

The Virtual Humanitarian

The virality of humanitarian video campaigns

Master Thesis

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Abstract

Viral marketing has been around for decades, but as social networking sites have grown explosively in popularity over recent years viral video campaigns have too. This thesis studies the viral potential of online video campaigns of a humanitarian nature, looking specifically at the persuasive and motivational factors in the videos which stimulate forwarding and sharing behaviour. Academic literature studying online video virality is often focused on video campaigns for commercial organisations, with little attention being paid to humanitarian organisations - despite viral marketing being a popular tool within both sectors.

To bridge this gap I will analyse the persuasive elements in humanitarian video campaigns. To do so and to answer the research question, I will combine a literature analysis with the analysis of three case study videos. There are several themes which are identified as being crucial to the instigation of forwarding behaviour, which are the source (ethos), the message (logos and pathos) and the audience. Key to humanitarian videos is the recurrent Western saviour complex, as the content and context of these videos are heavily influenced by postcolonial concepts of the 'other' being in need of rescue from Western countries. These concepts are further explored in the literature analysis and provide a structure through which the case study videos are analysed.

Keyphrases: Viral videos, humanitarian campaigns, forwarding and sharing behaviour, Western saviour complex.

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1. Introduction

“Viral product design — the process of explicitly engineering products so they are more likely to be shared among peers — has existed at least since the first chain letter was sent in 1888.” (Aral 2011: 1623)

With over 300 hours of video content being uploaded to YouTube every minute of every day, standing out from the crowd forms a daunting task to organisations. Getting a video to go ‘viral’ is considered somewhat of a holy grail amongst modern day marketers and is as desirable as it is difficult to attain. Viral campaigns owe much of their appeal to peer-to-peer communication, indicating that the receivers of a message are happy to spread it further amongst their social network. This very act is often considered an endorsement of the brand or product for which the campaign was created, enhancing its credibility in the eyes of the receiver (Eckler and Bolls 2011: 1). Though viral marketing has rapidly become a very popular marketing tool, it is difficult to clearly define what it is that brings viral success. Why is it that a video of a baby biting his brother’s finger is viewed millions of times, while a carefully produced marketing video disappears into the online clutter of content? In their pursuit of a formula for viral success, marketing scholars have researched this phenomenon extensively.

But it not just corporate organisations who seek to maximise the peer-to-peer spreading potential of social media, non-profit organisations are just as interested. As Richard D. Waters and Paul M. Jones debate, “the creation of organizational videos may be the most powerful method of creating a strong mental impression of the organization in the public’s mind.” (2011: 249). Despite the advantage the non-profit industry could stand to gain from viral marketing, little research has focused on this so far (Waters and Jones 2011: 250, Bal et al. 2013: 203). This thesis aims to link existing findings so as to lay the groundwork for further research into the motivators behind sharing behaviour of Social Networking Sites (SNS) users. Audiences are frequently exposed to messages of human suffering, often by humanitarian organisations appealing at them to contribute (often financially) to a solution. As Birgitta Höijer describes, it can be difficult for people to relate to stories of war, hunger and crisis in a faraway country and frequent exposure to imagery of these situations can result

in becoming “numb or immune” to this content (2004: 525). This suggests that humanitarian causes not only have to find a way to beat the clutter of online content, they also have to truly appeal to their audience without numbing them to the situation of those they wish to support.

Research Question

The research question which will be answered focuses on the persuasive intent and motivational elements of humanitarian viral videos: What persuasive elements in humanitarian video campaigns motivate members of social networking sites to share content, causing them to go viral? Additionally, several subquestions have been formulated to support the main research question and reflect the argumentative structure of this thesis. The key triggers to sharing behaviour on social networking sites will be explored, looking at for instance the creating of an online identity, the need to feel part of a group or relieving guilt. In light of the latter, the concept of Western humanitarianism will also be explored. Additionally, key elements which influence the viewers’ perception of the persuasive intent of a video will be highlighted, revealing the influence of the source of a video or who it was endorsed by. The influence of SNSs on the sharing of viral content will also be studied.

1.1. Research Method

With this research I aim to position non-profit organisation video campaigns in the marketing field, focusing on motivations to share by social media users. In order to explore the phenomenon of humanitarian viral videos and answer the research question I will conduct three case studies and analyse the existing literature. This will demonstrate that a lot of research has been carried out which explores the virality of advertisement videos produced by the commercial sector, but very little on the sharing of humanitarian videos. Similarly, the majority of research focuses on the spreading of content to specifically targeted audiences through, for instance, email. However, the increasingly widespread use of social media has heavily influenced the spreading of viral videos (Kaplan and Haenlein 2011: 255). There is a need to study the motivators behind sharing behaviour on social media specifically so as to stimulate the development of research on this field.

Most literature on viral marketing focuses on campaigns by commercial companies, creating a knowledge gap with little being known about the role of humanitarian video

content in this field. I aim to show that viral video campaigns can be as relevant for humanitarian organisation as for commercial organisations. For this research I have chosen for a qualitative approach, which will consist of three case studies in combination with a literature analysis. This will clarify what existing literature has collectively indicated with regards to the field of viral video marketing and uncover whether this can be applied to viral video marketing by humanitarian causes. The structure of this research will be as follows: First I will explore the concept of persuasive appeal and motivational elements in video campaigns. I will demonstrate that there are several main motivators for sharing behaviour which are relevant in this research. This is followed by an exploration of the manifestation of social movements in the internet age, focusing on the potential social media hold for non-profit and humanitarian organisations. After this I will focus on the development of literature in the fields of non-profit organisation marketing in Western countries, as well as studies on viral video campaigns. The learnings of the analysis of the case study videos will be elaborated upon within the discussion.

The case study analysis consists of a content-based approach aimed at exploring what persuasive and motivational elements are present in the respective videos. Kristin English, Kaye D. Sweetser, and Monica Ancu state that “decades of credibility research tend to agree that a message’s power to persuade is influenced by three categories of factors: the characteristics of the source (ethos), of the message (logos and pathos), and of the audience.” (2011: 735). The case study videos will be reviewed in light of these categories, aiming to identify how the presence - or absence - of these factors has influenced their viral success. Additionally I will carry out a narrative analysis. As Stefano Pace argues, the use of narrative can easily be identified in advertising and communication in general. Advertisements tell a story of which the plot makes them a “form of modern tale”, in which a problem is presented which is solved by a hero, a role played by the product or brand. (Pace 2008: 215). Pace argues for the narrative analysis of advertisements on YouTube to be persuasive and plausible rather than objective. “It should show coherence with the informant’s view, consider the viewers as co-authors of the research.” (2008: 223). Focusing on the role of the consumer, Pace debates that imagery used in advertising has an “intrinsic rhetoric value that is coded by the sender and interpreted spontaneously by the receiver. The interpretation is rooted more in the historical cultural context in which the subject lives, than in a natural

process of perception.” (2008: 215). Narrative is thus used within advertising to appeal to the audience through their interests and passions and cultural heritage. Pace considers the consumer to be “a reader of narrative” which is ingrained in advertisements or brands (2008: 216) and regards YouTube videos as novels or stories which can be divided into three levels. The case study analysis will explore the respective videos at each of these levels. “At a higher level, there are myths that are universal values and cultural truths. At the converse level, there are reports: narrative renditions of real facts and events. In between, there are stories, narratives (...)” (Pace 2008: 219). Furthermore, Pace argues that a narrative analysis should account for three forms of coherence:

“The global coherence accounts for the real intent of the subject in telling the story. Local coherence means understanding the tools and structure used by the narrator in order to achieve a desired effect. Thematic coherence means that certain themes are recurrent in a story and are the relevant keys for conveying the meaning of the tale.” (Pace 2008: 223).

These three aspects concern form and context as well as content and as such I will use them to analyse the case studies so as to highlight what the persuasive intent is of the videos. This in combination with the content analysis will reveal the elements which played a role in the viral success of these videos.

The literature analysis will provide a cohesive account of previously performed studies and their findings so as to reveal what it is about humanitarian content specifically which causes social media users to demonstrate sharing behaviour. The analysis will refer to the findings from the case study analysis to support or dispute theories and it will consist of the exploration of previous research and existing literature which study the phenomena of virality and persuasive intent as well as the positioning of the case studies in these fields. Willie van Peer, Frank Hakemulder en Sonia Zyngier address qualitative research in *Scientific Methods for the Humanities*, stating that it is aimed at exploring phenomena, and that researchers may use it to formulate hypotheses about these phenomena (2012: 69). Additionally, they note that “your literature study will reveal what is actually known about a certain research problem. But you need to critically examine claims made by previous researchers” (2012: 139). Chris Hart states that analysing literature can be as valuable, both

intellectually and practically, as collecting first-hand data. “A thorough critical evaluation of existing research often leads to new insights by synthesizing previously unconnected ideas, and can provide methods for the collection of data and suggest solutions tried in similar situations.” (1998: 3). The literature analysis in this research will aim to do just that: provide new insights by connecting different ideas. Jane Webster and Richard T. Watson state that a successful literature analysis “creates a firm foundation for advancing knowledge. It facilitates theory development, closes areas where a plethora of research exists, and uncovers areas where research is needed.” (2002: 13). I will analyse literature from several areas of research which revolve around themes of viral marketing, digital humanitarian content, online social movements and online identities. Gathering and linking information created by research performed within these areas will create a networked oversight of knowledge from which conclusions can be drawn in light of my research question.

1.2. Research Material

1.2.1. Material Selection

I will analyse three case studies which were selected using several criteria. The selected case studies need to have been created and spread by a humanitarian cause, with the intention of making them go viral. They also need to have achieved some form of viral ‘success’. It is of course difficult to determine what it means to be successful online, however, in these particular cases the amount of views show that each campaign has had a substantial amount of exposure. Last but not least, the campaigns needed to have been reported on by international media, indicating that they captured the interest of diverse audiences.

This method of selection is not without risk, seeing as part of the method is to compare the case study videos. Setting selection criteria automatically means that the three videos which have been selected are quite similar in nature, seeing as they are all videos produced by humanitarian causes. Drawing a comparison between content which belongs to the same category can potentially influence the findings, the risk being that too much focus is put on obvious video characteristics rather than more meaningful ones. This must be kept in mind while performing the analysis and comparison. I chose these three particular case

studies not only based on the selection criteria mentioned before, but also because they relate to topics which are currently relevant and frequently the subject of public debate. Analysing them will show what persuasive elements in humanitarian viral content can lead to sharing behaviour amongst viewers. My conclusions will uncover whether previously established findings on sharing behaviour amongst audiences of commercially produced viral content can be applied to humanitarian videos as well. This will help reveal whether there is a need for additional research into the field of viral humanitarian videos and what this should focus on. This field contains a lot of research which is highly relevant and interesting but fragmented. This confirms all the more that there is a need for a comprehensive overview of this, which will provide meaningful insights into this field.

1.2.2. Video Campaigns

The three video campaigns which were selected for this research are, in no particular order:

Kony 2012 by Invisible Children

Kony 2012 centres around child soldiers in Uganda, whom are forced to work for the so-called Lord's Resistance Army which is headed by war criminal Joseph Kony. The thirty minute video was made to promote Invisible Children's "Stop Kony" campaign. This campaign expired at the end of 2012, and the goal was to have Kony arrested before this time. The video gained widespread popularity within days after its release, especially after being endorsed by several celebrities, including Oprah Winfrey and Justin Bieber. To date, the Kony 2012 video has been viewed over 100 million times on YouTube. This video is deemed relevant for this research because of its massive international viral success. It is often described as being the "most viral video in history" (Wasserman 2012). Furthermore, at thirty minutes the video lasts significantly longer than an average video campaign. Studying how the audience's attention is maintained during this time will add an interesting aspect to the analysis.

Abortion Tutorials by MILES Chile

In Chile, the only type of abortion which is not illegal is an 'accidental' abortion. This law can lead to tragic situations. For example, aborting a pregnancy which is dangerous to the

mothers' health or which is a result of rape is illegal. MILES Chile is a non-profit organisation which started as a citizen movement in 2010. Their goal is to promote sexual and reproductive rights in Chile. In 2014 they launched a campaign to pass a law which would allow 'therapeutic' abortions, meaning women would be able to get an abortion if the pregnancy puts their health or life at risk, if they fell pregnant due to rape or if the foetus is non-viable. To gain support for their campaign, MILES launched a viral video campaign. This campaign consists of three videos, called 'Abortion Tutorials'. Each of the videos lasts around a minute and a half, and shows young women giving instructions on how to suffer an 'accidental' abortion. To date, each video has been viewed averagely 300,000 times. This campaign was selected for this research due to its goal of shocking its audience. The campaign is made additionally interesting by the fact that the lead language is Spanish, yet it was picked up by many international news channels.

Stopp Bryllupet by Plan Norway

In 2014, a blog was launched in the name of 12-year-old Thea. The young Norwegian girl apparently used the blog to chart her thoughts in the months leading up to her wedding where she was set to marry 37-year-old Geir. It also showed pictures of the young girl trying on wedding gowns and experimenting with hairstyles. Quickly circulating the internet, the blog shocked many. In reality, the blog was set-up and run by international aid organisation Plan to promote girls' rights. Once it was revealed that this organisation was behind the creation of the blog, a video was also released on YouTube showing what the wedding of Thea and Geir would look like. The aim of this campaign was to raise awareness of arranged marriages between young girls with much older men. To date, this video was viewed over 5.5 million times. Similarly to the Abortion Tutorials videos, the Stopp Bryllupet campaign is another example of a non-English spoken campaign which was spread by international media. Additionally, this campaign is deemed relevant for this research as it too contains a characteristic which distinguishes it from the other two case studies: the video was the final part of the campaign as it followed the release of the aforementioned blog.

2. Online Activism

In this thesis, the main question I will focus on is what the persuasive elements are in humanitarian videos which motivate SNS users to share this content. In order to do so, two main themes will be explored. These themes have been determined by both the academic positioning and relevance of this research. First the concept of persuasive appeal in video campaigns is explored, followed by strategic targeting and content and context.

2.1. Persuading the Online Activist

As mentioned earlier, though a lot of research has been done on motivational factors in video campaigns very little of this has focused on content of a humanitarian nature. English et al. demonstrate that humanitarian videos owe much of their persuasive appeal to their source, logic or emotion (2011: 733). The authors highlight the importance of creating credible content, referring to a communicator's characteristics as one of the main principles of source credibility, arguing that these "influence the degree to which the audience finds the message credible and persuasive.". They go on to credit "highly expert and trustworthy communicators" as having the power to "influence the audience into changing its attitudes and behaviors towards the issue, product or person promoting the message." (2011: 736). Equally crucial is the presence of logos, or what English et al. describe as 'logical appeal', where factual information and arguments are presented by an individual to demonstrate their position on an issue. "This process allows the recipient to evaluate the argument on the basis of that information and decide whether to accept the information as valid." (2011: 736). Last but not least, English et al. explore 'pathos', stating that the use of emotional appeals "adds a different element and/or perspective to information." (2011: 736). It is argued that the formatting and delivery of a message matters as much for logical appeals as for emotional appeals, suggesting that the absence or lack of logical appeal can be compensated for by distractions and emotional appeals, for instance through humour (English et al. 2011: 737).

Within marketing literature especially there is a lot of focus on the use of emotion in video campaigns. Angela Dobeles, Adam Lindgreen, Michael Beverland, Joelle Vanhamme and Robert van Wijk (2007) discuss the emotional response which successful viral marketing

campaigns trigger in viewers. According to them viral marketing is recognised as a successful marketing strategy, but there is still a lack of understanding of how this works. Viral marketing can lead to peer-to-peer recommendations, which the authors highlight as a key success factor, arguing that this can increase the credibility of a message. The authors mention the fine line between creating a meaningful message and spreading spam. Standing out from the crowd is a big challenge in marketing but according to Dobele et al. “emotions, and in particular the phenomenon of social sharing of emotions, offer a solution to this problem.” (2007: 292). Establishing an emotional bond between content and the audience is crucial in order to successfully spread the campaign. Dobele et al. explore the impact of “the six primary emotions” on content spreading. The emotions they explore are surprise, joy, sadness, anger, disgust and fear. From their research, Dobele et al. conclude that emotions alone may not be enough to motivate viewers to undertake action. They found that the campaigns they researched captured the imagination of the viewers in such a way that it secured action: forwarding behaviour. Besides this, they observed that the most successful campaigns were the ones which were well targeted, meaning they were sent to viewers who would be likely to respond positively. Further exploration of these two themes show that though emotions may not be enough to motivate forwarding behaviour on their own, they were more likely to instigate this behaviour when combined with yet another factor. For instance, the emotion most likely to trigger ‘something’ in a viewer was surprise, and when combined with joy this resulted in delight. Feeling delighted upon viewing the content often proved to be a trigger for forwarding behaviour. It is crucial to note that emotions are not simply transmitted, but must be triggered by an individual’s interpretation, contextualising the video (Dobele et al. 2007: 293). For instance, Western audiences have shown to be more likely to develop certain sentiments when exposed to humanitarian content showing suffering in non-Western countries, such as: “pity (sorrow toward the state of victims); repugnance (revulsion or guilt toward the conditions of victims); nobleness (greatness of character directed at saving victims); and sympathy (compassion toward the suffering of victims).” (Kurasawa 2013: 207).

2.2. Spreading the virus

The presence of different emotions within a video is incredibly subjective and difficult to measure and therefore it is important to explore additional relevant motivational factors. This is done by Guda van Noort, Marjolijn L. Antheunis and Eva A. van Reijmersdal (2012), who conclude that targeting is crucial in setting up a successful viral campaign. They argue that when a campaign is well-targeted it is much more likely to generate a positive response, resulting in increased chances of forwarding behaviour from recipients. In order for content to go viral, it needs to actually be viewed by people. Though this might sound as though it goes without saying, there is a lot of clutter online which videos need to distinguish themselves from. Typical of videos on the internet, as opposed to for instance commercials on television, is that they must be sought for by viewers or presented to them by people they know (Thorson et. al. 2010).

Van Noort et al. argue that social connections are key to the spreading of viral content as they have a major influence on how persuasion intent is interpreted by the 'receiver'. They also argue for increased attention for social context, social networks and social capital. Focusing on the spreading of messages on SNSs, the authors highlight several 'critical effectiveness factors' to viral success. They reveal that videos owe a lot of their credibility to their source, referring to how strong the tie of the receiver of the video is to the sender, which reiterates the argument made by English et al. regarding ethos. Van Noort et al. differentiate between online 'friends' as being either 'strong ties' or 'weak ties'. Strong ties represent strong connections between users who provide emotional or substantive support to each other. Looser connections are relations between two users which most likely do not involve emotional support but do offer useful information to both parties (2012: 40). They demonstrate that sources who are perceived as credible increase the persuasiveness of a message (2012: 42). Additionally, receiving a viral campaign through a social tie rather than directly from an organisation influences the receivers' perception of the persuasive intent of the message. The credibility of a social tie extends to the campaign, causing a receiver to experience the persuasive intent as lower than it actually is (Phelps et al. 2004: 344, Van Noort et al 2012: 43). Van Noort et al. theorise that if maintaining social connections is one of the most important uses of SNS, then this may be crucial to viral SNS content. It is also proposed that a strong tie between the sender and receiver of viral content through an SNS

positively affects the receiver's brand attitudes as well as campaign attitudes. Additionally, the receiver may perceive the content as being more relevant (2012: 42). When an SNS user views content through someone they have strong ties to, they perceive the persuasive intent to be lower than it actually is. This is positive, as it convinces the viewer of the contents credibility.

Andreas M. Kaplan and Michael Haenlein refer to finding the right people to spread the message as the first critical element in creating a "viral marketing epidemic". "Consistent with classical laws of concentration, 20% of messengers can be expected to carry 80% of the load; it is, therefore, especially crucial to select wisely the initial hosts for the epidemic (2011: 256). There are two approaches to strategic targeting which are relevant to this research. The first is to formulate a marketing message which is relevant to a particular audience, as viewers within that segment are not only more likely to be persuaded by the message, but also to share it with others (Harvey et al. 2011: 369). As Dobele et al. demonstrate, there is an increased chance of a message spreading through a specifically targeted segment as similar individuals are more likely to interact online (2005: 144). Similarly, it is individual viewers themselves who apply specific targeting, as when they forward a message to people in their network, they are likely to know whom would be interested in the particular content (Dobele et al. 2005: 144). Additionally, it is key for viral videos to be spread by media which are in turn followed by targeted segments of individuals. The second approach entails targeting influential individuals who are likely to spread viral content most broadly (Aral and Walker 2011: 1624). Robert T. Wheeler (2009) researched celebrity endorsement in the non-profit sector, concluding that "a celebrity who is closely connected to a non-profit organization through experience and proper fit will generate greater source credibility than will a comparable celebrity or a connected average person in an ad for that organization.". Additionally, this credibility will have a direct effect on the intention of individual to donate both their time and money (Wheeler 2009: 101).

2.3. Western Humanitarianism

So where does Western humanitarianism stem from? Thomas L. Haskell (1985) researches the relationship between capitalism and humanitarianism. He highlights the late 18th century as an important time for these concepts as it was then that "Western Europe, England and North

America” (355) became involved in networks of exchange with other distant countries, creating “new habits of casual attribution that set the stage for humanitarianism.” (1985: 348). Fuyuki Kurasawa demonstrates that the origins of Western humanitarianism is twofold. Centred around the idea of unifying humankind, Western humanitarianism was “constructed around norms of liberal humanism whereby war and other disasters befalling humanity could only be overcome by transcending civilizational, national, ethno-racial, religious, and other types of collective markers of difference dividing human beings from each other.” (2013: 202). On the other hand, Kurasawa demonstrates that the European founders of humanitarianism believed that humanism is based on a “unique articulation of the Christian notion of charity and the Enlightenment ideal of human teleology”, meaning that it could only have stemmed from Western civilisation as this “embodied humankind’s highest cultural achievements and its most advanced stage of development.” (2013: 202). The current worldview of Euro-American humanitarian movements is still heavily influenced by these beliefs and supports “geographically, racially or ethno-culturally grounded models of a hierarchical scale of civilizations” (Kurasawa 2013: 202).

Birgitta Höijer (2004) states that humanitarian aid agencies are playing an increasingly important role in times of global crises and that people in “the West” are getting more involved with these NGOs. “The media expose pictures of distant victims of civil wars, genocide, massacres and other violence against civil populations, and play a basic role in giving publicity to human suffering. The audience is expected to respond as good citizens with compassion and rational commitment.” (2004: 513). This notion establishes the context within which humanitarian videos are placed, influencing the perception of Western affluent audiences of this content. According to Höijer, “questions about media-reported suffering and misery, such as if and how they move us as audience” have up until that moment received very little academic attention. She states that “there are many questions that we need to address with systematic empirical research”, a standpoint which, with the recent explosive growth of online humanitarian campaigns, can still be deemed relevant today. Kurasawa discusses the troubling heritage left behind by contemporary humanitarianism, which has created generalised roles for different societies in the Western world. Unintentional traces of this “remain visible in the manner in which most North Atlantic humanitarian NGOs unreflexively enable the reproduction of symbolic and material asymmetries between Western

(and most often, white) rescuers and non-Western (and most often, racialized) victims of emergencies and crises in which they intervene.” (Kurasawa 2013: 202)

3. The ins and outs of humanitarian campaigns

3.1. Online Activists Unite!

The way a social movement shapes its network and image cannot always be left up to fate but should be carefully orchestrated, as Richard D. Waters and Paul M. Jones (2011) discuss. They argue that videos form a very effective tool through which an organisation can build its brand as “the three V’s of communication—verbal, vocal, and visual—are brought together in the video form so that an audience is impacted on multiple communication fronts.” (Waters and Jones 2011: 249). They demonstrate that a medium such as YouTube holds great potential for non-profit organisations as this allows them to spread one-way messages or engage in conversations with a range of stakeholders, arguing that “reviews of nonprofit campaigns indicate that using YouTube videos in communication campaigns is exponentially increasing as the viral marketing trend continues to be a hot trend in organizational communication” (2011: 253). Waters and Jones list three rules which they believe to be fundamental to creating effective, powerful videos which strengthen the identity of an organisation. First of all, videos must tell a story. This does not mean that they must tell “fictional anecdotes”, but rather that they must have a “clear beginning that introduces a problem or situation, a middle that builds up to a climactic scene, and a conclusion that wraps everything up for the situation discussed as well as any individuals or characters featured in the video.” (2011: 261). This claim is supported by Pace’s findings, who argues that audiences only consider a story a story when it repeats “universal ideas and truths with no variations. Any change would prevent the story from being considered a story.” (2008: 219). Secondly, vital for online communication is that videos must be brief. This means audiences are more likely to pay attention and view the entire video. (2011: 262). Last but not least, a rule which Waters and Jones say organisations often overlook as they are keen to include as much information as possible in a video. It is crucial to keep a video “simple and narrowly

focused”, as “keeping the focus on one situation, one success story, or one individual or group helps keep the viewers’ attention (...).” (2011: 262). These are crucial characteristics which provide a structure within which to analyse the case study videos.

Angela Dobele, David Toleman and Michael Beverland describe new communication technologies as enabling users to create positive or negative ‘buzz’ about something (2005). For instance, the introduction of SMS technology allowed consumers to text their friends halfway through a movie to share their opinion about it. “The word is then transmitted quickly around a wide network of peers and extended on to a wider audience via online chat groups.” The result of this can be hugely influential on the success of the movie (Dobele et al. 2005: 144). And whilst with the arrival of smartphones SMS technology might be considered somewhat outdated, this concept of creating ‘buzz’ using communication or networking technologies is still very much, if not more so, relevant.

Picking apart the viral marketing process, Maura Bampo, Michael T. Ewing, Dineli R. Mather, David Stewart and Mark Wallace (2008) describe ‘buzz’ as having an almost “ephemeral connotation” and cite Dobele et al (2005), agreeing with their view of ‘buzz’ being an “outcome or consequence of viral marketing” (2008: 273). They break down the viral process into three parts: “the social structure of the digital network through which the message is propagated, the behavioral characteristics of its members that facilitate the propagation of the message, and a seeding strategy that initiates the process.” (2008: 274).

3.2. Inclusion, Affection and Control

Dobele et al. (2007) argue that besides consumption, forwarding behaviour is the main goal of viral marketing (302) and “that viral marketing campaigns can result in peer-to-peer recommendations, thereby increasing the credibility of the message.” (292). Publicly endorsing an online advertisement, or viral video as in this case, allows people to express their self-concept by associating it with the symbolic value of the message. When the Kony 2012 video was at the heights of its viral success, I found it to be constantly popping up on SNS and news websites. Despite it being shared by viewers, I doubt that these people were actually undertaking action to support the cause. This raises the speculation that though Invisible Children was raising a lot of awareness for the cause, this does not necessarily mean that their viral success guaranteed the desired outcome for the campaign. This notion further

supports the conclusion drawn by Taylor et al., that consumers are more likely to share content which they consider to be consistent with their self-concept. This can be linked to Ho and Dempsey's theory (2008) on motivations to forwarding online content. They discuss motivators of sharing behaviour, using the FIRO framework as proposed by William Schutz to study "the various motivations that potentially underlie the forwarding of online content." (2008: 1001). Ho and Dempsey explain that Schutz hypothesised that people use interpersonal communication to "express one or more of three interpersonal needs: inclusion (need to be part of a group/need for attention), affection (show appreciation and concern for others), and control (need to exert power in one's social environment)." (2008: 1001).

This theory by Ho and Dempsey plays an important role in this thesis as it moves beyond the frequently explored theories on emotional appeal by focusing on the personal needs of the audience. Ho and Dempsey postulate that each of the three previously mentioned motivators positively affect the forwarding of online content. From their findings the researchers conclude that two of these three factors are "significant predictors" of forwarding behaviour, namely inclusion and affection. They also find that though "the motivation of the need to belong did not significantly influence the forwarding of online content", this does not necessarily mean that the internet is not used by consumers as a way of meeting this need. Stating that "individuals are able to connect with others on the Internet using different forms of e-communication such as Usenet groups and social networking sites such as Facebook", Ho and Dempsey recognise that social networking sites may potentially provide users with better opportunities to fulfil this need to belong as opposed to the forwarding of online content via email as studied in their research. This exploration of social media as being the ideal seeding ground for humanitarian viral content has rarely been explored in this field, a gap which I aim to draw attention to.

3.3. Self-relevant messages and mobilisation

Within their research, Ho and Dempsey recognise individuation and altruism as having particularly positive relations to the forwarding of online content (2010: 1004). They conclude that SNS users are "not only motivated to forward information to others in his or her social network as a way of standing out from the crowd, but also as a way of helping others." Though their research does not focus on campaigns by non-profit organisations, the findings

are relevant as they demonstrate that both self-presentation and altruism are important motivators in sharing viral video campaigns. The findings by David G. Taylor, David Strutton and Kenneth Thompson reiterate this, as they argue that “when consumers perceive an online advertisement as consistent with their self-concept, they are more likely to share that message with others.” (2012: 23). In this sense, individuals may share a humanitarian viral video to show themselves as social activists or as being aware of ongoing social issues. Taylor et al. argue that individuals are more likely to engage in word of mouth marketing, such as the sharing of viral videos, about self-relevant than utilitarian products. “That is, the social process of sharing an online advertising message shapes and helps express consumers’ sense of self, such that it influences which messages consumers are most likely to share with others through eWOM.” (Taylor et al. 2012: 23). Taylor et al. state that consumers use possessions, products and brands to reinforce a sense of self and express self-identities (2012: 14). Exploring the concept of self, Erving Goffman (1959) describes individuals as creating and wearing a mask which “represents the conception we have formed of ourselves - the role we are striving to live up to - this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be.” (1959: 48). Consequently, Goffman argues that we live our lives as though part of a performance, referring “to all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers.” (1959: 49). Linking this to Taylor et al.’s theory of the social process of sharing online advertisements, it could be argued that users share certain content on SNS so as to contribute to the construction of an online identity. This suggests that, as Taylor et al. discuss, people do not need to consume a product or brand to convey its meaning as “sharing an electronic brand - or product-related message - consumers may shift inherent meanings from the brand or product to their self-concepts.” (2012: 14).

Anatoliy Gruzd and Barry Wellman speak of a “transition from social influence to networked influence.” (2014: 1255). They describe how influence is no longer synonymous to one person being influenced by one-to-one or by mass communication. Rather, “network size, strong ties, mutual awareness, socially similar (homophilous) network members, geographical and social proximity, clusters of ties, bridges across clusters, and how people navigate among clusters in their complex networks” (2014: 1255) play an important role in exercising influence in our networked society. Similarly, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)

communication is an important part of this networked influence. David G. Taylor, David Strutton and Kenneth Thompson discuss self-enhancement as a motivator for sharing online content, arguing that engaging in eWOM on a SNS means that the message a user shares also becomes visible to a wider audience. There is no longer just one receiver and the sender may not always have full control over who the message is received by. “A Facebook profile or Twitter stream, for example, is publicly visible to anyone with an Internet connection.” (Taylor et. al. 2012: 15). To participate on SNS users have to create a personal profile, which is a crucial element to consider as these profiles lay the groundworks for the way in which users present themselves in a social media environment. Mirca Madianou describes profiles as the loci of SNS interactions, which record “interactions between the profile owner and their other publicly articulated contacts. These interactions - over which the profile owner does not have complete control – then contribute to the user’s online self-presentation (Madianou 2013: 254).

4. Persuasive potential

I have demonstrated that the main persuasive elements for sharing behaviour of humanitarian video campaigns on SNS can be divided into three categories. These are source or targeting, logical and emotional appeal. I will focus on these three concepts and discuss their presence in the case study videos so as to reveal the crucial role these elements play in the viral success of humanitarian videos.

4.1. Sources and targeting as the foundation of virality

SNS’ social connections amongst members is one of its main characteristics. “Social connection (e.g. to keep in touch with existing friends, maintaining relationships with people you may not get to see very often, finding out what friends are doing) is one of the most important motivations for time spent on SNS” (Van Noort et al. 2012: 40). An online social network created by individuals can also be considered social capital (Camarera and José 2011: 2294). Van Noort et al. argue that members of online social networks are more likely to have a positive attitude towards a campaign when it is received from a strong social connection. This

also makes them more likely to forward it (2012: 48). As discussed earlier, the authors differentiate between strong and weak ties. As SNSs afford the maintenance of both types of connections, viral content is likely to be received by SNS members from both loose and strong ties. The relational aspect of this social capital influences the forwarding of viral messages, thus playing a key role in the dynamics of viral marketing (Camarero and San José 2011: 2298). The influence of tie strength is explained by Van Noort et al., who argue that strong ties are perceived as more credible than weak ties. For instance, the persuasive intent of the Kony 2012 video is to urge viewers to financially support the organisation behind it. Receiving the video from a credible source will lead the audience to focus on the positive outcome promised by the organisation rather than the fact that it will cost the viewer money to support them. However, while this credibility may help capture the attention of the receiver, it does not necessarily influence their actions at later stages (De Bruyn and Lilien 2008: 160).

Upon receiving or viewing a video, the decision on whether or not to further spread it is heavily influenced by various other factors. Another key element which is associated with forwarding behaviour is targeting. The Kony 2012 campaign video owes much of its exposure and credibility to endorsement by influential people. Invisible Children makes a bold move by taking a very direct approach by calling upon celebrities to support and help spread their message.

“We are targeting 20 culture makers and 12 policy makers to use their power for good. (...) Celebrities, athletes and billionaires have a loud voice, and what they talk about spreads instantly. (...) Then, we’re going after culture makers. The ones that have the authority to see Kony captured.” (Invisible Children 2012).

The organisation further aimed to maximise the persuasive potential of social media by allowing visitors to the Kony 2012 website to click on the images of these influential people, prompting a pre-written message on Twitter either at the person of choice or tagging them in the message. This meant that these visitors were able to in turn call upon prominent figures whose support they believe could be extremely valuable to the cause. These forms of appeal proved to be quite successful, causing the likes of Oprah Winfrey and Justin Bieber to be amongst the first to publicly advocate the cause, instantly spreading it amongst their millions

of followers. They set an example which was quickly followed by numerous other influential people which suggests that in the eyes of the audience the video gained substantial credibility from this celebrity endorsement. Aral and Walker argue that celebrity endorsement is an effective way of spreading video content to a large audience (2011: 1624), which the Norwegian Stop Bryllupet campaign benefited from. Though this campaign did not directly approach influential individuals, it was promoted on the Facebook page of a Hollywood actor, reaching an audience of over 17 million people.

It is apparent that source and targeting are important aspects for viral campaigns with significant influence on forwarding behaviour. This also relates to the notion of online identities and self-concept. As mentioned before, users may attempt to maintain control over their online identity by sharing particular content so as to present themselves in a certain way. Taylor et al. describe this phenomenon as self-enhancement and argues that it mediates the “entertainment value” of an online message. This entertainment value “reflects the extent to which an online advertisement provides pleasure, diversion, or amusement to consumers influences the likelihood that the message will be shared (Taylor et al. 2012: 17). The importance of this entertainment value is clearly recognisable in the three case study videos. Each of these videos employs techniques which do not necessarily contribute to the message, but which have been designed to increase the entertainment value. Evgeny Morozov (2009) discusses the tension between digital and real-life participation in activist campaigns, arguing that the “ideal case here is when one's participation in digital activism doesn't subtract from — and instead enhances — one's eagerness to participate in real-life campaigns.”. He describes a portion of the activist population as “slacktivists”: people who are happy to support a cause online but are hesitant to engage in activities which may get them in trouble with authorities. The structures of SNS such as Facebook and Twitter are based on a concept of liking, sharing and commenting on content shared by individuals and organisations. Though this creates an ideal situation for sharing content related to a humanitarian cause, it is important to look at this critically and question what viral success actually means for these causes. Kony 2012 is a good example of this, as they appealed at viewers to undertake action in ‘real life’ and set themselves the target of having Joseph Kony captured by the end of 2012. However, now that the buzz around the Kony 2012 video has died down and 2012 is long behind us, it appears that neither of these goals were actually reached.

4.2. Logical appeal

Pace (2008: 219) speaks of videos which show narrative renditions of facts and events as operating on a converse level. This is what English et al. describe as ‘logical appeal’, used by the narrator to demonstrate his or her standpoint on the matter and to convince the viewer of this standpoint. The Kony 2012 campaign relies heavily on this, as the video appears to present the viewer with factual information on the current situation in Uganda through informative graphics and visuals. However, when observed closely, it becomes apparent that there is very little statistical information to support the claims that are made. One of the very few statistics which is provided is that over 30,000 children have been abducted by the LRA. Other than this, most numbers are generalised. For instance, Russell speaks of “hundreds of thousands” of people all over the world who support this cause, never actually referencing what this results in. As if to solve this issue, the video shows authoritative figures who work for the International Criminal Court in The Hague and who reiterate the urgency behind the capture of Joseph Kony.

The MILES Chile campaign also operates on a converse level. It presents the viewers with factual information, for instance informing them that even when a pregnancy is a result of rape, extremely dangerous to the health of the mother or one of many other options, abortions in Chile are illegal except when they occur ‘accidentally’. This forces women who are in need of an abortion to put their own lives at risk, a fact which is clearly demonstrated in this campaign. By making these videos appear as though they are home-made, the campaign refers to real life occurrences of ‘accidental’ abortions being made to happen on purpose. The videos each call for social and legal change and have two clear themes which convey the meaning of the story: women’s rights and empowerment. The end of the video show a clear call for action: “In Chile an accidental abortion is the only kind of abortion that is not considered a crime. The Chilean congress is still discussing whether it should be legal or not. Support the law and end the discussion.”

Mervi Pantti studies the use of “disaster appeal videos” on YouTube as a form of citizen communication that occurs in the wake of a disaster (2015: 1). According to Pantti, NGO’s have “increasingly adapted new methods to quell public distrust and the questioning of the authenticity and altruism of humanitarian communication”. This has lead to humanitarian organisations refraining from taking a stance, but rather assuming a role as

moral educator (2015: 4). In the modern consumption-driven Western world, it would appear that there is very little motivation for people to spend time on humanitarian video content, as there are no real tangible benefits. Plan International form a good example of this, their campaign refrains from operating on a converse level but relies heavily on the emotional appeal of their blog and video. The only text that is shown says that “Today, Thea (12) is going to marry Geir (37)” (Plan International 2014). The video concludes by stating that “Every day, 39.000 underage girls are forced into marriage”, appealing at viewers to “support our fight against forced child marriage” (Plan International 2014).

4.3. Emotional appeal

In fast-paced Western societies, people use social media as a means of connecting with other people (Van Noort et al. 2012: 42). During this time online they are exposed to a large amount of content, which is where humanitarian organisations can grasp users’ attention and aim to appeal to viewers’ altruistic and egoistic motives for engaging with humanitarian causes (Veludo-de-Oliveira et al. 2015: 390, Ho and Dempsey 2010: 1002). One way of doing this is by appealing to viewers on an emotional level. Kurasawa argues that “Over the course of the last century [...] the Euro-American humanitarian movement has employed visual representation as an essential instrument to acquire, retain, and expand its audiences” as it found images to fuel “the moral and emotional imagination.” (2013: 207). Both the Kony 2012 campaign and the Abortion Tutorials campaign appeal to their viewers’ emotions by giving an identity to what would otherwise be a faceless problem, confronting the audience with what is shown as being the stark reality and inviting them to picture themselves in the shoes of the victims. The Kony 2012 video uses footage of conversations with children who were abducted by Joseph Kony’s organisation LRA and managed to escape, whereas the Abortion Tutorial videos show young, relatable women. According to Kurasawa, this allows audiences to “engage in processes of phenomenological reconstruction of the lived experiences of the portrayed victims of these crises, or even of sentimental identification with the latter.” (2013: 207).

The Stopp Bryllupet campaign uses a somewhat different approach, playing with context to grasp the viewers attention. Posting on the charities website, the national director of Plan International, Olaf Thommessen, says that the organisation wanted to show how horrible

the practice of forced child marriage is by putting it in a context that is familiar and normally associated with love, happiness and hope for the future. (Russell: 2014). As Thommessen points out, a lot of the emotional appeal of this campaign comes from placing a practice which is foreign to this particular audience into a context which is familiar to them. This campaign relies strongly on the story being told in combination with the universal values and cultural truths of the setting it is being placed in. Additionally, the blog and video give a relatable identity to an otherwise mostly anonymous issue. In a Western country such as Norway practices such as child marriage are considered part of the past and do not fit in with the cultural values. By placing something as foreign and shocking as a young girl being forced to marry a much older man in a culturally familiar setting, this story shows a shocking truth.

4.4. Storytelling

Pace argued that advertisements contain narratives as a way of appealing to their audience (2008: 216) by telling a story. Western cultures historically show a visual construction of “narratives of primitivism and civilization” which depict the Western “self” as civilised and the non-Western “other” as not only primitive but also in need of aid (Brough 2012: 177). This ‘myth’ is described by Pace as a cultural truth and universal value (2008: 219) and is an important part of the message humanitarian organisations aim to send. As mentioned before, Pace describes advertisements as often containing a problem which is finally solved by the product or brand (2008: 215). In the Kony 2012 video this “self” role is not just played by Invisible Children, but most importantly by the viewer. The video - which creates a setting in which viewers are invited to place themselves in a ‘saviour role’ - adds to the construction of the identity of the ‘Western donor’ (Brough 2012: 179). The video carries a very serious tone throughout, even going so far as to create an accusatory feeling. There is a strong build-up of emotion: the situation in Uganda is shown as being desperate, while efforts to improve this in other parts of the world are depicted as powerful and full of potential. As is argued for by Waters and Jones and Pace, the video tells a story with a clear beginning and body but with an open end. It is up to the viewer to continue spreading the story and to fight for the cause, bringing it to what will hopefully be a happy ending.

The Abortion Tutorial videos tell a confrontational story, one that is deeply embedded in Chile's cultural values and truths. The organisation behind this campaign, MILES Chile, lets the myth of women's rights and the freedom to make your own choices tell a story, one that stands in contrast with reality. The tutorials show women who are seemingly in control and well aware of what they are doing, and by doing so the campaign is creating the idea that pregnant women in Chile have a choice. This creates a new sense of reality and discovering the reality behind what this choice entails is what makes the story behind this campaign a powerful one. The campaign draws on a tutorial format of which many examples can be found on YouTube, meaning viewers may already be familiar with this. The campaign consists of three tutorials showing women how to abort a pregnancy. This play on common YouTube tutorials was likely created to cause controversy, feeding into an already ongoing debate on women's rights. Sticking to the common style of many YouTube tutorials, all three videos are created to look homemade. The structure is a simple one, a story is told in such a way that no further explanation is needed. The end is not shown, as the part where the women have an 'accidental abortion' on purpose is blacked out. The audio suggests what is happening, so the audience can fill in the blanks. This speaks strongly to the viewers' imagination and emotions.

Brough argues that campaigns like this and "factors including neoliberal consumer culture, the professionalisation of humanitarian communications and Web 2.0 social networking are shaping new forms of humanitarian visual culture and, to varying degrees, new content." (2012: 176). She looks at humanitarianism as something which is "consumed" by Western societies, demonstrating that through this consumption the power of humanitarian public opinion may be growing. This "fair vanity" is leading to a shift from realist to postmodern visuals within humanitarian culture, and Brough highlights the importance of acknowledging that "the pop-culturizing of humanitarianism and its open consumption may further subject the sector to market pressures and steer much-needed resources toward media production (rather than beneficiaries) (...)." (2012: 188).

Norwegian campaign 'Stopp Bryllupet' forms a good example of a campaign which was designed mostly for this "consumption". The campaign was kick-started with the release of the blog which detailed how young Thea was experiencing the weeks coming up to her wedding. Thea wrote about what kind of hairstyle she would be getting and her dress, but also

about her feelings on her upcoming marriage. She expressed her curiosity towards sex, wondering if she would have to sleep with the much older Geir. The blog quickly became a hot topic in Norway, and was revealed to be part of a campaign launched by Plan International. Thea and Geir's wedding was meant to take place on October 11th, which coincides with the UN's International Day of the Girl Child (Russell: 2014). On October 12th a short video was released showing what happened on this day. The main intent of the video is to draw attention to forced child marriage and it does this by telling a story which aims to make the topic a point of discussion, so as to provoke interest and action. Placing this otherwise 'foreign' occurrence in surroundings familiar to a Western audience is an interesting strategy. Kurasawa describes this as a "sentimentalization of suffering" (2013: 202) which he argues "tends to disregard the significance of politically and socially thick practices of construction of global solidarity." (203). In accordance, Alex de Waal (2008) argues that "The market for emergency relief is set by those who pay the bills, not those who eat the food, and donors wish to see their brand names on television when journalists arrive to cover the disaster." (2008: 52). As a result of this the quality of humanitarian aid has gone down as more funds are being invested in advertising. De Waal describes low-profile work using local staff in areas in need of aid as a best practice, but argues that "this doesn't impress foreign donors and the media, which makes it harder to obtain funds." (52).

5. Conclusion

Just like any company, organisation or individual creating online video content, humanitarian organisations are faced with the challenge of being noticed amongst the massive clutter and noise of online content. In order for a video to attain viral success and gain international attention, there are several factors and conditions the content should adhere to. I have identified several persuasive elements which are employed by successful humanitarian campaigns in order to stimulate forwarding behaviour, which can be briefly summarised as source and/or targeting, content, such as emotional and logical appeal, and behaviour of individuals and social movements on social media. Videos which achieve viral success also operate on three levels: they integrate universal and cultural values, apply a narrative interpretation of facts and events and tell a story. Additionally they account for several forms

of coherence, which aim to increase understanding of the real intent and meaning of the videos and help achieve the desired effect of the video.

Content-wise viral videos appeal onto their viewers' emotions. It is argued that social movements in the internet age are triggered by emotions and supported and spread by people who want to identify with others. Cyberspace offers people the possibility of occupying urban spaces, allowing them to create buzz (Dobele et al. 2005) and form a place where like-minded people can unite (Castells 2012). This in turn plays into the theory that source is crucial; a video which is passed on through a personal connection or like-minded people is often viewed as being more credible and increases the chance of forwarding behaviour (Van Noort et al. 2012, English et al. 2011). Furthermore, the characteristics of SNS mediate the engagement of users with online videos. SNSs can play an important role as a mobilising agent in social and political movements, structurally changing how individuals are informed and motivated to participate. This motivation of engagement with online social and political movements is in part influenced by a notion of self-enhancement, with users attempting to control and shape their online identity through engagement with certain content.

Though both videos produced by commercial and humanitarian organisations may be shared by SNS users for reasons related to for instance online identity building, humanitarian viral videos appeal strongly to a viewers sense of altruism and need to feel like they are 'helping' in some way or as a way of relieving feelings of guilt. Besides users being able to build an online identity on SNSs and using humanitarian content to contribute to this, these platforms prove a breeding ground for social movements and at the same time influence the form of engagement with these movements. The Kony 2012 campaign has shown that a digital medium can speak to and unite viewers from all over the world. Bernard Enjolras, Kari Steen-Johnsen and Dag Wollebæk argue that social networks are facilitators of political mobilisation. "Through ties of camaraderie, neighborliness, and family, social leaders are able to communicate their messages and engage people in civic and political action." (2012: 894). The mobilising agency afforded by SNS causes digital networks to play an increasingly important role in social and political mobilization, alongside traditional mobilising agencies (Enroljas et al. 2012: 894). The role, and in particular costs, of these traditional agencies will be made increasingly irrelevant as social media structurally "change how individuals are informed and motivated to participate and they constitute a new form of mobilizing agency

that neither simply reflects nor crowds out existing formalized and established structures” (Enroljas et al. 2012: 904). Enroljas et. al. argue that SNS must be considered as supplemental to established structures of mobilisation, not as either a simple reflection of or threat to them. Elaborating on potential of social media for humanitarian campaigns, Mark A. Drumbl (2012) suggests “Undoubtedly, activists and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) would do well to harness the power of contemporary social media.” (2012: 1). At the same time he argues that the content of the message itself is still very important, and he questions whether it is “sensible for international law and policy to be based upon stylized content deliberately airbrushed just to increase attention-worthiness?” (2012: 2). This is where he highlights a sensitive issue which is at the core of this debate. Humanitarianism has turned into something which can be ‘consumed’, particularly by affluent Western audiences. The way humanitarian content is perceived by Western audiences is largely shaped by the dominant hierarchical scale of civilisations in these cultures.

In closing, this research has shown that in order for viewers to consider sharing content they see online, they must feel emotionally connected to it, be convinced of its credibility and see it as relevant to their self-concept. This is what humanitarian organisations can really take advantage of, as they have an inherently emotional and moral message to share. To capture and keep the attention of their audience, humanitarian organisations must take a clear moral stance and communicate their message in a way that is both powerful and unique to the organisation. Creating successful viral content which appeals to the emotion and altruistic side of viewers will leave humanitarian organisations with an appeal viewers feel they cannot ignore.

6.1. Further research

I have demonstrated that though a lot of research has been carried out on viral video marketing for commercial organisation, there is a lack of knowledge on how this strategy can be employed by humanitarian causes. The aim of this research was to lay the groundworks for further studies so as to fill this knowledge gap. Several additional questions have arisen which remain unanswered and could thus be cause for future research, which would significantly add to this research. An important question which was touched upon but of which further exploration lay outside the scope of this research is what the influence is of viral video

content on the mobilisation of social movements. Does viral success actually help humanitarian organisations attain their goals? Additionally, it is important that moving forward the role of SNS in the mobilisation of social movements is further explored. It could also be interesting to study the online engagement of SNS users surrounding humanitarian video content. Analysing the nature of for instance their comments on YouTube videos or Facebook posts could give interesting insight into the audiences perception of this content, as well as perhaps their motivations to either forward it or engage in some form.

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