MA KCM, THESIS

Creative Virality 2.0:  
Can Word-Of-Mouth Marketing Strategies Create Valuable Art?

University: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen
MA Arts, Culture & Media

Art Subject: Arts Marketing

Year: 2013-2014

Student: Borislav Makariev, s1833367

E-mail: b.p.makariev@student.rug.nl

Telephone: 06 25 171 342
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract 4  
Introduction 5  
Methodology 9  

**CHAPTER 1: WORD OF MOUTH MARKETING & WORD OF MOUTH STRATEGIES 13**  
Traditional Marketing vs. Modern Marketing: A Historical Overview 13  
Word of Mouth (WOM) Marketing 15  
Viral Marketing 15  
Viral Marketing Strategies in the Art World 17  

**CHAPTER 2: SCHOOLS OF ART AND THE MEANING OF PERFORMANCE 21**  
Definitions of Art 21  
The Meaning of Performance 23  

**CHAPTER 3: THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING VALUABLE 26**  
Value in Marketing 26  
Value in Art 31  
Value in Functional Art 32  
Value in Procedural Art 34  
Historically Reflexive Value 35  
Historically Reflexive Functional & Historically Reflexive Procedural Value 35  
The Phenomenon of Art Infusion 37  

**CHAPTER 4: THE VALUE OF ART IN VIRAL MARKETING STRATEGIES 41**  
Performance in Viral Marketing Campaigns 41  
Viral Marketing Campaigns: The Functional Approach 44  
Viral Marketing Campaigns: The Procedural Approach 47
Abstract

This research will focus on uncovering whether performance art used by marketers in Word of Mouth viral strategies can still be considered valuable, both from the perspective of the art world and the consumers. In addition, special attention will be paid to the changes in the functioning of the art world, due to the existence of Web 2.0. In order to do so, five basic frameworks are created, each one reflecting a different schools of art- functionalism, proceduralism, historical reflexiveness and two resulting hybrid definitions, namely historically reflexive functionalism and historically reflexive proceduralism. In the end, the notions of art, business and marketing are combined in order to enrich one’s view on how dynamic, evolved and ever so changing all those fields are, as well as what the current interrelations between them are.
Introduction

We all know the famous saying: “A picture is worth a thousand words”. The phrase is originally attributed to newspaper editor Arthur Brisbane, who used it back in 1921 to express the idea that a complicated notion can be better depicted by a single image. If he were alive to say that sentence today, he probably would have said “A picture is worth a thousand facebook likes” instead. And it is true, in a time like ours, where communication is dominated by the power of the internet, social media websites, blogs and others alike, the value of visual art, such as pictures, films, and art performances seems to be determined more by the amount of attention they attract, rather than their capacity to generate meaningful experiences. However, in order to understand the implications of this shift from importance of meaning to importance of public appreciation, we first need to understand what art is.

Throughout time, many artists, academics, philosophers and sociologists have tried to define “art”, and yet the term still seems to be somewhat elusive. Despite the lack of overall agreement though, the concept of art is a powerful tool, which is why, it is no surprise that many other fields have incorporated art in their functions. One of those fields is business and more specifically, marketing.

Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian philosopher, once said “Advertising is the greatest art form of the 20th century” (1976). Even though, marketing itself has not officially been associated with art, in the past few decades of ever so growing fierce competition for consumer attention and technological advancements, marketers have had to become more and more creative with their strategies to the point where one can say that constructing a successful marketing strategy has become a demonstration of craft in itself and as our research will showcase later, demonstrating a craft is a crucial part of art creation (Davies, 1991). Traditional marketing revolves simply around “analysing, organising, planning, and controlling of the firm’s customer-impinging resources, policies, and activities with a view to satisfying the needs and wants of chosen customer groups at a profit” (Kotler, 1967, p.9). Nearly 40 years later, Kotler provides yet another definition of marketing, in which he states that marketing is about “the art and science of choosing markets and getting, keeping and growing customers through creating, delivering and communicating superior customer value” (Kotler, 2006, p.6). In comparison to his old definition, the presence of two words seems to stick out, namely “art” and “value”. Could it be that nowadays creating a marketing strategy has indeed become art in itself?

The concept of marketing is a notion that is constantly evolving so naturally many approaches and definitions have been created throughout the years. However, as mentioned previously, the advancements in technology have been a main factor in the evolvement of marketing. Technology has played a great role in giving birth to various new communication channels, which in turn have allowed for the creation of new and innovative marketing strategies between marketers and consumers. Trusov, Bucklin & Powels elaborate on one of the most prominent of such developments- “Word-Of-Mouth Marketing”. As a concept, Word of Mouth has existed for hundreds, if not thousands of years, way before we were even familiar with the concept of marketing. However, nowadays our technology has allowed us to merge the two concepts- Word of Mouth and
Marketing, into one. This particular kind of marketing includes the sub-categories Viral Marketing (creating messages to be passed on by each receiver), Referral Programs (creating tools that enable satisfied customers to pass on information to family and friends in particular) and Community Marketing (creating tools for marketing to niche communities that share similar interests). (Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels, 2008). All these branches of marketing have found new ways to thrive due to the high advancements in technology and communication media, which we have witnessed in the past decade. In the midst of this technological overflow stand the potential consumers- active users or Internet applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube etc., all commonly known as Web 2.0.

Web 2.0 is a term, comprising technologies and applications, which all have in common that they integrate users into the value chain of organizations and help people to network (O’Reilly, 2005; Bauer et al., 2007; Hass et al, 2008). In this world of social networks, the consumer is more important than ever. He has been transformed from a passive observer at the end of a marketing strategy to an active co-producer, or a “prosumer” (Hausmann, 2012).

So where does art come into this intense scheme of marketing and communication? Whilst the business domain has been dominated by Word of Mouth marketing for years, the ever so experimental nature of the art world has been affected by it as well. A number of art organizations have also taken on using their visitors’ networks for positive reinforcements. However, what’s more, a bridge between the two fields- business and art, has been enhanced. This bridge is known as “art infusion”, or in other words: the influence that the presence of art has on consumer perception evaluations of products with which it is associated (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008). Sometimes, art is even created specifically for the purpose of marketing a product (Lewis, 1996). Thus, art infusion is achieved, when an artwork is used to enhance the marketing strategy of a company. Interestingly, there isn’t much research on how visual and performance art in particular are employed in marketing. Most of the research has been in the domain of music instead (Gorn, 1982; Alpert & Alpert, 1990). It doesn’t end here though. In their search for originality, many marketers have proclaimed themselves artists as they create new marketing offerings in the shape of viral films, images, music, performances and other alike, purely for the purpose of advertising and promotion. These offerings are then spread over the Internet by using the potential consumers’ online social networks. The examples are endless. In 2005, the Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis launched an art infused online campaign, which presented existing works of art “updated” with a contemporary element. The most popular example of the campaign was the new version of Vermeer’s “Girl With The Pearl Earring” (Figure 1.), who was given a piercing. Furthermore, a whole website was designed, just for that particular marketing plan. In 2014, a promotional campaign for the release of the video game “Watch Dogs”1 was launched, which consisted of scripted “hidden” theatre acts in public places. A certain scene would then occur, with the viewers believing that it is real and not aware of the fact that they are actually participating in it. This phenomenon is commonly known as “invisible theatre”- a concept originally brought forward by Augusto Boal in his publication “Theatre of the Oppressed” (1979).

---

1 Toggle Crouch (2014, May 16) Watch Dogs in Real Life Street Hack [video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnJWJn54hqY
According to him, invisible theatre is a type of theatrical performance, in which a certain event (a scene, a dance, a song etc.) is planned, scripted and rehearsed, but does not allow the audience to know it is happening. It often happens in unexpected public places (e.g. on the street, in a shop, in a restaurant etc.) and the actors usually hide the fact that it is a performance, thus leading the unsuspecting audience to believe that what they are witnessing is authentic. So how does something like that become viral? The answer is simple- the event is secretly filmed by hidden cameras and then put on the Internet, where social networks carry it and popularize it all around the world. Such was the case with the promotional strategy for the film “Carrie”. Many similar examples exist: The T-Mobile Dance, the TV channel TNT’s Dramatic Surprise and others.

Performances are not the only forms of art used in viral marketing though. A different type of example can be found in the usage of graffiti. In the past graffiti have been considered to be vandalism, but nowadays many people consider them to be a modern form of art (Hughes, 2009). Marketers have taken upon that trend and found a way to use them to send unconventional messages to their consumers. Figure 2 on the following page showcases such an example.

This thesis however, will only focus on performances and “hidden theatre” as tools for viral marketing. Looking at the examples pointed out above, one can’t help but wonder- if those viral paintings, films, acts and performance events are used for commercial purposes only, are they still actually art? And if yes, then is the value of such an artwork determined by the amount of views it receives on the Internet? Has virality actually changed the meaning of art as we know it?

This thesis however, will only focus on performances and “hidden theatre” as tools for viral marketing. Looking at the examples pointed out above, one can’t help but wonder- if those viral paintings, films, acts and performance events are used for commercial purposes only, are they still actually art? And if yes, then is the value of such an artwork determined by the amount of views it receives on the Internet? Has virality actually changed the meaning of art as we know it?

---

Even though the usage of art in traditional marketing is a theme that has been explored in academics for years (e.g. Hausmann, 2012; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008; Alpert & Alpert, 1990), information on the usage of art in Word of Mouth marketing and all the questions it raises seems to be lacking. This research will focus precisely on filling that gap by investigating popular Word of Mouth marketing strategies, using performance art and imagery in particular and relating them to art theory in order to answer the following research question and sub-questions:

**Can Word of Mouth marketing strategies create valuable art products?**
Methodology

In order to get insight into the research question, this study will be using existing literature by various pioneers in the fields of art theory, performance theory and marketing theory. In order to demonstrate, test and combine the provided concepts and notions, two central cases will be used, namely: a viral marketing campaign for the horror movie “Carrie” (2013) and a viral marketing campaign by “Coca Cola”. Furthermore, various additional examples of marketing strategies will be mentioned in the course of analyzing, in order to complement specific points.

The study is comprised of four chapters, each of which will provide insight into different art and marketing theories and will thus, through analysis of the theories in relation to the cases, answer specific sub-questions, which will later allow for the main research question to be answered. Briefly, Chapter 1 will concentrate on marketing theory, with a focus on explaining the evolution of viral marketing strategies from traditional marketing. Chapter 2, on the other hand, will investigate Art and Performance theory, with the specific context of understanding what constitutes a piece of art according to the different points of view one can take. Chapter 3 will look into the concept of value creation both from a marketing perspective and the different art school perspectives. This will be done with the purpose of creating an overall framework, incorporating information and criteria from all three chapters so far. Lastly, in chapter 4, the created framework will be used and applied to the two main cases- “Carrie” and “Coca Cola”, in order to answer whether viral marketing campaigns can create valuable art. More detailed information about the structure of each of the chapters follows below. In addition, suggestions and a set up for empirical research will be provided at the end of the research.

1. What is Word of Mouth marketing and what strategies does it employ?

Word of Mouth marketing is part of modern marketing. Before understanding Word of Mouth marketing itself, we first need to look at the overall concept of modern marketing and compare it to traditional marketing. This will be done by providing a historical and chronological overview of marketing’s development- from definitions of traditional marketing by Kotler (1967) and Bernt Schmitt (1991), who provides a detailed comparison between traditional and modern marketing, to definitions by more contemporary academics, namely Grundey, 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2004 and Tyan & McKechnie (2009). After explaining how modern marketing as a whole works, special attention will be paid to Word of Mouth marketing, from its creation as a concept in 1967 by J. Arnd, to its modern definitions sub-divisions – viral, community and referral, as defined by Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels (2008).

To further inquire into how Internet virality works and how a viral strategy could be designed, we look at the 6 Principles of Viral Marketing (Wilson, 2000) and the significance of Web 2.0 as described by O’Reily’s (2005), Burgess (2008), Hass B, Walsh G & Kilian T (2008) and Blackmore (1999).

In order to lead into discussions about art, we will look at how marketing has already used art in the past, by providing various examples e.g. Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis and
Bavarian State Opera in Munich. The two main cases, used in the later analysis of this research will be introduced in detail, namely the campaign for the horror film “Carrie” and a campaign by “Coca Cola”, both of which are successful representative of viral marketing. In addition, Pine & Gilmore’s realms of an Art experience will be explored and criticized in order for a better understanding of the connection between experience, art and marketing.

2. According to the schools of art indicated previously, what is performance art how is it created, communicated, experienced and perceived?

Before relating art theory to marketing theory, we need to look at art on its own. In his publication from 1991 Definitions of Art Stephen Davies divides art theories in two main schools, namely functional and procedural (also known as institutional), each of which is respectively supported by a number of academics and theoreticians in the field. The functional view, also known as the aesthetic view, simply proclaims that the function of art is to provide a certain kind of experience in itself, i.e. its purpose is providing an aesthetic experience. (Beardsley, 1958). Alternatively, the institutional school teaches that something can only be considered art if it is in the context of art world institutions, or in other words “a work of art in the classificatory sense is 1) an artefact 2) upon which some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the art world) has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation” (Dickie, 1971, p. 101). Furthermore, Davies speaks of the importance of historical reflexivity. Something is an artwork only in the event that it stands in the appropriate relation to its artistic forbearers (Davies, 1991). Thus, according to the historically reflexive view, “a work of art is a thing intended for regard-as-a-work-of-art: regard in any of the ways works of art existing prior to it have been correctly regarded” (Levinson, 1979, p.234), or more simply put- an object is considered art only if it has certain relations to existing objects that have already been labelled as art. In order to understand how performance art and imagery is created, experienced and perceived, we first need to understand what art is by taking a deeper look into the schools of art theory and the some of the most popular definitions and frameworks of art coming from the pioneers in the field, namely: Beardsley (1958), Dickie (1971), Bell (1913), Levinson (1979), Bourdieu (1986; 1997), Danto (1964) and Tolstoy (1896). Furthermore, theories and theoretical frameworks by Hans van Maanen and his book How to Study Art Worlds (2009) will be explored.

In order to explore and demonstrate the concept of art in viral marketing strategies, we will look at some specific examples of performances and performance art. Thus, a good understanding of the difference between those two is needed, as well as a good understanding of what constitutes a theatre performance. This discussion will be based on works by Marvin Carlson (1996; 2004) and Richard Schechner (1988; 2008). Performances used in viral marketing can be argued to represent an evolution of the so-called Invisible Theatre, as described by August Boal in his publication Theatre of The Oppressed (1979). Knowledge of his theory will also help us understand the theme of this paper.

3. How is the value of an artwork in a Word of Mouth marketing strategy determined?

In order to determine whether Word of Mouth marketing strategies can create valuable art works, we first need to look at how value is created both in art and marketing respectively. Gentile, Spiller & Nocci (2007) explain that in contemporary marketing, there is an active dialogue between an organization and its consumers, which consists mainly of various types
of value exchange procedures, expressed in value propositions from the side of the organization and value perception procedures from the side of the consumer. They demonstrate their theories with a model, which could be helpful in understanding the functioning of value. Their value theory will be expanded on by looking into theory from Addis & Holbrook (2001), Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004), Tynan & McKechnie (2009) and Masterman & Wood (2008), who all discuss the role of the consumer in this dialogue, as well as his evolution from a passive participant, to an active and co-creative factor in marketing.

Boswijk (2005) argues that marketing has to be able to create meaningful experiences, and heavily draws on theory from Csikszentmihalyi (1990), as well as in order to provide a checklist for identifying meaningful experiences. Eversmann’s (2004) notion for a “flow” experience provides further information into understanding the meaning of experiences, by proposing that such an experience possesses four dimensions, namely: perceptual, emotional, cognitive and communicative. These four dimensions become a central part to the framework for evaluating viral marketing strategies. The theories above are connected to theory by Dobele (2005), who talks more particularly about viral marketing and the importance of sending an engaging message to consumers, by providing the five main characteristics of such messages. Thus, an attempt at establishing a consecutive relation from an engaging message, to a meaningful experience is made. In addition, we look briefly at the concept of “stealth marketing” as described by Roy & Chattopadhyay (2010), whose counterpart in the art world could be the concept of invisible theatre described previously. In addition, we will look into how word of mouth strategies can create value and the importance of co-creation in general.

For art, we will need to look how value is generated according to all schools of art. For value in functional art, we will look specifically at theories by Beardsley (1938), Davies (1991) and an author from The Blackwell Guide of Aesthetics (2003), Alan Goldman. Beardsley (1938) provides the five characteristics of an aesthetic experience, which are crucial in the design of this thesis’s framework. Furthermore, Van Maanen (2009) refers to intrinsic, extrinsic and semi-intrinsic values in art worlds, which are highly useful in providing further insight into the value of an artwork, according to the functional paradigm.

For determining how procedural art generates value, once again theories by Van Maanen (2009) will be used, who provides a detailed overview of the role of conventions and status in the art world- both crucial elements in defining procedural art.

For historically reflexive views, Davies (1991) is the one to give us a basic overview of the main theoreticians in the field, namely Levinson (1979, 1989, 1993), Carrol (198) and Carney (1991, 1994).

Lastly, in combining value creation processes in art with value creation processes in marketing, we look at the phenomenon of art infusion and we investigate the meaning of spillover, contagion and halo effects. Hagtvedt & Patrick (2008) explain in detail how the process works and demonstrate two ways in which an art work can influence a marketing strategy: content- dependent influence of art and generalized content- independent influence of art.
In conclusion of this chapter, based on all the theories for value creation and utilization, as well as art and marketing theories from previous chapters, a general framework for art definition per art school will be created, as well as a framework for the overall evaluation of a viral marketing campaign. These frameworks will include various criteria as well as value creating processes per perspective, and will serve as a tool to help identify the presence (or absence) art and the success (or failure) of the viral marketing campaigns in question.

4. Is the usage of art in Word of Mouth marketing strategies and for commercial purposes, still considered art- both from the perspective of the art world and the consumer?

After providing frameworks for evaluation from the five different points of view of the five different schools of art, as well as a framework from a marketing perspective, it is time to apply them to the two main cases of this paper, namely the “Carrie” campaign and the “Coca-Cola” campaign.

Firstly though, the two cases will be looked at from a performance point of view, with the purpose to determine what kinds of performances they are exactly. Upon doing so, each one will be systematically viewed from the five different art paradigms. Furthermore, it is established that each viral marketing performance has two different audiences- those who are present on location and are actively involved in its creation, and those, who only view it later from home, using their computers. Both of those audiences will be accounted for.

In addition, the different types of performances in both campaigns will be compared and contrasted with specific attention on how they both act as art infusers (whether they are content-dependent or content-independent) for their respective products, as per definitions by Hagtvedt & Patrick (2008).

In the end, a conclusion to the research question, as well as suggestions for further research will be given.
CHAPTER 1.
Word of Mouth Marketing & Word of Mouth Marketing Strategies

Traditional Marketing vs. Modern Marketing: A Historical Overview

“The enigma of marketing is that it is one of man’s oldest activities and yet it is regarded as the most recent of the business disciplines.” (Baker, 1976, p.ix) It has been nearly 40 years since Michael J. Baker, a renowned professor in the field of business and marketing, published the words above. And indeed, the concept of marketing has been around even before people gave it a name. From street vendors advertising their products loudly at by-passers to Apple’s latest elaborate strategy, the very basic purpose remains the same- attracting consumers at all costs. In an amusing anecdote, Dr. Phillip Kotler even claims that one of the first examples of marketing can be found in the Bible—“We see Eve convincing Adam to eat the forbidden apple. But Eve was not the first marketer. It was the snake that convinced her to market to Adam”.

Naturally, it is all more complicated than that. Throughout the decades and ever since the popularization of business theory, there have been various definitions and sub-categories of the term “marketing”, which continue to evolve and change even today. The American Marketing Association defines the three chronological eras of modern marketing development as: Production Era (Produce as much as possible) → Sales Era (Sell as much as possible) → Marketing Concept (Give customers what they actually want). In these stages, we see a clear shift from a more static, traditional and generic notion of marketing to a new, broader, modern and dynamic marketing concept, which has led to a completely new consumer experience- an experience no longer simply limited to the point of sale, but a holistic experience that is suited to every consumer’s needs and personality. This modern marketing is called Experience Marketing. (Grundey, 2008)

The best way to understand this modern experiential approach to marketing is by comparing it to the traditional one. Bernt Schmitt (1999), a pioneer in the field of modern marketing, provides a useful contrast between traditional marketing and the initiation of modern marketing, which truly started rising in the beginning of the 2000s. According to him, traditional marketing employs the following main features: an analytical orientation towards commodity functional characteristics; a narrow outlook to the surrounding competitors and services and the assumption that the consumer is a rational, rather than an emotional buyer. In other words, in traditional marketing, it was all about the product. It wasn’t until the 1950s that this outdated approach started to change and companies recognized the

---

importance of a strategic marketing concept, where the consumer experience is key. A simple example demonstrating this shift is the world-wide conglomerate “Disney”. According to traditional marketing in the past, all they needed to advertise was the following sentence “We produce movies and run theme parks”. In modern marketing though, this sentence would be redesigned to read “We provide fantasies, dreams and entertainment”. It is clear that the focus now is on the experience, rather than the physical properties of the product offering.

Schmitt (1999) was one of the first to further define the characteristics of modern experience marketing as: focused on the holllistic consumer experience, consumers are considered as “emotional animals” and methods in use are eclectic. This means that organizations and firms have finally realized that their customers can not all be put under the same denominator, i.e. commoditized. Thus, economies have evolved from the delivery of products, to the delivery of services to the delivery of personalized experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). But when is an experience successful then? In the past, the success of a product and its marketing could have simply been measured by its sales. However, with experience marketing, there are many other factors in play. According to Arnoud & Price (1983) a consumer experience can be divided into four stages, namely Pre-consumption (searching, planning, daydreaming), Purchase (final choice, payment), Core consumption (sensation, satisfaction) and Remembered Consumption (re-living the memory). In order for a consumer experience to be successful and valuable, all those stages need to be achieved. For advertisers and marketing creators in modern marketing, it is the first stage that has rose to become the most crucial. It is the stage that attracts the potential consumer’s attention to the product and experience in question and without success in that stage, the other stages will never occur. With time many have taken upon Schmitt’s work on the importance of experience and expanded on them. More recently, Vargo & Lusch (2004) argued that in modern times, all economies are service economies, in which the consumer is always a co-producer and in which the organization only has the power to make value propositions and offers. A few years later Tynan & McKechnie (2009) mirrored Arnoud & Price’s 1983 consumer experience stages to bring them to: Pre- Experience Activities (imagining, searching, planning); Consumer Experience Value Sources (sensory, emotional, functional, relational, social, informational, novelty, and utopian); and Post- Experience Outcomes (enjoyment, entertainment, learning, skills etc.) At this point, it becomes clearer how important it is for organisations to mainatin a continuous interactive, unique and meaningful dialogue with their customers in modern economies. Unlike in traditional marketing, experience and value creation is now a crucial element of every communication stage, rather than just in the purchase stage. As previously mentioned though, this continuous dialogue starts in the first moment an organization establishes a certain contact with a potential consumer. With so many organisations, companies and competitors in our modern economy though, it is not always easy to

![Schmitt's Experience Marketing Characteristics, p.58 (1999)](image)
captivate potential customers. Thus, it is no surprise that marketers nowadays have come up with various creative ways to attract attention. They are no longer limited to traditional marketing strategies, such as TV ads, posters, billboards etc. In a modern world such as ours, filled with advanced technology, social media and networks, one of the latest trends for “attention-grabbing” in the pre-consumption phase is the so-called Word of Mouth (WOM) Marketing, a type of marketing that is an experience in itself.

**Word of Mouth (WOM) Marketing**

Word of Mouth Marketing (WOM) is a concept that has gained massive popularity with the development of the internet and the high prominence of online social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter and others alike. However, WOM marketing has been around for years before the current rise of technology. Back in 1967, J. Arnd described WOM as *face-to-face communication about a brand, product, or service between people who are perceived as not having connections to a commercial entity*. In the 1990s, Buckle expanded on the definition of the concept by adding the idea that *WOM can be electronically mediated and that organizations may offer incentives or rewards to consumers who spread WOM*. This leads us to modern times and a global international market in which market transactions and communication are no longer limited by time and location. The fall of such barriers has opened up the possibility for a 24/7 market access and a constant communication link between an organization and its consumers. It has never been easier to get informed about a product or a service than it is now- simply by using a computer and the internet from the comfort of your own home or office. Therefore, it is hardly a surprise that nowadays WOM's most prominent feature is precisely the usage of the Internet.

Organizations typically employ three main types of internet WOM marketing, namely: viral marketing, referral programs and community marketing (Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels, 2008) The first one, viral marketing, often also referred to as “creating buzz” or “network marketing” is perhaps the most widespread and used WOM. It refers to the concept of creating entertaining or informative messages designed to be passed on by each message receiver, often electronically or via e-mail. Referral programs refer to tools that enable consumers to refer their family and friends. Alternatively, community marketing involves the creation and support of niche communities that are likely to share interests about a certain product or a brand (e.g. fan-clubs, user groups, internet chat rooms etc.) This thesis however, will concentrate solely on viral marketing strategies, as a sub-division of WOM marketing and as a tool for creating new dimensions of consumer experiences in the art world.

**Viral Marketing**

Broadly speaking, viral marketing offers three main advantages to organizations, namely: it incurs less expense since the individual passing on the referral carries the cost of forwarding the brand message; the act of forwarding electronic messages containing advertisements is voluntary on the side of the consumer rather than paid and thus it could be viewed more favorably by the recipient; and those forwarding the message are more likely to know which of their family members or friends are likely to respond positively. (Dobele, Toleman & Beverland, 2005). As it can be clearly seen in the definitions of WOM and viral marketing above, the consumer is a central tool of viral marketing in the way that is precisely him who
distributes the message rather than the organization. Thus the crafting of a unique message, as well as its successful communication is a key concept in the success of the strategies employed. Just like a virus, successful and engaging viral marketing campaigns spread rapidly, bringing their designed messages to millions of potential consumers, who then bring it to other users, who bring it to others and so forth. This effect would have never been possible without the creation of Web 2.0, a term used to explain technologies, web sites and applications, which all integrate users into the value chain of organizations and help people to network (O’Reilly, 2005; Bauer et al., 2007; Hass et al, 2008).

Web 2.0 itself is not exactly a new technology, but it is rather an evolution of technologies and communication approaches, which have grown in importance in the past decade. (Chaffey, 2008). It all started with the creation of the so-called web blogs, or simply blogs, where people could write out their thoughts and ideas for anyone to read. However, this was mostly a one-sided process. Naturally, the need for better communication birthed what we know nowadays as social media websites, which are the main facilitators of viral marketing. According to studies in 2010, nearly three fourths of the people across the world who have access to the Internet use social media (Nielsen, 2010). Furthermore, according to official statistics of Facebook, one of the most wide spread social media sites, in 2013 there were more than 1,310,000,000 active users from all over the world. And what’s astounding about viral marketing is that a marketer could easily reach all those 1,310,000,000 users by only releasing an engaging enough message.

To demonstrate the importance of Web 2.0 and its connection to viral marketing, we look to Wilson (2005), who defines six main principles of viral marketing strategies. According to him, a successful marketing strategy:

*Gives away products or services*: Nothing attracts more than making an offering that is free of charge. Therefore, a lot of viral marketing strategies initially try to attract attention by offering free products or samples. If that product satisfies the customer or raises his/her interest, then they are bound to share that information to others and come back themselves.

*Provides for effortless transfer to others*: This is where Web 2.0 comes into play. In a strategy where communication is key, the message needs to be able to travel fast and easy. With its limitless instant communication capabilities and social online networks, the internet has managed to become viral marketing’s number one medium of transportation.

*Scales easily from small to large*: Successful viral marketing campaigns tend to spread very fast and therefore must be able to accommodate large amounts of consumers.

*Exploits common motivations & behaviors*: marketers often play on human emotions and interests, e.g. their desires to be “cool”, “popular” and “liked”. The resulting urge to be “in on it” or to have a new experience can easily raise people’s interests, which would then lead to them researching more information about the product in question and thus inadvertently becoming part of the viral marketing strategy.

*Utilizes existing communication networks*: The emergence of Web 2.0 and online social networks has proven to be a game changer for marketers. Sites, such as Facebook, Twitter,
Experience

Viral Marketing Strategies in the Art World

Art organizations and art producers primarily deal with offering experiences. This is why this new experience marketing and art seem to have been created to co-exist with each other. Joostens (2012) claims that the experiential value of an artistic product used in marketing is actually the experiential product that the marketing strategy produces. Thus, the supplementary services that surround the product aren’t the main focus, but rather the themed experiences surrounding the product are. Hence marketing strategies that use art, actually provide art experiences. From a business point of view, Pine & Gilmore (1999) claim an art experience can consist of four realms: entertainment, education, esthetics and escapism. However, the diagram above does seem to be inaccurate, especially from an artistic point of view. The authors unexplainably place Immersion and Absorption on two opposing ends, when in fact the two can be synonyms of each other. In addition, an art experience, regardless of whether it is in marketing or not, can easily fall into more than one of their four realms. In this way, the Pine & Gilmore figure is invalid, as it does not provide

Takes advantage of others’ resources: This can be easily related to communication networks. Someone else’s network is essentially a resource of potential consumers. Thus, using others’ resources is a vital part of viral marketing. People and organizations with larger networks will then have a better chance at advancing the reach of a viral message. A creative marketer needs to know how to utilize those resources.

Even though the above six principles are widely used in viral marketing, they need not always be all present. However, the more that are fulfilled, the better the chance of success. It is clear though, that regardless of other factors, the concept of Web 2.0 is a crucial facilitator. However, it is not the only one. As previously mentioned, modern marketing is very concerned with providing not just a new product, but also a new experience. One can say that if Web 2.0 is the medium, the experience is the message. This focus on experience has not only affected the business domain, but also the already very experiential and experimental nature of the art world.

So far we have only theoretically explored the emergence and connections between modern marketing, WOM, viral marketing and Web 2.0. However, in order to understand exactly how it all functions together and how it can be connected to the art world, we need to look at some specific examples.

Viral Marketing Strategies in the Art World

![Figure 5. Pine & Gilmore's Realms of an Art Experience](image)

Source: Pine and Gilmore (1999, p. 30)
for a way to properly categorize art experiences. Nevertheless, it brings forward one important opposition- that of a passive versus active participation.

As previously mentioned, a great part of experience marketing is actively involving the consumer. In viral marketing, as a subset of experience marketing, the consumer can be active in two ways. Firstly, he can be active the creation of the viral marketing product, e.g. if a “hidden theatre” performance is recorded, the consumer could be part of the crowd witnessing the event live. Secondly, the consumer is actually invited to be active by spreading the message himself or herself by going online and sending the recorded file to friends, family and other people in their network. This means that when an art experience and a viral marketing experience are combined, the consumer is active on 2 levels- the art level, and the marketing level.

Experiences aside, art itself is connected to viral marketing in two more ways. Firstly, there could be an art organization making use of a viral marketing campaign in order to advertise its product. For example, such was the case of the Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis described above. They used an online viral campaign (which involved the usage of art works in itself), which created a web-site allowing consumers to electronically alter existing art works themselves. It was a new experience and a new way to look at art, to become “active”. The strategy was very successful and served its purpose- users shared information about it with their friends and family and from then on, the visitors to the website grew and grew.

Another example of an art organization relying heavily on the usage of Web 2.0 in particular is the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, Germany. Their Facebook fan-page has been growing in numbers, starting with 2500 fans in October 2011 and reaching almost 22,000 fans in May 2014. A content analysis shows that there are numerous videos, podcasts, images and stories heavily used in order to create “buzz” around the fans and “keep them talking” (Hausmann, 2012). The ever so growing number of fans demonstrates that the strategy seems to be working. In these two cases above, art is simply a factor of the organization, rather than a factor of the viral marketing strategy.

The other way in which art can be connected to viral marketing is by organizations, who do not deal exclusively with art themselves, but use creative ways to advertise. Such was the example with the graffiti marketing campaign demonstrated previously and such are the cases that this thesis concentrates on. The organization above deals with preserving clean water, but they still use a graffiti painting, which is considered by many to be a modern type of art, in order to advertise their message. Due to the fact that such an advertisement is highly unusual for such an organization, people talk about it, share it with their friends and family and virility comes into play. There are numerous similar examples, which all use creativity in photographic images and gain massive popularity all over the world.

It is not all about photographic imagery though. Performance art has also been widely used for viral marketing. This thesis employs two examples in order to demonstrate that the usage of performance in viral strategies, namely a 2013 campaign for the remake of the famous horror movie “Carrie” and a 2012 campaign by “Coca Cola”.
The “Carrie” campaign\textsuperscript{6} takes the shape of a short scripted scene, taking place in front of a viewer, who is unaware that what he or she is seeing has been staged. In contemporary culture, such occurrences are often referred to as flash-mobs—a multiform platform, in which seemingly spontaneous group acts occur in public places. Originally starting as events organized purely for entertainment, or to raise social awareness for certain problems, nowadays flash mobbing has evolved to be an extremely popular concept with multiple functions (including advertising) and forms, e.g. dancing, singing, acting or the making of a random creative act (Gore, 2010). This particular flash-mob took place in a public coffee place in New York. In the performance, a seemingly average and normal girl sitting in the cafe gets provoked by a stunt man, which results in her using supernatural telekinetic superpowers. She throws the stunt man at the wall, knocks paintings of the walls, books off the shelves, moves tables and chairs, just like the main heroine in the advertised movie. All this occurs as unsuspecting customers walks into the cafe with the intention of purchasing a coffee beverage for themselves. Upon witnessing the realistic act, their reactions are naturally those of shock, horror and amazement.

The results from the “Carrie” promotional campaign were filmed by hidden cameras, edited and uploaded to YouTube, from where social media carried the video all over the world, currently resulting in nearly 58,500,000 individual views by potential consumers.

“Coca-Cola” provides the other main case of this research. In 2012, the conglomerate carried through a campaign in which they very actively involved the consumer. Whereas with “Carrie”, the viewer was more of a passive observer, here he was required to physically participate. The advertisement was done in collaboration with the promotion of the latest James Bond movie, “Skyfall, under the motto “Unlock the 007 in You”. The point was to literally put the audience in the shoes of the famous secret agent.

![Figure 8. Poster for the Coca-Cola Viral Marketing Campaign](image)

The act took place in a public train station, where a special vending machine was placed. When a consumer attempted to purchase a Coca-Cola drink from the machine, he was prompted with a message: “You have 70 seconds to get to platform 6”. At this point the buyer realizes something out of the ordinary is happening, but still proceeds to find a way to the designated platform. Upon trying though, he realizes it is not as easy as it sounds- there are various obstacles along the way. Those obstacles, such as people and objects in the way, have naturally all been planted by the creators of the experience. Upon reaching platform 6 in time, the participant was gifted a pair of free tickets to the upcoming movie premiere. Thus, two things were promoted at the same time- the movie itself and “Coca Cola Zero” as the drink of action heroes. As in other similar campaigns, all of this was filmed, put on the Internet⁷ and later went on to gather nearly 11,000,000 individual views.

All these examples truly show how exciting and creative of a field marketing has evolved to be. Originating in ancient times, when the call of a street vendor was enough of a hook, nowadays it has evolved into a notion, whose complexity is comparable to that of art. (Kotler, 2006). Starting from traditional, static and product-oriented concepts where the

---

only goal is profit, it is now a modern, fluid and service-oriented field, which not only provides products, but experiences. There is a dialogue between a customer and an organization - a dialogue, in which the customer is no longer just the passive acceptor of a message, but now has the chance to be an active co-creator in the crafting of that message. Viral marketing and the various strategies it employs are one of the fruits of this relationship. Thus, viral strategies are truly an expression of the modern age we live in - a way to communicate with masses of people, advertise on a global scale and use pre-existing networks to send a message - all of those activities, which would not have been possible without the two most crucial aspects of viral marketing - the involvement (and evolvement) of the Word of Mouth notion and the presence of Web 2.0. Hence, the main point of viral marketing is, through creative experiences and technological developments, to turn the consumer into a medium, which both co-creates the message, and also communicates it further.

The two main examples for viral marketing used in this thesis are only a small handful of all the campaigns out there. The examples are literally endless, with new acts and flash mobs happenings daily, and the consumers reached are millions. However, in the context of this research, here is where a very specific question arises. Can all those photographs, dances and performances used in viral advertising, regardless of how creative and unusual they are, be considered a form of modern art or are they merely a business tool, devoid of any artistic and aesthetic meaning? Are flash mobs a new form of performance art? So far we have only looked at the involvement of art from a business perspective, and in order to answer all those questions, we also need to observe art from an artistic point of view. Thus, we first need to understand how art itself is communicated, experienced and perceived according to the schools of art.

CHAPTER 2.
Schools of Art and the meaning of Performance.

Definitions of art

What is art? The official Oxford Dictionary defines art as “The expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power”. However, this is not an adequate definition. In Davies’ words in particular, this definition would be considered “unsatisfactory”. And he would be right. According to him, there are two ways in which an art definition could be considered “unsatisfactory and inadequate”, namely: by listing a property that not all art works posses and/or by identifying a set of properties that are not exclusive to art works. The Oxford definition falls under both. But then again, so do most of the classical definitions of art and there are indeed many classical definitions of art. Throughout history art has been described as imitation or representation (Plato, 1955), a medium for transmission of feelings (Tolstoy, 1995), an intuitive expression (Croce, 1920) and as significant form (Bell, 1914) and yet none of those seem to be able to really express the complex nature of art. Many have even asked whether the definition of art is possible in the first place. Nevertheless, despite an overall lack of agreement, there have been a few main schools and classifications of art that Davies (1991) considers to be
most “convenient” in his book “Definitions of Art”, namely the division between Functional art and Procedural (also known as Institutional) art.

According to functionalists, with Monroe Beardsley being the most associated supporter, art is designed to serve a purpose and an artwork can only be considered as such only when it achieves the objective for which it is designed. Most commonly though this objective must be to simply provide a satisfying aesthetic experience for the viewer. Henceforth, artworks, which intended to, but failed to achieve that goal, are considered to be “bad” art (Beardsley, 1983). Nevertheless, if something is officially labeled as functional art, then this implies that it is not “bad” art, as it has managed to fulfill the aesthetic requirement. On the other hand, proceduralists argue that something is an artwork only if it is made according to the appropriate process, regardless of how well it serves its point and regardless of whether it provides an aesthetic experience or not (Davies, 1991). Furthermore, Dickie, one of the most prominent supporters of procedural art claims that an artwork needs to be created by an artist with sufficient knowledge of the Art world and that this artwork needs to be presented precisely to the Art world. (Dickie, 1984) The presence of an “Art World” originally brought forward by Danto in 1964 is actually a crucial part of the Procedural school of art. Davis explains it as “the historical and social setting constituted by the changing practices and conventions of art, the heritage of works, the intentions of artists, the writings of critics and so forth” (Davies, 1991). Thus, procedural art is a closed system—individuals in the Art World produce art only for other individuals in the Art World. Hence, in comparison, one can say that functionalists regard the “goal” and the “effect” of art as vital, whereas proceduralists regard the way the content is created, i.e. the procedure and the “intended audience” as vital. The two definitions though need not be mutually exclusive. Davies further observes that something can easily fulfill both functional and procedural requirements. For instance, an artwork could be created by an established artist in the art world, discussed by other members of the art world and its main purpose could still be to provide an aesthetic experience. Thus we arrive at the notion of what is called “Hybrid definitions of art”.

Hybrid definitions combine the advantages of several theoretical perspectives, while avoiding the weaknesses that lie in the classical definitions. A popular hybrid is the combination of either functionalism or proceduralism with historical reflexiveness. Historical reflexiveness, or the Historical school of art says that something is art if it is intended for regard in one of the ways in which prior art works have correctly been regarded (Levinson, 1979,1989,1993). In other words, current art is defined by its relation to past art and thus art’s history becomes part of art’s defining character (Davies, 1991). Historical reflexiveness brings forward the following hybrid definitions:

**Historically Reflexive Functionalism:** If art is considered to be functional, then the function of art changes in time, depending on how it has been realized in the past.

**Historically Reflexive Proceduralism:** If art is considered to be procedural, then the procedures through which it is created change with time, reflecting new developments in the art world.

In the end, the above overview gives us 5 main definitions of art, which we could use in order to define whether viral marketing could produce valuable art, namely functionalism,
proceduralism, historical reflexiveness and the resulting hybrid definitions from mixing the three. Naturally, each one of those comes with its own “evaluation system”. Traditional functionalism clearly looks to aesthetics as its main evaluator, especially according to Beardsley, who claims that if anything is an artwork it must fulfill first and foremost an aesthetic function (Beardsley, 1958). Laurent Stern (2013) speaks of another important element of aesthetics, which has become even more crucial in contemporary times: intentionality and the interpretation of that intentionality. As per functionalism, the main intention a creator has is to provide a satisfying aesthetic experience. However, there could be other intentions and goals present and it is up to the viewer to interpret those. Therefore, when evaluating an item as an artwork, we need to be aware of what its intentions are and whether they are met. On the other hand, Stern (2013) further speaks about the importance of understanding the Artwork’s world when evaluating, which is clearly a pre-requisite of proceduralism. In that case, we need to be aware of the practices, conventions and culture that are part of the world, surrounding that work. We need to know “how” it was made, rather than “why”.

Understanding how art is defined and evaluated is only the first step to answering the research question of this paper though. Since performance is used as the main illustrator of art and viral marketing here, we first need to look into how performance is communicated, perceived and experienced as a whole.

The Meaning of Performance

Performance. For many, the mention of that word probably conjures traditional images of theatre stages, lights, curtains, actors, make-up and so on. And it is true, those are indeed crucial elements of traditional theatre, however, “performance” is a lot more complicated and overarching term. It is a term, which has grown from its typical use in theatre and has invaded other disciplines, such as cultural studies, anthropology, sociological studies and even linguistics. An interesting observation is that whereas in traditional terminology “performance” used to incorporate theatre, dance and film, nowadays “performance” is a term so often encountered in such varied contexts that little if any common semantic ground seems to exist (Carlson, 2008). So if it is not just theatre, then how does one begin to understand the meaning of a “performance”?

In traditional terms, Carlson refers to “performance” as related to a public display of certain skills, behavior and conduct. It is a form of art as a craft. However, a performance could also be about behavior. In this case, we are talking about pretending to be someone other than one’s self. More specifically, Richard Schechner calls this “Restored Behavior” and points out a quality of performance, not related to the display of skills, but rather to the distinction between a “self” and a “patterned behavior”, just in the way there is a distance between an actor in reality and an actor playing a role on stage. “Even if an action on stage is identical to one in real life, on stage it is considered “performed”, and off-stage merely “done” (Carlson, 2008). Furthermore, Dell Hymes refers to a performance as “anything and everything that happens” or “a behavior under the aegis of social norms, cultural rules and shared principles of interpretability”. He further defines it as a “subset of conduct, in which one or more persons assume a responsibility to an audience and to tradition as they understand it.” Thus, nearly anything, even in every day life, can be considered a performance as long as it has an intended audience. A performance can occur anywhere, at any time, as the limits of
the stage don’t exist anymore. In this case, Shakespeare’s famous words “All the world is a stage” have never seemed more relevant. Nevertheless, a very important distinction needs to be made, a distinction between something being a performance and something having a performative function. The former is done consciously and has an intended purpose and audience, whereas the latter is not a conscious act, but rather an unconscious repetition of a learned behavior. Both of those are learned by the individuals, but it is the conscious and realized “restored behavior” that belongs to the performance. (Schechner, 2004)

But then when does performance become something more than a behavioral element and turns into art? It was actually Richard Schechner’s 1992 editorial “A New Paradigm for Theatre in the Academy”, which raised this burning question and stirred up controversy by declaring that “The new paradigm is performance; not theatre. Theatre departments should become performance departments” (Schechner, 1992, p.9). And it is true that for the last few decades the line between theatre and performance has become more and more obvious. For example, nowadays many newsletters include a separate category of “performance” or “performance theater”, separate from that of theatre, dance, films. Theatre has now theoretically and practically become a sub-part of performance, rather than the other way around. Schechner takes this idea further and uses 2 models to illustrate performance as the one unifying element for a varied and organized spectrum of categories- the so-called “fan” model and the “web” model. The fan diagram clearly shows that theater is only a part of performance, and a performance need not necessarily be a representative of an art function, but it could also be a ritual, a ceremony or social everyday conduct. Schechner himself provides a useful explanation of the notion of theater in relation to performance theory: “the drama is what the writer writes; the script is the interior map of a particular production; the theatre is the specific set of gestures performed by the performers in any given performance; the performance is the whole event, including audience and performers (technicians, too, anyone who is there)” (Schechner, 1988). In other words, a theatre performance is always a performance, but not all performances are theatre. This is a one-way relationship though. As just explained, a performance doesn’t necessarily need to be deemed “theatre” in order for it to be “art”. The Web diagram (presented in Figure 10 on the following page) demonstrates a similar system, but illustrates it more dynamically, by putting Schechner’s own practical theatre work- environmental theatre, in the middle.

According to him, connection from 1 to 4 can be investigated historically, and may be linked to performances from across the world, but connections from 6 to 9 reveal “deep structures” of performance, which include preparations for a performance by both the actors (training, rehearsals workshops, etc.) and the audience (deciding to attend, dressing up, going, settling, waiting etc.) (Schechner, 2004). Thus, it becomes visible that the term “performance” is a constantly evolving notion, which has grown to be truly encompassing and inclusive. A viral marketing performance then would be a slightly problematic fit on the Web, unless a new connection is established. It would fall somewhere in between
connections 5 to 9, but the main difference is that an active preparation comes only from the side of the actors, since the audience is not aware of the fact that they are viewing a performance until it is actually happening. Nevertheless, there is still an element of “restored behavior”. Thus, a new number should be added to the web and the notions for what constitutes a contemporary artistic can be broadened even further.

Figure 10. Schechner's Web

Now that we have a clearer view on what constitutes a “performance”, it is necessary to connect that knowledge to the art schools described previously in order to get more insight into when a performance can have an “artistic” value. According to classic functionalism, in order for a performance to be considered art, it will need to fulfill a particular objective-specifically to provide an aesthetic experience for the viewer. Thus, it is not only traditional theatre that can be considered art, but also other types of performances. On the other hand, with classic proceduralism, things look a bit different. A performance will have had to have been made by an individual who is both with recognized status in the Art World, and who is following appropriate established procedures. This means that anything outside of this scope will not be considered art. Thus the scope of performance art according to proceduralism is a lot more limited. Nevertheless, there could be exceptions. This is where the hybrid theories of art become important, as they change the “rules of the game”. Historically reflexive functionalism broadens the limits even further, as it allows for the goal to be changed- thus even performances whose purpose is not an aesthetic pleasure have the possibility to be considered art. An example could be Boal’s Invisible Theatre (1972), which was originally conceived not to provide aesthetic experiences, but rather to bring people’s attention to social issues and controversies. Same goes for proceduralism- the procedures and rules change over time, so why wouldn’t it be possible for new guidelines to be established, which could incorporate new types of performance?
In the end, both “art” and “performance” are elusive concepts, but they are both necessary to determine whether viral marketing acts can be referred to as works of art. One would need to evaluate those viral marketing acts on two levels—first, to determine whether they are performances, and if yes, what kind of a performance they are, and second, if they are indeed performances, to determine whether they are artistic. As shown above, a “performance” is a largely encompassing term, which contrary to common belief, is not limited to the traditional concept of theatre, but is about exhibiting a conscious and realized “restored behavior” from the performers—a notion, which allows for a broad definition of what is eventually categorized as “performance”. Deciding further whether a performance constitutes art depends on the point of view one takes—functional, procedural, historically reflexive, historically reflexive functional or historically reflexive procedural. Each one of those views comes with its own definitions and requirements, some more traditional, some more contemporary, and can be used to determine when a particular performance is a work of art. However, before looking in detail whether viral marketing acts can be considered examples of artistic performance, we need to see how exactly value is created both in a marketing strategy and in an artwork respectively.

CHAPTER 3.
The Importance of Being Valuable

As already mentioned previously, the creation of value is a crucial element, both in the marketing and the art world. Naturally, we are speaking about two very different kinds of values in the two worlds, but values nonetheless. If the consumers of a product don’t value it, then they will not buy it or share its commercial. If an artwork has no value whatsoever, can we still even call it an artwork? What happens when those two values are put together in one concept?

Value in Marketing

As already established, modern experience marketing is very much a form of dialogue between an organization and its consumers. Gentile, Spiller & Noci (2007) have developed a useful model, which demonstrated the various forms of value as they are exchanged between an organization and its consumers.

![Value Exchange Model](image.png)

Figure 11. Value Exchange Model (Gentile, Spiller & Noci, 2006)
The consumer experience is made up of several components (namely, sensorial, emotional, cognitive, pragmatic, lifestyle and relational), and it originates from a set of dialogue between the consumer and the organization. The values that both the individual consumer and the company gain come from precisely those interactions (Addis & Holbrook, 2001). In the case of viral marketing, it is the value proposition (from the company’s side) and the value perception (from the consumer’s side) that are the most crucial. As already established, the value proposition that viral marketing puts forward tends to rely very much on experience (naturally, since it is a big part of experience marketing) and the activity, rather than passivity of the consumer.

The consumer himself is active in two ways. Firstly, he or she could be unsuspectingly present in the creation of the viral commercial. In the case of the video for “Carrie” previously described, the audience was physically immersed into the commercial simply by being present at the right place at the right time and having their reactions filmed. Their physical presence in the filming environment could correspond with the “absorption and “immersion” realms of experience as described by Pine & Gilmore (1999) above. They define “absorption” as “occupying a person’s attention by bringing the experience into mind” and “immersion” as “becoming physically a part of the experience yourself’. This is precisely why their definitions are inaccurate though: in viral marketing the two are not opposing ends of the same spectrum, but rather complementary pieces of the same puzzle. The unsuspecting audience that is part of the filming of a commercial, intended to be viral, are both physically present in the environment and the experience, whilst their mind and attention are attracted to that same event. This phenomenon is also known as “stealth marketing”- undercover, hidden marketing, which due to a low level of visibility is initially invisible to the target consumer (Roy & Chattopadhyay, 2010). Thus consumers present at the creation of a stealth viral marketing video shoot become inadvertently active, their reality is changed, they react to the circumstances of that new reality and they themselves become part of the marketed product. Secondly, the consumer can be deliberately active simply by spreading the message around. Those are individuals who later view the final filmed result online and share it to their respective network. Thus, the overall value of a viral marketing campaign is truly a product of co-creation between those two types of consumers and the organization. Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004) perceive this co-creation as an “Experience space”, in which organizations enable individual members to develop experiences that suit their own interests and desires for level of involvement.

Prahalad & Ramaswamy further strengthen the concept of marketing as an active “interaction”. According to their DART principle, the consumer is no longer the passive recipient of a marketing manager’s messages, but instead a meaningful dialogue needs to be established, where the consumers, rather than the firm’s internal capabilities are the focus of attention (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2009). Thus, the dialogue, expressed most strongly in the line of value proposition to value perception, is unprecedented, dynamic, and to an extent co-creative. This co-creativity and activity is expressed perfectly in viral marketing strategies that involve the consumer (usually even the unsuspecting one) into their plan, which is often the case. Such was the example with Coca-Cola and their James Bond advertising strategy, described above. The commercial would not have worked, had the consumers not went along with the expected “scenario”. By going along with it, and
later spreading the message, they agree to accept the value proposition of the company and become an active part of it and thus they become both value creators and value receivers themselves. Same goes for consumers who are only watching the video online, but haven’t participated in it. By watching the video they take the role of value receptors, but by sharing it, they become value creators in relation to other potential consumers. Johnson (2001) calls this phenomenon “emergent behavior”, meaning that in this new viral economy, communication, meaning and adoptions occur from the ground up, primarily in the hands of the consumers, as opposed to traditional marketing, where this was all in the hands of the marketers. Boswijk et. al. (2012) argue that value creation no longer takes place within the company, but is rather created in the individual- this is precisely what such type of viral marketing demonstrates. Tynan & McKechnie (2009) further support that idea and point out that the real value is embedded in the actual personalized experiences created through active participation. However, it is not enough for a consumer to just have an experience, in order for value to appear. Masterman & Wood (2008) argue that the effectiveness of an experience is related to the individual’s emotional response and state of mind, and thus it is hard to measure or exactly pinpoint. In addition, the effectiveness is also subject to the influence of other communications, both marketing and social driven, as well as previous experiences and expectations of each individual. By now, many people are familiar with the concept of viral marketing and so they have certain kinds of expectations from an experience with a viral marketing strategy. If this experience is to be effective, it needs to be meaningful and to respond to those certain expectations. It is only then that the consumer will be willing to participate in the viral strategy and “share it around”.

But how does one measure whether an experience is effective and meaningful? Experiences are intangible and thus, just like emotional levels, it is hard to measure. Boswijk et.al (2005) define experiences as: “Experience in the sense of Erfahrung is a continuous interactive process of doing and undergoing action and reflection, from cause to consequence, that provides meaning to the individual in several contexts of his life (p.2). Despite the difficulties in measuring experience effectiveness, Boswijk et.al. (2005) still provide ten characteristics of a meaningful experience, which they base on the idea of a “flow” experience by Csikszentmihalyi (1990).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ten characteristics</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. There is heightened concentration and focus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All five senses are engaged.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. One’s sense of time is altered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. One is touched emotionally.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The process is unique for the individual.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. There is contact with the “raw stuff”, the real thing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. One both does and undergoes something.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. There is an element of playfulness (flow).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. One has the feeling of being in control of the situation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. There is a balance between the challenge and one’s own capacities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. There is a clear goal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to them, if an experience is to be truly meaningful, all 10 characteristics need to be fulfilled. Thus, if one is to evaluate whether a particular performance in a viral marketing strategy provides an effective experience, it would be useful to use those 10 pointers as a check list. However, since these 10 characteristics are personally experienced, reflect the point of view of the viewer only, and are highly subjective, gaining adequate knowledge from them would be difficult unless in-depth interviews are carried out. Therefore, in order for a more objective evaluation to be given in this research, it might be more useful to look at the concept of “flow” experience in particular.

In his publication “The Experience of the Theatrical Event”, Eversmann (2004) clearly differentiates a “flow”
experience from an “aesthetic” experience. According to him a “flow” experience carries an inherent element of satisfaction, in which the audiences “no longer have the sense of consciously participating, but rather say that ‘it’ took over, that everything ‘fell into place’ and things ‘happened by themselves’”(p.145) In a way, it can be said that a flash mob performance in a viral marketing campaign is precisely a “flow” experience, as such performances alter the reality of the viewer and produce a new reality, which the viewer has no choice, but to accept as valid and thus it becomes something that just “happens by itself”. Eversmann (2004) further defines four dimensions of such experiences, namely: the perceptual dimension (being “overpowered” by the experience), the cognitive dimension (making sense of the experience’s structure), the emotional dimension (causing feeling in “one’s stomach”) and the communicative dimension (establishing a dialogue between the experience provider, in this case the performer, and the viewer, as well as the desire to communicate with someone about what has been experienced). The link between those dimensions and Boswijk’s table of 10 characteristics immediately becomes clear, as nearly all 10 can be grouped under the various dimensions. There is only one point whose fitting in the “flow” experience theory is problematic- point 8. According to point 8, a viewer needs to have the feeling of being in control of the situation. This means that in that case, the viewer needs to be the one managing the situation, rather than participating in it. In both “flow” experiences and viral marketing flash mob campaigns, this is nearly impossible, as they both “happen”, altering the existing reality. Then, the consumer doesn’t have the power to be in control of the situation, but only in control of themselves and their own actions. Whether they contort to the new reality, is another matter. Therefore, when analyzing a viral marketing campaign, it might be more appropriate to use Eversmann’s more general four dimensions and investigate whether they are all successfully activated, rather than the perhaps too detailed table by Boswijk (2005). Thus, If there have been signs that all four dimensions are activated in a way, then we can talk about an effective, meaningful experience. What both the approaches by Boswijk and Eversmann emphasize on though, is how important the viewer is. In the end, it is his perception, attributions, personality and life experience that make him see an experience as meaningful. Hence, the performance designers only have so much power in planning whether a product of theirs would be effective or not. The consumer is the one with power to decide. Thus, we can hypothesize by looking at the faces and reactions of the participants in the “Carrie” campaign for example, but truly, we have no way of knowing whether what they witnessed was truly meaningful to them, unless they are personally inquired on the subject-something, beyond the scope of this research.

The consumer and his or her meaningful experience is only one side of the story though. Before that experience occurs, it all still needs to be pre-designed by the marketing organization and above all- an engaging message must be created. Naturally, if the consumer does not find the message or idea interesting or engaging in the first place, he will not be willing to participate in it and share it. According to Dobele (2005), it is only engaging messages that get passed on and that create meaningful experiences, and a successful engaging message has five main characteristics, namely:

1. **It captures the imagination by being fun or intriguing**: People like being amused and having a good time. A simple concept, yet not always easy to achieve. What performances in viral marketing campaigns have and should strive to have is exactly this element of unexpected fun. Flash-mobs and hidden theatre acts have an
advantage happen at random places, while the consumers are not expecting such an event. Thus it is expected that most of the viewers present at that live act will be immediately intrigued. Whether they have fun and keep on being intrigued depends on the act itself though. Same goes for those viewers in front of the screens- if they keep on watching the final advertisement, find it fun and engaging, chances are they will share it on their online network.

2. **Is attached to a product that is easy to use or highly visible:** According to Dobele, the products that are most susceptible to the viral phenomenon are mostly unique products (e.g. collapsible scooters), highly visible products (e.g. well-known brands such as Gucci or Apple), and products that are naturally susceptible to word-of-mouth discussion (e.g. condoms). Nevertheless, Dobele’s publication dates back to 2005, nearly 10 years ago, just when word-of-mouth marketing and virality were rising to fame. Even though in the beginning, it truly worked almost exclusively for the types of products described above, nowadays things look a bit different. Naturally, it’s still helpful if the products fulfill one or more of the three characteristics just described, but in modern experience marketing, nearly any product can have a successful viral marketing strategy, as long as it is innovative and engaging enough. Therefore, it is possible for people to “fall in love” with a product’s representation and message, rather than with the product itself, which creates the danger that consumers might remember the one campaign instead of the product.

3. **Is well targeted:** A basic rule in marketing is that one needs to know his or her audience. When it comes down to viral marketing, the power of reference groups and opinion leaders is crucial. For example, when Dan Brown’s famous, and controversial novel “The Da Vinci Code” was published nearly a decade ago, the mass audience would not have heard about it, had it not been for all the historical fiction “geeks”, who upon reading it shared information about it with their friends and families, who in turn commented about it on social media and so on. Thus, the first group, the historical fiction “geeks” are the word of mouth providers, or opinion leaders, who urge the others to experience the product. In the case of “The Da Vinci Code” a very important additional factor was also its controversy, which immediately made it susceptible to word of mouth of discussions (as explained in the sub-point above). Thus, “an exchange between supplier and customer only takes place indirectly; customers take the function of intermediaries, and the supplying firm only contacts the first few adaptors’ (Helm, 2011, p.159)

4. **Is associated with a credible source:** As just mentioned, it is of vital importance to have opinion leaders, people and individuals who are the first to start spreading the “message” around. In order for word of mouth to be effective, both the sender and the receiver of the message in question need to perceive the information as valuable. If the source is credible and trustworthy, chances are the receiver will appreciate the message positively and act further on it, either by consuming the marketed product himself, or passing the message forward. People would tend to trust their friends and family rather than a generalized business campaign message, so once the opinion leaders in a particular target segment have emerged, the marketers would be wise to encourage them to spread the message first to their close network, and then further. Essentially, consumers would tend to favor the
opinions leaders’ recommendation, unaware that it was the marketers’ plan all along to create such a chain of a passing opinion.

5. **Leverages combinations of technology:** Technology is a crucial aspect of viral marketing strategies. Nowadays, people tend to spend just as much time communicating online as they do in “real life”. Social website, such as Facebook or Twitter have become a second life for a majority of consumers and hence, reaching out through them online is not only the best, but the only way to pass a message on to them. This is the most traditional (as far as traditional goes) concept in viral marketing. A strategy could use more creative sides of technology. For example, nowadays many posters include the so-called QR Code- an image representation of an Internet link. Upon scanning it with his or her phone, the consumer is taken to a website, or an online video promoting the product.

To sum it all up, value creation is not a one-sided process on behalf of the organization, but rather results from a dialogue between the said organization and its consumers (Gentile, Spiller & Nocci, 2006). On the one hand we have the organization- the designer of the initial message (Dobele, 2005), sent to the consumer in the shape of a value proposition (in this case, an experience). On the other hand, we have precisely the consumer, who can either accept or reject the value proposition. If he or she accepts it, then they turn into co-creators of the value, for without their acceptance, there is no value. Hence, in evaluating whether value has been created, we need to identify the presence of the following elements in the following order: an engaging message (based on Dobele’s characteristics), resulting in a meaningful experience (as per Eversmann’s four dimensions), resulting in co-creation (as the ultimate determinant of value presence). Thus, the most dependent element for value creation in a viral marketing campaign is the consumer himself. However, in order to understand whether this process can create actual art, value creation from an artistic point of view needs to be investigated and compared.

**Value in Art**

Where does the value of an artwork really come from? Is it attributed by the viewer or by the artist? In fact, can the attribution of value to an artwork ever be objective? According to Alan Goldman, “to call something an artwork is already to grant it a positive evaluative status. What counts as a genuine work of art must meet some minimal threshold of artistic value, so that minor or mediocre works of art are still better than objects that purport to be works of art, but do not merit that status.” (p.93) As previously described, this paper looks at the concept of art from 5 different artistic perspectives, namely functional, procedural, historically reflexive, historically reflexive functional, and historically reflexive procedural. Each one of those comes with its own definitions of art, art value and a different minimal “threshold of artistic value”.

Figure 13. An Example of a QR Code
Value in Functional Art

As previously mentioned, according to Monroe Beardsley (1938) functional art must have a goal that it tries to achieve. Usually that goal is to provide an aesthetic experience. If it fails to achieve that goal, it is considered to be “bad art”, but art nonetheless. Hence, it is only logical to suggest that if a particular artwork is created without a goal, just for the sake or creation, then it is not art and thus it holds no artistic value whatsoever. But what about “bad art” then? Is it still valuable?

Truth is that the evaluation of art is not an objective process, but rather a matter of perspective that takes into account the viewer’s knowledge and intentions. What might appeal and call for emotions, satisfaction and pleasure from someone, might seem bleak and poor to another. What one might describe as “beautiful”, “touching”, “graceful” and so on, another might describe as “pointless”, “ugly” or “dull”. Thus, when it comes down to evaluating the intrinsic values of a functional work of art and finding the aesthetics, the process is a highly personal matter. Alan Goldman (2003) states that every artwork is unique in the totality of its properties and that one artwork may have properties that another doesn’t, just in the way that an individual may appreciate some of those properties more than others. But ultimately, that doesn’t really matter. In the end it’s all about the aesthetics, regardless of which property they are born from.

Aesthetics itself is a complicated notion though. Marcia Muelder Eaton (2003) talks about an everlasting debate on the topic of the relation between “artistic” and “aesthetic”. She describes three main ways in which it is possible to view the two terms. Firstly, “artistic” and “aesthetic” could mean the same thing, be identical. Thus anything regarded as aesthetic will automatically be a work of art as well. In this way, absolutely everything in our surrounding world could be considered a work of art by someone. A sunset for example would hypothetically be held to the same value as a painting by Leonardo Da Vinci simply because both provide an aesthetic experience for the one who views them. Another possible relation between the two terms is that they are not completely identical, but they intersect. In other words, artistic value is part of aesthetic value, but not everything that has aesthetic value is artistic and hence, a work of art. In this way, the sunset will still provide for an aesthetic experience, but it will be just that- a sunset. The last view suggests that the two terms are completely separate and cannot be used to judge whether something is an artwork and whether it has artistic value. This latter approach though, goes against the functional paradigm and will not be useful for the purpose of this paper. Beardsley himself is a supporter of the second view. He claims that not all aesthetic objects are artworks, but he is adamant that all true artworks hold an aesthetic value. Nevertheless, both the artistic and aesthetic value are of importance. According to Davies, “what is needed for art’s appreciation is attention to the work’s artistic as well as its aesthetic properties” (2006, p.61)

When talking about aesthetic value, it is also important to mention the formalism view on it. Kant, a famous formalist, suggests that the aesthetic pleasure we feel is not simply intrinsic and dependent on our own character, but is a special kind of pleasure, closely related to form and its properties. In other words, something might give us an aesthetic pleasure just because of the way it is arranged. Van Maanen explains what this means: “the subject experiences in the form of a representation the existence of a certain object (a work of art
in this case) and that bestows a sense of satisfaction. The fundamental aspect here is that this pleasure is connected not to a judgment of taste about the object, but to nothing other than the awareness that the object is there” (2009, p.178) Thus, we are once again talking about something that is difficult to measure and pinpoint, but something that is rather very personally experienced.

So after all this, in order to determine whether something is an artwork according to the functional school, we need to determine whether it provides an aesthetic experience. To achieve that, we look to Monroe Beardsley (1958) and his characteristics of an aesthetic experience. He states that such an experience possesses the following elements:

- **Unity**: meaning that all of the artwork’s elements are felt as coherent, complete and integrated in accordance to each other
- **Focus**: meaning that one’s “attention is fully fixed upon the object” (p.527)
- **Active discovery**: meaning that there is an “excitement of meeting a cognitive challenge” (Beardsley, 1982, p.292)
- **Emotional effect**: meaning that “emotion carries the experience forward, binding parts and moments together” (Kupfer, 1983, p.72) Thus, the experience is personal.
- **Felt freedom**: meaning that the experience is not limited by monetary, practical or external rewards, but is rather felt as centered on the “process” than the “arrival” (Jennings, 2002)

When at least two of the above occur simultaneously, there is a presence of a certain aesthetic, and hence artistic, experience present. The more of the characteristics are fulfilled though, the more unique the experience. Van Maanen (2009) reflects on the elements above and expands on them by in addition to simply being aesthetic, a functional artwork can possess up to three types of value, namely intrinsic, extrinsic and semi-intrinsic. The first one, intrinsic, is a “direct effect of the mental engagement with artistic communications” (p.150). In other words, it refers precisely to the presence of aesthetics. Thus, if an artwork is aesthetic, it is valuable. The extrinsic value refers to occasions when the above effect of mental engagement is not present, but there is rather inferred value, e.g. economic value realized through contact with viewers at an aesthetic event, or through relation with other outside factors (e.g. relaxation, social and informative). Lastly, semi-intrinsic value are values not necessarily realized in aesthetic events, but in the case that they are, then they are a direct effect of the mental contact with the artistic expression, i.e. a direct effect of aesthetics. An example of a semi-intrinsic value is the increased knowledge, provided from the artwork. Thus, upon judging whether a viral marketing campaign has aesthetic products (as per Beardsley’s characteristics), it is possible to determine exactly in what particular way those campaigns are valuable by looking at the type of value and functions they provide. Whereas Beardsley’s definitions would provide a more general understanding, Van Maanen’s concepts can give specific insight into the matter when applied.
Unlike with functionalism, where the focus was all on the way an artwork is perceived and experienced by the viewer, here the value comes more from the way that artwork is made. In other words, the main value creators are the artist, the art world and the rules that connect the two. According to Stephen Davies “Something’s being a work of art is a matter of its having a particular status. This status is conferred by a member of the Art world, usually an artist, who has the authority to confer the status in question by virtue of occupying a role within the Art World to which that authority attaches. (1991, p.28) Van Maanen further comments on that definition by saying that in this way, value in proceduralism (or institutionalism) is more general, neutral and objective. In a way, the institutional approach is value free, as it blocks the thinking about the values that the arts contribute to society and the functions they serve. And it’s only logical-value is something intrinsic, intangible and thus a characteristic of functionalism. What’s important in judging an institutional work of art, is rather the status. But when and how does an artist or an Art world member receive the authority to infer status to an artwork?

Becker (1982) was one of the first to address the question of status entitlement in his 1982 publication “Art Worlds”. In it, he mentions that the entitlement of anyone allowed to speak on behalf of the art world “stems from their being recognized by other participants in the cooperative activities through which that world’s work are produced and consumed as the people entitled to do that”. (p.151) Thus the institutional art world is very much cooperative and the status of a work of art truly and only depends on the consensus of those participating in it. Conventions and rules play a crucial role in reaching this consensus as they provide a common evaluative structure. “Conventions suggest the appropriate dimensions of a work and they regulate the relations between artists and audience, specifying the rights and obligations of both” (Van Maanen, 2009, p.14) Naturally this conventions will vary for the different types of art, but it is important to remember that they are there, and unless they are fulfilled, the art world will not reach a consensus and there will be no art.

Thus, in summary it can be said that an object can be defined as institutional art if the people in the field (e.g. other artists, critics or in general those in power) collectively agree that it is such. In contemporary times, we can see that performance art is exponentially being classified as such by art organizations and pioneers in the field, with one of the most vibrant example being Marina Abramovic’s “The Artist is Present”. Performed in the museum of modern art in New York City, it stirred massive interest from critics, artists and pioneers in the field. Here, simply the fact that it was part of the museum’s curriculum infers artistic status to the performance. In addition, more mainstream institutions have also started accepting performance art as such, visible in the example of Tino Seghal’s solo exhibition in the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2010. Thus, proximity and association with an artistic institution is one way to classify a performance as art. Other important figures in the field of performance art include names, such as Claes Oldenburg and Allan Kaprow, who classify the practice of performance art as that embodying elements of “endurance”, “ritual” and “action”, meaning that as artists, they often agree to expose their own bodies to unusual and sometimes even extreme activities. Thus, there is agreement that performance art is something that challenges the limits of the human body. And indeed, many of the professionals in the field agree that the body stands in the centre.
(e.g. Orlan). Furthermore, many of the artists in the field strive to include a deeply provocative, emotional and often controversial element in their works. The general audience is left outside of this relationship, and they are only able to observe the final status of the work, which on the other hand challenges their perceptions of art as a whole. The status of a procedural performance then depends on whether the artists follows the ideas established by other artists in the field in the creation- the usage of rituals and actions, which not only involve, but challenge both the mind and the body in active and unique ways. Thus, professionals in the field agree that performance art is one of the most innovative fields, as it will allow for many actions, not normally associated with art, to be presented as such, as long as they encompass the above described elements of ritual, endurance, action and the human body as a central form of expression.

**Historically Reflexive Value**

In a way, historical reflexiveness relates to institutionalism, as it heavily relies on previous existing art works and guidelines. According to Danto (1973) something cannot become a piece of art unless there is a place for it within the Art world in regard to the prior history of this kind of art production. Thus, a new artwork, which still does not officially have art status, can acquire such if it responds and reflects properly its forbearers, which already have achieved an art status. Nevertheless, an important question arises: how is that connection defined? Davies gives an overview of a few theories, which try to answer the question. According to Levinson (1979, 1989, 1993) if something is regarded to in the way a previous similar work of art has been regarded to, then it is art. Carney (1991, 1994) suggests that it is style (e.g. content, presentation, matter, materials, technique etc.) that unites a past and a new piece of art. On the other hand Carrol (1988) sees the connection in a narrative that unities the new and the old- a narrative, which shows the new work as a natural development and progression of the older one. In the end, Davies concludes that historical reflexiveness is very relative and it depends on culture, as well as the importance of tradition in a certain Art world and raises the problem that historically reflexive definitions and values simply cannot accommodate certain products of art, namely the kind of art that comes first and thus has no predecessors. In the case of art infusion in the shape of performance art, it can be argued that flash mobs are a continuation of the narrative of Boal’s “Invisible Theatre” (1979) and thus their historically reflexive value will come precisely from the evolvement of this narrative.

**Historically Reflexive Functional and Procedural Values**

As history and time evolve, so does theory and practice. Hence, it is possible to suggest that the traditional concepts for both Functionalism and Proceduralism have undergone certain changes.

Whereas with functionalism, the goal of art has been considered to be the conjuring of aesthetics, it is possible that this goal has changed throughout the years. Looking at Boal’s Invisible Theatre (1979) for example, we can see that the main goal was not to provide an aesthetic experience, but rather to raise social awareness. There are many similar examples in modern performance art, which set goals, different from that of aesthetics. An example is Gustav Metzger’s “Auto Destructive Art” (1962) in which objects were destroyed in a violent manner, with the intention of pointing out the threat of a global nuclear disaster (so in
other words, the goal was to raise awareness); or the DramAidE organization in South Africa, which uses performances in order to educate the locals about HIV/AIDS (so in that case, the goal is to provide knowledge). In the case of viral marketing, it can be argued that the goal is to attract attention for the purpose of economic profit for the organization. The following question then arises: is it possible to accept those new goals as determinants of functionalism? Looking at modern performance art, and all the examples described above we see that many professionals in the field indeed use unconventional goals.

As far as proceduralism goes, the rules and conventions that it models the Art world around could have easily changed. As previously demonstrated, mainstream artistic institutions are gradually starting to accept performance art into the catalogues, and thus by itself already establishes a status for the works. A name that needs to be mentioned in this aspect is that of Marina Abramovic, who is one of the main figures, responsible for securing the art status of a performance. But she is not the only one to push the limits and bring new types of acts in the art field. Artists, such as Andy Warhol have revolutionized the way in which ordinary, every-day objects can be seen in new artistic light. Thus, they have altered the status of these objects. Just like with the example for the graffiti mentioned previously, new art scenes are created constantly. Hence, it is plausible to suggest that if it is possible to alter the status of such objects, then it might be possible to consider viral marketing activities and advertising as one of those elements, with altered statuses, just like with Warhol’s work. There are more and more professionals into the field of performance art, each of who brings new approaches and points of view every day. Thus, proceduralism allows for the gradual acceptance (key word being “gradual”) and classification of those approaches (flash mobs being one of them).

Lastly, another important factor responsible for the evolution of art scenes and the way art is perceived are the newly open distribution channels. Due to technology, there are now vastly more ways available to experience and conceive artistic works. Whereas in the past one had to be physically present at a performance, or in a museum, nowadays one can roam virtual museums, download recorded performances, and listen to music online. This has naturally allowed for a great distribution, a greater number of artworks available to the general consumer and a search for new ways to experience those artworks. Thus, the way art functions has evolved. A larger distribution implies the possibility of reaching a larger audience. The new types of art and the new distributions channels have managed to create new groups and users. Lastly, the changes of all these factors have resulted in various collaborations between art and other fields. Art used in viral marketing strategies is one of those collaborations. So thus, it is possible to suggest that functionalism and proceduralism have also changed in order to accommodate all those changes and modern processes.

To sum it all up in the end, classifying or evaluating something as an artwork depends on the point view one will take. Whether one would for aesthetics, status or a historical connection, depends purely on one’s intention and interest. Functionalism is mainly about the message (and in this, it has a striking similarity to one of the most important features of viral marketing), or in other words the “why”. It concerns itself with adding a goal to an artwork, and considers the aesthetical experience to be key. Proceduralism, on the other hand, concerns itself mostly with the “how”- the environment and its structure and conventions. When judging a work from the procedural point of view, one needs to be aware of how professionals and institutions in the field regard similar types of work. The
current state of the modern art performance art world seems to be opening up more and more to unconventional approaches. In the end historical reflexiveness is all about the “when” and the creation of an overarching narrative, spread from the past to the present. It is important that this narrative can still be active, dynamic and developing, which is what allows for the evolvement of functionalism and proceduralism.

So how are all those different types of value- economic and artistic united in WOM strategies and viral marketing? We start investigating the possibility of an artistic value of an economic product by first looking into the phenomenon of art infusion, which brings the two closer together than ever.

**The Phenomenon of Art Infusion**

As previously explained, art infusion is the general influence of the presence of art on consumer perceptions and evaluations of products with which it is associated. (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008, p.379). Art infusion generally has three possible main effects (not exclusively limited to the relationship art-marketing though): the so-called spillover effect, the so-called halo effect and the so-called contagion effect. The first one specifically refers to a situation in which the quality of an object temporarily “spills” over the way another object is perceived. For example, according to a research by Gorn (1982) music can alter a consumer’s perceptions of unrelated products. Listening to music you like, whilst being exposed to a new product directly affects your perception and preference of and to that product. Thus, a certain quality of the liked music has carried on to the unrelated product for the duration of the song. The second one, the halo effect is defined by Hagtvedt & Patrick (2008) as the way in which a work of art could transfer some of its general feeling to another object and give someone the same general feeling from both- thus, they could both be perceived identically, not in shape and form, but rather in experience. Lastly, contagion effects describe the direct or indirect mechanism through which the contact between two objects can lead to a permanent transfer of properties from one to the other. Rozin, Millman & Nemeroff define this permanent transfer as “the essence” that remains in the other object after the end of the contact. An example of a contagion effect could be the bad publicity that a cosmetic company receives from testing on animals- an off-putting factor for numerous customers. Even after the company stops conducting such tests, the customers will not return anymore as the brand in question will be permanently “contaminated”.

Hagtvedt & Patrick (2008) categorize two specific ways in which an artwork can influence marketing:

*Content- dependent influence of art:* Here, it is a very specific work of art that affects the marketing strategy, rather than simply the presence of art. The success of the art infusion effect would vary depending on the consumer’s preference or dislike towards that particular artwork. Hence, a work of art with positive connotations is likely to cause positive product evaluations and perceptions, while one with negative connotations will have the opposite effect. Nevertheless, it should be noted that normally in art theory, the value or function of an artwork is not directly correlated to its content or physical form, but rather to its aesthetic form and its intrinsic value (e.g. Beardsley, 1958). However, such values do not necessarily have to be functional- if the target consumer of the product is for example, a
distinct member of the Art world, then the institutional qualities of the related piece of art could be of importance. A specific case of a content-dependent influence could be found in a Lufthansa campaign, in which they used the famous Mona Lisa image to promote their flights. Thus, individuals who are fond of the painting could be favorable towards flying with Lufthansa simply because the image of Mona Lisa was used, and individuals who do not favor the original aesthetic quality to painting will be less likely to purchase a ticket.

![Figure 14. An example of content-dependent Art Infusion](image)

*Generalized content-independent influence of art:* According to the historical view on art, art is often connected to the heritage of high culture, with connotations of exclusivity, luxury and sophistication (Hoffman, 2002; Margolin, 1992; Martorella, 1996; Shrum, 1996; Tansey & Kleiner, 1996). Thus, it is possible that those qualities could be transferred to the product in question. Here, the specificity of an artwork is less important. It is simply the presence of an artwork that achieves the art infusion effect.

**The Framework**

At this point, after elaborately delving first into the meaning of modern experience marketing, WOM, art and performance definitions, as well as types of value, it is possible to construct a framework, which will allow us to test whether viral marketing strategies (in this case the “Carrie” campaign and the “Coca-Cola” campaign) can produce valuable art, whether they have been art infused and whether they are successful strategies as whole. It
will then be possible to apply the steps of the resulting framework to any other viral marketing strategy of the kind.

The Functional Framework

In order to determine whether viral marketing campaigns are valuable from a functional point of view, we need to look at a few main features: the goal, the aesthetic experience (if any) and the type of value that experience has provided. This can be done by, looking at Beardsley (1958) and Van Mannen (2009). As per functionalism, a work of art needs to have a purpose. Reaching that purpose requires for the artwork to fulfill certain functions. To get more insight into the function of that experience, we can also look for intrinsic, extrinsic and/or semi-intrinsic values (Van Maanen, 2009). This leads to the following connection.

![Figure 15. The Functional Framework](image)

Upon being able to fill the three tables, one can have a clear visual of all elements needed for an object to be judged as art from the functional point of view. Thus if there are at least two functions used to utilize the goal, and in the process least one of the three types of value is created, then there is presence of functional art.

The Procedural Framework

In order for a viral marketing campaign to be judged as procedural, we need to look at three main things: the creator and his/ her status; the opinion of artists on such types performances, and whether the conventions in the field have been followed. Thus, if the creators have artistic status, and/or professionals and critics in the field regard it as art, and/or certain conventions have been followed, then there is presence of institutional art.

The Historically Reflexive Framework

To judge something as a historically reflexive work of art, one needs to look at the connection it has to previous existing and established artworks. If there are such connections present, creating a continuous narrative, then there is presence of historically reflexive art.
The Historically Reflexive Functional & Procedural Frameworks

In order to judge an artworks as Historically Reflexive Functional one needs to look at two main elements: *what is the goal and how it has been achieved*. Hence, the framework used above for establishing functional art, cannot be used as it is only limited to identifying the elements of an aesthetic experience, which is only crucial according to traditional functional views.

For Historically Reflexive Procedural art, one needs to look specifically into the *current context of the art world* and the *professionals* in it. If there seems to be new guidelines and rules established, then it might be possible to determine a work as art from this point of view.

**Art Infusion and Successful Viral Marketing**

After determining whether the viral performances are art as per the different points of view, we can determine whether the art infused viral marketing campaigns are valuable as such. In order to do so, the campaign needs to be judged in a way that determines whether there is an element of valuable co-creation (as the ultimate identification of experience marketing). This will be done by discovering the presence of the following connected elements: Engaging Message → Meaningful Experience → Co-Creation. Each one cannot happen unless the previous one is present. The created framework (to be filled in per case) is as follows:

![Figure 16. Framework for Establishing Value in a Viral Marketing Campaign](image)

Now that we have a better understanding about how to identify the presence of art and the value of a viral marketing campaign, we can apply the frameworks per point of view.
CHAPTER 4.
The Value of Art in Viral Marketing Strategies

This chapter will attempt to answer the question of this paper in a few segments. Firstly we will look into performance and answer what kinds of performances are used in viral marketing. Upon answering that question, art theory and the designated frameworks from above will be applied in order to distinguish whether they are truly examples of valuable art both from the point of view of the art community and the general consumer.

Performance in Viral Marketing Campaigns

As previously demonstrated, various types of performance have been used in the creation of viral marketing campaigns. However, so far we have only analyzed the meaning of performance on its own, separate from its connection to marketing. The main types of performance investigated in this paper are all generally types of what Augusto Boal (1979) calls invisible theatre: rehearsing and performing various acts in public places, such as streets or malls, in front of an unsuspecting and random audience, who perceives what is happening as real. The concept of invisible theatre has evolved into what is now known as flash-mobs: a public performative event and cultural practice, which appropriates the city as its dynamic mise-en-scene, creating an ever-changing scenography of architecture, passers-by and activities (Brezjek, 2010). Originally such events were created by communities, who are eager to promote various social issues and changes- something that the theatre has always done. By taking it out to the streets, one can reach new audiences, who normally wouldn’t tend to visit the theatre a lot and thus wouldn’t be exposed to its messages (Manukonda, 2013). This is precisely one of the reasons that marketing managers have decided to incorporate the invisible theatre approach and the flash mob in their strategies. But the question still remains- are those acts actual valuable art or are they simply commercial tools?

Looking at Carlson’s (2008) traditional statement explaining that performance is a public display of skills, behavior and conduct, then there is no question- invisible theatre and flash mobs are definitely types of performances- not necessarily performance art, but performance nonetheless. Regardless of their purpose- economics, social or artistic, they have certain individuals (actors), displaying a type of “restored behavior” (Schechner, 2004) in front of an audience. There is no need for a physical stage in order to define the actor from the “self” in reality and the “role”, as the street/public location has taken on that task. It is simply the presence of those elements that qualifies them as performances, but not necessarily as theatre. Truth is, a performance doesn’t need to be considered theatre in order to be art and possess artistic value. In this case we are talking about performance art (and according to Schener, theatre is only a subset of that). As seen in Chapter 2 previously, not only traditional theatre is art, but also other kinds of performances (e.g. Marina Abramovic). Thus, as long as there is an element of a conscious “restored” act and an element of theatricality as defined by Diderot, we can talk about performance art- a distinction often used by contemporary modern artists. Hence, flash mobs, regardless of their purpose are indeed types of performance art: a performance art, which has transformed the traditional spectator and turned him into something more - a “spect-actor”
(Boal, 1979). Last, but not least, the title “Invisible Theatre” is limiting and not entirely sufficient anymore-it should be changed to “Invisible Performance”.

Let’s delve into an analysis of the two cases. As previously mentioned, the location for the “Carrie” campaign was a public café somewhere in New York City. A fake wall is set up, hidden cameras are installed, remote-operated props (books, tables, paintings) are spring-loaded and a stuntman is attached to an invisible cord. Thus the regular coffee place it is turned into a “walk-in” set. Nothing is there by accident and every element has a purpose.

![Figure 17. "Carrie" Campaign: Cafe Set Up](image)

In a way, the location is now a traditional stage set, covered in a décor. Actors come in, take their places along the tables and the performance is ready to start. What the performance consists of is a “scary” act of a girl using telekinetic superpowers as if they were real. All that is needed at this point is an audience. As soon as an unsuspecting customer enters, the performance is in motion- the girl gets angry and uses her “mind powers” to throw a man at the wall, knock paintings off the walls and books off the shelves, and move tables, thus giving the customer the impression that he or she is witnessing a true supernatural occurrence.

This is clearly a theatrical performance: there is a stage, and acting space and actors exhibiting “restored behavior” in this space. Furthermore, there is a clear difference between the main actress’ “self” and her “character”, as naturally she doesn’t possess superpowers in reality. In addition, the “Carrie” campaign is above all a very clear example of modern experience marketing, which physically and mentally challenges the consumer
and his senses into a new experience. The reactions shown above in Figure 7 are an obvious indicator of that - the viewers are actively involved in the “message” presented in front of their eyes. The fact that the video has more than 58,000,000 views on YouTube further demonstrates that the video has indeed gone viral. This means that people who saw it online decided to post it on their Facebook (or any other social network) and share it with their networks, friends and family. Thus, we have two different levels of viewers and consumers - the ones who were physically involved in the shooting of the video (the unsuspecting walk-in consumers in the café) and the ones who view the final video at home on their computers and share it further. In this particular case, the first group is more passive, meaning that their presence and re-action (rather than action) is the only thing that is needed in order for the performance and the campaign to occur. The second group is the one that is more active, in the way that they are required to make the effort and pass on the video to other viewers.

The Coca-Cola campaign on the other has also challenged the activity of the consumer, but in a slightly different manner. There, we also have a sort of a set, with the main piece being the special vending machine. As soon as a consumer tries to purchase a Coca-Cola can, he is prompted with a message, telling him that he has 70 seconds to reach Platform 6. In a way, this is the value proposition of the campaign. If he accepts the proposition, he then becomes a co-creator, a co-performer. When he tries to make his way to the designated platform, he realizes there are various obstacles in his way - pre-positioned actors, whose purpose is to stall him, e.g. a beautiful woman talking to him, a pair of works carrying a big piece of glass in his way, a woman walking a group of dogs, etc.

Figure 18. The "Coca-Cola" Campaign Set Up
In this marketing campaign, the consumer is a lot more active than in the “Carrie” one. Whereas then it was about his or her reactions to a given scene, here it is all about their actions. They become a central element of the performance. Thus in the end, they willingly become co-creators and co-performers of the final product. However, in this case, we can’t classify the Coca Cola campaign as a representative of invisible theatre, since it doesn’t fulfill one of its most important characteristics- the audience is aware of what is happening around them, they don’t perceive it as real, but rather as a scripted game. Nevertheless, there is still an element of “restored behavior”, firstly on the side of the prepared actors, and secondly on the side of the consumer, thrust into this unusual reality. By performing all the actions, required to get to the end, actions he would probably never do in real life, he unconsciously exhibits such behavior, thus becoming a performer in a staged performance.

Now that we have established that flash mobs, invisible acts in general and the two cases in this study can be regarded to as performances, we should determine whether they can be considered valuable performance art according to the five definitions of art described above.

**Viral Marketing Performances: The Functional Approach**

The process of determining value in viral marketing and the functional school of art certainly has some similarities. For once, they are both heavily concerned with the message- in viral marketing the message must be highly engaging (Dobele, 2005), whereas in traditional functional art it should pass forward a certain intangible element of aesthetics (Beardsley, 1938). They both provide a certain experience for one or more of the senses. In addition, they are both very personally experienced- one might disregard a certain marketing strategy simply because of a different “taste”, just as one might disregard a work of art in a similar manner. Nevertheless, this does not automatically mean that a viral marketing campaign is valuable both in business and artistic terms.

In order to finally decide whether the “Carrie” campaign and the “Coca-Cola” campaign can be considered art, we should use the framework, designated at the end of Chapter 3. The first step is to determine the goal of the performances. As previously explained, with traditional functionalism it is all about aesthetics and providing and aesthetic experience. Therefore, in this case, already for both campaigns, we can fill in the goal as being that of aesthetics. From them on, deciding whether each one fulfills the definitions of an aesthetic performance is done separately by case. It is important to note though, that in order for most accurate results to be received from applying the framework, it will be best to interview the participants directly, as an aesthetic experience is something very personal and certainly depends on one’s personality and interest. This thesis hypothesizes based on the reactions in the videos of the campaigns, and therefore it may not always reflect the actual reality. This is a limitation of this research.

Looking at Beardsley’s five characteristics of an aesthetic experience, the “Carrie” campaign certainly fulfills at least some of them, at least from the point of view of those customers who were physically present and participated in the shooting of the video. There is a clear element of unity- the performance has a beginning (consumer walking in), a build up (girl getting angry), a climax (girl using superpowers) and an end (girl calming down). Thus, the performance is felt as coherent, logical and complete. There is also an element of focus
from the consumer. His or her attention seems to be completely concentrated on what is happening, as it is naturally, something truly unusual for the reality we are all used to live in. Active discovery is a bit more difficult to judge simply by looking at the video. In a way, yes, there is discovery of the possibility of a new reality, one where supernatural powers are not fictitious. On the other hand, there isn’t really a cognitive challenge present - the viewers simply accept what they see as real (as seen from the reaction photos in Figure 7). Nevertheless, some might find it more challenging to deal with such a reality than other, which makes this characteristic quite personal and thus, almost impossible to define without an interview. As far as emotional effect, there certainly seems to be some - the viewers’ shocked and unbelieving faces are an indication of that. However, once again, in order to find out what emotion exactly is being felt (e.g. fear, excitement, panic etc.), one will need to talk to the viewers directly. Lastly, the requirement for felt freedom is definitely there, to the point where during the performance, the consumer is not aware of the fact that he or she is watching a performance. Thus, they perceive it as part of reality, without inferred borders and limitations.

The other type of audience, the one watching the video at home experiences things a bit differently. They can still witness the element of unity and there is still supposed focus from their side (if they chose themselves to observe the whole video), although it is a bit more debatable whether they experience active discovery, emotions and freedom. Since they are a bit more distant from the performance, it might not be possible for them to get as emotionally and cognitively involved in it. Knowing that it is part of a viral marketing campaign from the start, there isn’t really an element of felt freedom present, as they are aware of the limitations of the act from beforehand.

All in all, it can be said that the “Carrie” campaign seems to mostly fulfill Beardsley’s characteristics of an aesthetic experience, some probably better than others. Since, it is required for at least two to be fulfilled (and in this case, they are both for the participants and the audience at home), we can say that the performance has positively brought on an aesthetic experience (thus, fulfilling the set goal), which then classifies it as a form of art from the functional point of view. As such, it also carries certain elements of value.

As Van Maanen (2009) explains, there are three types of value an aesthetic work can bring - intrinsic, extrinsic and semi-intrinsic. In the case of “Carrie”, there is definitely established intrinsic value. Since intrinsic value simply comes from the fact that there is an aesthetic experience (which, we just identified as present), then such value is also present in the performance. Extrinsic value however doesn’t seem to be present, at least for the participants on location, as they don’t have anything to infer it from, since they are not consciously viewing the performance as an art performance. However, for the viewers at home, there might be an element of extrinsic value, inferred from the fact that the campaign advertises a film. Thus, it is possible for them to perceive the viral advertisement as a by-product of the film. Lastly, a type of semi-intrinsic value in this case, can be people buying tickets for the release of the advertised film, because of a peak in their interest during the campaign. Thus, the performance has had a certain effect on them - raising their interest in addition to providing them with an aesthetic experience.

In the end, the results from analyzing the “Carrie” campaign can be found and the filled in framework below, both from the point of view of the audience physically participating in the
campaign, and from the point of view of the audience, viewing and sharing the video from home.

Applying the analysis to the “Coca-Cola” campaign, we see that some things seem to be a bit different. The goal here is the same- to bring an aesthetic experience. Looking at Beardsley’s five characteristics, we see that the element of unity is also present- the performance has a clear beginning (the message on the vending machine), a middle (the consumer running towards platform 7) and an end (the consumer reaching the desired destination). Thus, once again the performance develops in a structured way, with a clear destination and purpose. The element of focus also seems to be present- the consumers need to have their attention fully “in the game” in order to succeed and they take in every element from the experience- the accompanying music, the actors, the props etc. For the consumers participating physically, the factor of Active Discovery is a lot clearer here- the consumer is actively challenged to complete the task at hand (get to the end of the track). For the viewer at home, the element of active discovery is probably once again a bit less present, since due to previous experiences he is more aware of what to expect from such a campaign. In addition, all he is required to do is observe and share, not discover. As far as the emotional effect goes, it would be once again difficult to measure. For the physical participants, there are probably high levels of excitement and determination present, due to the challenge at hand. For the viewer at home, it would depend on his personal interest and enjoyment from similar campaigns, and in this case, the James Bond franchise. Lastly, the element of felt freedom is also indefinable without a further interview for both groups. Unlike in the “Carrie” campaign, here the active participants are aware they are part of a pre-organized challenge. Thus, in order to participate they have to accept certain limitations- e.g. there is only route to the platform they need to reach. For the home viewers, the limitations are present in the sense that they knowingly involve themselves in the act of watching of a commercial, knowing that its ultimate purpose is to attract their attention for monetary purposes. Thus, their experiences might be influenced by that knowledge.
As far as values, the situation seems to be mostly mimicking the one in “Carrie”. If this is indeed an aesthetic experience as per Beardsley’s characteristics, then we can immediately talk about the presence of an intrinsic value, expressed in the aesthetics. Extrinsic value now though, will not only be present for the home audience (who is aware of the connections of the performance with Coca-Cola and specifically James Bond from the very beginning), but also for the actual participants, who are equally aware from the very beginning of the act. Lastly, semi-intrinsic value is created if the campaign and performance has been successful as a tool to create an aesthetic experience and simultaneously raise interest and heighten attention. The filled up framework for the “Coca-Cola” campaign is shown in the following figure.

![Figure 20. The Functional Framework Applied to the “Coca-Cola” Campaign](image)

In the end, based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that the two campaigns have indeed produced functional art and hence, that viral marketing campaigns are able to produce art in general. The most important element in determining how and why per case, comes from identifying the presence or absence of an aesthetic experience and the values it brings forward. The success of such an artwork though, is also very dependent on the viewer’s personal taste, as aesthetics is essentially something very personally experienced. Horror fans may have enjoyed the “Carrie” campaign a lot more than non-fans, just as action movie fans would have enjoyed the “Coca-Cola” campaign a lot more than others. Nevertheless, even though this part is a matter of taste, the performance is still an artwork.

**Viral Marketing Performances: The Procedural Approach**

The most vital elements for identifying something as procedural art are the status inferred to the work by its author, the art world directed procedures used in making that particular artwork what it is, and the way professionals and critics in the field refer to it.

The actual creators of the “Carrie” supernatural performance are not artists by title. They are most probably marketers and engineers. The marketers came up with the idea to shoot an invisible theatre campaign, whilst the engineers figured out a way to make it physically
happen (by finding appropriate technology and technical methods to bring it to reality). Thus, it is immediately clear that the conceivers are not members of the Art world and hence possess no artistic status in it. According to Davies, a work’s creators and the position they occupy in the art world infer the status of an artwork to it. Then it is immediately clear that at this point the “Carrie” performance cannot be considered art from a procedural perspective, as its authors have no artistic status to infer to it.

However, what if we look at the guidelines, conventions and rules? According to van Maanen (2009) conventions can also create a general framework and define the relationships between artists and audiences. Essentially, the “Carrie” campaign fulfills the traditional definition of invisible theatre: a public, planned, scripted and rehearsed event, which does not allow the audience to know it is “fake” (Boal, 1979). Thus, there are certain artistic conventions that apply to it. In addition, if we assume that marketing has gotten so creative that now it is a form of “art as craft” in itself, then we could say it has managed to create a very specific and new art world. Hence, in a way it is possible we could consider the “Carrie” campaign as a valuable product in this hybrid art world, as it follows rules and guidelines established both in marketing literature (experience marketing theory) and art literature (invisible theatre literature). It all depends on our point of view- whether we consider the author status as a defining factor, or the presence of conventions as such.

Despite all of this though, most traditional institutionally established artists would probably disagree with calling the campaign valuable art, as they would require both point of views to be fulfilled. Hence, we can’t really define this as a valuable form of institutional art. There is no cooperative consensus and thus, there is no art. But perhaps this is just the case with the “Carrie” campaign. Let’s investigate the other case, a different kind of flash mob and see if it might be possible to call it institutional art.

The Coca Cola marketing described above takes on a slightly different approach in staging a performance. The stage in this case is a public train station and the central piece in that stage is a special Coca Cola vending machine. When a customer attempts to purchase a Coca-Cola can from the machine, he or she is prompted with a message claiming they have “70 seconds to get to platform 6” and if they do- they will win free tickets to the premiere of the latest James Bond movie. Up until this point, none of the participants suspect there is something out of the ordinary happening, but it is at this point that they realize they are in sort of a game. This is the moment when the campaign sends them their value proposition- they can now choose whether to accept that value proposition and play along, or disregard it and move on. If they accept, they have 70 seconds to run from their current location to the designated platform. However, it is not as simple as that- there are various obstacles on the way that they have to overcome. In this marketing campaign, the consumer is a lot more active than in the “Carrie” one. Whereas then it was about his or her reactions to a given scene, here it is all about their actions. They become a central element of the performance. Thus in the end, they willingly become co-creators of the final product. However, in this case, we can’t classify the Coca Cola campaign as a representative of invisible theatre, since it doesn’t fulfill one of its most important characteristics- the audience is aware of what is happening around them, they don’t perceive it as real, but rather as a scripted game. Thus, the little artistic status it had, cannot be accepted according to Boal’s definition. The campaign is indeed a type of performance, but a performance valuable in viral marketing terms (it involves experiences, it has an engaging message, it has more than 10,000,000
online views), but it has no artistic merit (no status inferred, no artistic conventions followed). Therefore, the Coca Cola James Bond campaign is also not valuable procedural art.

**Viral Marketing Performances: The Historically Reflexive Approach**

The very first official flash mob was conceived in Manhattan, New York in 2003 in the home furnishing section of Macy’s department store (Nicholson, 2005). It did not have a commercial, but it was rather done for entertainment. It consisted of a big group of people walking into the store and informing collectively to the sales people that they all live in a free-love community and that they want to buy one “love rug”. The mob lasted for about 10 minutes, after which everyone dispersed. The main problem with assessing a viral marketing strategy according to the historically reflexive approach is the fact that flash mobs as a whole, and flash mobs as viral marketing tools have not been around for very long and thus do not have a big history. One might even say that their status as art (if any) is still in a “processing” stage. Hence, it might be difficult to infer artistic quality based on previous examples. The concept of viral marketing is a type of word of mouth, which on its own has existed for thousands of years so it can surely be connected to it. However, as a concept, traditional word of mouth does not bear any artistic value and thus attempting to infer artistic value from this connection is fruitless. Nevertheless, the essence of viral marketing is Boal’s concept of invisible theatre.

If we look past the commercial side to it, the “Carrie” campaign for example is truly an invisible theatre performance- it involves actors performing a certain scene in a public location, whilst the “audience” is unaware of the fact that what they are observing is a performance. Despite the fact that in its original conception invisible theatre was used to demonstrate oppression in the every-day life of a person, one can argue that flash mobs are a natural evolvement of that concept, so that other emotions and concepts can be demonstrated (even pure entertainment). This evolvement can be seen as the narrative Carrol (1988) talks about- a narrative expressing a natural progression from an old style to a new style.

The Coca-Cola campaign is a bit of a different case, since there the viewer himself becomes part of the performance. This differs from the “Invisible Theatre” concept in the way that in Boal’s “Invisible Theatre”, the performers were only prepared actors and it was just the surrounding architecture that became part of it, rather than the spectator. Therefore, we can’t classify the “Coca-Cola” campaign as historically reflexive art, but rather as a new hybrid between invisible theatre and a physical challenge. Thus, it could be one of the first in its field, and as such it’s impossible to infer historic value to it.

In conclusion, it is possible to view flash mob performances used in viral marketing campaigns as historically reflexive art, firstly by their connection to invisible theatre (and according to Levinson, 1979, if something is regarded to in the way a previous similar work of art has been regarded to, then it is art), and secondly by regarding to them as natural progression to invisible theatre. Nevertheless, the creation of this historical narrative has to be done per case and can’t be generalized due to the vastly different constructions of flash mobs.
So far, we have seen that the traditional functionalist approach does allow for viral marketing flash mob campaigns to produce a type of art in certain cases. Nevertheless, their value is not absolute. Just like everything else though, theories evolve and allow for the accommodation for new definitions, new practices and new conventions. So-called modern art for example is typical for the period between 1860 and 1970 and it is art in which traditional definitions have been pushed aside in favor of new and more experimental approaches (Gombrich, 1958). It was followed by the development of Post-modern art and Contemporary art, which both expanded on the idea of experimentalism. Using media and various installations for instance, became truly popular for the first time in the period of post-modern art, and more importantly- so did Performance art as a concept (Desmond, 2011). Balme (2004) explains that theatre has grown to the point where technology is a crucial part of its presentation and defines three main areas: video art, multimedia theatre and digital Internet performances. The idea that technology is now such a vital part of something so classical as theatre, surely implies that it is possible that the functional and procedural views on art to have evolved as well.

The core of functionalism has always been to provide a satisfying aesthetic experience. However, with all the current developments, new procedures and new distribution channels, art may have found different goals. As previously demonstrated, there are artists who have found goals such as raising awareness for an issue (e.g. Gustav Metzger), or providing knowledge (the DramAiD organization). In the case of art used in viral marketing campaigns, the goal is to firstly, advertise and send a message, and secondly, involve the viewer actively by providing him with never before felt experiences. It is precisely this activity that adds a new and special element to art. This is precisely what Prahalad & Ramaswamy meant in their explanation of the DART principle- the consumer is no longer a passive observer; he is a co-creator, a co-artist in a sense. Hence, the goal of art has changed- it not simply about supplying an aesthetic passive satisfaction, it is about supplying a one of a kind experience. If that experience truly makes a genuine impact on the viewer, then it is successful. In that sense, historically reflexive functionalism would indeed define performance art and flash mobs in viral marketing campaigns, such as the “Carrie” campaign or the Coca Cola one, as art.

Proceduralism on the other hand, has always been concerned with the status of the creator and especially his place in the art world. Nevertheless, the art world that we know today is not the same art world that we knew say a century ago. As previously explained, its procedures, distribution channels, outcomes and contexts have evolved in order to reflect the modern time. The new procedures and types of art have naturally created new rules and guidelines to be followed. Hence, it is possible to suggest that many types of artists who wouldn’t have originally acquired valuable status within the art world, can now achieve such a position. An example again is the graffiti. Originally they were just a form of vandalism, but nowadays numerous individuals view it as a type of modern art. Hence, if the art world can create a place for graffiti artists, then it should be able to create a niche place for performance art in viral marketing campaigns. In that case, a historically reflexive proceduralism view is likely to define the “Carrie” campaign, the “Coca-Cola” campaign and similar flash mobs created for business purposes as a type of art. From then on, whether it is “good” or “bad” depends purely on the taste of the observer.
**Viral Marketing: Art Infusion**

After seeing how the different art schools can consider viral marketing art as valuable from their point of view, let’s look at it from the point of view of the consumer. Hagtvedt & Patrick (2008) claimed previously that the phenomenon of art infusion would only work if the artwork is truly perceived as art and simultaneously associated with positive connotations and experiences. As mentioned, there are two types of art infusion—content dependent, and content independent. The main examples used in this paper, “Carrie” and Coca Cola, respectively refer to both of those and thus provide for two different views on art infusion from the consumer’s perspective.

As previously mentioned, in the case of viral marketing, the consumers are split into two sub-groups: those who are physically present at the performance, and those who view the ready filmed and edited product from their home. Even though the two groups have certain similarities in their experiences, there are still some elements that differ due to their different positions.

The unsuspecting individuals in the “Carrie” campaign probably did not consciously view their experience as art upon understanding what they witnessed was staged, but rather as a prank. Nevertheless, they did experience certain feelings and emotions, which they inferred to the advertised product. In this case, those feelings were probably of shock and horror—something, which a horror movie such as “Carrie” should attempt to communicate to its viewers. If the viewers are naturally inclined to like such experience, then the campaign would have been impactful and they would have been even more positively inclined to see the film. The whole fictional world of the film would have been felt as more real and closer. However, in invisible theatre and invisible performances, one is not aware that he or she is viewing an artwork and thus, he can’t attach an artistic meaning to it. This means that viewers will not be influenced by the presence of a specific artwork or experience, but rather simply by the presence of a new experience, whatever it may be.

As far as the viewers at home go, they are aware from the beginning that they are watching a staged act. Once again, if they are inclined to like the adrenaline rush from watching horror movies, then they might be inclined to enjoy the campaign, as it would truly demonstrate what it would be like for supernatural powers to be real. Nevertheless, they are aware that this is a commercial for an upcoming film. Hence, in their case, the campaign provides a more content-dependent influence. Thus, it is possible for them to attach artistic value to the performance, even though in reality, such a viewer is more likely to be affected just by the fact that the film is advertised in such a new and original way, rather than the fact that what he views is performance art specifically. Thus, depending on taste, a generalized content-independent art infused campaign will be successful because of the active art product it offers, regardless of whether a participant or a viewer realizes that what they are seeing is a work of art.

The Coca Cola campaign on the other hand provides a content-dependent influence for both the participants on location and the ones at home. From the very beginning participants are aware they are now a part of a campaign connected to the iconic James Bond and it is their choice whether they would play along or not. Same goes for the viewers-
if they are fans of the franchise, then they are more likely to enjoy the campaign and more likely to favourably identify a Coca-Cola product with the James Bond image. Thus, if both audiences have a positive connotation towards the Bond franchise, then the campaign would be a success.

This creates an interesting contradiction between the points of view on art from the schools of art’s point of views and the customers’ point of view. According to both views, a viral marketing performance could be valuable, but for different reasons- in the art world for its artistic merit, whereas within the consumer’s perspective, simply for the fact that the advertising campaign in question is different from a traditional TV commercial or a billboard photo. Thus, in order for art infusion to work, the consumer does not necessarily need to be aware of it.

Now that we have seen that it is possible for the two campaigns to produce art, and that they are both art infused, let’s specifically investigate whether the final art infused product is valuable in marketing terms.

**A Marketing Evaluation**

In order to decide whether “Carrie” and “Coca-Cola” have indeed been successful in their art infusion and influence on consumers, we can apply the marketing framework from Chapter 3. Like previously explained, in order for the campaign to have been successful it needs to follow the structure of an *Engaging Message*, bringing forward a *Meaningful Experience*, bringing forward *Co-Creation*.

With “Carrie”, there certainly is an engaging message present, as per Dobele’s (2005) characteristics. The campaign is innovative and entertaining and suggests the idea that the filmmakers are innovative and try to reflect the interests in current pop-culture. Thus, the movie itself is likely to be reflecting those. The advertisement is attached to an easily distinguishable product- a film, produced by a very credible source- a well-known film studio. Even though the participants on location might not be aware of that in the beginning, they are most probably informed later on, after the end of the performance. The target audience for “Carrie” is surely fans of horror films and horror books (for the movie is based on a classic novel by the renown author Stephen King). Naturally, it is logical to suggest that it will be more effective for people specifically interested in the matter, but whether the participants are such, is difficult to determine from watching the video. Nevertheless, the fact that it has more than 10,000,000 online indicates that there are enough interested people, who have watched it and probably referred to their friends and families. Lastly, technology is used both in the construction of the advertisement, and also in its sharing. Thus, it can be said that “Carrie” has put forward an engaging enough message.

In order for that message to have created a meaningful experience, we need to distinguish Eversmann’s four dimensions in it. For the participants on location, the perceptual dimension (being “overwhelmed by the experience) seems to be present, as indicated by their reactions and faces. They are witnessing the idea of a completely new and unnatural reality, completely surrounding them and for a few minutes, suggesting an overwhelming change to the world, as they know it. For the viewers at home, this dimension is perhaps a
lot less powerful, since they are aware of the fact that what they are seeing is a performance and thus has no everlasting effects on their surroundings. The cognitive dimensions seems to be activated due to the fact that the performance has a clear structure, as explained before- a beginning (raising interest), a middle (build up of the act) and an end (consequences of the “supernatural” element). Therefore, it is possible to be perceived as a whole. Lastly, there is communication present in the way that both the performers and viewers are part of the campaign- the first by being present on location and on camera, and the second by actively sharing it online. Thus, co-creation is present, as the campaign would not have been possible without the involvement of these two types of consumers. The filled-in framework is then as follows:

![Figure 21. The Viral Marketing Framework applied to the "Carrie" Campaign](image)

In relation to the “Coca-Cola” campaign, one can see that there also seems to be an engaging message present. It also captures imagination by being a creative and unusual way to advertise the products- it’s not every day that one can experience the feeling of James Bond. This feeling can then be inferred to Coca-Cola product, so that every time the consumer purchases the given beverage, he or she will reminisce about the experience and thus the image of the iconic action character will be transferred to the drink. In addition, the message, “Coca Cola is James Bond’s drink” is clear and easily distinguishable as both brands are highly recognizable and credibly as sources. The target audience here is a bit larger than the one in the “Carrie” case, as here the main target audience is not only James Bond fans, but also simply people who like drinking “Coca-Cola” products. Thus, it is a larger pool. Nevertheless, the commercial is most likely to be successful with fans of the Bond franchise. Lastly, it also leverages technology, expressed in the construction of the vending machine, and once again- the distribution channels.

Just like with “Carrie” the perceptual dimension is probably more powerfully experienced by the physical participants than the one at home, as it is more likely that being present on
location will make one feel more “into the atmosphere”. This seems to be an emerging trait in such viral marketing campaigns. Cognition is also certainly there - there is a clear goal for both the actual participants (to fulfil the task) and for the viewers online (to share). The emotional dimension is yet again difficult to judge, as here the reactions of the participants are not as clear as with the “Carrie” commercial. However, just the fact that they participate until the end, suggests the idea that at the least, there is a sense of enjoyment from the act. The millions of online views also suggest the same for the remote viewers. There is a higher level of communication here between the organizers of the campaign and the participants. Clear instructions are given to the unsuspecting consumers on location, and they respond to those instructions by following them through to the end. The communication with the rest of the audience, watching at home, is again expressed in the fact that many of them have probably shared the video (if the number of views are any indication of that at the least). Thus, co-creation is once again present and the campaign is a success due to the planning of the organization and the positive response of the consumers. The filled-in framework in this case is visible below.

![Figure 22. The Viral Marketing Campaign Applied to the "James Bond" Campaign](image)

All in all, assessing an art infused viral marketing campaign as successful, and as an art producer is a holistic process, which involves many factors and points of view. From some of those perspectives, labelling something as “art” is more difficult than others. Considering that viral marketing performances are quite a new development for both marketing and performance concepts, the traditional definitions of functionalism and proceduralism are a bit more difficult (but not impossible) to be adjusted to the cases since they are not designed to reflect the change in times and social values. Historically Reflexive approaches though provide for a bit more freedom in analysing and a larger pool of possible definitions due to the evolution of art structures and functions.

Traditional functionalists would tend to be divided in their view, depending on whether they view “artistic” and “aesthetic” as having the same meaning; traditional proceduralists would tend to not see flash mobs and invisible performances as art due to the lack of a cooperative
consensus; historically reflexive supporters would tend to agree that viral marketing campaigns can produce valuable art based on their relation to invisible theatre; and lastly, contemporary functionalists and proceduralists would tend to agree that the subject in question can be a form of valuable art, reflecting the changes in the functioning and structuring of the art world. Consumers on the other hand would most probably not actively define it as art, but they would still experience its effects. Hence, a viral marketing performance could be valuable, but for different reasons- in the art world for its artistic merit, whereas within the consumer’s perspective, simply for the fact that the advertising campaign in question is different from a traditional TV commercial or a billboard photo. Thus, viral marketing campaigns can technically produce valuable art- both from the point of view of academics and consumers.

CONCLUSION

Frans Haks, a former director of the Groninger Museum once said that he was far more interested in what advertising agencies were doing rather than new alumni of art academies. The evolution of the concepts, notions and ideas in the marketing field shows that he indeed had a right to find such interest in advertising strategies. As demonstrated, marketing has turned, from a static, product-oriented concept, to an ever so creative, dynamic and exciting world, full of opportunities and imagination. Word of Mouth, being one of the most standout examples of this new world of marketing, is not a new concept. In fact, one may even call it ancient. It has been around long before we had notions for marketing, commercializing and Internet. Due to its high speed of communication, it is only natural though that people have evolved to incorporate it in their business strategies. Originally emerging in the 1960s as a subject (Arnd, J, 1967), Word of Mouth Marketing has grown to become one of the most popular and creative ways of advertising- a way, which allows marketers to demonstrate a more creative and exciting approach to business (Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels, 2008). Its success is hardly surprising though. It reflects the latest trends in marketing, and allows for consumers to do something they never had the chance to do before- have active experiences. In the modern economy, experiencing is what it is all about (Petkus, 2002). Schmitt (1999) was the first to give a definition and a setup for marketing strategy in experience marketing and throughout years he has been followed by many marketers and academics (e.g. Kotler, 2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Grunde, 2008; Tynan & McKechnie, 2009 etc.). However, it wasn’t until the 2000s that viral marketing was truly reflected in experience marketing thanks to the rise of importance of the so-called Web 2.0 (Chaffey, 2008).

Web 2.0 itself, is a term used to define technologies, web sites and applications, which all integrate users into the value chain of organizations and help people to network (O’Reilly, 2005; Bauer et al.,2007; Hass et al, 2008). Some of the most popular examples of Web 2.0 are names we all know nowadays, names such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and many more. Web 2.0 has opened up a whole new way for marketers to reach their customers, thus giving birth to the modern version of WOM-word of mouth strategies, relying heavily on their distribution over the internet. Organizations typically employ three main types of internet WOM marketing, namely: viral marketing, referral programs and community marketing (Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels, 2008). There are a lot of definitions and guidelines...
for WOM (Dobele, 2005), but nevertheless one thing is obvious in all three- the consumer plays a key role in bringing them to their success. Viral Marketing, possibly the most widespread one, designs messages whose sole purpose is to be passed on by each receiver, usually electronically or via e-mail. However, in order for an organization to stay “afloat” and manage to send memorable messages and value propositions to their consumers, who would then willingly “spread them around”, the marketers needed to find new ways to reach their goals. Hence, it is only natural that they would look into other fields for inspiration. One of those fields is art.

The phenomenon of Art Infusion proclaims that the presence of an artwork in a marketing campaign can significantly boost a product’s performance (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008). The need for being creative and original though, called for more than just using existing art. It called for creating something new- a new experience. The result was the concept of using invisible theatre and flash mobs- types of performances, which are planned, rehearsed and performed in public places, but without letting the audience realize that what they are seeing is a staged act (Boal, 1974). The result is then filmed and put online for everyone to see and share. In such performances though, it is all about the viewer and his actions and re-actions. This means, that organizations have found a new way of communication with their customers, a way which allowed the customer to become an active co-creator (Tynan & McKechnie, 2009).

Thus viral marketing posed a puzzling question. Can those acts of invisible theatre (which are ultimately for commercial purposes) create valuable art? Art itself is something that has been elusive to define for decades, but essentially there are a few main schools, namely: functional, procedural and historically reflexive (Davies, 1991). Each of those schools characterizes the concept of art in a different way and in addition, this thesis proposes the idea that functionalism and proceduralism can be combined with historical reflexivity in order to create new definitions. Regardless of the point of view one would take, the question of what is art, will forever be controversial. This paper does not really try to define art in a new way, but rather proposes a modern view on it, reflected in viral marketing campaigns. Just like everything else in our lives, art has to evolve and change too (Carrol, 1988).

As seen, assessing something, anything, as art is a long, detailed and holistic process and there are many points of view one can take, some easier to support, some not so much. As mentioned, the more traditional views would probably always be a bit more problematic to apply in modern art experiences. Traditional functionalists would always tend to put the importance of “aesthetics” on top- a fact, which can be considered a bit limiting, especially when it comes down to such advanced and modern approaches, as the ones used in viral marketing campaigns. Nevertheless, traditional functionalism still allows for those performances to be viewed as art, because the effect of a work of art is not and should not be limited by physical limitations. It is felt. It is experienced. It is personal. Just like aesthetics. Therefore, aesthetics could be present everywhere and in everything. It’s a concept that has transcended beyond the physical world and the physical senses of the body. Sometimes it’s just wearing an unrecognizable mask, but that does not mean it’s not there, just like the analysis of the cases of “Carrie” and “Coca-Cola” demonstrated. Thus, the fact that such a modern performance can still be new and conforming to traditionalism at the same time, truly proves how timeless the concept of art can be. Even with
proceduralists, the traditional part of which, would experience more trouble with agreeing that viral marketing produces art, can eventually be persuaded to take a new, fresh look on the environment and assess the qualities and possibilities that those campaigns can offer to the art world. And historically, this has happened numerous times and will continue happening- something obvious from the status of currently very well established artists such as Marina Abramovic or Andy Warhol and many others, whose boldness has changed the rules of the art world, and challenged its limitations- precisely what the concept of flash mobs in general aim to do. Marketers have just been smart enough to “get on board the train” and extract the benefits from this new development, thus creating highly innovative and entertaining marketing campaigns, which would appeal to even broader audiences. This thesis only presented a small glimpse into this endless world. In a more in-depth study, it would certainly be beneficial to conduct personal interviews with the participants in order to determine what their experience has been on a personal level. In addition, as seen viral performances can still differ very much from each other- for example with “Carrie” the viewers were more passive, whereas with “Coca Cola”, they were physically active. Thus, it would be useful to gather more knowledge regarding the variations in performance art used in viral marketing campaigns in particular.

At the very end of it all, after conducting an extensive research for the purpose of this thesis, I personally tend to lean more towards the functional view myself, for I believe that true art is not something material, not something one can touch or taste, or even see. If there were real magic in our world, art would probably come as close to it as possible. As my grandmother used to say: “Art is food for the soul”.
Bibliography


Bell, Clive. (1913) Art. London: Chatto and Windus


Hagtvedt, H. & Patrick, V.. (2008). The Influence of Art Infusion on the Perception and


69-79.


Tolstoy, L (1899) What is art?, Hacket Publishing.


http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/blog/how-going-viral-has-changed-art

http://www.kotlermarketing.com/phil_questions.shtml