ONLINE SHARING PLATFORMS AS A MEDIUM FOR THE EMERGENCE OF VIRAL CONTENT

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Abstract

The research objectives of the paper are to look into the viral phenomenon emerging from online platforms for sharing video, pictures, tweets, GIFs, Facebook posts, and to discuss the emotional element as well as the key categories of the most popular content. The methodology includes reviewing, presenting and categorizing a selection of worldwide viral stories and some that have become popular in the UK and Bulgaria. The main focus is on features and content from YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram that has become viral during 2017. Our findings indicate that there are 9 main categories – Media, Entertainment, Celebrity, Domestic, Empathy, Jokes, Everyday life, Cause, and Politics – that could be distinguished in the explored selection. Another aspect we consider is the emotional effect the viral content has over the online users. We observe three dominant emotional states - positive, negative and ambivalent. The main outcome is that in almost 2/3 of the researched cases the emotion is positive. Future scope of research is

to explore further what effect the viral content has over individuals, how fake content will affect the true viral content and the media agenda and whether media will focus on fake viral content and the consequences of it.

1. Introduction

Viral content originating from online sharing platforms is often included by media in their news agenda. This type of content is a source of information which can be shared, investigated, analysed, followed up, expanded on, etc. Stories are recognized as viral only when they are viewed, shared, liked or commented an excess number of times. This number can vary from hundreds to thousands and millions. In all cases, the main character becomes popular or gains more popularity.

The size of popularity can be looked at different levels from the regional perspective. For a local media covering a small region few hundred hits can be enough to identify content /a story as a viral locally but this may not be enough to reach the national and international level. On the Internet, where geographical borders do not exist, the most popular content is the one viewed from the most people from the total reachable Internet audience. This type of content can easily be seen published or broadcasted on all type of media.

For the purpose of this article, we distinguish two main categories of viral content: 1) specially created to reach the widest possible audience, and 2) which becomes popular by accident or based on the qualities it possesses or not. The viral content from the first category is the basis of the viral marketing (a strategy for distributing content on the Internet).

1.1 What Information The World Is Looking For?

At the beginning of each year, Google officially puts together a short video of the main events from the past year. The video for 2017 "Google – Year In Search 2017", is the seventeenth one produced by the company. The most searched and hot topics worldwide in 2017 are natural disasters – the destructive hurricanes Irma, Hose, Katrina and Maria in Puerto Rico, Florida and Mexico, the terrorist acts in different parts of the world, the hashtag #MeToo against sexual harassment, a number of protests ("The march of the women" against Trump), the solar

eclipse on 21 August, the North Korean racquets, the cryptocurrency Bitcoin, etc. This year, the search for the hurricane Irma was higher than the one for iPhone 8 and iPhone X.

Viral content often emerges in the most interesting topics for the society, prompting online users to share it. Some of the waves in the Web are natural and spontaneous, but others can be manipulated. It is hard to predict how the audience will react – sometimes they do not support noble and sensible causes, and other times they react to ridiculous and meaningless events just because they can mock and have fun.

In the world top 500 sites (March 2018), the first three places are taken by Google, YouTube and Facebook, Twitter is 12th, Instagram – 14th, Vk – 18t, and Linkedin is 29th (The top 500 sites on the web, 2018). In our study, the countries we have taken some of the viral examples from are the UK and Bulgaria. To a great extent they repeat the world's trend, but with their specificity in terms of ethnopsychology. *Google Trends* groups important for the public topics in categories, e.g News, Events, Movies, Sports, Memes, which are extracted from the keywords in the search. The most desired information in Bulgaria is about the tennis player Grigor Dimitrov, elections, Miss Bulgaria, VIP Brother and iPhone 8. People in the UK are most interested in information about Meghan Markle, iPhone 8, the hurricane Irma, fidget spinner, the terrorist act at Manchester Arena, Grenfell Tower, North Korea, Las Vegas shooting, Harvey Weinstein, and Kevin Spacey. Just for comparison, these topics are also a priority in the USA but adding the topics about the eclipse and the price of bitcoin (Godinata v Google tarsene, 2017).

2. Recent Theories

Jonah Berger and Katherine Milkman study how content characteristics affect virility. They analyse 7000 New York Times articles to find what the role of the emotions in the process is. Their results indicate that "positive content is more viral than negative content, but the relationship between emotion and social transmission is more complex than valence alone" (Berger & Milkman, 2011). They say that the virality is partially driven by physiological arousal. According to them, "content that evokes high-arousal positive (awe) or negative (anger or anxiety) emotions is more viral" and "content that evokes low-arousal, or deactivating, emotions (e.g., sadness) is less viral" (Berger & Milkman, 2011).

The Guardian in "The DNA of Viral Content" presents Jonah Berger's theory about six strains of the viral content. The science behind why people share specific content more than others is called Psychology of Social Transmission. After analysis of thousands of pieces of

online content, Jonah Berger argues that there are "six key steps to crafting contagious content": social currency, triggers, emotion, public, practical value, and stories (Berger, 2014).

Every Social Network (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram) has its own features which affect the content specifications, presentation, and functions. Content becomes viral when is shared, liked, commented enough times (sometimes more, other times less) to become popular. Social networks have their own specifications for facilitating the actions of online users that turn content into viral.

2.1 What Makes Content Viral On the Internet – Factors

2.1.1 Video

According to Neil Patel in "How to Create Super Shareable Video Content" "sometimes luck decides which videos go viral, but you can do plenty of things to get luck on your side" (Patel, 2017). He says that the video needs to offer content which people will be willing to share, something which appeals for example to their "conscience, their interests, or their heartstrings". Patel also recognizes the role of emotion and emotional reaction like laughter, joy, sadness, anger, or a call to action. Neil Patel also points out that the content has better chances if it doesn't look like "infomercial" because people do not like the feeling that they are "brainwashed". Using "call for action" is also important to him – in the video or in the description people can be encouraged to share, reviews, etc. (Patel, 2017).

2.1.2 Twitter

Many practitioners and researchers are looking into what people can do to make their message go viral specifically on Twitter. According to Dan Zarrella, social media scientist for HubSpot, the following factors need to be taken into account (Zarella, 2009): Call for action; Timing; Links; Social proof; and Value. Garin Kilpatrik (Kilpatrick, 2017), a social media strategist and blogger, also share tactics how a tweet to become viral. He believes that sharing the tweet by influencers will contribute to the popularity. Kilpatrik points out that tweets concerning breaking news gain a lot of attention.

Maximilian Jenders, Gjergji Kasneci, and Felix Naumann in "Analysing and Predicting viral tweets" examine what makes Twitter users re-tweet and what is the possibility of prediction which content will go viral (Jenders, Kasneci, & Naumann, 2013). They research different features influencing the retweet frequency. They have looked into the number of followers and have found out that "the average number of re-tweets (per tweet) grows over-proportionally with

the number of followers". Another two key aspects they analyse are *hashtags* (keywords) and *mentions*. Here they conclude that "tweets containing 1 to 3 hashtags are more likely to be retweeted than tweets without hashtags". But if the number of hashtags in a tweet grows, "the expected number of retweets decreases". The same is valid for mentions. Another important factor is the sentiment. The researchers look over tweets with a positive and negative sentiment. The findings show that the number of tweets with a positive valence is greater than those with negative valence. But when talking about re-tweets it is valid the totally opposite – "for the negative sentiment valence, the fraction of retweets is higher than that of tweets, while it is the opposite for the positive sentiment valence".

Soroush Vosoughi, Deb Roy, and Sinan Aral, researchers at MIT, investigated over 126 000 news (rumour cascades) tweeted by 3 million people more than 4.5 million times between 2006-2017. In their research, they classify the news as true or false using information from six independent fact-checking organizations. They find out that "falsehood diffused significantly farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth in all categories of information, and the effects were more pronounced for false political news than for false news about terrorism, natural disasters, science, urban legends, or financial information." (Vosoughi, Roy, & Arak, 2018). They also say that false stories inspire fear, disgust, and surprise in replies, and true stories – anticipation, sadness, joy, and trust. According to the research true stories are rarely dispersed to more than 1000 people while false ones can reach between 1000-100000.

2.1.3 Facebook

Over the past three years, BuzzFeed News has maintained lists of sites publishing fake stories. They use the "social analytics service BuzzSumo to identify the top-performing Facebook content from 167 websites that entirely or consistently publish articles" with a completely false content. Their analysis shows that the top 50 most viral fake news stories of Facebook for 2017 have generated more total shares, reactions, and comments than those for 2016 – 23.5 million v/s 21.5 million total interactions. When analysing the top viral categories of fake content (crime, politics, medical, world, business) in 2016 they discover that the dominant one is US politics – 23 out of the top 50 stories. In 2017, only 11 of the top 50 were about politics and instead the category crime seems to have taken the lead with 20 stories (Silverman, Lytvynenko, & Pham, 2017).

2.1.4 Instagram

The We Are Flint survey suggests that 43.1 million people use social media, which is 89% of the UK population. According to the research, the usage of the social network has increased in the last three years – from 29% in 2016, followed by 35% in 2017 and reaching 41% in 2018. Instagram is the fourth most used social media in the UK among 18-24 years old, fifth among the age group 25-34, sixth for users between 35-44 years. The survey clearly shows that Instagram is used mainly by young people aged 24 or below, and the dominating gender of the users is female – 48% v/s 35% man (Social 2018 Main Findings, 2018).

3. Research Objectives

Looking into most shared stories allows us to try understanding what excites the online users the most and analyse even further what type of content tend to become viral. It looks like the emotional factor appears very strong in all the stories. Studying the behavior of the audience is key not only for viral marketing science but to all media as well. Viral content finds its way quickly to the media agenda and often brings popularity for the media as well. The ranking of the most shared stories is covered immediately after the announcement by all type of media and this is another opportunity to review and analyse that phenomenon.

4. Viral Content on Online Social Platforms

4.1 Viral Video

Viral video is among the most popular viral content online. It is widely recognized today that it can be a strategy of gaining people's attention and many practitioners, researchers, and scientists try to find the answer what exactly makes a video to go viral.

4.1.1 How to Make Viral Videos

Making viral videos for online sharing platforms has turned into a whole science combining knowledge about technical production and editing of videos, the functioning of social networks, the psychology of the online user and online marketing. Many specialists and practitioners analyse viral videos in order to come up with a formula for preparing this such a desired product. Titles on this topic vary from tips how to make a viral video in few steps (e.g. 4, 10, 11, 15, etc.) through what are the main rules and qualities, advises on how to improve your viral video and how to make money from it. Also, some look at the viral video phenomenon in the context of a chosen social media and provide even more specific tips.

4.1.2 Top 10 Viral Youtube Videos 2017

As every year, YouTube revealed its list of the most popular videos in 2017 as well. The ranking reflects both significant events from the past year and also what somehow had interested people around the world. With the combined help of social networks and media, the videos have reached a huge number of online users, in some cases hundreds of millions. This versatile video content demonstrates what online users are looking for. Having reached this serious level of popularity, the following 10 videos have earned their own place among the most successful videos in the YouTube's history (Eadicicco, 2017) (See Table 1 – Number 1 to 10).

4.1.3 Media Selection of Top Viral Videos – *Scottish Sun*

Publishing news, reportages or interviews based on viral content is a way not only media to be up-to-date with the audience interests but to keep their attention and to reach new online users. Some media even publish their own selection on the most popular viral video. For example, the Scottish Sun's published an article in December 2017 with top 12 Scottish video that went viral (Murray, 2017). This is their own choice which aims to entertain readers. They clarify that this is not a classification and the videos are not in any particular order. They have included 12 viral videos (See Table 1 – Numbers 11 to 22).

4.1.4 The Top Memes and Viral Videos of 2017 – BBC Monthly Ranking

David Lee, a technology reporter, publishes the article "The top memes and viral videos of 2017" on bbc.co.uk where he offers a list of "the most active participants of the Internet in 2017" by month (Lee, 2017). He says that these are "the people that, whether intentionally or not (mostly not), provided laughs, relief or inspiration – and sometimes all three". Here are few examples what he included in his list (See Table 1 – Numbers 23 to 32). David Lee had written similar articles about the top memes and viral videos in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 which are also posted on the BBC news website.

4.1.5 Media Selection of Top Viral Videos in Bulgaria – Vbox7.Com Rating

Vbox7.com, a website for entertaining video, published its yearly classification at the end of 2017. The most viewed video content during the year is divided into 5 main categories – 1) Top 100, 2) Web Series and Vloggers, 3) News and Events, 4) Bulgarian Pop and Rap music, and 5) Pop Folk music (See Table 1 – Numbers 33-39). Vbox7.com registers over 3.2 million unique users per month. Statistics show that 250,000 of them visit the website every day and

watch more than 63,000 hours video, with ladies being more active than gentlemen. Over 60% of all users of Vbox7.com watch video on their mobile devices.

4.2 Viral Tweets

Twitter is one of the most popular online sharing platforms and one of the biggest sources of viral content along with YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. In this section, we look at what makes tweets viral and present some examples of Twitter viral content from 2017. These examples are used in the viral content category analysis presented in the final part of this paper.

4.2.1 Viral Tweets – Examples

The examples posed below are the top 9 most shared tweets on Twitter 2017, the most popular tweets in the UK, and a summary site where popular tweets in Bulgaria can be found.

4.2.2 Top 9 Most Shared Tweets on Twitter In 2017

All tweets tell a unique story that many media from all over the world shared. Three tweets of Barack Obama have made it to the official ranking for most shared tweets in 2017. Similarly to YouTube, Twitter also publishes information about the most shared posts every year. In December 2017, Twitter announced officially the most shared tweets for the year [Top 9 the most retweeted…, 2017]. (See the stories in Table 1 – Numbers 40 to 48).

4.2.3 Most Popular Tweets in the UK In 2017

The ranking of the most popular tweets in the UK in 2017 (Whelan, 2017) is slightly different from the world classification. (See Top 10 in Table 1 – Numbers 49 to 55).

All of the messages on Twitter are accompanied by pictures or video. Some of the tweets that had become the most shared in the UK in 2017 are made by already popular people (e.g Barack Obama, Ariana Grande, etc.), others are act of raising awareness about a significant problem (e.g cancer, suicide, etc.), third contain the fun element (free chicken nuggets).

4.2.4 Most Popular Tweets in Bulgaria

The website https://twitter.com/twitganda collects the best Bulgarian tweets. Most often they parody events from the Bulgarian reality especially, from the social-political life.

4.3 Viral Facebook Content

At the end of June 2017, Facebook had 2.01 billion users. Adding an average of 20 million new users each month, by December, the active network becomes 2.13 billion, which is 14% increase from the previous year, with 1.4 billion daily active audiences around the world

(according to data from Facebook MAUs). This is nearly one-third of the world's population and that fact hides its own risks (Shahid & Sumbul, 2017).

In Europe, over 327 million people are registered on Facebook. The largest proportion of users of the social network is made of people between 25 and 34 years of age which is 29.7%. Statistics show that on average 5 new profiles are created every second. Bulgarian users of the social network are 3,600,000. Approximately 1 800 000 of them are men (1 200 000 daily users) and the same number are women (1 300 000 daily users). The We Are Flint survey shows that Facebook and YouTube are the most used online sharing platforms in the UK when compared with another 17 social networks. Both receive equal 79% of the researched audience (Social 2018 Main Findings, 2018).

4.3.1 Most Shared Content and Viral Posts on Facebook 2017 – Buzzsumo

Buzzsumo has reviewed two billion articles and Facebook posts published in 2017 and have looked into the most shared content on Facebook (articles, videos, and blog posts) as well as the top viral Facebook posts (Rayson, 2017). Buzzsumo's top 10 classification discovers that music videos take three of the places and political posts – two. See the actual ranking in Table 1 – Numbers 56 to 64.

Buzzsumo also publishes a classification of the top 20 most viral posts on Facebook. 17 of them were videos and the most popular topics were practical hacks, food recipes, animals, music videos and inspiring content. See the first 10 most shared posts (Rayson, 2017) in Table 1 – Numbers 65 to 74.

4.3.2 Most Shared Stories from Bulgaria

In 2017 many topics excited the Bulgarian public but several of them received a wide response in the online sharing platforms (especially Facebook) and after that in the mainstream media as well (See Table 1 – Numbers 75 to 80). The model and fitness instructor Lazar Angelov has more than 1 million Facebook followers and is among the top Bulgarians in the social network ("168 chasa": Nay-haresvanite balgari v mrezhata, 2017).

4.4 Viral Instagram Content

On 16 July 2010 Instagram CEO and co-founder Kevin Systrom upload a picture of a golden retriever and a foot with flip-flops to an application called Codename. The foot belongs to his girlfriend but the owner of the dog is believed to be unknown. Three months later Instagram is launched and this is considered to be the first post on the popular social network Instagram.

Today, the application (bought by Facebook) has over 800 million active users and many new features. Photos and videos can be shared with few clicks, but in order to be successful, an Instagram profile requires a lot more than an army of followers.

4.4.1 Instagram Viral Content 2017– Examples

Similarly to YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, Instagram also publishes information about the most popular content on the platform in 2017 (Instagram's 2017 Year in Review, 2017). Looking into this will help us identify what were the most popular topics and what kind of content excites the users.

4.4.2 Most Liked Instagram Posts – See Table 1 (Numbers 81 To 90).

It is obvious that the top 10 most liked posts were divided between the following celebrities – singer Beyoncé, football player Cristiano Ronaldo, and singer Selena Gomes. People are interested in their celebrity lives featuring the topics about family, children, birthdays and health problems. From the examples above we can also see how many likes a post needed to become popular in 2017 and this is between 7,086,369 – 11,253,350.

4.4.3 The Most Liked Celebrity Videos On Instagram – See Table 1 (Numbers 91 To 100).

Amongst the top 10 most followed celebrities in 2017 were Selena Gomez (@selenagomez) with over 122 million followers, followed by Cristiano Ronaldo (@cristiano) – over 116 million followers, and Ariana Grande (@arianagrande) – over 115 million followers. There were the top three celebrities who gained the newest followers as well.

5. Analysis of the Viral Content Selection

In this section, we share results from analysis of carefully selected 100 examples of viral content. These examples include videos, text posts, pictures, memes, articles, quizzes that have been recognized as viral content in 2017 by media, online sharing platforms, and research groups. The aim is to distinguish the dominant categories of viral content and to define the dominant emotion from user's perspective.

5.1 Viral Content Categories

The following table displays the selected examples with a summary, a form of the viral content, where they have been taken from and if they are part of any ranking. It also includes a category we can refer to the example and the emotion is most likely to have over online users.

Table 1: *Selection of viral content*

	Summary of the viral content	Form / Ranking/ Source	Category	Emotion
1	The children of Prof. Robert Kelly's appear on TV while their father is giving a skype interview for BBC News	Video; Top viral YouTube videos in 2017, No 1 in world ranking, time.com; The winner for March 2017 in Top memes and viral videos, monthly ranking by BBC	Media	Positive
2	Short animated movie "In a Heartbeat" telling the love story between two boys	Video; Top viral YouTube videos in 2017, No 2 in world ranking, time.com	Entertainment	Positive
3	A fairly different story of the world history in 19 minutes	Video; Top viral YouTube videos in 2017, No 3 in world ranking, time.com	Entertainment	Positive
4	A Parody of Trump's inauguration. The voices are covered with funny comments	Video; Top viral YouTube videos in 2017, No 4 in world ranking, time.com	Politics Entertainment	Negative
5	Lady Gaga's performance during the Super Bowl halftime	Video; Top viral YouTube videos in 2017, No 5 in world ranking, time.com	Entertainment Celebrity	Positive
6	James Cordon's Carpool Karaoke with Ed Sheeran	Video; Top viral YouTube videos in 2017, No 6 in world ranking, time.com	Entertainment Celebrity	Positive
7	Darci Lynne, a 12-year-old ventriloquist in "America's got a talent"	Video; Top viral YouTube videos in 2017, No 7 in world ranking, time.com	Entertainment	Positive
8	Several men show – tricks with ping pong balls	Video; Top viral YouTube videos in 2017, No 8 in world ranking, time.com	Entertainment	Positive
9	"Shape of You" by Ed Sheeran, performed under the choreography of Kyle Hanagami (The most viewed choreography video on the YouTube platform ever)	Video; Top viral YouTube videos in 2017, No 9 in world ranking, time.com, and No 2 for viral posts on Facebook – Buzzsumo ranking (9.7 million interactions)	Entertainment Celebrity	Positive
10	Thai musical performance from the reality format "The mask singer"	Video; Top viral YouTube videos in 2017, No 10 in world ranking, time.com, (over 228 mln. views)	Entertainment Celebrity	Positive
11	David McClure, a 6 year-old boy, dance and imitates Mr Bean	Video; Most viral videos in Scotland 2017, selection by Scottish Sun	Entertainment	Positive
12	A woman tries to save a	Video; Most viral videos in	Empathy	Negative

	pigeon in Glasgow giving CPR	Scotland 2017, selection by Scottish Sun		
13	A painful peeling off a facial mask	Video; Most viral videos in Scotland 2017, selection by Scottish Sun	Domestic	Negative
14	Colby Stephen, a 3 year-old boy from Fraseburgh, leaves a mess at home	Video; Most viral videos in Scotland2017, selection by Scottish Sun	Domestic	Ambivalent
15	19 year-old Liam Hubbard jokes about "snorting ashes"	Video; Most viral videos in Scotland 2017, selection by Scottish Sun	Joke	Positive
16	A man climbs a horse but soon after that fells off straight in the mud	Video; Most viral videos in Scotland 2017, selection by Scottish Sun	Domestic	Negative
17	Joshua Keenan receives a boarding pass which is almost the same size as him	Video; Most viral videos in Scotland 2017, selection by Scottish Sun	Joke	Positive
18	Robert Welsh shows a fitness routine topless	Video; Most viral videos in Scotland 2017, selection by Scottish Sun	Entertainment Domestic	Ambivalent
19	A young man uses 10 meter building site rubbish chute as a slide	Video; Most viral videos in Scotland 2017, selection by Scottish Sun	Entertainment	Ambivalent
20	Jim Delahunt is reporting live on TV, a young boy is dragged away by his ankle	Video; Most viral videos in Scotland 2017, selection by Scottish Sun	Media	Ambivalent
21	Music coming from a prison van	Video; Most viral videos in Scotland 2017, selection by Scottish Sun	Everyday life	Positive
22	Unexpected dance party in Glasgow city centre	Video; Most viral videos in Scotland 2017, selection by Scottish Sun	Entertainment	Positive
23	Turkish chef Nusret Gokce with his cooking attitude demonstrated in the Instagram video	Video; Top memes and viral videos of 2017, monthly ranking by BBC The winner for January 2017	Entertainment	Positive
24	Drew Scanlon - the "blin-king guy" because of an expression he made during gaming video in YouTube	GIF, Top memes and viral videos of 2017, monthly ranking by BBC. The winner for February 2017	Everyday life	Positive
25	Picture of Saffiyah Khan at an English Defence League (EDL) rally in Birmingham	Photo; Top memes and viral videos of 2017, monthly ranking by BBC	Cause	Ambivalent
26	Animated dancing hotdog is hit by a train	Meme on Twitter; Top memes and viral videos of 2017, monthly ranking by BBC	Entertainment	Negative

27	A man, throwing flip-flop into a rubber ring from high building	Video; Top memes and viral videos of 2017, monthly ranking by BBC	Entertainment	Positive
28	A man is looking at another girl while he is with his girlfriend	Meme, Top memes and viral videos of 2017, monthly ranking by BBC	Everyday life	Negative
29	Derry tries to catch a bat that has flown in the kitchen	Video; Top memes and viral videos of 2017, monthly ranking by BBC	Domestic	Positive
30	A movement against women being sexually harassed and assaulted	Twitter post text, Top memes and viral videos of 2017, monthly ranking by BBC	Cause	Ambivalent
31	Black Friday in Currys PC World on Oxford Street	Twitter text+video, Top memes and viral videos of 2017, monthly ranking by BBC	Everyday life	Ambivalent
32	Jeffrey and Lorrie are married for 25 years but Jeffrey decides to propose again	Twitter text+video, Top memes and viral videos of 2017, monthly ranking by BBC	Domestic	Positive
33	Web series "Follow me" starring the Bulgarian young people idol – the singer Tita. The teen idol Tita's first video receives over 17 million views on YouTube	Video; web series, recognized as a viral content for 2017 by the Bulgarian site for video sharing vbox7.com , generated nearly 15 million views online for its two seasons	Entertainment	Positive
34	The Bulgarian online show "Let's bet" where the reporter Dani Petkanov sets up different challenges for the contestants	Online show, recognized as a viral content for 2017 by the Bulgarian site vbox7.com The show receives nearly 5 million views on Vbox7.com	Entertainment	Positive
35	The victory of the European Boxing Champion Kubrat Pulev (Bulgaria) over Kevin Johnson	Video news, recognized as a viral content for 2017 by the Bulgarian site for video sharing vbox7.com	Celebrity	Positive
36	The success of Bulgarian tennis player Grigor Dimitrov at ATR finals in London	Video news, recognized as a viral content for 2017 by the Bulgarian site vbox7.com	Celebrity	Positive
37	Web series "Not like that, brother", awarded at the International Festival Mediamixx for web-series of 2017	Video web series, recognized as a viral content for 2017 by the Bulgarian site for video sharing vbox7.com	Entertainment	Positive
38	Two rap songs of Bulgarian singers Suzanita and Kaskata	Music video clips, recognized as a viral content for 2017 by the Bulgarian	Entertainment	Positive

		site vbox7.com		
39	Hurricane Irma	News, recognized as a viral content for 2017 by the Bulgarian site vbox7.com	Everyday life	Negative
40	Footballer Sam Martin's message "Leo and I are donating 6 lbs of dog food to Houston for every retweet this gets!!!! RT RT RT!!"	Text+photo; Most shared Twitter posts, No 9 in world ranking, Twitter	Celebrity Cause	Positive
41	Obama's tweet "It's been the honour of my life to serve you. You made me a better leader and a better man"	Text; Most shared Twitter posts, No 8 in world ranking, Twitter	Politics	Positive
42	NBA athlete LeBron James turns down an invitation to visit the White House publishing the message "U bum @StephenCurry30 already said he ain't going! So, therefore, ain't no invite. Going to White House was a great honour until you showed up!".	Text; Most shared Twitter posts, No 7 in world ranking, Twitter	Celebrity Politics	Ambivalent
43	A photo by Linkin Park about the loss of their soloist Chester Bennington	Photo; Most shared Twitter posts, No 6 in world ranking, Twitter	Celebrity	Negative
44	Obama's tweet: "Thank you for everything. My last ask is the same as my first. I'm asking you to believe – not in my ability to create change, but in yours"	Text; Most shared Twitter posts, No 5 in world ranking, Twitter	Politics	Positive
45	Ariana Grande after the Manchester terror attack "broken. From the bottom of my heart, I am so sorry. I don't have words"	Text; Most shared Twitter posts, No 4 in world ranking, and No 2 in UK rating,Twitter	Cause Celebrity	Negative
46	Pennsylvania State University's appeal to raise money for Houston "With the current devastation in Houston, we are pledging $0.15 for every RT this gets! Please forward this along to help out those in need!"	Text+photo; Most shared Twitter posts, No 3 in world ranking, Twitter	Cause	Negative
47	Barack Obama's message of	Text+photo; Most shared	Politics	Ambivalent

	equality "No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin or his background or his religion..."	Twitter posts, No 2 in world ranking, and No 4 in UK ranking, Twitter The message was retweeted over 1.7 million times		
48	Carter Wilkerson, a 16-year-old-boy, asks a food company how many re-tweets will bring him free chicken nuggets "Help me please. A man needs his nuggs"	Text+photo; Most shared Twitter posts, No 1 in world ranking, Twitter He ends up with 3.6 million retweets	Empathy	Positive
49	Jeremy Corbyn on video "When you walk back into the sash after throwing up"	Text+video; Most shared Twitter UK posts, No 10 in UK ranking, dailypost.co.uk	Politics	Ambivalent
50	LucidWhim raises aware-ness for breast cancer "Tweeting this because my young daughter is fighting breast cancer. If it gets 1 retweet it might save a life"	Text+photo; Most shared Twitter UK posts, No 9 in UK ranking, dailypost.co.uk	Cause	Ambivalent
51	Footballer Peter Crouch's tweet about family time "Summer for me is about time with family"	Text+photo; Most shared Twitter UK posts, No 8 in UK ranking, dailypost.co.uk	Celebrity	Positive
52	PC Dave Wise's about suicide prevention "Uk's suicide prevention line – 116.123. Will you retweet and possibly save a life?"	Text +chart; Most shared Twitter UK posts, No 7 in UK ranking, dailypost.co.uk	Cause	Ambivalent
53	Jeremy Clarkson, an English broadcaster, attempts to dabs "Dab on it wagwan"	Text+photo; Most shared Twitter UK posts, No 6 in UK ranking, dailypost.co.uk	Politics	Positive
54	Andy Johnson's message of support for Aaron Lennon "It's time to #EndTheStigma and talk about #MentalHealth. For every RT, I'll donate 10p to @MindCharity in @Aaron-Lennon12's name. #topman"	Text+photo; Most shared Twitter UK posts, No 5 in UK ranking, dailypost.co.uk	Cause	Ambivalent
55	Footballer Jermain Defoe's tweet "sleep tight little one" - a tribute to the young fan	Text+photo; Most shared Twitter UK posts, No 3 in UK ranking, dailypost.co.uk	Celebrity	Negative

	Bradley Lowery who lost his battle with cancer			
56	"Despacito", spanish YouTube video	Video; Viral Facebook content 2017, No 1 in ranking, Buzzsumo, 22.2 mln. interact.	Celebrity Entertainment	Positive
57	News article about the ex-singer of Linkin Park who committed suicide	News article; Viral Facebook content 2017, No3 in ranking, Buzzsumo, 7.4 mln. interact.	Celebrity	Negative
58	Quiz about grammar mistakes "Only 1 in 50 people can identify these 16 grammar mistakes. Can you?"	Quiz; Viral Facebook content 2017, No 4 in ranking, Buzzsumo (5.4 million interactions)	Entertainment	Positive
59	"I've been crying" – video of Prue Nakarin	Video; Viral Facebook content 2017, No 5 in ranking, Buzzsumo, 4.5 mln. interact.	Entertainment	Ambivalent
60	"$213 Train Rides of America's most Beautiful Sites" – a travel adventure	Travel article; Viral Facebook content 2017, No 6 in ranking, Buzzsumo	Entertainment	Positive
61	Quiz "What state should you move to, based on your personality"	Quiz; Viral Facebook content 2017, No 7 in ranking, Buzzsumo	Entertainment	Positive
62	An article about Trump requiring "welfare to work" – the free ride is ending	News article; Viral Facebook content 2017, No 8 in ranking, Buzzsumo	Politics	Negative
63	"20 million Muslims march against ISIS and the mainstream media completely ignores it"	News article; Viral Facebook content 2017, No 9 in ranking, Buzzsumo	Cause	Negative
64	Video "Garth Brooks gives a guitar to a fan with Cancer"	Video; Viral Facebook content 2017, No 10 in ranking, Buzzsumo	Celebrity Empathy	Ambivalent
65	"Get clever with your clatter… and these 7 organization hacks" – this video offering practical solutions for reorganizing clothes	Video; Viral Facebook post 2017, No 1 in ranking, Buzzsumo	Entertaining	Positive
66	"Best video you will see" – a video compilation of people interacting with animals	Video; Facebook viral post 2017, No 2 in ranking, Buzzsumo	Empathy Everyday life	Positive
67	"Best videos of the year so far" – posted on the Fb page "People are awesome" and features people's achievements and amazing skills	Video; Facebook viral post 2017, No 3 in ranking, Buzzsumo	Entertainment	Positive

68	Tara Bank's post "Share this with your friends, because this guy just sang Whitney Houston like you've never heard before". It is about Johnny Manuel singing at America's got a talent	Video; Facebook viral post 2017, No 4 in ranking, Buzzsumo	Entertainment	Positive
69	"Brighton up your day with these 5 surprising hacks" – a video offering practical ideas how to fix a broken plate, to clean rusty jug, a ring…	Video; Facebook viral post 2017, No 5 in ranking, Buzzsumo	Entertainment	Positive
70	"8 ways to transform and upgrade your wardrobe"	Video; Facebook viral post 2017, No 6 in ranking, Buzzsumo	Entertainment	Positive
71	A practical video "Awesome ideas for a T-shirt that is toooooo old"	Video; Facebook viral post 2017, No 7 in ranking, Buzzsumo	Entertainment	Positive
72	"These 8 wow-worthy pie hacks are as easy as…" – cooking video for pie tricks	Video; Facebook viral post 2017, No 8 in ranking, Buzzsumo	Entertainment	Positive
73	"Nanny, play with me, no working!" – young panda in a zoo wanting to play with a member of staff	Video; Facebook viral post 2017, No 9 in ranking, Buzzsumo	Empathy	Positive
74	A cooking video "4 surprising things you can make with only 2 ingredients"	Video; Facebook viral post 2017, No 10 in ranking, Buzzsumo	Entertainment	Positive
75	Photo of Miss Bulgaria 2017 – Tamara Georgieva	Photo, recognized as viral by Bulgarian media, 24chasa.bg	Celebrity	Negative
76	Scandalous FB post by Bulgarian journalist Petar Volgin about Grigor Dimitrov	Text, recognized as viral by Bulgarian media, Nova.bg	Celebrity	Negative
77	Video of a driver approaching petrol station with a cigarette	Video, recognized as a viral by the most of national Bulgarian media like nova.bg, offnews.bg, btvnovinite.bg	Everyday life	Negative
78	Photo of Bulgarian President barefooted	Photo, recognized as a viral by the site of a Bulgarian daily newspaper 24chasa.bg	Politics	Ambivalent
79	Facebook post of the Bulgarian first lady about Sofia pride	A post, recognized as a viral by the news site of a Bulgarian national TV	Politics	Ambivalent

		btvnovinite.bg		
80	A mother with a sick child calling for help because of a stolen wheelchair	Photo, recognized as a viral content by a Bulgarian daily news site offnews.bg	Everyday life	Ambivalent
81	Beyonce's post sharing the news that she is pregnant with twins	Text+photo; Most shared Instagram posts, No 1 in Instagram ranking, 11,253,350 likes	Celebrity Everyday life	Positive
82	Christiano Ronaldo, his son and girlfriend holding their newborn baby daughter	Text+photo; Most shared Instagram posts, No 2 in Instagram ranking, 11,370,739 likes	Celebrity Everyday life	Positive
83	Selena Gomes' post in the hospital after kidney transplantation, together with the donor	Text+photo; Most shared Instagram posts, No 3 in Instagram ranking, (10,562,286 likes)	Celebrity Everyday life	Ambivalent
84	Beyonce's post and photo introducing her twins to the world	Text+photo; Most shared Instagram posts, No 4 in Instagram ranking, 10,327,763 likes	Celebrity Everyday life	Positive
85	Christiano Ronaldo holding his newborn twins	Text+photo; Most shared Instagram posts, No 5 in Instagram ranking	Celebrity Everyday life	Positive
86	Selena Gomes selfie published in April	Photo; Most shared Instagram posts, No 6 in Instagram ranking (8,154,974 likes)	Celebrity Everyday life	Positive
87	Photo of Selena Gomes and her boyfriend Abel Tesfaye	Photo; Most shared Instagram posts, No 7 in Instagram ranking (7,778,477 likes)	Celebrity Everyday life	Positive
88	Family photo of Cristiano Ronaldo	Text+photo; Most shared Instagram posts, No 8 in Instagram ranking (7,326,181 likes)	Celebrity Everyday life	Positive
89	Selena Gomes posing on a bike photo	Photo; Most shared Instagram posts, No 9 in Instagram ranking (7,184,365 likes)	Celebrity	Positive
90	Birthday photo of Selena Gomez	Text+photo; Most shared Instagram posts, No10 in Instagram ranking (7,086,369 likes)	Celebrity Everyday life	Positive
91	Cristiano Ronaldo in his new car	Text+video; Most liked celebrity videos on Instagram, No 1 in Instagram ranking	Celebrity Everyday life	Positive
92	Leo Messi sharing moments with Neymar	Text+video; Most liked celebrity videos on Instagram,	Celebrity	Positive

		No 2 in Instagram ranking		
93	Selena Gomez giving a hug to a child	Tex+video; Most liked celebrity videos on Instagram, No 3 in Instagram ranking	Celebrity	Positive
94	Cristiano Ronaldo scoring a goal at football game	Text+video; Most liked celebrity videos on Instagram, No 4 in Instagram ranking	Celebrity	Positive
95	Cristiano Ronaldo's new car	Text+video; Most liked celebrity videos on Instagram, No 5 in Instagram ranking (21,131,984 views)	Celebrity Everyday life	Positive
96	Cristiano Ronaldo's son playing football	Text+video; Most liked celebrity videos on Instagram, No 6 in Instagram ranking	Celebrity Everyday Life	Positive
97	Leo Messi dancing at wedding	Text+video; Most liked celebrity videos on Instagram, No 7 in Instagram ranking	Celebrity Everyday life	Positive
98	Short introduction of Selena Gomez's new single Wolves	Text+video; Most liked celebrity videos on Instagram, No 8 in Instagram ranking	Celebrity	Positive
99	Cristiano Ronaldo's training football	Text+video; Most liked celebrity videos on Instagram, No 9 in Instagram ranking	Celebrity	Positive
100	Emma Clarke's video of Kit Harington demonstrating his Game of Throne's character	Video; Most liked celebrity videos on Instagram, No 10 in Instagram ranking (18,492,167 views)	Celebrity	Positive

Based on the analysed selection on viral content for 2017 we could identify 9 main categories – Media, Entertainment, Cause, Politics, Celebrity, Domestic, Empathy, Jokes, Everyday life.
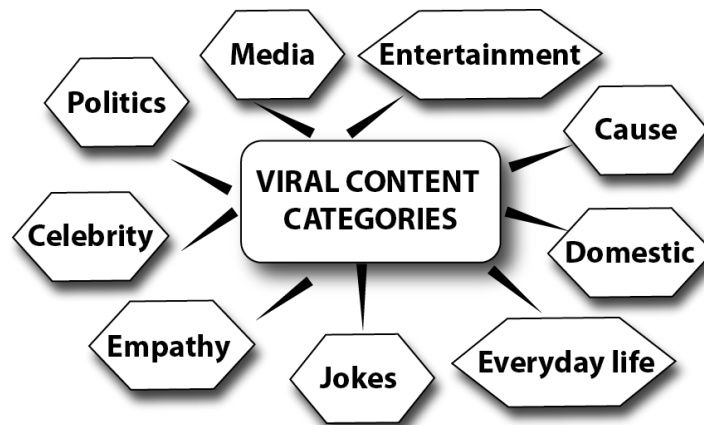

Figure 1: *Viral content categories*

5.2 Dominant Emotion in a Viral Content from Youtube, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram

Reviewing different research findings of scientists on what makes content viral it turns out that the emotional factor is a key element. The online users tend to share content that provokes strong emotions whether positive or negative.

That's why along with the categories, it was interesting for us to see what the dominant emotion among users is when they encounter with viral content. For this purpose, we conditionally distinguished three states that we called positive, negative and ambivalent. Often the scene has a positive character but causes negative **emotions** in online users or vice versa. A negative situation itself provokes empathy and unites people for a good cause. In these cases the emotion is mixed and it is difficult to be defined exactly and classed as definite positive or definite negative. Therefore, in this study, we added a third category – an ambivalent emotional attitude to the viral content.

Positive emotion – here we have included viral content which provokes definite positive emotion in the online users. For instance, positive emotions are hope, pride, amusement, love, happiness, fun, appreciation, pleasant surprise etc. **Negative emotion** – in our selection of examples the negative emotions which could be easily identified are – sadness, fear, empathy to someone's pain, disappointment, shock, disagreement, reaction to aggression etc. Some of the topics related to those emotions are – parody content, dying animal, painful peeling off a facial mask, painful accident, unfaithfulness, RIP, terrorist attack, natural disaster, ignored cause, aggression, inappropriate behaviour, etc. **Ambivalent emotion** – this is viral content which leaves most online users with mixed feeling - either positive or negative emotions cannot be identified clearly or both present.

6. Conclusion

With the emergence of online sharing platforms, the need of studying the viral content acquires particular importance for the media which nowadays includes viral stories daily on their agenda. The online audience is exposed to highly emotional and provocative content which asks not only for attention but for action as well – liking, sharing, and commenting. In this paper we have gathered examples of viral content in 2017 from four of the most popular social media in the world – YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram and analysed them to extend we could distinguish nine main viral content categories – Media, Entertainment, Celebrity, Domestic,

Empathy, Jokes, Everyday life, Cause, and Politics. This enables us to discuss what attracts the attention of the online users and to question whether viral content can be planned in advance.

Similarly to Berger & Milkman (Berger & Milkman, 2011) who discover that positive content is more viral than negative, we can also share these observations though on a different scale. Our collection of viral content 2017, generated in the most used social networks, shows that in 2/3 of cases the emotion is positive (64%). The rest 36% share equally the negative and ambivalent emotions. As expected, the videos, posts, and pictures with entertaining content, as well as everything connected to celebrities, happenings from both their personal or professional life, are the most represented in our selection. This corresponds to the dominant positive emotion in the online users as the entertainment is the most often source of such emotion.

7. Limitations and a Scope of Future Research

The presented selection of viral examples we have provided is not representative, but it outlines a truthful picture of the content type which becomes most often viral. In this selection, we have gathered viral content from different world classifications and also some that have become popular at a regional level – in the UK and Bulgaria, the countries where the authors of this paper currently live. Where official classifications were not found we had selected examples of viral content that had become highly liked and shared during 2017.

We continue questioning how well online user's emotions and reactions can be predicted as we have discovered the third category of the ambivalent emotion. Every phenomenon in online media, including the one we reviewed, brings positives and negatives. Fake viral content appears on the social networks' stage as well because of the power of gaining popularity and influencing behaviour. This is an issue which social platforms for sharing content meet and try to fight with policies and applications. It will be interesting to observe in the future how this will affect the true viral content and the media agenda – whether media will focus on fake viral content, and the consequences of it.

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