

1. Why this book? Because laws are not laws.

- Things moving so fast, marketers get caught up in the hype and apply concepts that are less tested
- Often applying findings from case studies and single sets of data.
- Many social scientists get bogged down in their quest for statistical significance, but good science is based on replication.
- Our research is about looking to see whether findings hold across multiple sets of data with differing conditions.
- When findings hold across different conditions only then do they offer predictive value
- Other sciences – new medicines – new building material – new technology – they don't apply results only found to hold once, they test them over and over.
- This is what we call an empirical generalisation approach – basis of my work, basis of the book.

2. Distribution is a bigger piece of the sharing puzzle than given credit.

- Most social videos don't go 'viral' - even the big famous ones share in line with expected.
- Viral marketing is not analogous with biological epidemics i.e. that (good) content will spread to millions from a small base. Actually it's the other way around.
- This is because even the best examples of creative the pass along rate is a fraction of what most think, i.e. best example 8 to 1 viewing to sharing ratio, on average 24 to 1.
- So while creative helps, like most brands, distribution is the single largest predictor of success. Means if you start with a small viewing base the video will remain small.
- This is why we see a negative diffusion curve. We know that 25% of all sharing happens within the first 3 days, with 25% of sharing happening within the first week – demonstrates burnout
- This is also why we see that most videos don't go viral – highly viewed videos are typically shared in line with expected given the relationship between shares and views. Therefore the way industry define virality is misleading – they say a video that is highly viewed is viral, but in reality it is likely just sharing in line with expected (based on degree of seeding).
- In actual fact even small/low viewed videos can be viral if it shares above what is expected.
- The reality is big AND viral videos are rare.

3. Good quality content is the icing on the cake.

- But first what is creative quality? Emotions are long noted as important in content delivery because emotional reactions function as the gatekeeper for further cognitive and behavioural reactions. We started here.
- High arousal (Ha) emotions are a secondary predictor of sharing after distribution.
- This means that while distribution is important, good quality content aids incremental sharing.
- Incremental sharing is earned reach that occurs over what is expected given the level of views achieved.
- In essence, this embodies the real meaning of viral success; that is, outstripping the level of performance that was simply bought through seeding efforts.
- When considering content that deviates well above what is expected we can see where creative quality kicks in.
- When we isolate the 'superstars' (the rare few that deviate well above what is expected) we can see that 90% of the incremental sharing can be explained by good creative (high arousal positive).

- For the most part, big videos are big because they are well distributed, so looking at the creative characteristics of only these big videos tells us nothing of their differences over poorly performing videos this is why this research is different.
- We find that distribution will make a video 'big' but good creative helps deviate away from expected and makes it truly viral.

4. Creative device (i.e. babies, animals, celebrities) is not responsible for content diffusion.

- Every social video commentator has an opinion on what type of creative device gets shared the most. In nearly every article, book or blog we see some insight about the success of animals, cute babies or dancing.
- And while this commentary is not wrong our results suggest that it is not entirely correct either.
- But looking at only the top sharing, without looking at low sharers, only gives us half the story.
- Fact is creative devices can be equally successful and non-successful in terms of shares and equally high and low arousing.
- We find no correlations between sharing and device and emotions and device.
- Personal triumph is the one exception
- It shares significantly more regardless of whether it evokes high or low arousal emotions.
- Yet very few marketers use it (3% of 800 videos sampled).
- Personal Triumph linked directly to HaP Exhilaration and Inspiration
- Lesson – focus less on which creative device and more on how arousing the creative is.

5. Branding is not the enemy in content marketing

- Poorly branded advertising is like throwing away your marketing budget – or worse giving it to your competitor.
- A myth exists that overt branding will hinder content sharing. So while TV executions are typically well branded, marketers 'dial down' the marketing when it comes social video (around 1/3 videos expose the brand early *cf* 2/3 of TV ads and TV exposes brand visually to viewer twice as often as video).
- But we see NO evidence to support that branding hampers sharing. No relationship between sharing and branding and no differences in shares in high or low branding.
- It turns out HaP content records the highest level of branding (both frequency and duration), yet still shares the most.