



forward thinking series

# 'Evolution of beauty' Dove Case Study

An applied buzz & brand activation research model

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An applied buzz & brand activation research model

## Summary / Abstract

In traditional campaign post-testings only the impact of direct exposure (people actually having seen the creative) is measured. By doing so, all dynamics behind the buzz in terms of word-of-mouth and word of mouse and how this influences consumer dynamics remains unknown. Insights in the content and dynamics of these conversations could be very useful to understand the success (or failure) of a campaign however. Traditional approaches also neglect the actions people undertake after having viewed a commercial message, while commercials can be found on sites like YouTube and are shared around the world. This study tests Dove’s viral movie ‘Evolution’ and confirms that measuring indirect exposure as well consumer actions undertaken after ad exposure provides advertisers with new and useful insights.

## Introduction

### The consumer 2.0 the cocktail party goes digital

Today's empowered 2.0 consumer is very well informed, strongly connected with peers (and millions of surfers in general), has the ability to unify with them & share ideas but also has the tools to create proper content beyond control of marketers. This consumer is more sceptical, questions many things and uses intelligent ways to see through the facade of marketing actions (Jaffe, 2005).

With the rise of this "new" consumer a recent trend in marketing called "word of mouse" (WoMo) has emerged. Verhaeghe et al. (2007) defined word of mouse as "the act of a consumer receiving, creating and/or distributing marketing-relevant content through online channels (both textual and audio-visual)". WoMo is part of "buzz" defined as the act of consumers providing information about brands, products and services to others in an informal, non-commercial way. Buzz has an offline component – traditional "word of mouth" (WOM) – as well as an online component ("word of mouse").

Buzz is part of human nature. Consumers are eager to share great experiences or discoveries in return for respect of their peers (Damani and Damani, 2007). The thing with word of mouth is that in the past, it has always been rather limited in terms of reach ('one-to-one' or 'one-to-a-few'). Today, everybody can easily broadcast and publish with global reach as well as search content (Anderson, 2006). No need to say that this condition of almost 'perfect information' has a major impact on marketing.

Verhaeghe et al. (2007) found that all types of consumers participate in buzz at all places possible about a whole range of different brands in different product categories. In fact, more than half of the

online population indicated that they had engaged in word of mouse over the past week as much as they performed word of mouth. The usage of online communication channels to share information about brands, products and services is more than just a hype for marketers. More than 4 in 10 internet users are exposed to comments and articles about products and brands – 1/3 reads blogs about brands and between 20 and 8% create some form of content about brands, products or services.

Clearly something is going on!

### The new rules of the advertising game

Advertising and communicating to consumers has changed dramatically. In 1987 an average 30-second TV commercial in the United States needed to be aired 3 times to reach 80% of the Americans. Today it has to be aired 150 times to have the same impact (Himpe, 2006). TV advertising is still working, but at a much higher cost.

Marketers and advertising professionals have to change their view on marketing communications and cannot go on with these unacceptable levels of waste. In trying to break through this clutter, companies attempt to use consumer buzz & conversation in their favour. But the talk can also turn against them (see textbox).

Alternative ways of advertising (such as viral movies, guerrilla...) have the power to attract attention of people as well as the media. People talk about things that are taboo, unusual, outrageous, hilarious and remarkable or a secret. The media mostly covers stories like the David and Goliath story, the unusual or outrageous story, the controversy story, the celebrity story and stories regarding topics that are already hot. The impact of the media strengthens the effect of buzz because the messages are perceived as being

"In the beginning of 2005, Vichy wanted to launch an anti-aging crème using a new strategy by taking part in this new, online conversation. France is one of the countries where blogging has had an above-average acceptance, so it was logical to use blog as a medium. But Vichy made a wrong assessment! The advertising agency created a character (Claire), a blog, and Vichy sent out a press release announcing the online presence. Claire, or actually the marketing team behind the blog, started posting. Within an hour bloggers were accusing the brand of presenting a false character. Although trying to sound like Claire, the team's advertising language had been identified and trust had been damaged. The blog was taken down and later relaunched in a different format, using real people blogging about real life. Vichy apologized to the blog community" (Beelen, 2006). It is hard to assess but that damage has been done is sure.

very credible and directly conveyed by people (Rosen, 2006; Himpe, 2006; Hughes, 2005). Commercial content that is well conceived, well placed, and well timed can break through the clutter and contribute to buzz.

### New challenges for market research firms in measuring the effectiveness of campaigns

The described evolutions in consumer behaviour provide new challenges for market research companies. Till now, word of mouse was measured by only registering the click through or forward rates of a viral movie. Although these measures do provide useful information, we believe they are mechanical and ignore underlying behavioural as well as attitudinal processes. In addition, traditional post-testing only measures the impact of direct exposure (actually seen the creative). Any of the dynamics of buzz and the marketing impact remains unknown. Still, insights in the content and dynamics of these conversations could be very useful to understand the success (or failure) of a campaign. Traditional approaches also overlook which actions people undertake after having viewed commercial content (e.g. viewing, spreading, creating).

In this study, we will test *Dove's* viral movie *'Evolution'* on these dimensions. We will therefore use a variation of the framework for measuring word of mouth and word of mouse processes proposed by Verhaeghe et al. (2007). We will first describe the business case itself. Next, extend the framework and how it is applied to the "Dove Evolution" case, followed by our research methodology, research findings and conclusions.

### The business case: **'Evolution of Beauty'** It all started with... a consumer insight

To further explore the global understanding of women, beauty and well-being Dove (Unilever) commissioned 'The Real Truth About Beauty' study in 2004. The study had its roots in a growing concern that portrayals of female beauty in popular culture were helping to perpetuate an idea of beauty that was neither authentic nor attainable. Dove was concerned that the distorted portrayal of beauty was preventing women from recognizing and enjoying beauty in themselves and others.

The company was also aware that – in a world where female beauty is highly valued – this situation could also impact women's well being, happiness and self-esteem. The study provided important data on the hypothesis that what women learn about beauty can have a negative or positive impact on how they feel about themselves and their lives (Etcoff et al., 2004). As a result Dove launched the *'Dove Self Esteem Fund'* (DSEF) in 2005 (first in Canada and later on in the rest of the world).

Inspired by the 2004 study, *Dove* decided to take the next step in exploring the impact of society's beauty ideals on the self-worth of women and importantly of young girls. Today's stereotypes of beauty are a big issue hurting girls around the world. This second study, called *'Beyond Stereotypes: Rebuilding the Foundation of Beauty Beliefs'*, learned that 92% of young women want to change something about the way they look and that mothers can play a powerful role in nurturing a positive body image and self-esteem (Etcoff et al, 2006).

Continuing this social mission and the willingness of *Dove* to 'walk the talk', the plan for 2006 included the launch of the *'DSEF Real Beauty Workshops for Girls'*. These are interactive sessions designed by experts to spark dialogue between girls and their female role models. To amplify these workshops and drive registration, two viral movies were developed – *'Daughters'* and *'Evolution'*.

In developing *'Daughters'* it became clear that young girls are seriously affected by the stereotypical images that they see every day. In *'Evolution'*, *Dove* captivantly shows how distorted our perceptions of beauty are. The viral shows the transformation of an ordinary girl into a glamorous woman by using a professional team of make-up artists; hairdressers and Photoshop specialists (see <http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.ca/flat2.asp?id=7134>).

### The **'Evolution'** movie and its worldwide success

The *'Evolution'* movie was created on demand of *Unilever Canada* and posted on *YouTube* by its creator *Ogilvy & Mather Toronto* 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2006. The objective of this 75-second viral film was to reach the target group of mothers, mentors and female role models since they have the greatest influence on

freeing the next generation from false beauty stereotypes. The aim was that this primary target group would engage in WOM and WoMo with young girls and women (secondary target group). Given *Dove's* mission to make more women feel beautiful every day, this film was also designed to challenge the stereotypical view of beauty that women are bombarded with everyday.

Unilever objectives in developing these films were to:

- touch the lives of 70,000 girls in Canada towards the global objective of touching over 1,000,000 girls by 2008 over the world (this target has already been reached after 2 months);
- to do so in a meaningful way by providing tools, resources, educational materials that can make a real and lasting difference;
- drive mass awareness of the workshops and available materials, reaching Canadian women through viral email blasts, word of mouth, on-line advertising and PR.

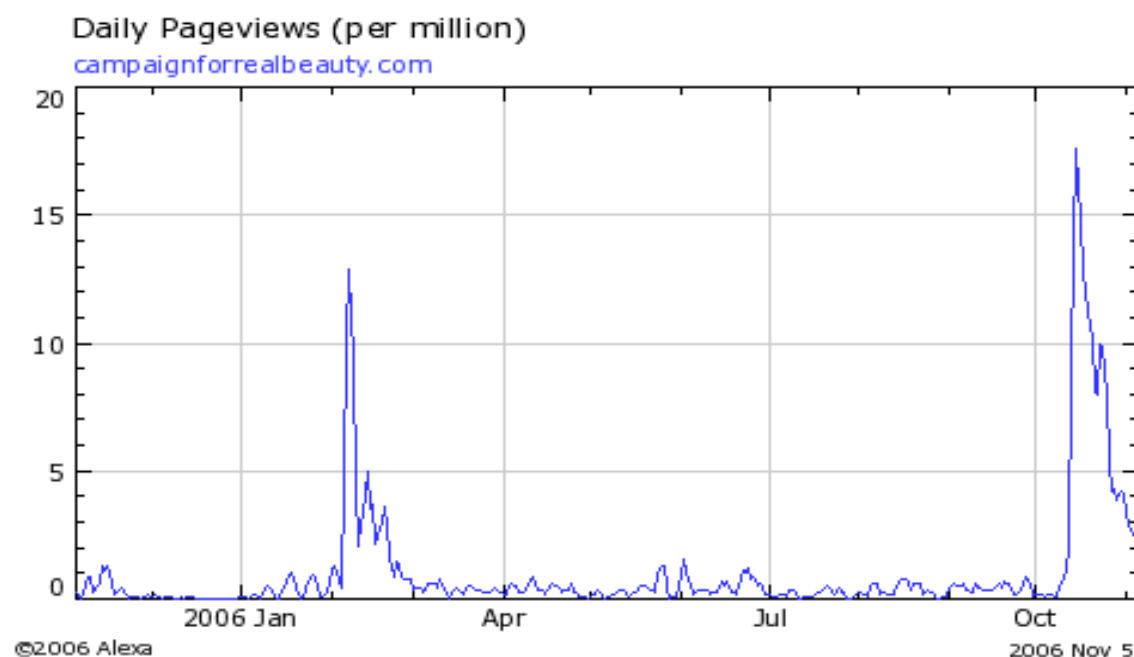
Besides being posted on YouTube, an e-mail with a link to the movie was sent to 460,000 people in Canada, followed by targeted e-mails to 15,000 women who attended a DSEF workshop. An online media plan focusing on woman's websites supported

the launch of the movie. After this the movie began to live its own life 2.0 and travelled around the world!

The week of the launch the traffic to the international campaign site increased with 8,000%. The Alexa graph below (see Figure 3) illustrates the number of daily page views on the "campaign for real beauty" web site. The peak on the left is the effect of the 'Dove Beauties' ad – showing the URL at the end – aired during the 2006 Super Bowl. The October peak is much higher than the Super Bowl peak leading us to conclude that the launch of the 'Evolution' movie was far more successful in terms of views than the \$2.5 million ad during the SuperBowl of 2006. The movie attracted more than 7,000,000 viewers on *YouTube* (spread over countless reposts) and is still counting, there are more than 30,000 testimonials about 'real beauty' on the campaign website and the movie is now launched in more than 40 countries

The Dove marketing team wanted to jump on 'what's already hot in the media' and slipstream with 'Evolution' in the skinny models debate after the Fashion Week in Madrid (were the organisers banned ultra thin models from its runways). The debate speaks to the heart of the 'Campaign for real beauty' and for *Dove* this was an opportunity not to be missed. A targeted PR and Media campaign was developed to coincide with LA Fashion Week to maximize share of conversation for the campaign.

Figure 1 – Daily page views campaign website (Alexa)



Press releases, a DVD with the 'Evolution' movie as part of the goodie bag ... generated mass PR coverage (e.g. publication in several talk shows, television programmes, newspapers and magazines). In total, \$60 million of media value was generated.

### The Launch of the movie in Belgium

Unilever Belgium received the 'Evolution' movie through Germany at the end of October 2006. The Dove department in Germany was responsible for the dispatching, implementation and follow-up of the 'Evolution' movie in Europe. The adaptations to create the French and the Dutch version of the movie happened between end October and begin November 2006. The movie was finally launched on November 14<sup>th</sup> 2006 on the Belgian campaign website with the possibility to download the movie or tell a friend about it on the website. But, WoMo was faster than the marketing process. A great part of the Belgian Internet population had already seen the 'Evolution' movie after its launch on *YouTube*. To jump start the viral effect of the film, the Belgian links for the movie were sent by e-mail to 2,875 people by Unilever employees.

The specific research questions Dove had were as follows:

- What makes this movie breaking through the clutter and grabbing so much attention?
- Does measuring indirect exposure provide us with new and useful insights?
- Is it true that people and the media are most credible and result into higher impact on the buying and decision making process?
- What kind of actions did people undertake after having seen the movie?
- Did mothers, mentors and role models undertake actions to reach young girls? And what has driven them to do so?
- What was the content of the conversations about the movie?
- What is the impact of those actions and conversations on the brands awareness, the brand image and on brand buying?

## The conceptual framework

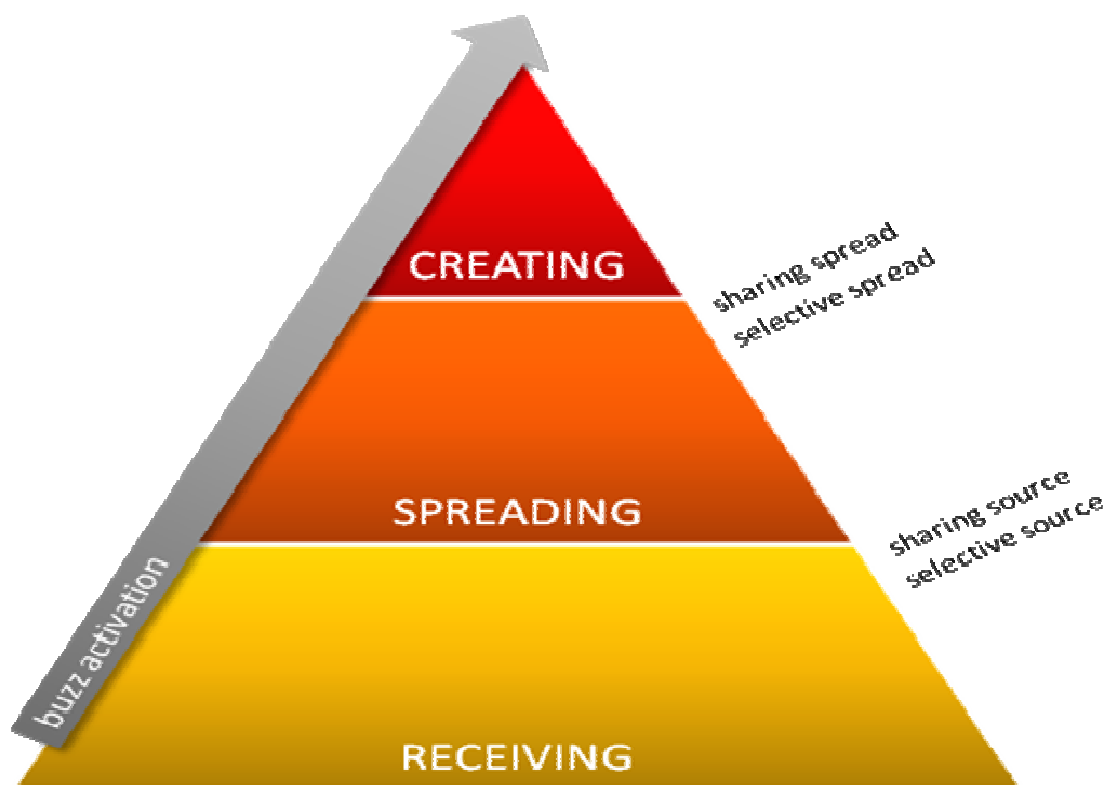
We believe that buzz activation is not primarily tied to a specific profile of people or personality characteristic e.g. sneezers, opinion leaders, advocates, evangelists and other seemingly magical consumers. WOM and WoMo are primarily performed by a variety of consumers engaging in buzz actions. The most active and impactful consumers might not always be as expected. Hence, our framework for measuring buzz puts *actions before profile*. Consumers are not waiting for anybody to activate them, *actions happen sooner or later*. Regular consumers from all societal layers undertake brand and product WOM and/or WoMo. Marketers need to take into account that activation campaigns should be aligned with their target group's action profile.

### Buzz activation: different levels of engagement

Buzz activation can reach different levels of engagement (see Figure 2):

- **Receiving** or viewing behaviours occur whenever people receive and absorb content of a message about brands, products and services. The sources via which consumers are exposed can be *selective* (e.g. when receiving an e-mail or listening to a friend's recommendations) or consumers can engage in receiving actions via *sharing* platforms (e.g. blogs, online broadcast platforms or newspapers).
- **Spreading** (or sending) happens when consumers spread the word and share content through a variety of *online and offline channels*. Spreading can be *selective* when the content is distributed to a limited set of people (e.g. forwarding a viral via e-mail). Spreading can also be *sharing* when the content is made available for anybody (e.g. posting a viral on a public platform like *YouTube*). The initiator is not interested in reaching close acquaintances but to reach as many people as possible.
- **Creating** actions basically imply people contributing content to the ad, participate in a contest or play an interactive game or even create a new ad mostly a parody.

Figure 2 – The buzz activation pyramid



### From buzz activation towards buying activation

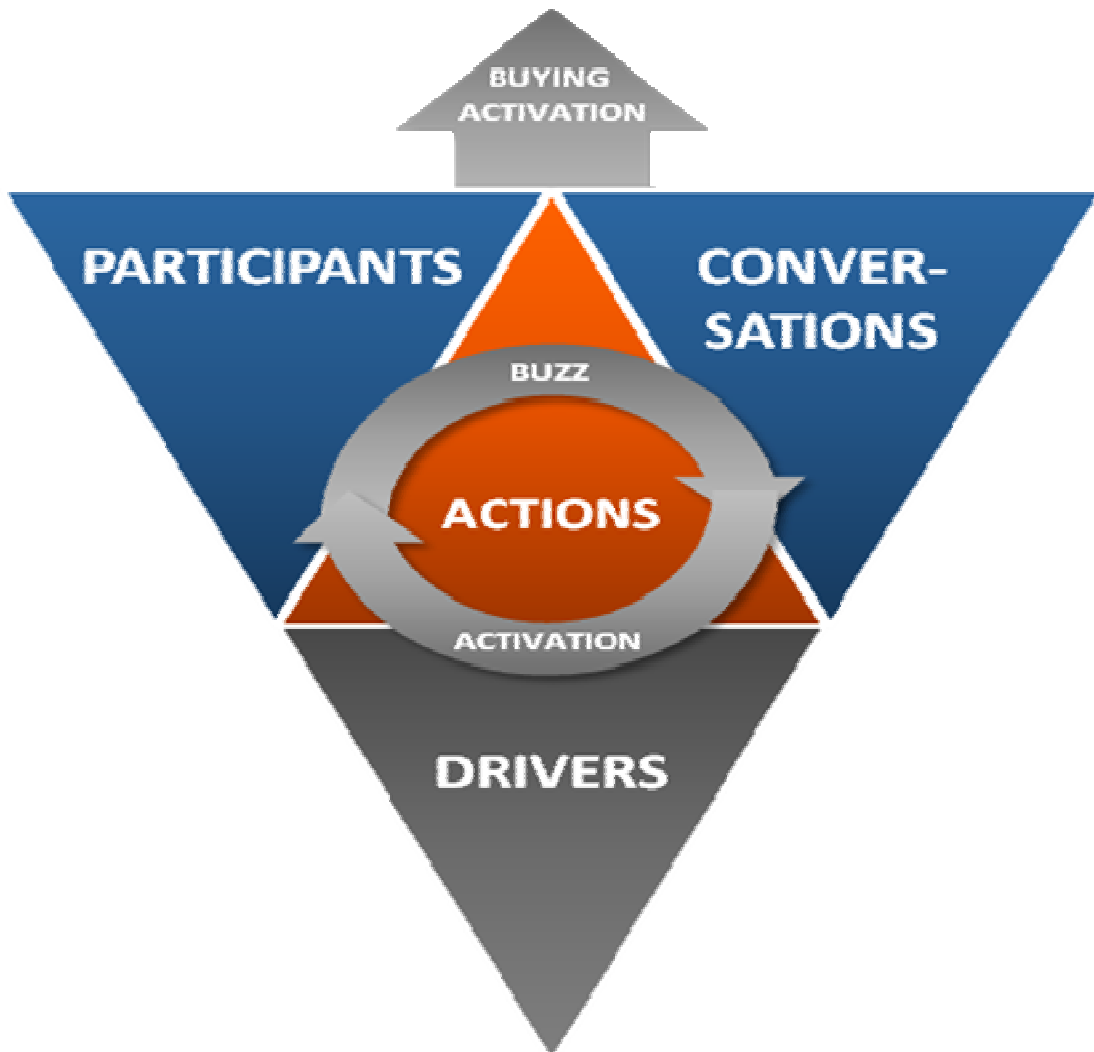
People participate in buzz activities for different reasons. Is it the brand or the execution of the viral, the exposure their social-demographic background or just something about people? After consumers are exposed and when they engage in buzz they often comment. The *polarity* of the conversation and the *relevance* of the conversation (is the buzz really about the campaign itself) and the (correct) brand/product message will all influence the impact on the buying decision making process.

The buzz actions consumers undertake with regards to viral movies may have an impact on different aspects of the buying cycle at the receiver's end, but may not necessarily lead to immediate purchases (see Figure 2). In fact, they may move the consumer forward in the purchase process only step by step.

- **Knowledge:** buzz actions can activate brand or product *awareness*, trigger *information seeking* or lead directly to *new knowledge*.
- **Attitudes:** buzz actions can lead to a change in *attitude* towards the brand or product and reinforce *differentiation*.
- **Consideration:** buzz can activate a brand or product in the *consideration set* of consumers and even stimulate *trial*.
- **Purchase:** buzz actions can activate a *purchase intention* for the next buying occasion or even an *immediate purchase*.

We will assess to what extent the viral 'Evolution' lead to effects in the buying cycle.

Figure 3 – Our conceptual framework



### Measuring impact of direct and indirect exposure

As an extension to Verhaeghe et al.'s (2007) model we distinguish and test the effects of two types of exposure. When it comes to measuring the impact of (integrated) advertising campaigns, direct and indirect exposure need to be assessed (Himpe, 2006).

- Direct exposure to the viral (direct impact) here refers to people who actually saw the 'Evolution' film. The exposure to the viral can activate them to undertake further word of mouth/mouse actions (forwarding the film, post it on a web 2.0 sharing platform...).
- In case of indirect exposure to the viral (indirect impact) consumers have not seen the advertisement. They may have heard about the viral via other media, both online (blogs, friends via e-mail,...) or offline (newspapers, traditional word of mouth,...). This indirect impact can be controlled (by means of press releases) or uncontrolled (media exposure, online or offline word of mouth) by the advertiser.

## The case study

### Methodology

Having used Internet as the main communication channel for this movie on an international level, it is quite difficult to have clear results about the impact of Belgian launch. Hence, our study focuses on the Belgian target group rather than the Belgian actions undertaken by Unilever. Our study was set-up in cooperation with Unilever Belgium and consisted of a post campaign impact measurement.

Data were collected via the Belgian internet access panel of XL Online Panels ([www.xlonlinepanels.com](http://www.xlonlinepanels.com)). In total 1,503 panel members participated in the survey. Data were reweighed to the Belgian online population to be representative (according to: language, gender, age, education, professional status and internet intensity) ([www.escape-reports.com](http://www.escape-reports.com)).

To measure if the impact of the viral movie is in line with the management objectives – i.e. reach mothers, mentors and female role models who hopefully engage in conversation about *'real beauty'* with young girls and women– we isolated two different target groups from the rest of the online population:

- **Primary target:** female, older than 24 and a mentor or role model for young girls and women
- **Secondary target:** female and between 15 and 24 years old

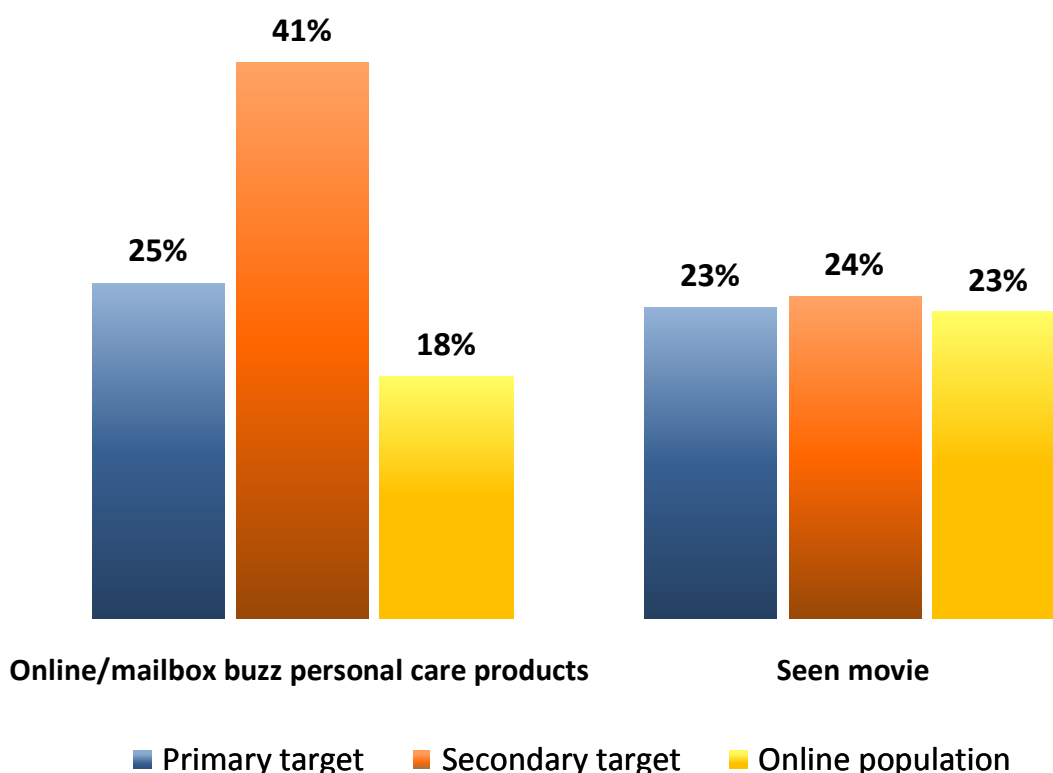
15% of Belgian online population belong to the *'primary target'* and 13% of them is member of the *'secondary target'* group.

### Data analysis and findings

#### Impact measurement as we are used to do it

In traditional post-testing only the impact of direct exposure is measured. The dynamics of WOM and WoMo and how this influences the results is not tapped into. Still insights in the content and dynamics of these conversations would be very useful to understand the success (or failure) of the Dove campaign as was also clear for the management objective. This paragraph describes what we would get if we measured the impact of the viral *'the traditional way'*.

Figure 4 – Exposure to *'Evolution'*



Strikingly the secondary target group is engaged more in buzz concerning personal care products. Within the group of 'female role models and mentors' almost one out of four women (23%) was directly exposed and viewed the 'Evolution' movie. While this penetration is quite high it is not so that the primary target group was reached more effectively than other parts of the population. The exposure penetration among 'young girls/women' (24%) and the 'total online population' (23%) was very similar. Of the consumers who saw the movie, about one out of

three knows that the movie is initiated by Dove. This results in *effective impact scores* of 8% within the 'primary target', 7% for the 'secondary target' and 6% for the overall online population.

Respondents who have viewed the film, have developed more sympathy for the Dove brand (42% among 'young women' and 52% among 'role models') and talked to others about the brand in a more positive way ('young women' 21% and 'role models' 23%). 19% of the 'role models' says they more on the

Figure 5 – Attitudinal impact of 'Evolution' campaign



lookout for other *Dove* communication due to being exposed to the movie. Within the group of 'young women' this is only 7% indicating to a lower level of engagement. So, both the secondary and the primary target strongly agree with the fact that the movie enlarged their sympathy for the *Dove* brand and made them engage in positive buzz. The primary target indicates that they did feel like buying *Dove* products (25%) and that they had selective attention for other communications of the brand (19%). While the secondary target group appreciated *Dove* products more but was less likely to watch more closely for other communications of the brand than the secondary target.

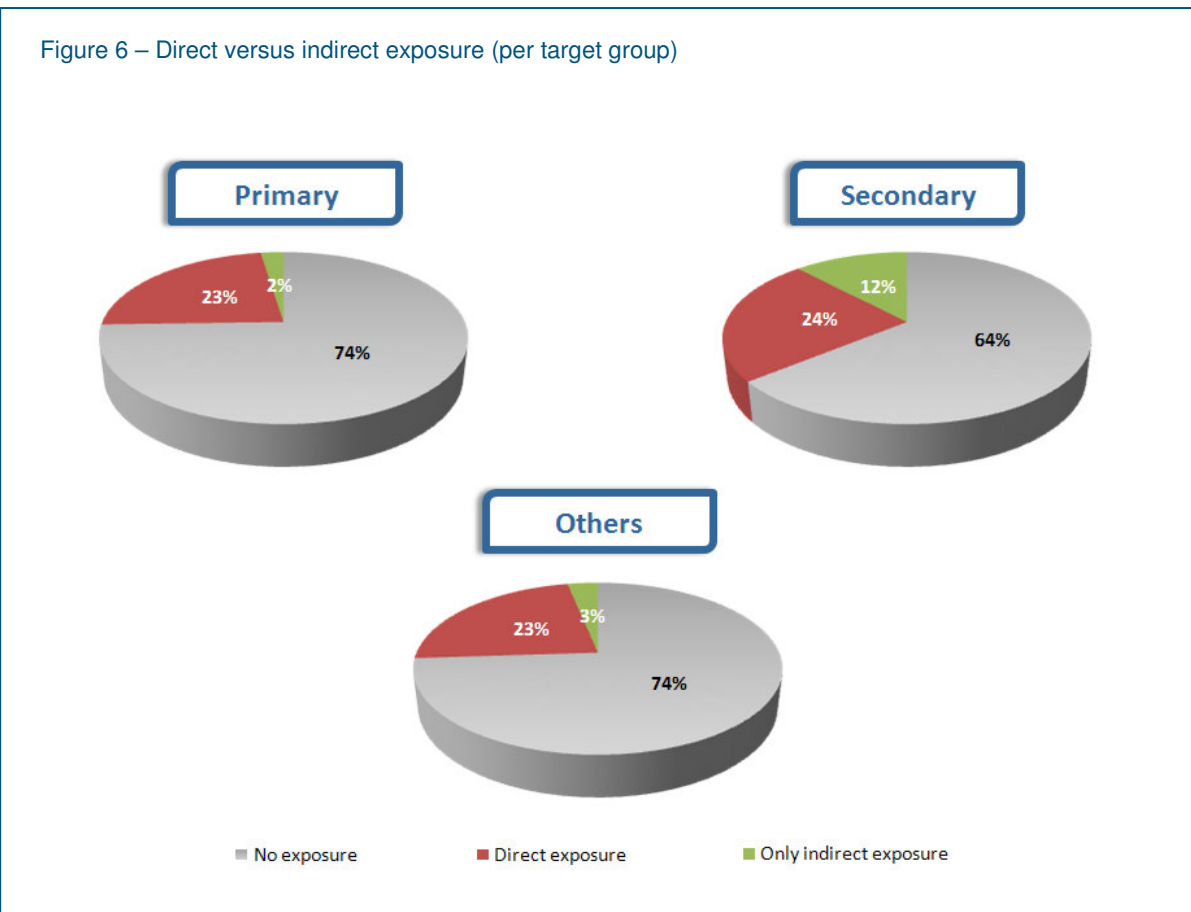
The attitudinal change caused by the viral seems rather successful within the secondary target group. Girls and young women who saw the viral disagree more with the statement "I find it important to be considered 'beautiful' by other people" ('seen': 19% and 'not seen': 6%). This is also the case for "I find it important to be surrounded by 'beautiful' people" ('seen': 71% and 'not seen': 60%). Especially people who were neutral towards these statements before

exposure were convinced by the content of the movie and changed their attitude. Within the primary target group we can find opposite results in the extremes. Those who have seen the viral before indicate to disagree less with both statements. This could be due to the fact that for example these elder women are already confronted with situations in which beauty seems to be important. Or their need to be perceived as beautiful has become more important now that they are confronted with the (first) signs of getting older.

More than three out of four understood the key messages of the movie ("The media do not give a realistic image of female beauty", "Every woman is beautiful in her own way", "The current ideal of beauty is forced on us" and "Perfect beauty does not exist") and seem to be both credible and important for both the secondary and primary target group. To almost 30% of both secondary and primary target the 'Evolution' movie makes the *Dove* brand more attractive.

Among both target groups the likeability of the viral movie is rather high (primary: 7.2 and secondary: 8.3). Both target groups agree with the fact that the

Figure 6 – Direct versus indirect exposure (per target group)



spot is not commercially-oriented, that the spot has an emotional impact on them and that watching the spot is entertaining and gives them new insights, besides something to talk about with other people. Moreover, respondents who saw the viral indicate that the movie suits the *Dove* brand well and it projects an image of quality on the brand.

Did we overlook something?

The analyses up till now only assess the people who were directly exposed. We come to an interesting conclusion taking into account those who were indirectly exposed to the movie. Among the secondary target 12% has not seen the viral directly, but has heard or read about it via other people or in the media. Whilst the previous finding of the equal exposure among primary and secondary target groups may have been a little disappointing, this phenomenon is exactly what Dove wanted to achieve: to create buzz about its campaign among the secondary target group. This finding is in line with the fact that this market segment engages more in buzz about the topic in general. Hence, one should never overlook measuring indirect impact too!

Although direct exposure is equal among the three groups, the secondary target is the only one with a percentage 'only direct exposure' of any importance. But we still do not know how this came about. Have mothers, mentors and female role models talked about the viral to young girls and women? Or were they mainly exposed to publications in the media? In

the next paragraphs we get deeper into the dynamics behind this results.

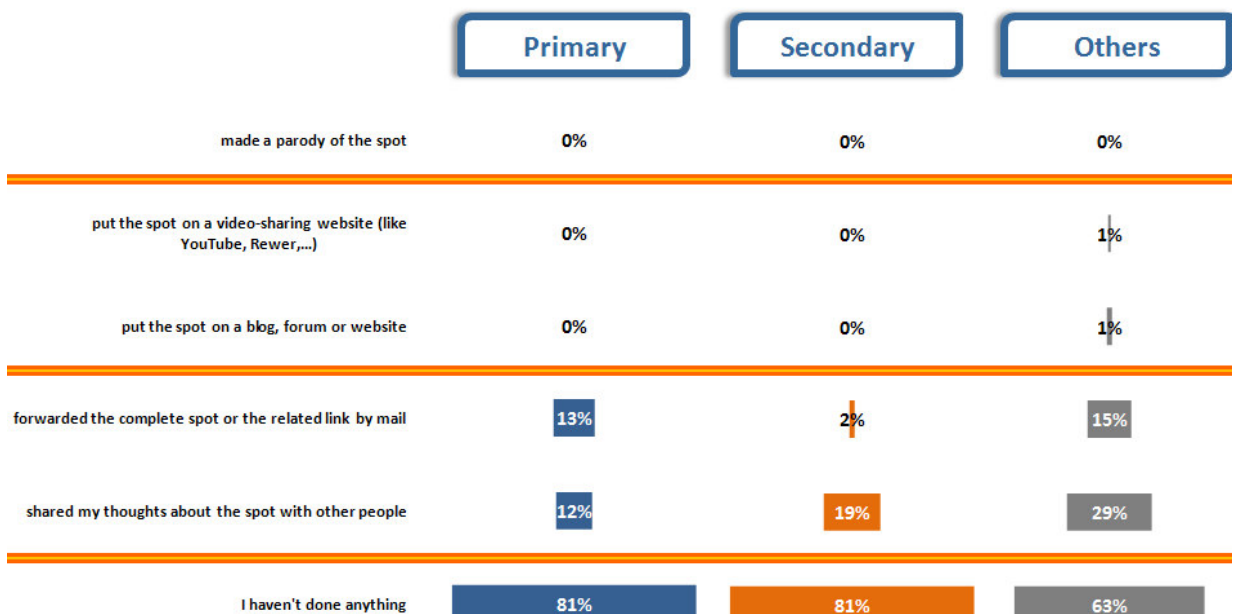
Let's talk about buzz activation

After having seen the viral, 81% of both the secondary and the primary target did not undertake any action. The primary target group shared their thoughts with other people about the movie (12%) and forwarded the complete spot or the related link by mail (13%). The secondary target shared more thoughts about the movie with other people (19%). But they forwarded it less to others (only 2%), which is rather negative for the extension and subsequent generations of WOM & WoMo and, thus, the lifecycle of the viral campaign.

Both 'young women' and 'role models' in Belgium did not post the film on a video sharing site, blog or forum. 'Others' – outside of the target group – undertook most action (no action: 63%, sharing thoughts: 29%, forwarding: 15% and posting on a blog, forum, website or a video sharing site: both about 1%). This finding is in line with a previous study on word of mouth and word of mouse (Verhaeghe et al., 2007). Although, this group of 'others' has no direct relevance for the advertiser they carry the campaign as they post the movie on sharing sites and blogs, forward it and talk about the campaign to people who could in turn be relevant to the advertiser.

All groups especially shared their thoughts with a good friend ('primary': 50%, 'secondary': 46% and

Figure 7 – Evolution's buzz activation pyramid



'others': 53%). The 'primary target' shared their thoughts rather with their partner (47% towards 'secondary': 27%). This is also the case for the respondents belonging to the male dominant group of 'others' (49%). This is again an indication of the fact that indeed a group, who initially is not perceived as being a target, can spread the word towards the target groups. The secondary target shared their thoughts more with a relative (66% towards primary: 13%) or with their mother (19% towards 'primary': 0%) while the 'others' especially do this towards an acquaintance/colleague (50%).

Almost one out of three saw the movie for the first time on television – the movie was aired on a TV channel, during the Flemish variant of 'Getting Naked'. Furthermore having received the complete spot via e-mail is most common among the 'role models' (23%) and the 'others' (21%), but far less among the 'young women' (7%). The last ones indicate that they discovered the video more by themselves on blogs, websites or video sharing platforms like *YouTube*. This youngest female group is more empowered and know their way on the digital highway better. So, it is possible that due to a more advanced internet experience 'young women' have

Figure 8 – Sources of direct exposure

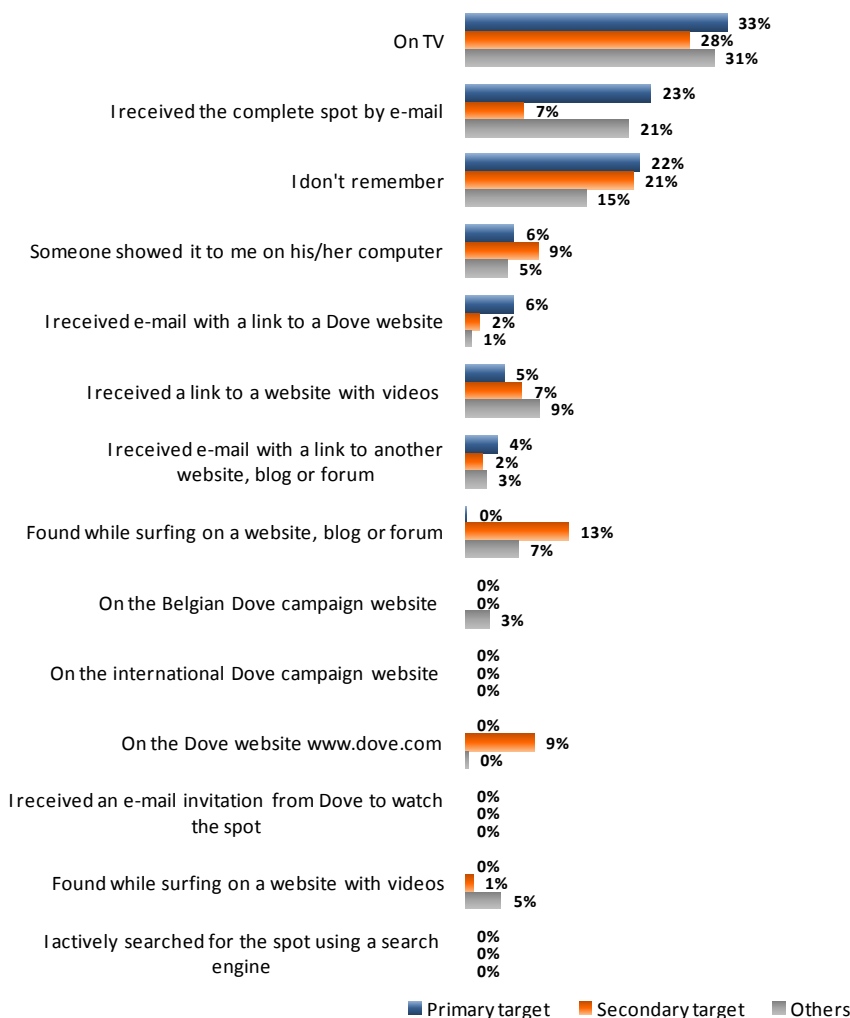
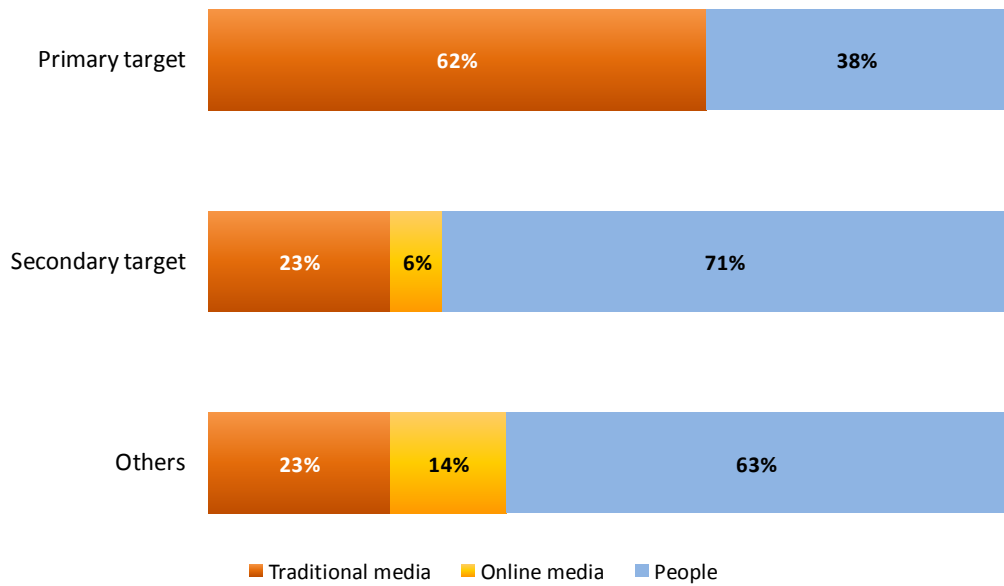


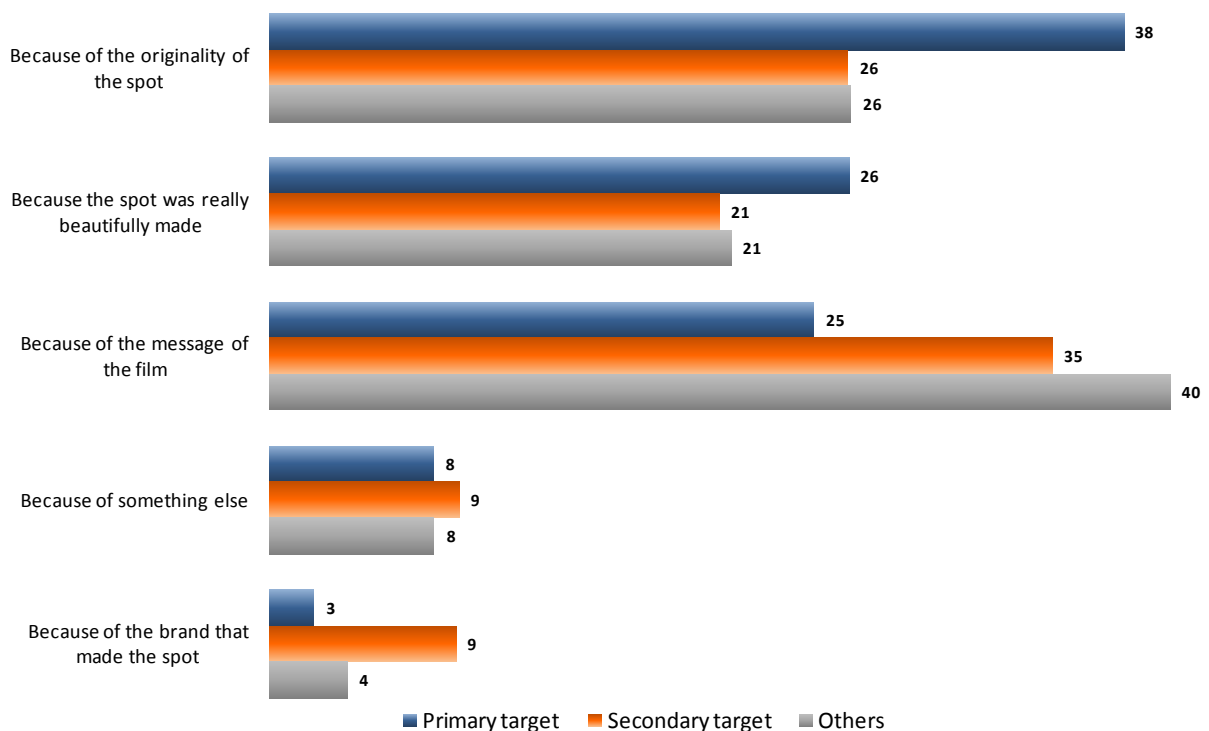
Figure 9 – Sources of indirect exposure



seen and discovered the movie earlier than their counterparts (the 'role models'). Magazines, acquaintances and colleagues, TV and people were the most popular indirect sources for

indirect exposure. Among 'role models' traditional media (especially magazines and TV) seem to be the biggest source of indirect exposure (62%) followed by people (38%). For 'young women' and the 'others',

Figure 10 – Drivers for taking action (after exposure)



people are the most important (respectively 71% and 63%), followed by traditional media and the internet. We also notice that the 'secondary target group' has a very high score on "through a friend" (52%) and on "through relatives in general" (30%). Another interesting finding is the fact that both the 'primary' and 'secondary target group' has heard it "through her mother" (both 13%). About one out of three has talked or wrote further about this spot after having heard or read about it.

#### Drivers for engaging in buzz action

The primary target group, reports that the originality of the spot is the main driver for performing buzz actions. Followed by the execution ("because the spot was really beautifully made") and the message of the movie. For the secondary target and the others, the most important driver for taking action is the message of the film, again followed by the fact that it is beautifully made and original. The fact that Dove as a brand made the spot is of almost no importance (see Figure 5). This is in line with the general findings of Verhaeghe et al. (2007) that for audio-visual WoMo the message is much more of a driver than the brand itself. In this specific case the brand Dove is moreover not pictured very explicitly which allows less opportunity for this variable to come into play.

Respondents who saw the movie virally (not on TV) for the first time are more likely to undertake action. This could be due to their internet skills (indirectly) but also due to the fact that this happens in personal context: the message comes to their mailbox via a friend, instead of by mass marketing actions. From the literature we know that people like to tell about their experiences, discoveries and little secrets (in this case that media and advertisement lie and do not show 'real beauty'), and the respect gained from peers is the incentive for spreading the word.

The more customers like the spot the more it is likely that they will undertake action (forward it, post it on a (video sharing) website, forum or blog). When it comes to personal characteristics, people who frequently forward these kind of movies are twice as likely to do something with it.

#### Conversation

More than one out of three of those consumer who undertook an action with the viral, have commented this action. In all cases this comment was positive towards the film and dealing with the message of the movie: "Ads can lie", "Everybody can look beautiful",

"Huge pressure on women", "Gives courage to young girls",... (see Figure 11).

Hence, subsequent generations of WOM/WoMo are also in line with the core message Dove wanted to convey.

#### Buying activation

Respondents who were both 'directly' and 'indirectly' exposed, visited the 'campaign for real beauty' website much more compared to those who were 'only direct/indirect' exposed ('both': 20%, 'only direct': 4% and 'only indirect'). This group was also most likely to talk about the viral and forward it to other people.

Figure 11 – Commented conversation (post coded)

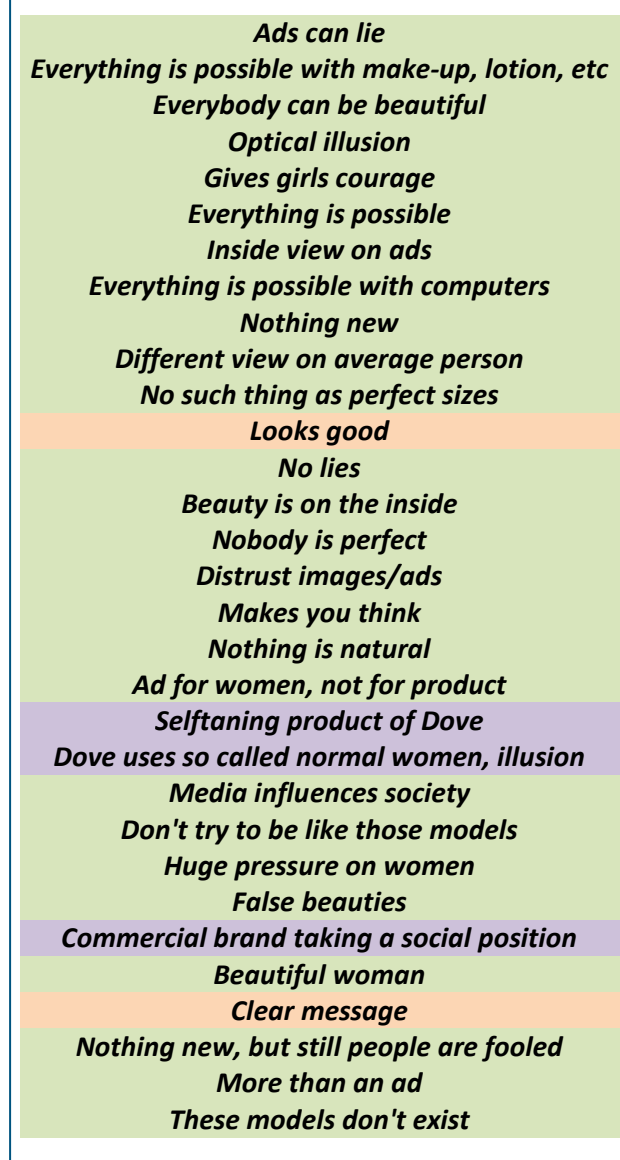


Table 1 – Buying activation impact per exposed group

	Only direct	Only indirect	Both
Visited the campaign for real beauty website	4%	5%	20%
Talk about the movie	20%	18%	46%
Forward the movie to other people	10%	NA	27%
	Only direct	Only indirect	Both
More sympathy for the DOVE brand	42%	32%	65%
Talk to others about DOVE in a more positive way	16%	32%	32%
Appreciate DOVE products more	16%	3%	16%
Feel like buying DOVE products	17%	4%	18%
Have taken a closer look at DOVE products	11%	15%	16%
Recommend DOVE more often to others	11%	7%	12%
Going to watch more closely for other communications by DOVE	14%	24%	28%
	Direct	Only indirect	
More sympathy for the DOVE brand	46%	32%	
Talk to others about DOVE in a more positive way	19%	32%	
Going to watch more closely for other communications by DOVE	17%	24%	
To what extent the movie makes Dove more attractive for people	40%	27%	

Consumers who were both directly and indirectly exposed experienced the greatest impact in terms of buying activation. Our data shows that 'direct' exposure is generally more powerful in terms of more developed buying activation.

Consumers who experienced direct impact only, mainly develop more sympathy for the brand, engage in more positive WOM and WoMo with others and show more selective attention for Dove communication. Hence, whilst 'indirect' exposure seems to be very powerful in the more early stages of the buying process, its impact will be more on the long than on the short term.

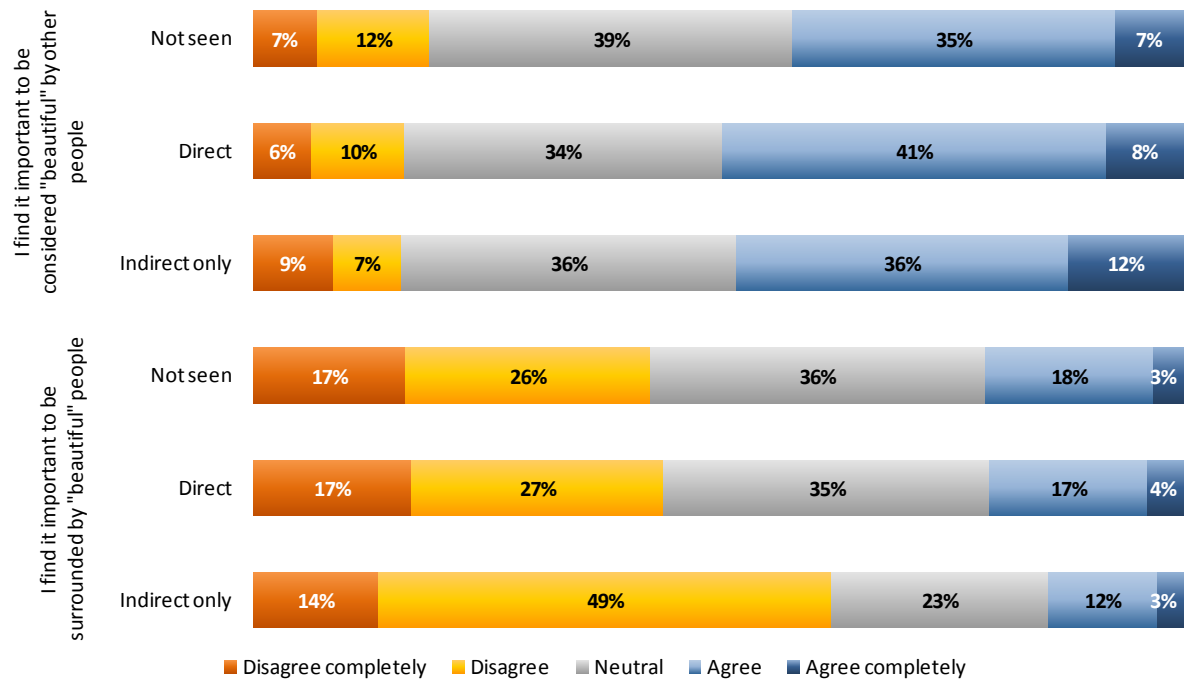
When it comes to attitudinal changes, 'direct' and only 'indirect' exposure have almost the same positive impact on disagreement with the statements *"I find it important to be considered 'beautiful' by other people"*

(*'both'* about 50%) and *"I find it important to be surrounded by 'beautiful' people"* (*'direct'*: 21% and *'only indirect'*: 15%).

Again, all this confirms that we need to measure 'indirect' impact when testing advertising campaigns on their effectiveness. If we would leave this out, we would ignore an important part of the impact that a campaigns had on consumers.

In order to assess which elements of the viral movie lead to buying activation for Dove and measure if these drivers are different according to the primary and secondary target group a series of ordinary least squares regression analysis was performed. First, a principal components analysis (varimax rotation) was performed on the sub-evaluations of consumers who were directly exposed to the 'Evolution' viral. 21 items were reduced into 3 underlying dimensions (61%

Figure 12 – Attitudinal change caused by viral movie



variance extracted): 'movie execution' (Crombach's  $\alpha$  0.93), the 'message content' ( $\alpha$  = 0.64) and 'brand fit' ( $\alpha$  = 0.83). Similarly, all buying activation items were tested for uni-dimensionality: all items loaded together in one component ( $\alpha$  = 0.86).

This overall buying activation dimension was regressed on the former 3 components to assess the success factors of the Dove viral. Our regression model was significant with an  $R^2$  = 0.41. The results indicate that brand fit was the most important factor in explaining buying activation for Dove followed by the movie execution and the message conveyed. Hence, consumers who found the viral to fit with quality image of Dove, who found the commercial to be well executed and who agreed with the commercial's message were more inclined to engage in buying activation. Still, the results become more interesting when performed according to the Dove target groups namely young women versus role models.

The primary target group of mothers and role models are most activated by the link between the viral and

the Dove brand as well as quality of the movie execution just as was the case in the overall model. Still, the primary target group is relatively more driven by the message conveyed as well: standardized beta coefficient going up from 0.20 in the general model to 0.31 for the primary target group. So all three components need to be in sync in order successfully stimulate consumers to engage with the Dove brand.

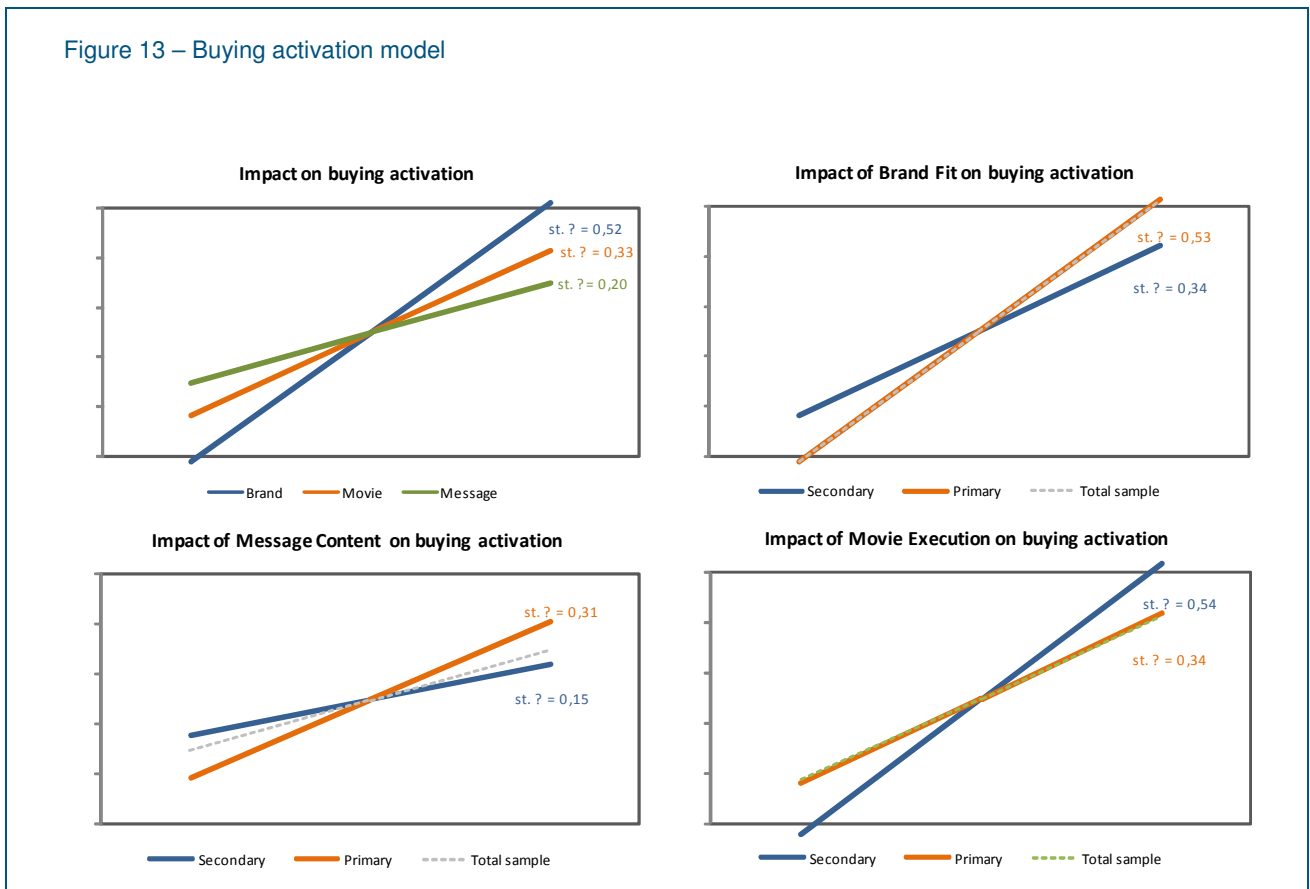
The picture is quite different for the secondary target group of young women. This group is much more persuaded by the execution of the movie (standardized beta coefficient 0.54 compared to 0.33) and less so by the brand (standardized beta coefficient dropping from 0.52 to 0.34). Whether or not this group perceives the content of the message does not influence their level of buying activation (standardized beta coefficient no longer significant). This finding indicates that viral movies are much more youngsters' cup of tea who are much less influenced by the content as such.

Table 2 – Principal component analysis factor loadings

	<i>Movie Execution</i>	<i>Brand Fit</i>	<i>Message Content</i>
I find the spot interesting	0,80		
This spot attracts attention	0,79		
This spot is convincing	0,78		
This spot is original	0,76		
This spot is credible	0,76		
This spot lingers in the mind	0,75		
This spot is attractive	0,74		
This spot gives me material for discussion with other people	0,70		
The spot has an educational impact	0,67		
The spot has an emotional impact on me	0,63		
The spot gives me new insights	0,60		
The spot was professionally made	0,59		
This spot is easy to understand	0,55		
Watching the spot is relaxing	0,53		
This spot projects an image of quality for the Dove brand		0,85	
This spot leaves a good impression of Dove		0,82	
This spot suits Dove well		0,78	
Dove wants to keep women from trying to conform to an unrealistic beauty image			0,73
This spot is not commercially-oriented			0,66
Dove challenges the distorted images of beauty, so women feel better about themselves			0,66
This spot confirms that the media do not project a realistic image of female beauty			0,61

	<i>Brand activation</i>
I am going to watch more closely for other communications by DOVE	,91
I feel like buying DOVE products	,89
I have taken a closer look at DOVE products	,86
I now have more sympathy for the DOVE brand	,85
I now appreciate the DOVE products more	,83
I now talk to others about the DOVE brand in a more positive way	,83
I recommend the brand DOVE more often to others	,75

Figure 13 – Buying activation model



#### Slob evolution and other parodies

As mentioned earlier, the web 2.0 consumer has the tools to generate content of their own and may even destroy some of the original marketing efforts. In case of viral movies there are parodies abound on the web. 3% of the online Belgian population has ever seen a parody on the 'Evolution' movie. While most of them (77%) indicate that they rather enjoy such parodies, a small group of about 11% states that such parodies are not done.

The most popular parody on the 'Evolution' movie on YouTube is 'Slobevolution' in which a good looking guy is turned into a fat ugly old man due to drinking beer, eating hamburgers and smoking. At the end of the parody the makers copy the tagline ("Thank God our perception of beauty is disturbed. No one wants to look at ugly people"), added an alternative URL and made a smoking Dove logo. The question remains whether this is detrimental to Dove's nicely built up marketing efforts?

Only 2% of our sample has ever seen the 'Slobevolution' parody. Whilst the number of observations is low, our data suggest that the impact of the parody is rather limited. Only 8% says they have changed opinions about the Dove brand or about the original commercial (11%). A quarter of those who saw the spot did undertake some actions: 21% sent the parody to others in one way or another, 12% shared their thoughts about the parody with other people and 2% of the online population placed the spot on a website for video sharing, on a blog or on a forum.

Still, our data is not of sufficient size to draw final conclusions about the effect of viral parodies on key marketing communication metrics.

## Conclusions

Next, to the enormous amount of clicks and views and speed of spread, the “Dove Evolution” campaign reached almost ¼ of all Internet users, regardless of the target group of female role models, young girls or others. The impact of the campaign in Belgium was mainly to be situated at the level of attitude building. In line with Unilever’s objectives the campaign was able to change attitudes regarding beauty and its importance as well as create buzz among both target groups.

The effective impact scores are only part of the picture, however. More than 1 out of 10 of Unilever’s secondary target group was exposed to the viral indirectly clearly indicating the power of WOM and WoMo. Measuring indirect exposure is thus a prerequisite for measuring the effectiveness of viral movies. Still, due to the local measurement of the campaign and the fact that it was set-up for Canada resulted mainly in receiving and viewing behaviors in Belgium rather than spreading or creating. Interestingly, however, we found evidence for the fact that people outside of the core target group carried the viral much more compared to the primary and secondary target group and as such function as the cement between all groups.

In our study we found no evidence of people with negative comments in their conversations about the Dove viral. All reported outtakes were in line with Unilever’s objectives. The company also succeeded in changing the attitude of people about their own and other people’s beauty, as well via direct as indirect exposure and among primary as well as secondary target groups.

We may conclude that both word of mouth and word of mouse actions were present and driven by a few main ingredients of the viral. The fact that a beauty brand shows beauty images which challenge existing conventions and alternative images of beauty and women that were not sexualized is quite unusual and even revolutionary (Debapratim P. and Rajiv F., 2007). Moreover, the movie unveils a secret of the ‘beauty’ industry (“*nothing seems what it is*”) and the film is proven to be not too commercial and authentic. As we know from the literature (Hughes, 2005) such facts are activating and stimulating buzz.

The execution and message of the Dove viral seem to be more important drivers for consumers to engage in buzz actions compared to buying activation, for which brand fit is more important than the execution and message of the viral. For the primary target group of role models and models all three components are important, and especially the fit with the brand. For the secondary target – the ones that need to be influenced by buzz – are much activated in the buying process by the execution, less by the brand and not at all by the message. Hence, for youngsters one needs to play on a high quality viral to stimulate the buying process. “*When developing a viral campaign, marketers need to assure the fit with the word of mouse profile of their target group*” (Verhaeghe et al. 2007).

Finally, in the case of Dove Evolution parodies do not seem to affect much of the consumer dynamics in Belgium. While this study expands our knowledge about viral movies and their impact, further research is needed to fine-tune methodologies and enhances insights.

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