysis and Discussion

To do so we have divided the analysis and discussion into three successive parts. In the first part (Chapter 6) we examine, whether there is potential to target a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com at Danish students in higher education. Assuming there is a potential, the second and third parts (Chapter 7 and 8) discuss how such a campaign can be designed and seeded.

The distinction between analysis and discussion is not clear cut, as all three parts contain analysis and discussion elements. The reason for this is that we have chosen to follow the structure inherent in our empirical data and this structure transcends the division of a 'pure' analysis part and a 'pure' discussion part. However, the first part tends to stay on an analysing level, whereas the second and the third parts have more of a character of a discussion.

147 For a more thorough discussion of the choice of the survey method and individual interviews, see Chapter 4.

148 Shcrøder et al., 2003: 350, Danermark et al., 2002: 271, Bryman, 2001: 444

149 Bryman, 2001: 444, Danermark et al., 2002: 305

150 Bryman, 2001: 428

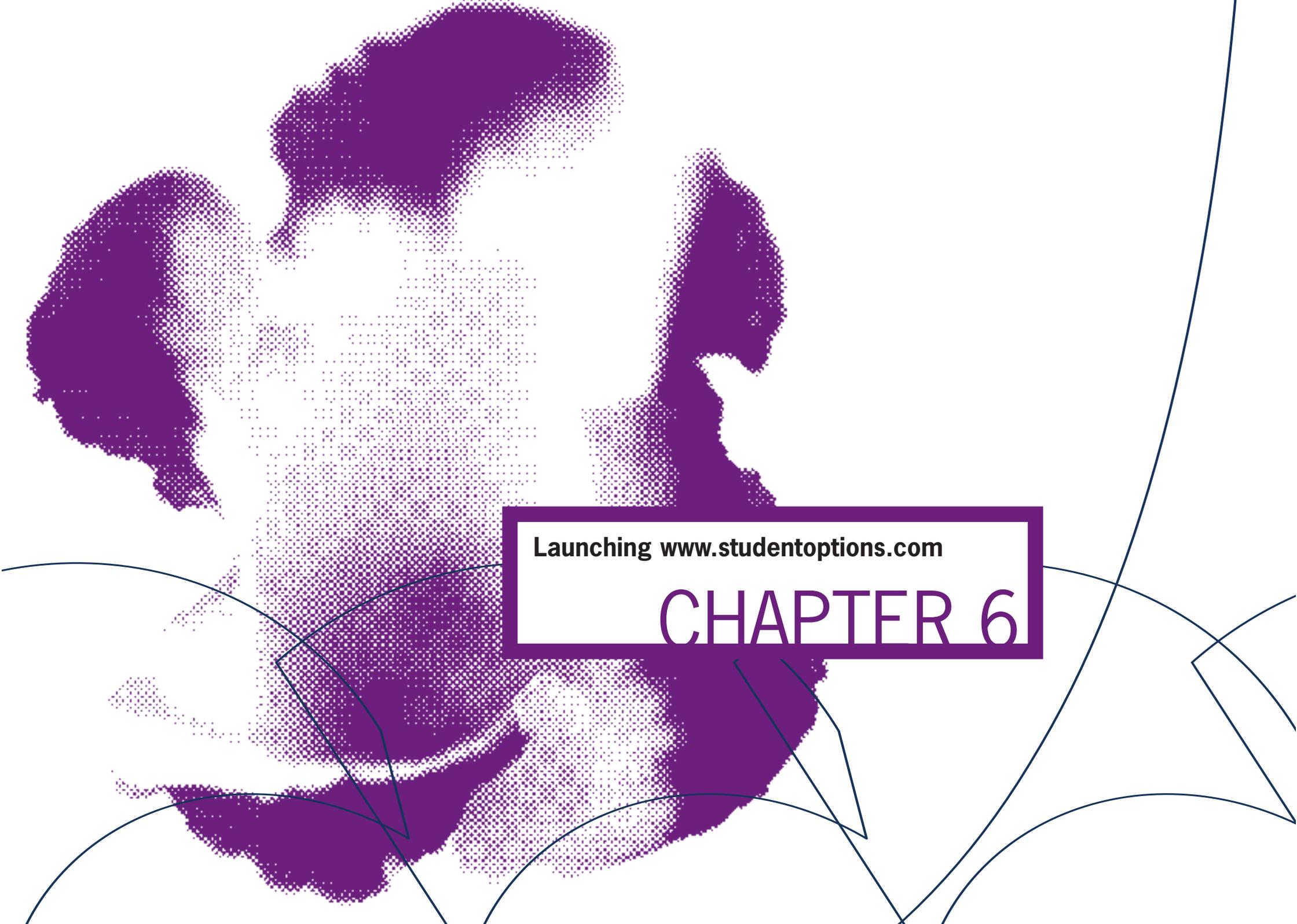151 Dey, 1993, cited in Olsen, 2002: 36

152 Bryman, 2001: 428-434

153 Bryman take point of departure in Hammersley's classification of approaches (Bryman, 2001: 447)

154 Bryman, 2001: 447, 453

155 Danermark et. al, 2002: 181, 188

156 Danermark et. al, 2002: 182

157 For a more thorough argumentation see Chapter 1 on meta theory

Launching www.studentoptions.com

CHAPTER 6

Chapter 6: Launching www.studentoptions.com

In this chapter we discuss whether viral marketing successfully can be used to market www.studentoptions.com to Danish students in higher education. Naturally, the viral potential of the website depends on a range of elements which is impossible to obtain full knowledge of. However, a limited number of elements seem particularly important. First of all there must be a substantiate number of the students who are able and willing to function as carriers and initiators of viral messages. Secondly, the students' perception, and in particular that of the e- and tech-fluentials, of IT and opinion of Microsoft is also important. Finally the students' inclination to shop software online is crucial to research. We therefore centre the discussion around these elements.

Students as Carriers and Initiators of Viral Campaigns

In the previous chapter, we showed that many Danish students in higher education can benefit from www.studentoptions.com. Furthermore, we have argued that Danish students in higher education are a relatively homogeneous group which as discussed in Chapter Four is an important element for a successful viral campaign. However, in order for the students to constitute a good target population for viral campaigns, it is important that they are buzzprone, meaning there needs to be a substantial number of individuals among them who are able to function as carriers and initiators of viral messages.[158] We will therefore turn our attention to this.

Students as Carriers of Viral Messages

As previously shown internet users between the ages of 18 to 35 are perceived to be the best carriers of viral campaigns.[159] Most students in higher education fall within this criterion and should therefore be a good group to target virally. However, in order to obtain a more thorough knowledge of this, we will in the following examine their ability to function as carriers of viral messages, empirically.

In 2001, a British survey about viral marketing was carried out with approximately 800 respondents. One of the conclusions that was derived from the study was that younger people are very good carriers of viral messages. The reason is that the 16 to 24 years olds twice as often, compared to the general population, 'always' open an attachments sent by friends or acquaintances, and also are significantly more likely to open an attachment 'most of the time'. Individuals in this age group are furthermore the ones that most often forward emails 'always' and 'most of the time'. The age group of 25 to 34 year olds comes second, and the frequency falls significantly throughout the older age groups. Finally, the 16 to 24 years old and the 25 to 34 years old are most likely to react on a link sent to them. The inclination to do this drops significantly in the older age groups.[160]

In a Danish context two independent survey studies - one from 1999 with 3,012 respondents,[161] and the other from The Danish Ministry of Cultural Affairs carried out in 2005 with 2,900 respondents - reach similar conclusions about Danish internet users: The people who use the internet most are students[162] and young people in general. In one of the studies 'young people' are defined as 20-29 year olds, in the other as 20-30 year olds.[163]

Another point that we feel indicates that students is a suitable group to reach via viral marketing, is the high number of respondents to our online survey. Even though we do not have the exact number of people the survey was sent to, the number of respondents, 2,780, came as a positive surprise to us. We believe that the high response rate indicates that many Danish students in higher education are willing to spend time on emails that are not directly beneficial for themselves – and also to open links sent to them by email. Furthermore, 85 percent of the respondents in the survey stated that they turn to family, friends and acquaintances for information on IT.[164] This can be seen as an indicator of viral marketing being suitable for IT and software, as the trustworthiness of recommendations from own network is one of the core conditions in viral marketing. Additionally, more than 60 percent of the respondents claimed that they look to the internet for information on IT, placing the internet second to personal recommendations.[165] This fact implies that many students browse the internet when searching for IT information, and thereby are likely to stumble upon a viral IT message.

Based on the number of respondents to our own survey, and the fact that other empirical studies find that the majority of students fall within an age group that is suitable for successful viral marketing, we perceive the theoretical preposition about students being a most vital audience to carry viral messages, tenable. With regards to IT and software, this is additionally supported by the findings from our own survey, pointing to the fact that information on IT is often passed on within personal networks.

Students as Initiators of Viral Campaigns

There is an essential difference between internet users that carry viral messages and internet users that actually initiate viral campaigns; e- and tech-fluentials. In order for viral campaigns to be successful, the active presence of both types in the target population is crucial.[166] We have shown the existence of individuals who carry messages, and in the following we will, based on our qualitative interviews, examine the forwarding patterns of the e- and tech-fluentials within the target population.

All informants, apart from Signe,[167] visit new websites often. The majority had visited a new site on the day of - or the day prior to - the interview.[168] This means that they are likely to 'stumble' upon a viral message. Furthermore, all informants come across as confident with regards to forwarding news, recommendations, or a

158 Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004: 17

159 Chapter 4: Target Audience

160 Goldsmith, 2002: 44-77.

161 Blauenfeldt, 1999

162 One study concludes furthermore, that wage earners also are among the people who use the Internet the most. However, the other study dismisses this point.

163 Blauenfeldt, 1999 and Bille et al., 2004

164 App. A3, slide 14

165 App. A3, slide 14

166 Chapter 4: Target Audience

167 Signe: 65+71

168 Per: 70-71+75, Pia: 99, Mads: 99-100, Anders: 63+72, Sacha: 58+63-65, Nina: 78+87, Christian: 80

laugh – and are doing so on a regular basis.[169] The vast majority use email or chat[170] to forward links and attachments to others. Per is the only one that is different in this respect, as he uses his blog to pass on recommendations to others.[171] Per is also the only one who does not regularly receive links or attachments from friends and acquaintances, however people in his network can place links on his blogs, which is most likely to be the thing that takes the pressure off his private inbox.[172]

In general the informants all open all attachments and links they receive from their network of friends and acquaintances. In fact only Sacha leaves some emails unopened.[173] Sacha furthermore states that she does not feel inclined to open an email sent to a load of people, by for instance Microsoft, and not to her personally.[174] Some of the other informants also mention spam mails, which they find extremely annoying and never open.[175] Such statements underline the core strength of viral marketing: That a recommendation from a friend or acquaintance is welcomed and opened, whereas an e- mail sent to many people by for instance the newspaper Politiken or Microsoft most likely will not be opened by e- or tech-fluentials.

After examining the respondents and informants ability to function as carriers and initiators of viral campaigns, we find it likely that a substantial number of Danish students in higher education - and the e- and tech-fluentials among them - are likely to carry and initiate viral campaigns, respectively.

IT as a High-involvement Product
As viral marketing is most applicable to high-involvement products, it is important to determine the perception the target population has of IT.[176] For e- and tech-fluentials, IT is by definition a high-involvement product. Tech-fluentials are characterized by being technologically orientated and interested, and e-fluentials are defined as people who are *"much more active than other internet users in terms of their online influence, using emails, newsgroups, bulletin boards, and other online vehicles to convey their messages."*[177] Interviewing the informants also left us with the feeling that they had an exceptional high interest in IT.

It is also important that the general population of Danish students perceive IT and software as a high-involvement product. In order to understand the perception Danish students have of IT, we posed questions about this topic to our respondents. Interestingly, 85 percent of the respondents state that they either have an interest or little interest in IT.[178] This finding implies that Danish students in higher education are interested in IT, and we therefore find that IT can be regarded as a high-involvement product for the majority of the target population.

Not surprisingly, men are significantly more interested in IT than women. Only 6 percent of the men state that they are not interested in IT in comparison to 20 percent of the female respondents. As previously stated, viral marketing is often found to be more suitable for males than females.[179] With regards to viral marketing campaigns for IT and software, the above numbers support this statement.

Perception of Microsoft

The opinion the target population has of Microsoft is also important, as the perception the receivers of a viral campaign have of a company is highly influential on their reaction to a campaign from the company, and their inclination to forward this to others.[180] We will argue that should the representatives among the target population and the e- and tech-fluentials prove negative towards Microsoft, a viral campaign is not a viable option for marketing www.studentoptions.com. In the following we will therefore examine the respondents' and informants' opinion of Microsoft.

The opinion of Microsoft is constituted by the perception of the brand Microsoft and the perception of Microsoft products. As many people have difficulties distinguishing between these two notions - which also seemed to be the case for the informants - we will analyse them simultaneously, so that we do not disturb the informants' statements and points of view. However, the informants discussed their perception of the Office Suite separately from their general opinion of Microsoft. The respondents were also questioned specifically on the Office Suite, and we therefore examine their opinions and relations to the Office Suite separately.

Students: Neutral Perception of Microsoft

One of our initial expectations was that Danish students in higher education have a negative perception of Microsoft, and that they perceive the corporation as a monolithic giant on the global software market. However, the survey depicts a different picture as it indicates that the vast majority of Danish students in higher education do not hold a negative preconceived opinion of Microsoft.[181] More than half of the respondents state that their opinion of Microsoft is neutral or that they have no opinion of Microsoft at all. 24 percent of the respondents hold a positive opinion of Microsoft and 20 percent state that they have a directly negative perception of Microsoft. Though 20 percent is a high figure that needs to be accounted for, the above implies that most students' perception of Microsoft does not compromise the use of viral marketing in relation to www.studentoptions.com.

The opinion of Microsoft differs a lot in the different education institutions. At Copenhagen Business School only 8 percent state that they have a negative perception of Microsoft, whereas 27 percent of the respondents

169 Mads: 210-211, 233-236, 246-252, Sacha: 113-115, 123-125, 139, Signe: 153-154, 177-178, Nina: 193, 207-211, Christian: 179-180, 188-191, 210-211, 215-216, Pia: 301-320, 328-330, 335-352, Per: 60-71, Anders: 138, 141-146

170 Signe: 149, Pia: 409-410+127-133, Mads: 210-211, Anders: 138, Sacha: 113-115, Nina: 189, Christian: 179-180

171 Per: 157-158, 183-188+70-71

172 Per: 145, Signe: 111, Pia: 113-114, Mads: 131+182-183, Anders: 111-112, Sacha: 87, Nina: 156, Christian: 148

173 Signe: 115-116, Pia: 236, Mads: 141-142+203, Anders: 116-120+125-127, Nina: 160+164, Christian: 98-99+152, Sacha: 87+107-109. Whether Sacha opens a link or attachment depends on from which of her friends or acquaintance she receives the recommendation (Sacha: 87+107-109)

174 Signe: 134

175 Pia: 236, Mads: 203, Anders: 116-120

176 Chapter 3: Viral Marketing

177 Chapter 4: Target Audience

178 App. A3, slide 2

179 Chapter 4: Target Audience

180 Charpter 3: Viral Marketing

181 App. A3, slide 19

at Roskilde University hold a negative perception of Microsoft. At Aalborg University and Copenhagen Business School, respectively 35 and 32 percent of the respondents hold a positive opinion of Microsoft. This is only the case for 20 percent of the respondents at Roskilde University. There can be many reasons for these differences; they could be a result of the underlying ideology that is prevalent at the different institutions. Roskilde University has a reputation for being politically leftwing in orientation, which could explain why so many students here disavow themselves from a large corporation such as Microsoft. Our own hypothesis about the perception of Microsoft may furthermore be originated in this ideology. Copenhagen Business School, on the other hand, has a reputation for being more politically right-wing which may be the reason why relatively many students here are positive about Microsoft.

Almost all respondents (97 percent) that have a positive opinion of Microsoft, also use Microsoft Windows as their operating system. This is 'only' the case for four fifths (78 percent) of the respondents who have a negative opinion of Microsoft.[182] Shifting from a supplier that is perceived negatively must be regarded as a natural step. However, Microsoft has a monolithic position in the software market, making a shift away from Microsoft products difficult. It is therefore not surprising that just 22 percent of the respondents that perceive Microsoft negatively have made this shift.

Finally we find it essential to emphasise that 28 percent of all male respondents state that they have a negative attitude towards Microsoft. This is only the case for 14 percent of the female respondents. These figures are worth considering as the target population's opinion of Microsoft is crucial for the success of a viral campaign. So even though we have established that men theoretically are more appropriate to target virally and furthermore are more likely to perceive IT as a high-involvement product than women, it may not be advisable to gender specify the audience for www.studentoptions.com.

E- and Tech-fluentials: Microsoft is Just Another Big Company

As viral campaigns are dependent on initially being forwarded by e- and tech-fluentials, their opinion of Microsoft is of particular importance. In the following we therefore turn our attention towards our informants' opinion of Microsoft in order to examine whether they are among the 20 percent who perceive Microsoft negatively.

Many of the informants perceive Microsoft in a neutral and almost indifferent manner. Using Mads' words they *"...tænker hverken sådan negativt eller positivt..."* about Microsoft. It appears as if the neutrality originates in an understanding of Microsoft as simply being another big company, which they *"...ikke sådan [har] en følelsesladet holdning til..."* as Nina expresses it.[183]

This opinion is exemplified with a quote by Signe:

> "… jeg synes ikke, jeg har ikke nogen negativ… jeg har egentlig ikke rigtig den store holdning. De udbyder noget, som jeg skal bruge. Som sådan er jeg ikke helt så… politificeret over det. (…) Men det er bare, altså, det er en stor virksomhed, som sælger et produkt. Det kunne lige så godt være Coca Cola."[184]

Though Anders is the only one who holds Microsoft in high esteem, Sacha and Pia also perceive Microsoft more positively than the informants described above and even regard it as a 'trustworthy' company.[185] In Anders' opinion, Microsoft may have a monopolistic position in the software market, but in his eyes this does not prevent Microsoft from constantly being innovative and ahead of the game.[186] Per, on the other hand, has a directly negative perception of Microsoft. He finds that Microsoft is resting on their laurels and does not provide customers with the latest technology, which is to be expected from a large software company.[187]

Tech-fluentials: Microsoft is a Mainstream Brand

All the tech-fluentials appear highly opinionated towards Microsoft. Consequently, their statements appear reflexive, which we take as an indication of their validity. However, the tech-fluentials seemed even more reflexive than the e-fluentials as they elaborated on their opinions of Microsoft.[188] Furthermore, the tech-fluentials were much more selective with regards to using Microsoft programmes.

For instance Pia has changed her internet browser from Microsoft's Internet Explorer to Mozilla's Firefox. Likewise, she is using the Macromedia web design programme, Dreamweaver instead of Microsoft's Frontpage, as she finds Dreamweaver to be a better product.[189] She describes her reasons for changing to Firefox in the following way:

> "Der er jeg så begyndt at bruge Firefox. Det er nok et eller andet med, der tror jeg, det er den der jargon, der er på IT-steder. At det er lidt finere. Ligesom at alle grafiske designere skal have deres Macs. Og så er det måske lidt, at det er lidt finere at bruge en mindre browser end at bruge de der store browsere."[190]

This statement - that Microsoft within IT-circles is not perceived as the most innovative and compelling company, but more like a mainstream brand - is cemented by two of the other three tech-fluentials. As mentioned above, Per does not think that Microsoft keeps programmes up to date with the newest software technology. He exemplifies this with the lack of development in Microsoft's internet browser, Explorer:

> "Men der har jo rent faktisk ikke været en ændring i Internet Explorer i to år nu eller sådan noget, altså den har ikke

182 App. A3, slide 8

183 Signe: 329-331, Nina: 536-538, Mads: 602-620, Christian: 585-587

184 Signe: 329-331+335-336

185 Sacha: 303, Pia: 867 & 872, Anders: 344, 351-354

186 Anders: 341-344, 351-354

187 Per: 532-535

188 Signe: 324-325, Nina: 487-531

189 Pia: 849-851

190 Pia: 856-859

ændret sig på nogen måde, den er måske blevet mere sikker, men sådan rent funktionalitetsmæssigt har den ikke ændret sig på nogen måde. De er simpelthen så arrogante, at de ikke gider at følge med, og de gider ikke, at give deres kunder de her ting. Og man er... næsten, hvis der ikke var software-alternativer, så var man næsten overladt til at bruge plug-ins af forskellig art, for ligesom at få den (?) funktionalitet, ikke? Og det er bare den der sådan vildt arrogante holdning, som jeg synes er alt for irriterende. Og så det, at de ikke laver deres ting ordentligt."[191]

Mads has a more 'passive negative perception' of Microsoft's programmes. Like Per and Pia, he only uses Microsoft programmes when it is beneficial for him. However, Mads is not as strongly opiniated as Per and simply states that within some product categories, he avoids Microsoft as he finds alternatives better:

"Jeg synes '...' jeg tænker ikke sådan hverken negativt eller positivt. Jeg er ikke sådan en total anti-Microsoft. Jeg undgår dem bare der hvor jeg synes, deres produkter er dårlige. Der finder jeg alternativer. Men der er også mange steder hvor de egentlig er udmærket."[192]

The last tech-fluential, Christian, was vague in his statements about Microsoft's products, and is the only tech-fluential who did not find Microsoft's products inadequate for him personally. However, he states that Microsoft has now *"ryddet lidt ud"*[193] in faulty products, which implies that he might feel superior in some way to Microsoft's programmes.

Our overall feel from the interviews with the tech-fluentials is that they do not find all Microsoft's programmes good enough for advanced users. This interpretation is directly voiced by Mads:

"Der er mange af de ting som er lavet, de er beregnet til folk som ikke fatter en skid om computere."[194]

Even though tech-fluentials perceive Microsoft as mainstream, they nevertheless use some Microsoft programmes, as they find it hard work if wishing to completely avoid Microsoft products and only use products from smaller, alternative suppliers[195] as Microsoft is omnipresent within the global software market. Pia explains that she, despite the fact that she uses Microsoft products and finds the brand trustworthy, has no real relation to Microsoft. She feels as if Microsoft *"...bare [er] en stor virksomhed, og jeg (...) bare [er] en anonym bruger."*[196]

The Microsoft Office Suite is Widespread

Though the tech-fluentials are highly selective with regards to using Microsoft programmes, all informants, apart from Sacha, use programmes from the Office Suite.[197] Sacha uses freeware, and the only Microsoft products she uses are Messenger and Media Player.[198] Most informants are satisfied with the programmes in the Office Suite.

In Signe's words the satisfaction consist in the fact that the programmes *"...opfylder de behov jeg har..."*[199] The tech-fluential Pia, who with regards to other programmes does not use Microsoft, elaborates on this explanation and states that:

> "… Men jeg er generelt virkelig glad for det (Word, ed.). Jeg kunne aldrig finde på at bruge andre tekstbehandlingsprogrammer. For jeg kender funktionaliteten. Og det samme med regneark. Der ville jeg også altid vælge Excel."[200]

As the above indicates, Pia's satisfaction with the Office Suite stems from the fact that she knows the programmes' functionality. We find that this can be seen as an indicator that Pia will continue to be loyal towards the Office Suite, even though Microsoft is loosing its monopoly in the software market and more competitors are arriving.

The above conclusion from the interviews is supported by data from the survey. The respondents were asked to state which software programmes they regularly use. They could choose between programmes from Microsoft, Apple, Adobe and others. The top three programmes used were Word with 95 percent, Powerpoint with 49 percent and Excel with 48 percent of the respondents regularly using the programme.[201] All of these are part of the Office Suite, which will be sold at www.studentoptions.com. These figures imply that most Danish students currently are using the Office Suite, and that they therefore could be interested in buying it on www.studentoptions.com.

Opinion of Microsoft: Not an Obstacle for the Use of Viral Marketing

As shown above, the majority of the informants perceive Microsoft neutrally. The tech-fluentials' reason for doing so is most likely linked to the fact that they perceive the Microsoft brand as mainstream and therefore not particularly interesting. This explanation could also be applicable to many of the e-fluentials' opinion of Microsoft. The very neutral attitude that the informants seem to take towards Microsoft, does not affect the opportunity for using viral marketing to launch www.studentoptions.com decisively. Had they had a negative opinion of Microsoft it might not have been possible to make them initiate a viral campaign. At the same time a more positive attitude to Microsoft would have increased the chances of a successful viral campaign. Similarly the respondents' quite neutral opinion of Microsoft means that they could be carriers of a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com.

191 Per: 528-535

192 Mads: 602-604

193 Christian: 571

194 Mads: 614-615

195 Per: 477-485, Mads: 590-591, 604-605

196 Pia: 874-875

197 Mads: 585-590, Per: 456, Pia: 837, Signe: 324, Anders: 335, Nina: 487, Christian: 555

198 Sacha: 35, 184-186, 190, 294-295, 281

199 Signe: 325

200 Pia: 847-849

201 App. A3, slide 7

Inclination to Purchase Software Online

The final aspect that is crucial for marketing www.studentoptions.com virally is whether buying software online is a realistic action for Danish students in higher education. If they feel alienated from shopping software online, it may prove very complicated to make them use www.studentoptions.com. Similarly the e- and tech-fluentials' eligibility to purchase software online is crucial, as it is not likely that they will initiate a viral campaign should they feel alienated from shopping software online themselves. In the following we will therefore examine the respondents' and informants' opinion of shopping software online. Their pirating behaviour is also crucial for their likelihood to shop software online, and we therefore also examine their attitudes to pirating and illegal downloads.

Students' Use of the Internet as a Shopping Alternative

According to our survey results, Danish students in higher education are not put off by purchasing software online. We asked the respondents whether they would use a recognized website selling software at discounted prices, given this existed. On this hypothetic question, almost 90 percent were positive towards buying discounted software online and 65 percent that they either 'definitely' or 'probably' would use a website selling software to students at discounted prices.[202] This was the case for 70 percent of the female respondents, whereas only 60 percent of the male respondents showed the same enthusiasm. We believe this is connected to the fact, that males in general are more liable to use pirated software, and that their alternative to buying software therefore often is getting it for free.[203]

E- and Tech-fluentials: Online Shopping is Cheaper

All informants are accustomed to shopping online. All the tech-fluentials and half of the e-fluentials state that the fact that shopping online is cheaper is the primary reason they are doing so.[204] Additionally Pia, Nina, Christian and Mads point out that accessibility plays a big role, when they choose to buy something online as they find that everything can be found on the internet.[205] With regards to gender, all of the male informants are quick to respond that they buy hardware and IT-appliances over the internet.[206] The e-fluential, Anders, is the only male that rather vaguely states that he buys computers online. All other male informants, who are also tech-fluentials, promptly state that they buy all their hardware online. In general, most informants state that they buy cd's online, however this is most noticeably for the female respondents – and thereby also the e-fluentials.[207] Pia, Signe and Anders are the only ones that mention buying clothes online,[208] and Nina the only one to mention shopping for art and books online.[209]

The impression from the interviews is that the informants feel that anything can be bought online and see no obstacles for online shopping. Even though all the male informants use the internet for buying hardware, none of the informants have previously bought software online. This could be an obstacle for www.studentoptions.com. However, as many of the informants have downloaded their software for free on the internet, and in general are familiar with online shopping, we assume that this fact does not constitute a major obstacle for the success of www.studentoptions.com.

Students: Majority Uses Legal Software

Having examined the respondents and informants online shopping behaviour, we will now address the aspect of pirating. One of our initial expectations was that many students pirate copy software. If this is true, their likeliness to shop software at www.studentoptions.com must be regarded as relatively low. The survey confirms this assumption to some extent as it shows, that around 30 percent of the respondents in general find pirate copying tolerable.[210] When asked specifically, a third of the respondents admits to be using a pirate copied version of the Office Suite.[211] These two figures are almost coherent, which may support their validity. However, we believe, that these answers should be taken with a pinch of salt as it is likely, that some respondents have not told the truth, due to fear of being tracked via the online survey. Though we aimed at reassuring the respondents that they were fully anonymous, an online survey can be tracked and the respondents had nothing but our word to guarantee their anonymity. Seen in that light, the 'actual' number of respondents who pirate software may be larger.

Of the remaining part of the respondents, about 50 percent state that they either do not take a position in the debate or are unsure whether they support or disavow pirate copying, whereas approximately 20 percent disassociate themselves from it.[212] As previously stated, significantly more men than women find pirate copying acceptable and state that they use an illegal version of Office. This difference supports the fact that we do not feel that a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com should be made gender specific, even though literature on viral marketing emphasises that men in general are a better audience for viral campaigns.

There are considerable differences among the education institutions. The respondents who disassociate themselves most from pirate copying attend either The Danish University of Educations, The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, Denmark, or Aarhus University. The Danish University of Educations is also the institution where most respondents use a legal version of Office. There could be many reasons for this. However, one is that the average age for students at The Danish University of Educations is considerably higher than at other education institutions, as students here often have other educational background and work experience before attending the university.

202 App. A3, slide 9

203 App. A3, slide 5

204 Signe: 99-104, Anders: 91, Christian: 119-120, Per: 137, Pia: 199, Mads: 157

205 Christian: 137-139, Mads: 169-174, Pia: 200-201, Nina: 143-150

206 Christian: 119, Per: 127, Anders: 89, Mads: 156

207 Nina: 117, Sacha: 78, Pia: 165, Anders: 89

208 Anders: 89, Pia: 165-166, Signe:140-142

209 Nina: 117

210 App. A3, slide 5

211 App. A3, slide 6

212 App. A3, slide 5

Regarding subject, the IT-students stand out, as the majority of these respondents find pirate copying acceptable. They are furthermore the most likely to use a pirate copied version of Office. We do not find this surprising, as it demands a certain level of interest and knowledge about IT to use pirated software. As before, the e- and tech-fluentials' pirating behaviour is crucial to explore. If the e- and tech-fluentials perceive pirating as a good alternative to purchasing, they will probably not be inclined to use www.studentoptions.com themselves and consequently most likely not recommend it to others. In order to examine this we will turn our attention to the informants.

E- and Tech-fluentials Use Pirated Software

With regards to pirating behaviour the informants differ from the respondents as they all pirate copy[213] and, except Sacha who only uses freeware, use pirated versions of software programmes.[214] This seems worrying for the potential of www.studentsoptions.com and even more, when the informants' attitude towards pirate copying is also taken into consideration, as the informants - to some extent - find pirate copying acceptable.

Signe is the only of the e- and tech-fluentials that disassociates her self from pirating,[215] whereas Mads finds it fully acceptable[216] and Per, Pia, Nina, Christian, Sacha and Anders have a noticeable two-sided attitude towards pirate copying. This two-sidedness consists of an understanding of pirate copying as morally wrong, but at the same time to a certain degree acceptable. In other words the informants accept some forms of pirate copying which will be examined and discussed below.

The six informants above find it acceptable to pirate copy when pirating the product is not an alternative to paying for it. An example of this is to pirate copy a film one would never pay for watching in the cinema or rent at Blockbusters. They also find it acceptable to pirate a software programme that is considered 'too expensive to buy', and which they would never be able to afford.[217] As Christian puts it:

> "Hvis det er noget man alligevel ikke ville have købt, så gør det jo ikke den store forskel kan man sige."[218]

Or in Anders' words:

> "…for den person som gør det tilgængeligt mister jo ikke noget. Så problemet er jo nok, at man ikke føler, at der er nogen, der har et tab, udover musikindustrien eller producenterne, softwareproducenterne."[219]

Mads also uses the above argument, to justify his attitude to pirate copying.[220] We find that this is quite similar to the informants arguing that stealing a lollypop in a supermarket is ok, providing that they would like to have it, but never would dream of paying for it. We did not, however, pose this question.

Another situation where some find it acceptable to pirate copy products is when the supplier/artist is 'extremely rich', and pirate copying his/her products does not feel as if depriving somebody of their way of living. Madonna, Metallica and Microsoft are all mentioned in this connection. The informants question why they should pay money to someone so rich. Mads explains it this way:

> "Og så synes jeg måske ikke at kunstnere som Michael Jackson og Metallica har brug for flere penge. Jeg kan ikke se, hvorfor jeg skal give 100 kr., når de har en fantasi milliard penge i forvejen. Hvorfor de lige skal bruge 100 kr fra mig. De kan aldrig nogensinde bruge de penge de har tjent i deres liv, hvorfor fanden skal jeg så købe."[221]

The same point of view is shared by Signe and Pia.[222]

Additionally many informants accept pirate copying, when not using the pirated products a lot - or when only using a part of it.[223] The first point can be illustrated by a quote from Christian:

> "Så hvis det er noget musik man lige høre et par gange, og så ellers er det dét, så behøver man nok ikke have købt det. Men hvis det bare er sådan noget, så har jeg ikke noget imod det. Men hvis det er noget man bruger mere, eller en del, så synes jeg, man skal købe det."[224]

The second point with a quote from Nina:

> "…jamen, så er det også hvis der lige er den ene sang som man rigtig godt vil have og man ved, at resten af albummet er noget lort. Så gider jeg ikke købe albummet."[225]

A fourth situation that in the eyes of the informants makes pirating acceptable is when it is only done on a minor scale. Although Sacha is the only one who expresses this directly,[226] it seems as though others agree. Nina states for instance that:

> "Og jeg ved godt sådan hvor problemet ligger. Og hvem der virkelig skaber problemer. Og det er jo ikke dem, der downloader én sang ad gangen. Det er dem, der kun downloader."[227]

Thereby Nina insinuates that because she both pirates and buys, her pirating behaviour is not really problematic.

213 Signe: 185, Sacha: 154, Nina: 245, Christian: 291+295, Pia: 434, Per: 197, Mads: 261-268, Anders: 164

214 Signe: 185-187, Sacha: 158, Nina: 260, Christian: 295, Pia: 439-448, Per: 201-203, Mads: 272-274+291-297, Anders: 168-170

215 Signe: 226-231

216 Mads: 391-392

217 Nina: 306-311, Christian: 361-362, Pia: 534-539, Per: 329-349, Anders: 205-210+182-187 Sacha: 163-168

218 Christian: 361-362

219 Anders: 198-199

220 Mads: 329-338

221 Mads: 307-310

222 Pia: 489-496, Signe: 226-231

223 Per: 329-336, Anders: 205-210, Christian: 366-368, Nina: 252-254

224 Christian: 366-368

225 Nina: 252-254

226 Sacha: 179-180

227 Nina: 270-272

Furthermore, some informants pirate because they find it easier and faster than obtaining products through legal channels. As Signe states, it simply is *"...lidt nemmere bare at låne det af en eller anden..."*[228] Nina's take on pirating as easier is not linked to obtaining products via friends, but through illegal file sharing websites. She finds that many of these websites are more user friendly than many of the websites selling legal products:

> "Altså, rigtig tit er det meget, meget nemmere. Og meget hurtigere [at få produkter ulovligt på internettet, ed.]. Og jeg tror, det er derfor, folk nu er blevet så glade for I-tunes. Fordi nu er der en mulighed for – både ser det lækkert ud – og det er nemt og det er brugervenligt og det koster ikke så meget…"[229]

Christian similarly explains that he pirates software almost by habit, as he finds pirating very simple and easy.[230]

Finally it is worth mentioning that some informants use pirating and illegal downloads for products they otherwise would not be able to get hold of. For instance Per pirates television series from the US that are not shown in Denmark, and Nina pirates music that has not yet been released in Denmark.[231]

All in all the informants are well aware that pirate copying is wrong. Nevertheless, they in some situations feel that pirating is acceptable. Furthermore it seems as if the informants have their own standards for what a product is worth. If they find the product to be too expensive, they simply pirate it. As Pia explains:

> "Men i forhold til det store og hele så tænker man 'hvorfor skal det være så dyrt i første omgang?' Altså, det har måske lidt at gøre med, om der er rimelighed i priserne. Og det er der jo i musikmarkedet. Og det synes jeg måske ikke, der er i softwaremarkedet."[232]

The informants' tolerance of pirate copying software can be seen as an obstacle for their liability to buy software at www.studentoptions.com. However, the website will meet some of the situations where the informants find pirating acceptable. First of all, it makes legal software easily accessible and thereby devalues the argument that it is "easier to get hold of illegal software". Furthermore, the website defies the argument that pirating software not is an alternative to purchase, as the website lowers the price on software significantly. This means that the informants' call for lower prices on software programmes[233] is met to some degree. From the interviews it is not possible for us to determine whether the reduction in price on www.studentoptions.com is enough for the students to start using the website. However, half of the informants state that they are willing to pay for programmes they use a lot if these become considerably cheaper. This is for instance the case with Mads:

> "Altså hvis jeg kunne betale f.eks. i forbindelse med min skole – Photoshop og InDesign og alle de programmer, jeg bruger 200-300 kr. max. Hvis de var lige så tilgengægelige som hvis man skulle købe en bog til 500 kr. Nu koster de, jeg ved ikke, flere tusinde kr for bare en licens '…' Så jeg kunne godt købe en licens hvert år til 500 kr til de programmer jeg bruger. Hvis det så gjorde at de var fuldt lovlige '…' For så var det lige som at købe en bog '…' Jeg har jo brug for dem, ligesom andre folk på andre studier har brug for en enkelt bog til 500 kr."[234]

Mads states that his reason for buying programmes would be that they then would be working better and he would have access to updates:

> "Så virker det hver gang. Det er ikke altid med de der programmer. Nogen gange skal man lige lave lidt '...' det er mest med programmer. Fordi nogen gange så er det ikke altid man kan få alle de updates til det via hjemmesiden. Det er meget udbredt nu at man bare connecter automatisk, og så updaterer det hele. Det er ikke alle der understøtter det, hvis det er ulovlige registreringskoder og den slags. Og så vil jeg gerne betale for et godt produkt. Jeg har bare ikke, jeg har ikke råd til at betale for det nu."[235]

The same considerations are applicable for Christian, Pia and Anders.[236] However the argument that Microsoft is a wealthy corporation cannot be changed by www.studentoptions.com. The informants' acceptance of pirating products of rich suppliers is thereby not met – and cannot be met. However, Microsoft is donating a significant amount of money to charity which none of our informants mentioned. It is therefore likely that this fact is unknown by many individuals and it could be an idea for Microsoft to start communicating this.

Another argument that the website does not address is the acceptance of pirating products that are not fully used. For the future, it may therefore prove a good idea to split the Office Suite up in smaller components and provide the possibility for purchasing Word, Excel, Powerpoint etc. separately. This would devalue the argument about not paying for all of the Office Suite if only using for instance Word. The last argument in favour of pirating was that it is acceptable to pirate once in a while. However, this argument seems almost impossible to counter as Microsoft cannot claim to be economically harassed. The only way to address this, therefore, seems to be to refer to pirating on moral grounds – but as we have seen, the informants are already well aware of this aspects.

Online Software Sale a Possibility

As shown the vast majority of the respondents do not feel alienated from shopping software online. But a large part of the respondents use pirated software which reduce their likelihood to use www.studentoptions.com. Fortunately, many of the respondents do use legal software, and we therefore feel convinced that there is potential among Danish students in higher education to purchase their Microsoft software at www.studentoptions.com. However it is also important that the e- and tech-fluentials in the target population will be using the website. If not inclined to do so, it is unlikely that they recommend the website to others. Consequently, a viral campaign would not be initiated and hence viral marketing would not be a suitable method for marketing www.studentoptions.com.

228 Signe: 209-210

229 Nina: 558-600

230 Christian: 299-302

231 Per: 233-251, Nina: 250-252

232 Pia: 559-561

233 Signe: 201, Nina: 280-286, Pia: 502-517+899, Per: 201-203 + 344 – 345, Anders: 181-187+192

234 Mads: 355-363

235 Mads: 373-378

236 Christian: 279-280+331, Pia: 457-459+463-472+521-529, Anders: 215-218

Shopping software online is not alienating for any of the informants. However, the picture regarding pirating is blurred, as almost all informants pirate copy software and feel that pirate copying is acceptable in certain situations. www.studentoptions.com does address some of these situations and thereby devalues some of the arguments for pirating. Whether the arguments met are enough for the e- and tech-fluentials to start purchasing software at www.studentoptions.com can only be speculated about.

The aspect of pirating therefore constitutes a potential problem for the success of a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com. Hence, addressing the e- and tech-fluentials may not be a great solution. Prior to disregarding viral marketing in relation to www.studentoptions.com it must be emphasised that e- and tech-fluentials are extremely influential with regards to their peers' attitude towards pirating. Put bluntly it is therefore not likely that the general student stops pirating, unless told to do so by e- or tech-fluentials. This means that even though there is a risk that the e- and tech-fluentials will not be using the website and thus not initiate a campaign for it, addressing the e- and tech-fluentials and hoping for them to pass on the campaign may prove the best way of influencing the general student's attitude towards pirating. As the e- and tech-fluentials acts as innovators and opinion leaders within IT, their acceptance of the site is crucial in order for it to be successful. We therefore find that a viral campaign aimed at this group is recommendable for the marketing of www.studentoptions.com.

Summing Up

The analysis of the respondents' and informants' potential to function as carriers and initiators of viral campaigns, their relation to IT, opinion of Microsoft and liability to shop software online, indicates that there is a potential for marketing www.studentoptions.com to Danish students in higher education with a viral campaign. However, the issue of pirating constitutes a serious obstacle. In spite of this we find that viral marketing could be used to address this problem. Obviously, the success of a viral campaign is dependent on how the campaign is produced. In order to create a campaign that has high probability to be successfully received, we will in the following look to the mission, message and primary product promotion, as well as the format and seeding of a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com in Denmark.
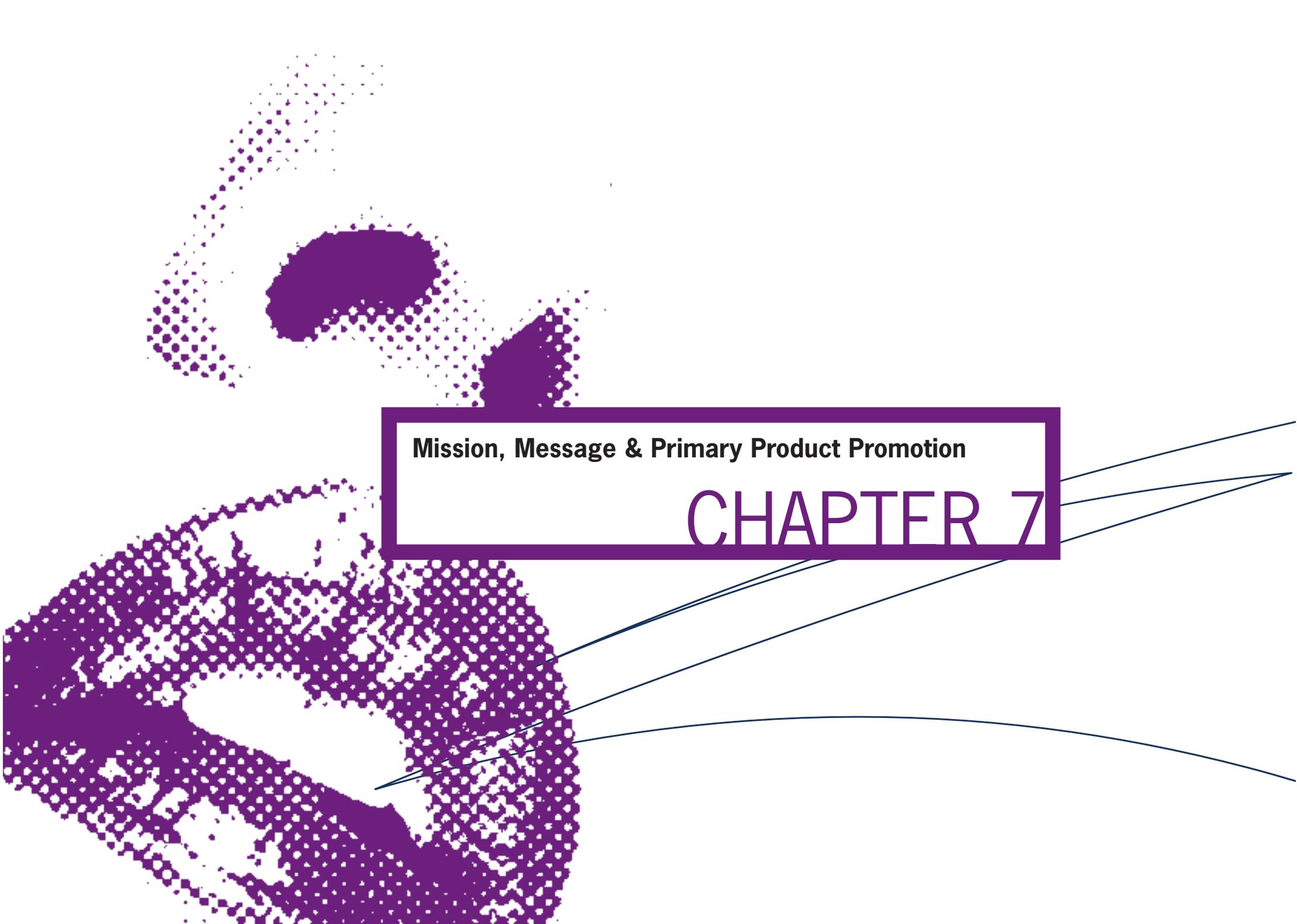
Mission, Message & Primary Product Promotion

CHAPTER 7

Chapter 7: Mission, Message & Primary Product Promotion

In the previous chapter we showed that there is potential for a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com among Danish students in higher education to be successful. In this chapter we discuss how a campaign can be planned in order to obtain the optimal spread and effect. This will be done by examining the mission, message, and the primary product promotion of the campaign. The empirical data for this part of the analysis mainly consists of the informants' statements and is only occasionally supported by survey results. We start out by examining the overall mission of the campaign.

Mission: Generate Traffic to www.studentoptions.com

The overall mission for the campaign for www.studentoptions.com is to drive traffic to the website. The purpose of www.studentoptions.com is to increase sales by making students buy Microsoft software at the site at the discounted price. According to our survey 95 percent of Danish students use Microsoft software.[237] However, our survey also shows that over a third of Danish students are currently using a pirated version of the Office Suite.[238] As previously showed this is also the case for many of our informants. We therefore find that one of the main purposes of www.studentoptions.com is to encourage students to start buying software instead of pirating it illegally. In the following we will discuss and show how traffic to www.studentoptions.com can be generated. We will discuss what the message of a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com should be and how this is most successfully communicated to the target group.

Message: Benefit from Buying Discounted Software Legally

Microsoft Denmark does not have any previous experience with public campaigns aimed at preventing pirating behaviours. However, in recent years the music industry has, both in Denmark and on a global scale, produced a number of scare campaigns to stop people pirating music. In Denmark the initiative that has had the most media exposure is AntiPiratGruppen ("The Anti Pirating Group"), which is a collaboration of the film and media industry and is fighting illegal copying and distribution of film and music.[239] AntiPiratGruppen has initiated a number of campaigns stating that internet-users who download illegally will be tracked down and may be taken to court.

Transferring this strategy to software and creating a scare campaign could be one way to try preventing students from pirating. However, in the first part of the analysis we showed that all e- and tech-fluentials' already are aware that pirate copying is both morally and legally wrong – and that this does not prevent them from pirating. Furthermore, the majority of our informants mentioned AntiPiratGruppen in the interviews, and the conclusion from their statements is indisputable; the initiative has failed. Pia and Nina find that the way AntiPiratGruppen

has been painting black and white pictures is old fashioned,[240] and that it is something which is joked about.[241] Mads finds the initiative ineffective,[242] and even though AntiPiratGruppen has influenced Per and Christian, this has only resulted in a change in the way the two go about pirating.[243] As Christian explains:

> "Jeg kan da godt se, de har en pointe, men jeg ved ikke '…' det kan ikke give '…' nej, det har sådan mest gjort at jeg bare '…' den måde, jeg piratkopierer på, har bare ændret sig. At, nu henter jeg bare fra mine venner og sådan noget i stedet for selv at gå ud og lede efter det. Plus at de ting på nettet hvor man kan hente fra, det er måske bare nogle andre steder. De mest oplagte, det er også dem der bliver tjekket, ikke?"[244]

In their own words, Per, Christian and Mads are too smart to be caught pirating. As they are all tech-fluentials we do not think that this can be projected to a larger population, however the above indicates that a pointed finger does not seem to have an effect on the amount that the informants download. As the viral campaign needs to address e- and tech-fluentials, we disregard this approach and in order to change the student's pirating habits, we therefore look to other approaches.

In the first part of the analysis we showed that many of the e- and tech-fluentials we talked to, are willing to pay for programmes they use a lot, if these become considerably cheaper. Among the e- and tech-fluentials we identified three different motivations for paying for software programmes:

1. Legally purchased programmes are perceived to have fewer defects, and this stability is held in high esteem.
2. Legally purchased programmes give the owner opportunities for downloading updates. This is not possible with pirated illegal programmes.
3. Some found that programmes that they use a lot themselves would be reasonable to pay for, and from a moral perspective, they would prefer to do so.

As showed in Chapter Three, one of the core elements of successful viral campaigns is that the message is kept simple and concise. We therefore find it necessary to choose from the above motivations. The first motivation about wanting programmes without defects, we believe is applicable for most computer users and not just e- and tech-fluentials. Furthermore, we find that this is a positive thing to play on with regards to legally purchased programmes. However this is not true! According to Microsoft Technical Specialist Pau Larsen, pirated versions of Microsoft programmes do not have more faults than legally purchased programmes. We therefore disregard the first motivation as a factor that needs including in the message, as it would be untrue to play on this.

As the e- and tech- fluentials are not representative of the population of students in general, we do not think that their motivations for having legal software can be transferred directly to the general population of students. Specifically with regards to downloading updates, we assume that this is more important for e- and tech-fluentials

237 App. A3, slide 7

238 App. A3, slide 6

239 "AntiPiratGruppen er en sammenslutning af film og musikbranchen, bekæmper ulovlig kopiering og distribution af film og musikværker.", www.antipirat.dk, viewed on January 11, 2006

240 Nina: 340-341

241 Pia: 891

242 Mads: 383

243 Per: 266-278, Christian: 352-356

244 Christian: 352-356

than it is for the average student. This is supported by the fact that 65 percent of our survey respondents do not find it important to have the very newest version of the programmes they are using. Consequently we do not think that it is beneficial to make this the main message as it is not everyone in the target population that will appreciate this. However, as we find that access to updates for software is perceived positively by not only the tech- and e-fluentials, but also 30 percent of the target population,[245] we do not disregard this motivation completely. We find that it is very important to appeal to the e- and tech-fluentials, and therefore feel that the second motivation should be kept in mind. The third motivation, the moral argument that it feels right to pay for programmes that are used a lot, we find to be to close to the campaigns driven by AntiPiratGruppen.

Even though the overall message should be kept as simple as possible, we find it beneficial for a viral campaign to - in a minor scale - play on the second motivation as well, still keeping the discounted price the main message, as price is one of the main barriers for buying software at all.

Primary Product Promotion

As stated in the case description two alternative product promotions for www.studentoptions.com can be identified; Office and OneNote. Keeping in mind that the message should be kept as simple as possible, we find it important to choose one of the two to be the primary product promotion of the website. In the following we discuss advantages and disadvantages of using either of the two programmes as the main product driver.

One of the key elements of viral marketing is that it is suitable for launching new, relatively unheard of products.[246] As OneNote only was introduced in 2003 and barely has been marketed in Denmark, this seems to be an obvious choice for a viral marketing campaign. We therefore start with examining the possibilities for launching www.studentoptions.com with OneNote 2003 as the main product promotion.

18 percent of the respondents in our online survey regularly take notes on computer. A further 29 percent take notes on computer 'once in a while', and 22 percent state that currently they do not take notes on computer, but have considered doing so. In short, almost 70 percent of the respondents are positive towards note taking on computer. However, only around one percent uses OneNote for note taking.[247] We find that convincing students who do not already take notes on computer (the 22 percent plus the remaining 30 percent) to do so - and to use OneNote, is a considerable challenge, as this would require great behavioural changes for more than 50 percent of the target audience. Note taking is a trained practice that has been incorporated over years, and we do not find it plausible that a viral campaign for a software-selling website also can initiate big behavioural changes. We therefore do not find it beneficial to use OneNote as the main driver to this part of the segment, which according to the survey accounts for just over 50 percent of the students.[248]

To this must be added that the students that have been presented with the online survey are all students in higher education institutions. However, computers are a much more integrated part of life for the younger audience still in their teens and at high school. We assume that this segment is more inclined to take notes on computers, and that the percentage that is doing so is larger in this age group. We therefore believe that OneNote stands better commercial chances with the students applying for universities in the coming years. However, we have not researched this issue and this is therefore only an assumption which we will not conclude on.

Making OneNote the primary product promotion of www.studentoptions.com seems obvious for targeting the remaining 47 percent that either regularly or sometimes use their computer for taking notes. As a big behavioural change is not required by this part of the segment, this is 'only' a question of making them change to an actual note taking programme. No note taking programmes have yet been marketed in Denmark, and it is therefore likely that the majority of the students use Word for note taking.[249] Providing that the students are currently using Word for note taking, it is just a small behavioural change that needs to be encouraged. However, it is still a behavioural change of something deeply rooted, and even though we think that it may be possible for a viral campaign to initiate it, this would only be relevant for half of the students.

Furthermore www.studentoptions.com has been positioned with OneNote as the primary promotional product in the five other countries where the website has already been launched – and nowhere has it launched with commercial success. Additionally we showed a viral campaign for OneNote at the interviews with e- and tech-fluentials, and none of our informants expressed an interest in OneNote after seeing the animated film clip.[250] In connection with this, Mads stated that he is not interested in using any more Microsoft programmes, as many viruses and pop ups are designed specifically to these.[251] Similarly Per is not interested in getting more Microsoft programmes as he feels Microsoft cannot give him something he does not already have.[252]

As shown, the students' relation to the Office Suite is remarkably different: 80 percent of the respondents already use the Office Suite. Of the remaining 20 percent, the half is using other programmes, and the other half do not know what they use. Furthermore all of the informants use the Office Suite a lot and are satisfied with this. As earlier stated, many of the informants are inclined to pay for programmes they use a lot providing they find the price fair. Furthermore Microsoft launches a new and improved version of the Office Suite every third year and a third of our respondents state that is it important for them to have the very newest version of the programmes they are using.[253] For a Microsoft Office user this means acquiring a new version of the Office Suite every three years. As the Office Suite is used by the majority of the students and our informants state that they use it a great deal, we believe that there is potential for creating a viral campaign focusing on buying the Office Suite at a discounted price, letting the reduced price be the 'news'. This does however, still requires a behavioural change for the students, as it for at least a third would mean starting to pay instead of pirating software.

245 App. A3, slide 5

246 Chapter 3: Viral Marketing

247 App. A3, slide 3 & slide 7

248 App. A3, slide 6

249 Lone Lyth, Product Manager for Office,
Microsoft Denmark, 14.10.2005

250 Signe: 275-291, Mads: 404-429, Anders: 292-315,
Per: 415-430, Christian: 475-488, Nina: 423-435,
Sacha: 232-435, Pia: 705-752

251 Mads: 404-429

252 Per: 415-430

253 App. A3, slide 14

Based on the fact that students already use the Office Suite, are calling for lower prices, are interested in the benefits from legal versions, and claim they are willing to pay for programmes they use a lot, we - contradictory to literature on buzz marketing - will argue that it is most beneficial to make the Office Suite the pivotal point in a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com. Given a larger budget our recommendations would stretch to creating two campaigns, one for OneNote and one for Office that could then run simultaneously. Doing this would increase the possibility to meet most students' desires and as discussed above, we believe that OneNote's potential will increase in the coming years. However, taking a limited budget into consideration we will argue that only one campaign should be produced in order to let this be permeating, and that the best solution is to let the Office Suite be the primary product that is promoted in the campaign.

Summing Up

A viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com must therefore focus on the opportunity for buying the Office Suite at a discounted price. For students that are already using legal Microsoft software and want to buy a newer version, this will be an obvious reason to use the site. At the same time students that are currently using pirated versions of the Office Suite will be made aware that they can buy a legal Office Proffesional Suite at 674 DKK, which is considerably less than the 5,000 DKK that the Office Proffesional Suite normally retails for. This is not much more than a textbook for their studies. Furthermore, as a smaller part of it, the campaign shall ensure that students that pirate are made aware of the advantages of having access to updates. In the next chapter we discuss which format will be most suitable to communicate this message, and how a viral campaign could be seeded.

Format & Seeding

CHAPTER 8

Chapter 8: Format & Seeding

In order to examine which type of viral marketing is most appropriate to target the e- and tech-fluentials with, we find it necessary to consider their opinions of the forwarded messages they receive, and which campaigns they would consider forwarding themselves. By analyzing these aspects we get a nuanced picture of how a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com should be designed in order to engage the e-fluentials and tech-fluentials. The focus in this chapter is the format of a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com, which type of viral would be most eligible - and how the campaign can be seeded.

Format

When looking to the reasons for forwarding messages, the overall keywords from the interviews were "value creating," "relevance" and "selection". Most informants state that it is important for them to create actual value for the receiver when disturbing them with an online message.[254] Value in this case is anything from something that is relevant for their own person, relevant with regards to something else or just putting a smile on their lips. Giving the receiver something valuable seemed to be the most important element for the informants. Furthermore the word "relevance" came up numerous times. This was both with regards to forwarding and receiving. Something of great relevance to the receiver was held in high esteem among the informants. These two terms are also used by both Moseholm and Frederiksen when stating what a viral campaign should achieve.[255] As Moseholm states:

> "...når du laver viral markedsføring, så laver du det med et andet præmis end andre former for markedsføring. Så laver du det med den præmis, der hedder, at dit markedsføringsmateriale og din kampagneaktivitet, den skal være værdiskabende, eller den skal have en relevans eller en værdi for forbrugerne, som gør, at de har lyst til at bruge tid på den."[256]

The last keyword we detect from the interviews is "selection". Selection should be understood in the sense that the sender is selective when choosing to forward something interesting or funny, and consequently only forward it to the people to whom it is relevant or who will find it amusing.

The above implies that most informants only forward to friends and acquaintances that will find the given message interesting and valuable and thereby distance their own behaviour from that of spammers.[257] [258] We detected a great awareness among the informants about not wasting other people's time, by sending chain letters

and random jokes to one another.[259] Signe emphasizes that she forwards jokes and movies to her friends and family to amuse them when she is not around herself,[260] and clearly states that she will not be forwarding things that waste her own time, as she will not 'allow it' to waste other's.[261] Similarly Anders, Mads, Sacha and Pia state that they only forward things that they feel are of relevance to the receiver.[262] As Pia describes it:

> "… altså, det, som jeg tror, er meget karakteristisk, det er, at jeg kun sender videre til dem, jeg synes, det er relevant for. Jeg kan fx huske, at jeg for nylig sendte noget, hvor jeg både sendte det til min mor og far, fordi det var noget, der sådan var en joke, der kørte på mor-far-datter forholdet (…) jeg tror, der kører alligevel nogen tanker gennem én, når man får sådan én (en vira kampagnel, ed.). Vil man sende den videre – man sender den i hvert fald ikke videre til dem, man ved ikke gider have den. Og så skriver jeg også sådan ofte en lille undskyldning oppe i subject, det er ikke fordi, men den er sgu sjov eller sådan noget, ikke? Altså, folk er trætte af at få ting i hovedet. Men der er sgu nogle sjove ting undervejs."[263]

This implies that even though the informants are aware that most people experience an overload in their inbox, they will still forward things that they find are relevant to the recipient or things that are 'extremely funny'. However, the informants are selective about whom they forward different things to.[264]

At the same time, most of the informants express a growing immunity towards incoming mails that seem targeted towards a great number of people and have no personal relevance to themselves, and also express an antipathy towards spam mails and things that waste their time. Christian is the only informant who does not express as selective an approach to forwarding as the remaining informants. Christian states that he will forward interesting things he stumbles over, when surfing the internet, adding that his main reason for forwarding anything is:

> "… hvis jeg selv synes det er sjovt, så kunne jeg forestille mig andre også ville synes det er sjovt. Eller interessant eller et eller andet."[265]

Christian's attitude to what is worth forwarding, clearly differs to the majority of the informants' attitudes, as shown above. Where most others can be said to have a 'pessimistic' approach, being more concerned about what not to forward,[266] Christian seems less reflective about what he forwards, taking his point of departure in what amuses him self, representing a more 'optimistic' viewpoint than the other informants. Optimistic in the sense that if something amuses him; then others will find it amusing too. With regards to the viral campaigns shown during the interviews, Christian also appeared the most positive towards forwarding these to his friends – even though he only found the Excel sheet *"meget sjov"*,[267] thus insinuating that he did not find it extremely funny, he still stated that he could be forwarding this to his friends. This was not the case for any of the other informants.

254 Sacha: 133-135, Pia: 301-302, Anders: 138, Signe: 153-158,

255 Moseholm, 2005: 2 & Frederiksen, 2005: 6-7

256 Moseholm, 2005: 2

257 Nina: 207-211, Pia: 301-320

258 Spamming: Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary: Spamming is a "practice of sending mail, especially advertising material, through the internet to a large number of people, who have not asked for it."

259 Signe: 132-140, Anders: 118-120, Sacha: 133-139, Mads: 219-237

260 Signe: 177-179

261 Signe: 158

262 Pia: 301-320

263 Pia: 301-304 & 310-314

264 Nina: 207, Signe 153-154

265 Christian: 233-234

266 Signe: 165-171, Sacha: 131-136

267 Christian: 455

On an overall scale we detected two approaches to forwarding from the interviews: The Selective Approach and The Uninhibited Approach. All of the informants show traits from both approaches. However, most informants mainly show traits from The Selective Approach whereas Christian mainly expresses traits from The Uninhibited Approach. Within both approaches, two different reasons for forwarding are defined; forwarding something funny, or forwarding something interesting. The approaches can be seen in detail below:

1. **The Selective Approach:** The emphasis is on creating value for the receiver, and being aware about not being perceived as a nuisance or a spammer. The sender will in general only forward things that are believed to be of relevance or real value to the receiver. Two scenarios can be identified within the selective approach:

   a. Having stumbled upon something of real interest and relevance to a friend or a group of friends, the sender then forwards this to a selected group.

   b. Occasionally forwarding things that are found to be very funny and that it is expected for a selected group of recipients to appreciate.

2. **The Uninhibited Approach:** There is no real reflection behind what is forwarded to whom. A more optimistic approach. An urge to show others something funny or interesting. The sender in general forwards anything without any deeper thought regarding the receiver's experience, but more based on own taste or experience.

   a. Having stumbled upon something relevant, interesting or simply something peculiar, the sender forwards this to friends in order for them to see it to and share the experience.

   b. Having found something that he/she thinks is funny or interesting the sender will forward this onto a group of friends to give them a laugh. The sender does not reflect on the recipients' sense of humour and is likely to forward the same joke to his/hers entire mailing list.

The Selective Approach is focused on relevance and the creation of value which are terms prevalent in the literature on viral marketing and the interviews with Moseholm and Frederiksen. The Uninhibited Approach is the more spam like, and when receiving a mail from someone sending out many forwarded messages, the informants state that they are more likely to hit the delete-button, than if they receive a mail, thinking it is

genuine and that they themselves have been thought about. When asked what makes her open an attachment, Sacha for example states:

"... hvis vedkommende, jeg fik det fra, var ikke én, jeg plejede at få noget fra. Fordi, der er nogen, der bare sender ting i flæng og sider i flæng, og så gider jeg ikke. Det var en fra, hvor det virkede troværdigt, og det kunne være noget, som jeg gad se."[268]

In this way Sacha draws a parallel between the spamming behaviour of sending out many forwarded messages, with untrustworthiness and a greater chance that she might not be interested in opening to see what she has received from a friend forwarding endless amounts of links. This implies that the informants are more likely to be attentive to an email forwarded from a friend with a selective approach, making the receiver feel chosen and thought about, and less attentive to messages from a friend with an uninhibited approach to forwarding. The two different reasons for forwarding, a and b, resembles the differences between infomercials and advertisment which are presented in Chapter Three.

As we have previously shown, sending many emails does not necessarily make a person an e- or tech-fluential, and it is therefore not surprising that Christian is the only of the informants that primarily show traits from the uninhibited approach, as we have interviewed only e- and tech-fluentials. This does not mean that Christian is not a tech-fluential, but should more be taken as an indicator that most e- and tech-fluentials have a selective approach to forwarding.

A Public Relations Approach
As the target audience for www.studentoptions.com is a limited population, it is important that a viral campaign reaches the same defined group that will benefit from using the website - Danish students. It is therefore important that people that forward the campaign do it with a selective approach, reflecting on who will benefit from it, and consequently, which of their friends they choose to forward it to. Of the informants with a primarily selective approach to forwarding, Nina, Signe and Pia mention forwarding articles or news when it is relevant for the recipient and all three are referring to this as a customary action.[269] Our suggestion is to make the viral campaign follow a pr-approach. This implies planting the message in the editorial parts of websites, letting information be the driver. Like this, the campaign could take form of an article posted electronically. In the following we will explain why we ascribe to this approach, more leaning towards the approach of informercials[270] and not the traditional viral marketing approach of advertisment.[271]

268 Sacha: 106-109

269 Sacha: 111-115 & 123-125, Nina: 163-169 & 207-211

270 Ellegaard & Lundsgaard, 2002: 125

271 Ellegaard & Lundsgaard, 2002: 123

First of all, forwarding jokes in general seems to follow a more random uninhibited approach. Nina mentions that she has forwarded a gay aerobics video, because she thought her gay friends particularly would find it funny,[272] but this is one of the only points where an informant mentions forwarding a joke to a specific group of friends.[273] Most of the time it seems to be more random who receives a joke from them.

Secondly, news and articles in general hold more credibility than traditional advertising. Forwarding news or articles may furthermore provide the sender with some authority, as opposed to what forwarding advertisements and funny jokes would. It can also be argued that an article is likely to be forwarded to the people that it is relevant for and who might have a personal interest in the written, whereas a funny advertisement, with the advertising and not the product being the main focus might not reach the correct people that will benefit from the product. Additionally, some informants directly disassociate themselves from advertising and state that they - almost by principle - will not forward an advertisement.[274] Christian, the only exponent for the Uninhibited Approach, does not have the same antipathy towards advertising and for instance refers to a viral campaign for Sony which he found very impressive and worth forwarding.[275]

Thirdly, we find that humour may be problematic; as humour is subjective, the snowballing effect required for a viral campaign to be successful, can easily fail if someone does not find the campaign amusing. Showing viral campaigns in our interviews also showed that it is hard to sell humour or irony to the e- and tech-fluentials. The informants did not find the same campaigns funny and in general it had to be extremely funny for them to forward anything.

Another point with regards to humour is that the viral campaigns that the informants find amusing often are on the edge of what is usually acceptable in advertising.[276] For Microsoft Denmark this constitutes a problem as the Danish sub is under guidance from the global American sub and therefore following American guidelines, which, seen with Danish eyes, are generally restrictive with regards to political correctness in corporate advertising.

Summing up, we feel that there are several arguments in favour of a viral marketing campaign for www.studentoptions.com to be formed as an informercial, utilizing the pr-approach to viral marketing, as explained by Moseholm.[277]

Seeding

As the only legal way of seeding viral campaigns in Denmark is via indirect launch pads, a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com should therefore be seeded on websites where it is plausible that students will be exposed to them as half of the informants stated that one of the reasons for checking out new sites is seeing a link to it on another site.[278] In order to optimize the effect of the seeding process, we suggest that the viral campaign is primarily seeded at sites that are of particular relevance to students. This could for instance be student magazine sites such as www.soundvenue.dk or www.tjeck.dk. These sites are directly aimed at students

and the articles are concerned with student life. It could also be more industry specific sites that students may be visiting, music or youth orientated websites or IT websites such as www.edbpriser.dk, which is a specialist site for finding the best software and hardware prices on the Danish market. Similarly it is crucial that a viral marketing agency ensures a great search engine optimization. Pia, Christian, Nina, Sacha, Mads and Anders state that they find new websites by using a search engine and it is all important that the website comes up if searched for. However the technical seeding is a specialised technical expertise which viral marketing agencies specialize in and we will not discuss this further.

Many viral campaigns are supported by other kinds of marketing, and we feel that it would be beneficial to include other forms of marketing to support the viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com. Furthermore as we recommend to follow a pr-approach, creating the viral campaign will not be very costly, leaving room in the budget for supporting marketing activities. As the target audience's opinion and preconceptions of the sender of a campaign is important for a campaign to be positively received we feel that efforts aimed at the students that are most positive towards Microsoft stand a better chance of becoming successful. According to our survey students at Copenhagen Business School and Aalborg University are most positive towards Microsoft. Furthermore students here also find it important to have the newest versions of the programmes they are using a lot,[279] which obviously is an important motivation for purchasing software.

Another group of students to consider are the students at the IT University. 93 percent of the students here already look to the Internet for information on IT which is only the case for 63 percent in the average population. Having supporting marketing activities for www.studentoptions.com at the IT University may sharpen their awareness about the site. Furthermore, we find that the IT students are a suitable group to initially target, as they are less reliant on advice from family, friends and acquaintances than the average population and we assume that the IT students more often act as guides rather than the guided. We therefore find that supporting marketing activities such as print, posters or events in cantines for instance, will give the best return of investments if placed at Copenhagen Business School, Aalborg University and/or the IT University. In order to make the viral campaign exclusive and keep it interesting for the e- and tech-fluentials, we suggest seeding it prior - around three weeks - to starting the supporting marketing activities.

Summing Up

We find that it will be most beneficial to let the viral campaign follow a pr-approach in order to benefit from e- and tech-fluentials being more selective when forwarding these campaigns, and have suggested how a campaign could be seeded. In the following chapter we conclude and dicuss the aspects and opportunities that we see for www.studentoptions.com, and broaden the discussion to a more general level.

272 Nina: 193-198

273 For instance Pia has sent an IT joke only to people on her university – The IT University (Pia: 254-259).

274 Nina: 425-435, Anders: 260-263

275 Christian: 428-442

276 Pia: 357-358

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278 Pia: 145-153, Nina: 113, Per: 85-94, Mads: 138-144.

279 App. A3, slide 15: Students at Karch/ Aarch and ITU are scoring the highest in the importance of having the newest version of programmes. However, students at Karch/Aarch are using non-Microsoft programmes for drawings etc., and students at ITU have a natural interest in IT.
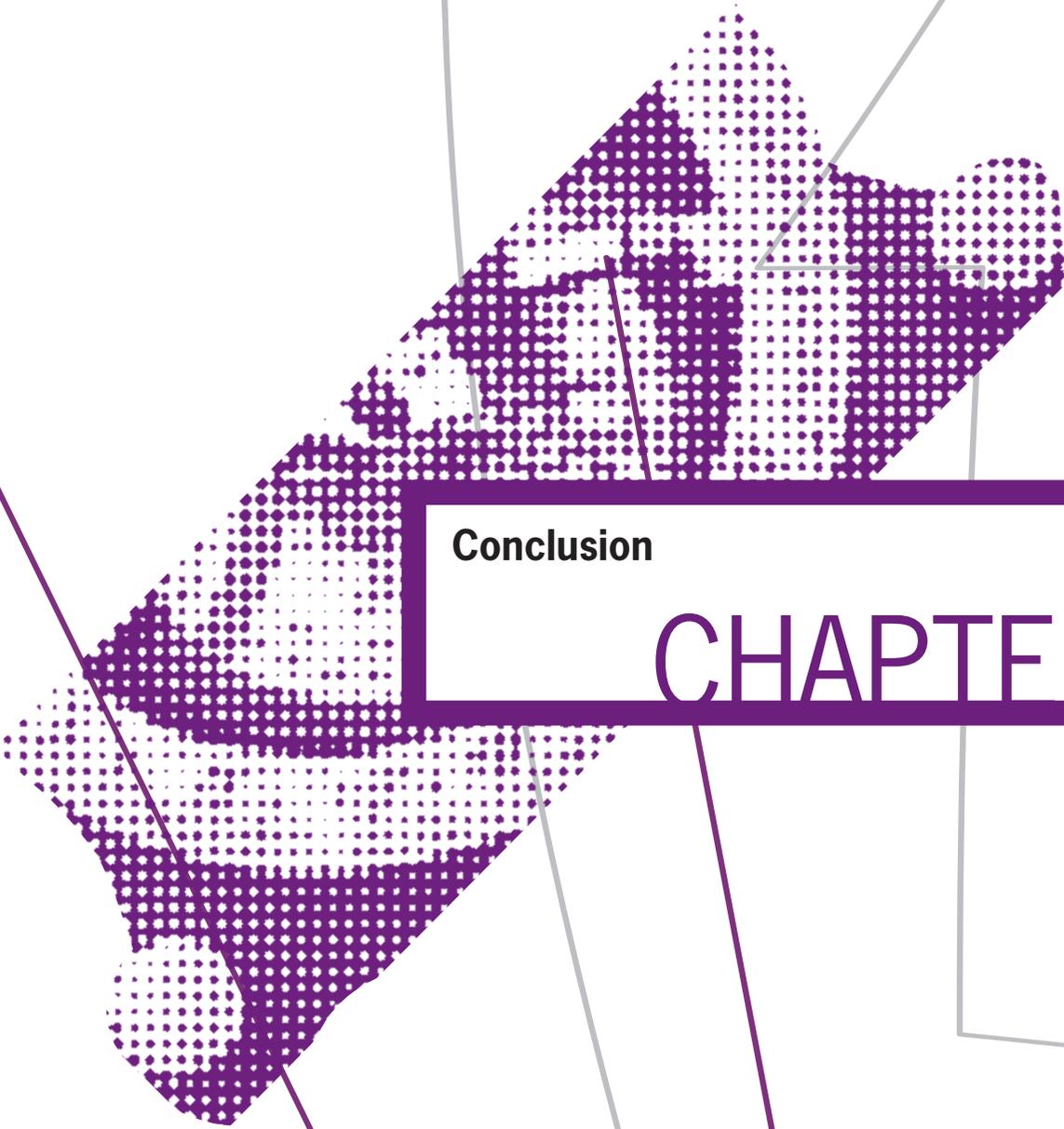
Conclusion

CHAPTER 9

Chapter 9: Conclusion

In this chapter the conclusions to our initial research question; whether viral marketing is a viable strategy for marketing www.studentoptions.com to Danish students and how this viral campaign can be designed, are presented. Subsequently we present our recommendations with regards to reaching a limited population with a viral campaign. We perceive the validity, reliability and representativity of our empirical data as relatively high, and therefore feel that our conclusions are truth-likely and that it is likely that they can be transferred to Danish students in higher education in general.

A Viral Campaign for www.studentoptions.com

The report's analysis and discussion show that many students use pirated software programmes, and that they to a certain degree find pirating acceptable. This implies that students may not want to pay for software at all. If this is the situation, www.studentoptions.com faces a major problem. However, we do not think it is likely that students will stop pirating without encouragement to do so, and it is therefore essential for Microsoft to approach students' directly and encourage them to stop pirating software. www.studentoptions.com may not prove an immediate commercial success, however we believe that the website may still serve a purpose in order to start a long-term change of students' pirating behaviour and it therefore makes sense to market the website.

Our research suggests that viral marketing is a recommendable method for generating traffic to websites, as links received from friends and acquaintances is a common way of visiting new websites. Furthermore, we find that IT and software is a suitable product field to market online with a viral approach inherent. Additionally we find that students are a suitable audience for viral marketing, and that their perception of Microsoft does not inflict on this. We therefore find that viral marketing is a suitable method for marketing and generating awareness about www.studentoptions.com.

The Format

It is important that a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com addresses e- and tech-fluentials among the students, as these act as trendsetters and influence the general population of students. Furthermore, e- and tech-fluentials are more active online, and likely to be the first that see viral campaigns. Most e- and tech-fluentials forward with, what we have termed The Selective Approach. Based on our research and analysis, we therefore suggest that a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com follows a pr-orientated approach. We find that this carries more weight than a traditional funny or entertaining film clip. Furthermore we have found that articles and more 'serious' links that are directly relevant for the receiver are forwarded more selectively. Mails send out following The Selective Approach to a limited number of receivers are more likely to be taken seriously by the receiver, and this is crucial in order for the campaign's message to be transmitted and understood.

In accordance to our analysis, the most effective way of awakening the interest of the e- and tech-fluentials is to create a viral campaign based on press releases and articles which are published at a number of sites that are either of direct relevance to students or specifically concerned with software. In order to attract the e- and tech-fluentials the key message in the articles should be the aspects which they find of particular interest. We have found that expensive software prices are seen as an obstacle for purchasing software and a decrease in price is called for by e- and tech-fluentials. Furthermore we detected an interest in having legally purchased software as this means gaining access to updates. We find that these two aspects are particularly important to emphasize in articles and press releases.

Reaching a Limited Population

Our research shows that when viral marketing is applied to a limited and defined population it may be hard to apply traditional viral campaigns playing on extraordinarily black humour or sex. Campaigns that are following a pr-approach, for instance in the shape of articles, are more likely to be forwarded with a selective approach and consequently more likely to reach the right target population.

The main initiators of viral campaigns; the e- and tech-fluentials are aware that a lot of viral campaigns are in rotation and are therefore concerned that they themselves could be perceived as spammers, which are found to be a nuisance. This is reflected in their forwarding behaviours, and the e- and tech-fluentials are very concerned about creating value and only forwarding things that are of relevance to the receiver. This does not imply that there is no market for traditional viral campaigns such as jokes or film clips. However, we will argue that – and particularly when targeting a limited population – it will be beneficial to consider the design of viral campaigns. And sometimes opt for a pr-approach, which may seem less of nuisance and more credible for the sender to forward.

A thorough research into the target population is recommendable. Prior to our research, we were – with a background in literature on viral marketing – convinced that the new Microsoft product, OneNote would be a suitable focus for a viral campaign, generating traffic to www.studentoptions.com. However, our research showed that the e- and tech-fluentials had no interest in this, but were more positive towards acquiring a legal version of the Office Suite inexpensively. This finding contradicts literature on viral marketing, as the literature emphasizes that new and unknown products or services are particularly suitable for viral campaigns. With regards to this aspect, viral marketing literature is not applicable for our case. It may therefore be interesting to test whether our case deviates from the norm or if this finding holds true in other contexts as well.

For future research it would also be interesting to test our conclusions in another defined and limited population. It may for instance be expected that the antipathy towards The Uninhibited Approach to forwarding is particularly outspoken amongst e- and tech- fluentials that are students, and that e- and tech-fluentials in other populations would be more positive towards forwarding humoristic film clips. Testing all our conclusions in other limited populations would also provide a better foundation for the truth-likeness of the above conclusion, and we think this is an interesting field for future research.

For our own study it could have been beneficial to test our findings from the interviews with e- and tech-fluentials in the general population of students. Doing this would have provided us with a more sophisticated foundation for our final recommendations.

On the following pages we present a brief for a viral campaign for www.studentoptions.com and a suggestion for a press release from Microsoft to an agency. The brief and the press release are both in Danish, as they are for a Danish agency. As written in the brief, it is expected that the agency will make different versions of the press release to different mediums. We have presented our conclusion, the brief and the press release to Microsoft Denmark in late January 2006. Microsoft Denmark approved of our conclusions and will include our thoughts and ideas in their considerations with regards to launching www.studentoptions.com in Denmark.

Brief for en viral kampagne for www.studentoptions.com

Introduktion og baggrund
Microsoft Danmark lancerer i februar 2006 hjemmesiden www.studentoptions.com. På hjemmesiden kan studerende købe Microsoft software til stærkt reducerede priser; op til 89 procents rabat af normal salgspris.

Mere end hver tredje studerende bruger piratkopierede software programmer. Med www.studentoptions.com forsøger Microsoft at imødegå behovet for at piratkopiere ved at tilbyde studerende Microsoft produkter til nedsatte priser.

Målgruppe
Hjemmesiden henvender sig til alle danske studerende over 18 år. Fokus er i første omgang særligt på studerende ved videregående uddannelser, og specielt de meningsdannende samt de IT-interesserede studerende.

USP
Det er særligt Office-pakken, der skal fungere som trækplaster for hjemmesiden. Omkring 80-90 procent af danske studerende bruger allerede Office-pakken, men det forventes at mange bruger piratkopierede udgaver. Den vejledende salgspris for Office Profesional 2003 i Danmark er 4.969 kroner. På www.studentoptions.com kan studerende købe Office Profesional 2003 til 674 kroner.

Markedsføring af www.studentoptions.com
Budgettet til lanceringen er begrænset, og Microsoft vil derfor bruge alternative markedsføringsmetoder til at lancere www.studentoptions.com. Da formålet er at drive trafik til hjemmesiden, ser Microsoft en viral kampagne som et vitalt redskab til at lancere hjemmesiden til de danske studerende.

Den virale kampagne – opgaven
Den virale kampagne for www.studentoptions.com skal udformes efter en pr-approach. Det er bureauets opgave at sørge for, at www.studentoptions.com omtales i forskelligt redaktionelt stof på hjemmesider og i nyhedsbreve, som studerende læser. Bureauet skal skrive individuelle og målrettede pressemeddelelser til de forskellige medier. Microsoft formulerer et skriv der kan danne udgangspunkt for pressemeddelelserne. Et godt kendskab til studerende og unge er påkrævet. Ligeledes er forhåndskendskab til viral og internetmarketing en forudsætning.

Budskabet i artiklerne

Hovedbudskabet i pressemeddelelserne skal være, at som noget nyt kan studerende nu få en lovlig Office-pakke billigt. Herudover skal pressemeddelelsen spille på et eller flere af følgende budskaber, afhængig af hvilket medie, der skrives til:

Lovligt software gør det muligt løbende at opdatere programmerne online

www.studentoptions.com betyder at lovligt software nu er nemt tilgængeligt

De fleste studerende vil gerne betale for software, såfremt de har råd, da de føler, at det er mere rigtigt.

Budget

Budgettet for kampagnen er 200.000 kroner.

Der skal budgetteres således, at der er råd til opstøttende print kommunikation og eventuelt events på udvalgte uddannelsesinstitutioner. Kreativt materiale i denne forbindelse stilles til rådighed af Microsoft, og skal blot oversættes fra engelsk til dansk.

Microsoft foreslår en særlig indsats på IT-Universitetet og/eller Copenhagen Business School, da studerende her er henholdsvis særligt IT-interesserede og ønsker at have den nyeste version af et program installeret og særligt positivt stemt overfor Microsoft.

Tidsplan

www.studentoptions.com lanceres 15. februar 2006. Kampagnen skal være klar samme dag.

Den opstøttende kommunikation skal i luften tre uger efter den virale kampagne er seedet.

For mere information, kontakt:

Mikael Dalsgaard Jensen

Account Manager

Tuborg Boulevard 12

2900 Hellerup

Mail: mdalsga@microsoft.com

www.studentoptions.com og www.microsoft.dk

Forslag til pressemeddelse

Studerende ønsker lovligt software - Microsoft sænker priserne

Selvom rigtig mange studerende piratkopierer, vil 9 ud af 10 egentlig gerne købe en lovlig udgave af Office-pakken, hvis de følte, de havde råd. Det kan måske lade sig gøre nu, fordi Microsoft sænker priserne på software for studerende. Fra den 15. februar kan studerende købe den professionelle Office-pakke for 674 kr. på www.studentoptions.com, i modsætning til de næsten 5.000 kr. den koster i dag.

Nemmere og bedre software

Med hjemmesiden bliver priserne på software ikke alene sænket betydeligt (op til 90 procent af salgspris), lovlige software køb bliver også lettere tilgængeligt. Det bliver nu lige så nemt at downloade et software program lovligt, som det er at downloade det ulovligt gennem fil-delings hjemmesider.

Udover at det føles mere rigtigt at betale for noget, man bruger meget, er det også en fordel at bruge lovligt software. Det er fordi, at det er muligt at updatere lovligt software og dermed konstant have den nyeste udgave af programmet installeret. Det tillader ulovlige udgaver ikke.

Udelukkende for studerende

Det er kun muligt at benytte hjemmesiden hvis man er studerende og over 18 år. Camilla Jørning Roost er ansvarlig for hjemmesiden og glad for, at Microsoft endelig kan tilbyde studerende særlige priser:

> "Vi har erfaret, at rigtig mange studerende piratkopierer vores programmer. Og det er vi selvfølgelig meget kede af, men samtidig kan vi også godt forstå, at det er svært at afsætte penge til et dyrt software program på en SU. Derfor er vi utrolig glade for, at vi nu kan tilbyde studerende vores programmer til en favorabel pris."

Foruden Office pakken tilbyder hjemmesiden det nye note-tagningsprogram OneNote til 128 kroner., styresystemet Windows til 589 kroner, web-design programmet FrontPage til 446 kroner og meget mere.

Se hjemmesiden på: www.studentoptions.com.

For yderligere information kontakt:

Camilla Jørning Roost, Sales Representative
Microsoft Danmark
Tuborg Boulvard 12
2900 Hellerup
Email: croost@microsoft.com

Office Pakken

- 80 til 90 procent af alle danske studerende ved lange videregående uddannelser bruger Office pakken og mange er glade for den
- Mindst hver tredje studerende bruger en piratkopieret udgave af Office pakken
- Ni ud af ti studerende vil egentlig gerne bruge lovlige software programmer, hvis de havde råd
- Omkring 90 procent af de studerende er interesserede i at benytte en hjemmeside, der sælger software programmer til reducerede priser, og 65 procent vil enten 'helt sikkert' eller 'sikkert' benytte sådan en side.

Kilde: Ny rapport om studerendes IT-vaner

The Background for the Article

We find that our report contains aspects and conclusions that are interesting to others than ourselves, and have therefore produced an article over some of the conclusions from the report.[280] Before presenting the article, we will briefly outline the content, the target audience which it is aimed at, the medium we will present it, and the guidelines we have followed in order to catch and keep the reader's attention.

Content and Target Audience

In our opinion, some of the most interesting conclusions in the report are those transcending the case specific context, which have a more general reach. Furthermore, these conclusions are most likely the ones that will appeal strongest to people with no connection to Microsoft. We have therefore produced our article over the report's generalizing conclusions on viral marketing, in order to provide the reader with a new angle on this. For an article of this length, we feel that is more vital to only include some of our conclusions and findings, and focus on these as opposed to superficially going through all our findings. Consequently we have picked out a few conclusions that explain to a greater audience.

Given the subject of the article; viral marketing, we assume that it will mostly be interesting for people within marketing or communications. We therefore operate with a defined target population; people working or studying within the fields of marketing or communications.

Medium

There are a number of different online and offline media channels through which we can communicate directly to other marketers and communicators.[281] One of these is www.kommunikationsforum.dk. The site has a high number of daily visitors,[282] which naturally makes it interesting for us to have our article published here. Furthermore we use the website ourselves and as articles written on the basis of dissertations are requested at www.kommunikationsforum.dk, we find that this is an obvious medium for us to publish our findings. Our article is therefore bespoken to the format and style of www.kommunikationsforum.dk.

www.kommunikationsforum.dk states that the website communicates "nye tiltag, tendenser og trends indenfor kommunikations- og medieverdenen".[283] Along with this, the website seeks to create active debates by allowing people with "kvalificerede meninger og holdninger"[284] to have their say. In line with these objectives, we believe that our article would be interesting to publish, as it provides the reader with new knowledge, or a new angle, on one of today's buzz words; viral marketing.

As www.kommunikationsforum.dk is targeted at people interested in communication, we assume that the receiver of our article has a basic knowledge of marketing and communications. We have therefore kept the article on a certain academic level in order to lay out the complexity of our conclusions correctly. However, the visitors on the site have various backgrounds; as researchers and professionals within the field, as well as students, use the website. Consequently we have shortly explained all specific concepts and correlations, in order to make the article applicable – and readable for all readers within the target audience, regardless of backgrounds.

As www.kommunikationsforum.dk is a Danish site, we have written the article in Danish. The forum accepts articles between 4.000 and 8.000 units,[285] consequently our article contains 5,800 units.[286]

Guidelines

In order to draw attention to the article when posted on the website, we have both deployed elements deriving from the traditional news story genre, as well as elements from the scientific paper genre.[287] More specifically, we have leaned towards general guidelines for hypertext, as independent studies conclude that good online texts differ from good offline texts in a number of different ways. The reason for this is primarily that online texts, more often than offline texts, are scanned rather than read. To ease the readers scanning process, and catch his/her attention, it is therefore even more important in online text than in offline text to provide meaningful headings and subheadings,[288] ensure tight writing by having shorter sentences and simple words[289] and to divide the text into small paragraphs, that is easy for the eye to scan.[290] Additionally, it is recommended to provide a sense of immediacy by applying what Maciuba-Koppel terms active verbs.[291] We have emphasized to live up to these guidelines in our article. However, we have not emphasized the criterion of simplicity in the language, as articles posted on www.kommunicationforum.dk are generally kept in an academic tone.

Additionally we have tried to ease the scanning process by applying an 'inverted pyramid' style of writing. That means we have presented the key conclusions in the headline and introductory paragraph, repeated them in the first sentences in the article, and explored them more in depth in the actual article.[292] Obviously we have also tried to utilize all the fundamental rules of how to catch the reader's attention in a written text. We have for instance emphasized to vary our language and sentence constructions and have also included short examples.

280 Our study guidelines also prescribes producing an article, which obviously also is an enticement to do so. http://www.ruc.dk/upload/application/pdf/f51d6748/SpecialevejledningE05.pdf

281 The member journal 'Xcom' for the trade union 'Kommunikation og Sprog' (Communication and Language), the association Cand.comm.'s website, different communication institution's newsletters as e.g. Institute 11, Aalborg Universit

282 On average kommunikationsforum.dk has 20.000 to 40.000 unique visitors a month, and 2.000 articles are read every day. http://www.kommunikationsforum.dk/default.asp?id=8

283 http://www.kommunikationsforum.dk/default.asp?id=8

284 http://www.kommunikationsforum.dk/default.asp?id=8

285 http://www.kommunikationsforum.dk/default.asp?id=7

286 With this number of units we also meet the criterion from 'Cirkulære om formidling i specialer' about producing an article at minimum 2.400 units. http://www.ruc.dk/upload/application/msword/1932cf2c/Cirkulaere_om_specialer.doc

287 Shortland et al. in Longman, 1991: 37-53

288 Maciuba-koppel, 2002: 9

289 Maciuba-koppel, 2002: 9

290 Maciuba-koppel, 2002: 106

291 Maciuba-koppel, 2002: 108

292 Shortland et al. in Longman, 1991: 41

Viral marketing behøver ikke underholde

Virale marketing kampagner har ofte form af underholdende filmklip, jokes eller reklamefilm. Et nyt kommunikationsspeciale fra RUC konkluderer, at dette ikke nødvendigvis er det mest hensigtsmæssige format. En public relations orienteret tilgang er i mange situationer mere egnet. Det skyldes, at artikler ofte videresendes på baggrund af det, der kaldes den selektive tilgang, mens jokes, filmklip og reklamefilm ofte videresendes på baggrund af det, der kaldes den ureflekterede tilgang.
Af: Louise Elver Hansen & Agnete Sylvest Jensen

Viral marketing er kort fortalt en online version af word of mouth marketing. Det vil sige en online kampagne, der er så god, at internetbrugere sender den videre i deres personlige netværk. De internetbrugere, der først støder på virale kampagner, kaldes online influentials. Udover at være meget vidende, fungerer de som opinion leaders i deres - ofte store - netværk. Derfor er det vigtigt, at virale kampagner appellerer til denne gruppe internetbrugere.

Langt de fleste virale kampagner, der florerer på internettet, er små underholdende filmklip, jokes eller reklamefilm. I vores speciale har vi set nærmere på, hvordan man kan appellere til de online influentials. Og vores analyser viser, at der muligvis skal tænkes i nye baner, hvis man ønsker at påvirke de vigtige online influentials. I stedet for at arbejde med det traditionelle underholdnings-element, er det i mange situationer bedre at følge en public relations orienteret tilgang.

Selektiv tilgang vs. ureflekterede tilgang
Forklaringen, på at en public relations orienteret tilgang ofte virker bedre end filmklip, jokes og reklamefilm, skal findes i måden virale kampagner videresendes på. Vores analyser viser, at virale kampagner enten videresendes på baggrund af det vi kalder "den selektiv tilgang" eller det vi kalder "den ureflekterede tilgang".

Selektiv Tilgang
At videresende ud fra en selektiv tilgang indbefatter, at afsenderen ligger vægt på at skabe værdi for modtageren. Afsenderen videresender derfor udelukkende virale kampagner, som han/hun mener, har direkte værdi eller relevans for en eller flere udvalgte modtagere.

Ureflekterede Tilgang
At videresende efter den uovervejede tilgang sker mere tilfældigt. Fokus er i høj grad koncentreret om afsenderens personlige smag. Det betyder, at hvad som helst kan sendes videre til enten en række modtagere – eller til hele afsenderens mailingliste - så længe afsenderen selv synes, det er af værdi. Denne adfærd tenderer spamming.

Dette gøres igennem en analyse af mulighederne for at markedsføre www.studentoptions.com viralt. www.studentoptions.com er en hjemmeside, hvor studerende kan købe software til reducerede priser.

Analysen tager afsæt i teori om viral marketing, interviews med viral marketing eksperter, en spørgeskemaundersøgelse med 2.780 danske studerende og individuelle interviews med otte opinionsdannende og dagsordensættende studerende.

Specialet kan læses her:
A New Perspective on Viral Marketing

Hvem sendte mailen?

De fleste kender en Søren, der sender sjove links og film tit og ofte, og til mange mennesker. Det er ikke altid, at man lige får tid til at åbne mailen fra Søren. Søren videresender efter den ureflekterede tilgang, og tænker ikke på at skabe værdi for modtageren.

De online influentials er derimod opmærksomme på ikke at blive opfattet som en Søren. De er derfor forsigtige med, hvad de videresender. De fleste af dem følger den selektive tilgang og forsøger at skabe værdi for modtageren. Værdi skal forstås meget bredt. Der kan både være tale om en relevant information, en øjenåbner, noget gratis eller en underholdende joke.

Artikler videresendes mere selektivt end jokes

Ifølge vores analyser videresendes filmklip, jokes og reklamefilm oftest via den ureflekterede tilgang. Og artikler videresendes i højere grad gennem den selektive tilgang. Det betyder, at jokes sommetider videresendes til en hel mailingliste, mens artikler kun sendes videre til en enkelt person, eller en afgrænset gruppe, for hvem det er direkte relevant. Derfor vil artikler oftere nå den intenderede målgruppe.

Herudover er modtagere af et link til en artikel også mere tilbøjelige til at åbne linket, end modtagere af et link til en kampagnefilm er. Det skyldes, at man føler sig mere 'tænkt på', når man modtager et link til en artikel end et link til en film, fordi artiklerne oftere når modtagere, der er interesserede i dem.

Public Relation orienteret tilgang

Vi vil derfor anbefale, at man overvejer, om det kan betale sig at benytte sig af en public relations tilgang til viral marketing. En public relations tilgang indebærer, som i al public relations, at man får sit budskab ind i det redaktionelle miljø på hjemmesider, i form af artikler, pressemeddelelser eller notitser.

"Det er ikke sjovt"

En anden mere pragmatisk grund til at vælge public relation tilgangen er, at det er svært at være sjov. Der er i dag så mange virale kampagner i omløb, at der skal utro lig meget til, for at en kampagne er sjov nok til at blive sendt videre. De online influentials vi har talt med, gav alle udtryk for, at det er meget få ting, der er værd at sende videre. Ingen af de online influentials vil opfattes som en Søren, og de har derfor en tendens til at være meget kritiske overfor, hvad der er sjovt og kan sendes videre. Et andet problem er, at den form for humor, som bruges på internettet, ofte er meget grov. Det kan derfor være problematisk for virksomheder, der er underlagt omfattende guidelines, at benytte sig af humor, da de ikke kan tillade sig at benytte den type humor, som virker på internettet.

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Appendix A

Appendix A1: Interview guide, practitioners

Introduktion
To specialestuderende, International Communications på RUC.
Fokus på viral marketing, mulighederne i dette og brugen af opinion leaders på nettet...
Case: Microsoft, vil lancere en side til studerende med softwareprogrammer til reducerede priser

Hvordan vil du karakterisere den primære målgruppe for virale kampagner?
        - Bruger I / har du hørt om begrebet e-fluentials (og tech-fluentials)

Hvor udbredt er viral marketing I Danmark
        - Hvordan ser det danske marked ud?
        - Hvordan ser du fremtiden for viral marketing? / Hvad er fremtidsperspektivet?

Bruger I opstøttende reklame i form af print eller lignende til jeres kampagner?
        - Hvad kan du sige lidt om det?

Hvordan seeder I jeres kampagner (identificerer e-fluentials)?

Hvad er det vigtigste for en succesfuld viral kampagne?

Appendix A2

Appendix A3

Appendix A4: Screening questions, informants

Netadgang - forbrugssituation
Hvilken slags netadgang har du? - Hvor hurtig er din netforbindelse?
Hvilke tidspunkter på dagen bruger du din computer?
Kan du sige hvor lang tid om dagen, du burger foran computeren?
Hvor mange af disse er du på nettet?

Net aktivitet
Er du aktiv på nogen webblogs eller nyhedsgrupper?
Er du på nogen chatrooms? Hvad med fx Messenger?
Sender du nogle gange feedback til en hjemmeside? – Hvor ofte gør du det?

IT – kendskab, holdning, innovation
Bliver du ofte spurgt til råds om IT?
Er du tit den første blandt dine venner til at prøve nye softwareprodukter eller programmer som fx dreamweaver eller photoshop?
Vi har snakket med en del der mener at kvalitet og design er langt vigtige end pris I forhold til IT-produkter, hvad er din holdning til det?

Social aktivitet
Har du en stor social omgangskreds på dit studie?
Hvem er ellers I din sociale omgangskreds, gamle gymnasievenner eller hvad er det det?
Forwarder du nyheder, jobopslag eller andre ting til dine venner og bekendte? Hvor ofte?
Har du mødt nogen af dine venner gennem Internettet?

Appendix A5: Interview guide informants

Intro
Om os: Speciale i komm./Ruc – Overordnet prøver vi at blive klogere på studerendes Internet-vaner – mere specifikt arbejder vi udfra Microsoft som vores case-virksomhed.

Samtalens forløb: Tale sammen ca. en time – jeg stiller nogle spørgsmål, som du skal svare på – der er ingen rigtige/forkerte svar, men til gengæld er det vigtigt at du svarer så sandt som muligt (gerne gi' dig tid til at overveje spm.) – vi er interesseret i dine erfaringer, ikke din viden - vi er her for at lære af dig – du er anonym – optage, ok?

Handle om: Vi skal tale lidt om dine Internetvaner, piratkopiering, vise dig nogle korte film og til sidst vil vi lige høre, hvad ddin holdning til Microsoft er.

Demografi
• Navn, alder, studie (universitet, retning, hvor langt er du), evt. studiejob
• Hvor og hvordan bor du
• Interesser

Nettet (I telefonen talte vi om, at du er meget på nettet)
• Hvad laver du, når du er på nettet? (fx tjekke mails, læse avis, købe, blogge)
• Bruger du nettet til andre ting?

Websites
• Hvilke hjemmesider besøger du tit? (Politikkens netavis, dit studies hjemmeside, særlige musiksider etc.)
• Er du tit inde på nye sites?
• Kan du huske sidste gang, du besøgte en hjemmeside for første gang? Hvis ja: Fortæl lidt om det (hvorfor besøgte du sitet, hvordan fandt du sitet).
• Er det typisk den måde du finder en ny hjemmeside på? Hvorfor/ hvorfor ikke.
• Generelt, hvad tror du får dig til at gå ind på et website for første gang? (søgning på google efter noget specifikt, tilfældig surfing, pga. anbefaling, bannere?)

Køber du ting over nettet?
- *Hvis Ja:* Hvilke ting køber/downloader du over nettet (musik, film, tøj etc).
- *Hvis Ja:* Kan du huske den sidste gang, du købte noget på nettet? Fortæl lidt om det. (Hvordan fandt du sitet, hvad købte du, hvorfor købte du det på nettet frem for Offline?)

Forwarding
- Får du tit tilsendt attachments/links i mails fra venner/bekendte? – åbner du mange af dem?
- Kan du huske en af de sidste gange du fik et attachment/link tilsendt? – åbnede du det? Hvis Ja: Hvorfor gjorde du det?, hvad var det?
- Generelt hvad tror du får dig til at åbne et attachment/link, som en ven/bekendt har sendt dig? (er der nogle ting du aldrig åbner?)

Sender du selv nogle ting videre til venner/bekendte?
- Fortæl om en af de bedre ting, du selv har sendt videre (Hvorfor sendte du netop den videre?, hvor fik du den fra?).
- Hvilke ting sender du som regel videre? (film, produktanbefalinger, spil, konkurrencer, reklamer?)
- Er der nogle kendetegn ved det du sender videre? (særlig humor, sex)
- Er der nogle ting du ikke gider/vil sende videre?
- Hvordan bliver du selv opmaerksom paa de ting, som du sender videre (finder dem på hjemmesider, får dem tilsendt af andre?)
- Hvad tror du, er grunden til, at du sender ting videre?

Piratkopiering (ved, det er et lidt touchy emne, men du er helt anonym)
- Downloader / piratkopierer du selv?
- *Hvis Ja:* hvilke produkter downloader / piratkopierer du (musik, film - hvad med softwareprogrammer?)
- Er der nogle produkter, som du har mulighed for at piratkopiere, men som du køber i stedet for? – Hvis Ja, Hvorfor?
- Hvad er grunden til, at du piratkopierer? (er det fordi, produkterne er for dyre?)
- Nogle siger, at de ikke kunne finde på at piratkopiere et produkt, hvis de sympatiserede med udbyderen/kunstneren. Er det et synspunkt, du er enig i?
- Tror du, at du ku' finde på at købe et produkt i stedet for at piratkopiere det, hvis det blev tilstrækkelig billigt?
- Er der noget andet, der kunne få dig til at holde op med at piratkopiere og købe produktet i stedet for?
- Hvad synes du generelt om piratkopiering? (etisk, moralsk forsvarligt?)

Kreativ metode: Vise fire virale kampagner: TDC, Excel ark, OneNote, Disco Führer
- Hvad synes du om dem?
- Ville du reagere på dem? (Gå ind på websitet? Sende dem videre?)

Microsoft (Her til sidst har vi et par spørgsmål om Microsoft, da de er sådan en stor spiller på området)
- Bruger du Microsoft produkter?
- Hvis ja: Hvad synes du om dem?
- Hvad synes du generelt om Microsoft?

APPENDIX A

Appendix A6: Code lists

Start Code List
• Opinion and relation to Microsoft (products and brand)
• Pirate copying vs. purchase.
• Do they open links/attachments – do they follow recommendations from friends?
• Do they receive and forward links and attachments?
• Motivations for forwarding links and attachments
• Are they open to visit new websites?
• Internet habits. What do they do on the internet? What catches their attention?
• What do they like to receive and forward?
• What do they not like to receive and forward?
• Other

End Code List
• Opinion and relation to Microsoft (products and brand) and opinion about corporate brands in general.
• Pirate copying. Opinion about pirating, do they pirate, why do they pirate, what could make them stop pirating?
• Purchase. Do they shop online (what and why)?
• Do they open links/attachments – follow recommendations from friends?
• Do they forward and receive links/attachments? What do they forward and receive?
• What do and don't they like to receive and forward?
• Their motivation to forward links and attachments
• How do they find/get the links and attachments they forward
• Are they open to visit new websites? How do they find new websites? What do and don't they like about new websites?
• Internet habits. What do they do on the internet? What catches their attention?
• Awareness of spam.
• OneNote
• Comments on good offers