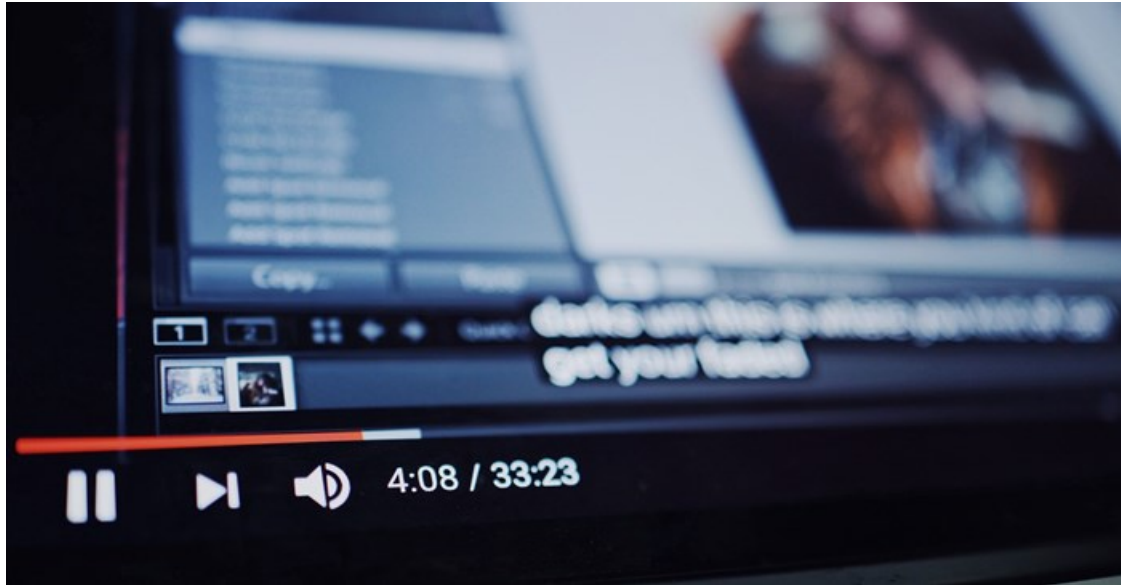


Viral video success in 2018

 By [Jon Ratcliffe](#)

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I believe strongly that the best way to communicate marketing messages today is through data-driven social video on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram.



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This is because the cost per meaningful engagement is lower than any other communications channel available to marketers.

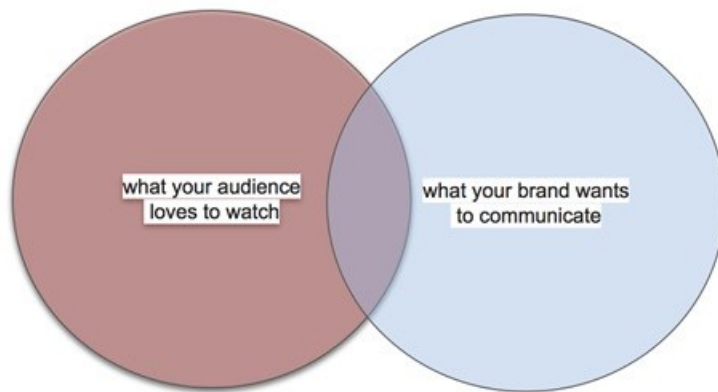
Across platforms like BuzzFeed's recipe platform called Tasty, for example, the average video view time is over 25 seconds and 1 in +-25 people comment like or share their videos on average. That's a 4% engagement rate in an industry where CTR of ads on the web is 0.05% on average or over 1 in 2000. This is all at a price per person you reach which is less than 10% the price of a 1-page magazine ad in most ad markets. So, it is far more engaging and far cheaper. If marketers can achieve this depth of engagement at this price, no marketing channel can match it.

Great video and a strong content strategy

Basically, every news source in the world ran the story that fake news on Facebook swayed opinions enough to win Trump the US election. I believe this is true and it's because as above, you can use the platform to communicate incredibly effectively at very low cost. Marketers in favour of Trump realised this and used it.

Social videos live in a perfect meritocracy where great videos on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram with great distribution strategies will result in a breakout performance. The biggest mistake I see brands making in this space is that they only get one of these two, right. Great video without a strong content strategy or vice versa. These two absolutely have to happen at the same time and when they do, the synergy is massive.

Let's unpack this. What makes great branded content. Best way to look at this is a Venn diagram where on the one side you have "what people love to watch" and on the other, "what brands want to communicate". In the overlap, you find content which has the potential to have massive success online.



Great branded content so often lands on the side of "what brands have to communicate" but completely omits what people love to watch. This often happens in the form of the TVC cut down for social and almost never works. The best measure of this is whether your audience cares enough to share your content with their audience. You will only know this once your content is live but if people are not sharing and commenting, the heuristic is that they don't care and the content is a failure.

Sasko vs. Red Bull

Good well understood example is Red Bull's content strategy. People love to watch the extreme sports video content they create and it's a great fit for the brand positioning. What about closer to home. The most viral video in SA marketing history is this simple recipe video for Sasko. It's great for the brand and people clearly love it because over 600,000 have shared it. Interestingly, Sasko has also created the second most viral video in SA with over 100,000 shares so they clearly get this and their strategy is a winner.

Interestingly, Red Bull's biggest global success of the year is this one with 20k shares.



Certainly, surprising that a SA bread brand trumps this universally respected brand content platform.

Distribution strategy is harder. Here you need deep niche specialists who do just this. Maths geeks and scientists are where you want to look for this skill. It's different on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram but the philosophies are the same. Here are some of the things you have to get right, all at the same time. SEO, Tagging, titles, time of day, day of week, time of year, descriptions, headlines, targeting, data lists, re-marketing lists, length of video, orientation of video, audio, captions, call to actions, organic publishing strat, etc.

Strong distribution strategy

Bottom line is that Facebook, YouTube and Instagram see great marketing success every day on the platforms where millions of people engage with a single piece of content and this success is replicable. Just make sure the content is what people really want to watch and make sure you have a strong distribution strategy and boom!

It's worth getting this space right because its massive and its growing. Globally users are spending over a billion hours on FB most of which is now video and over a billion hours on YouTube on average every day.

Lots of brands around the world realise this and are doubling down, in fact, Facebook and Google together make up more than 20% of total global adspend. So R1 for every R5 spent on marketing anywhere in the world happens with these two companies.

In summary, social video is the best cost per meaningful engagement you can achieve in marketing today. If your content strategy and distribution strategy are both great, you can achieve massive success in this space. Lots of brands around the world understand this and so are spending massive amounts to succeed here.

ABOUT JON RATCLIFFE

Jon is the CEO of engage Video Group, a data-driven, social video publishing business. Jon is also the chairman of the Cape Town branch of the Advertising and Media Association of South Africa (AMASA) and the African representative to the World Economic Forums global agenda council on the global creative economy...

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