HARNESSING THE POWER OF 'BUZZ' FOR MEDIA PLANNING AND CHANNEL OPTIMISATION

Polly Carter, KMR Group

INTRODUCTION

There's a lot of buzz about word of mouth. And whilst it has always existed, the proliferation of new online platforms means that the current consumer generation has broader social networks than ever before, creating countless opportunities to share information and spread word of mouth recommendations. In addition, fragmentation and multiplicity of buying options have given consumers an unlimited selection when it comes to the products and brands they choose. The upshot is that word of mouth is playing an increasingly significant role in the lives of consumers and as such is becoming progressively more valuable as a communications channel.

Most of us know that word of mouth communication has tremendous potential, but the challenge for media planners is in harnessing its growing power and influence in such a way that it delivers real commercial impact. This paper aims to demonstrate how the influence of word of mouth 'Champions' can increase the reach of communication messages and extend the buzz potential of media channels, in particular print. This new approach considers not only the people that can be reached with a marketing campaign, but also the extension into the people they themselves can reach, and seeks to place a real value on this which can then be used to inform media planning decisions. The paper will also illustrate how the same methodology can be applied on an international basis, using 10 European markets as an example.

WORD OF MOUTH IN MEDIA PLANNING

First things first: identifying the word of mouth 'Champions'

While consumers welcome and often actively seek word of mouth recommendations from friends and family, at the same time they are providing recommendations of their own. Some of them have a much greater predilection to do this than others. TGI has recently begun to carry questions designed to identify the consumers who have the greatest potential influence on others.

The questions cover a selection of product sectors, namely: clothes, food, healthy living, household products, pharmaceutical/ chemist products, alcoholic drinks, toiletries, home furniture/furnishings, financial services, cars, mobile phones and TV/video/audio equipment. They ask:

(1) Over the last 12 months, how many different people did you talk to about these products?
 * Many
 * A few friends or family
 * One or two people
 * No-one

(2) How much information would you say you could give about each of these products?
 * A large amount
 * A moderate amount
 * A small amount
 * Very little or none at all

(3) How likely is it that you could convince other people about your opinions on these products?
 * Very likely
 * Quite likely
 * Neither likely nor unlikely
 * Quite unlikely
 * Very unlikely

A basic observation that can be made from looking at the responses to these questions is that some topics have wider appeal than others. In Great Britain for example, around three-quarters of adults have talked about food (78%) and clothes (71%) with other people in the last 12 months; barely half as many (37%) have discussed household products.

It's also the case that different types of people are more likely to get involved in certain conversations. In general, women are more likely than men to discuss food, healthy living, toiletries and household products; men are more likely to talk about cars and TV, video and audio equipment. Mobile phones are a key topic for young adults, and adults in the higher socio-economic groups are more likely to talk about financial services.

Looking across the 10 European markets, it also becomes clear that consumer interest in different topics varies quite considerably by country, and this will be explored in more detail later on in this paper.

Taking things a step further, the answers given by respondents to these questions also allow us to categorise the types of people most likely to be word of mouth 'transmitters'. If we borrow three pieces of terminology utilised by Malcolm Gladwell in "*The Tipping Point*", we might say that:

* the 'Connectors' are those who talk to many different people about a product;
* the 'Mavens' are those who could give a large amount of information about a product;
* the 'Salesmen' are those who are either very likely or quite likely to convince others about their opinions.

To illustrate in Germany, the greatest number of Connectors can be found in the clothing category, making this the sector about which the largest number of conversations takes place (see Chart 1). 13% of adults say they have talked to many different people about clothes. However this is not the field in which people believe they have the greatest knowledge. The highest number of Mavens (21% of adults) can be found in the food sector.

Word of Mouth:
Connectors, Mavens & Salesmen in Germany

Word of Mouth 'transmitters'

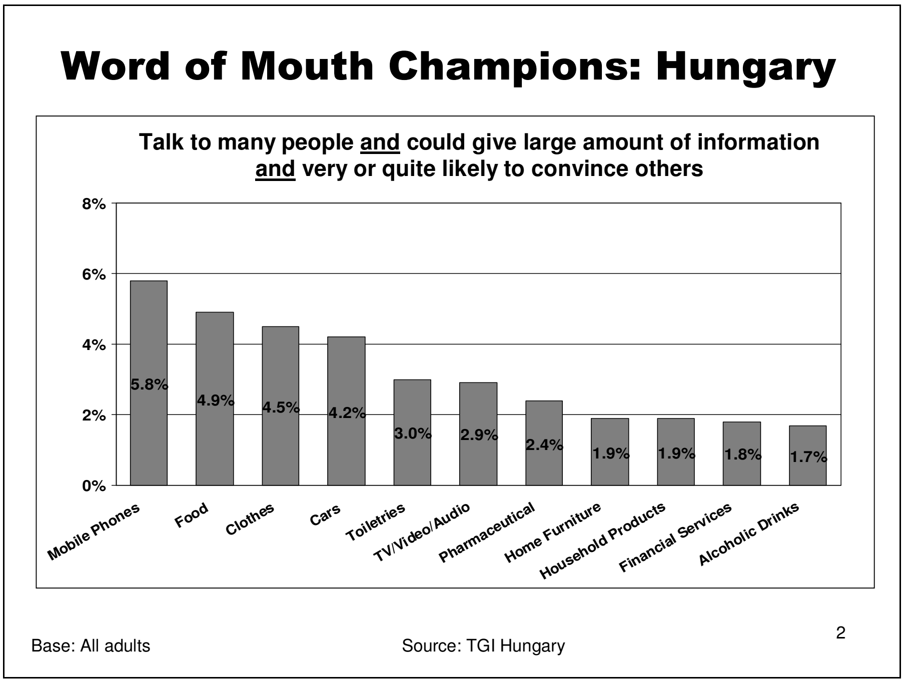
	Talked to many different people: Connectors	Could give large amount of information: Mavens	Very or quite likely to convince: Salesmen
Clothes	13%	18%	37%
Food	10%	21%	33%
Healthy Living	8%	14%	25%
Household Products	5%	12%	20%
Pharmaceutical & Chemist Products	7%	9%	18%
Alcoholic Drinks	7%	9%	20%
Toiletries	6%	13%	26%
Financial Services	5%	10%	18%
Cars	10%	14%	23%
TV/Video/Audio Equipment	6%	9%	18%
Mobile Phones	8%	12%	21%

Base: All adults Source: TGI Germany 1

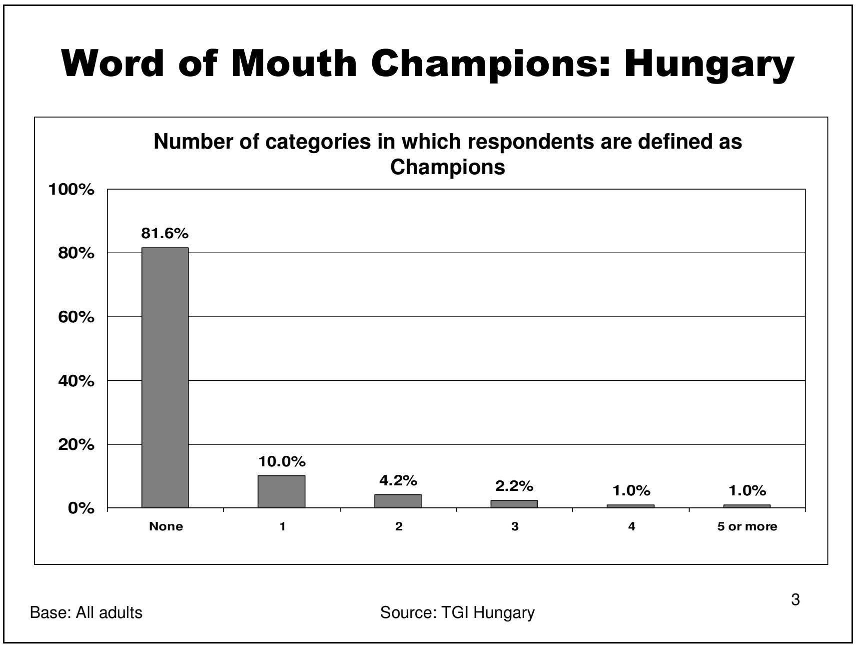
In Germany, these are also the two sectors in which the largest numbers of people feel confident in their ability to convince others of their opinions (37% and 33%). In other words, these sectors comprise the highest proportion of Salesmen. They are followed in this by toiletries, where 26% of the population feel they can convince other people of their opinions.

The next logical stage is to narrow our target audience by defining a group of word of mouth 'Champions' for each of the product sectors. This definition combines the responses from all three questions – those who talk to many different people, could give a large amount of information, and are either very likely or quite likely to convince others about their opinions.

Chart 2 shows the percentage of the adult population in Hungary who are classed as Champions in each sector. The range is from 5.8% for the mobile phones sector to 1.7% for alcoholic drinks. Four of the categories emerge as being of considerably wider general interest than the others: these are clothes, food, cars and mobile phones.

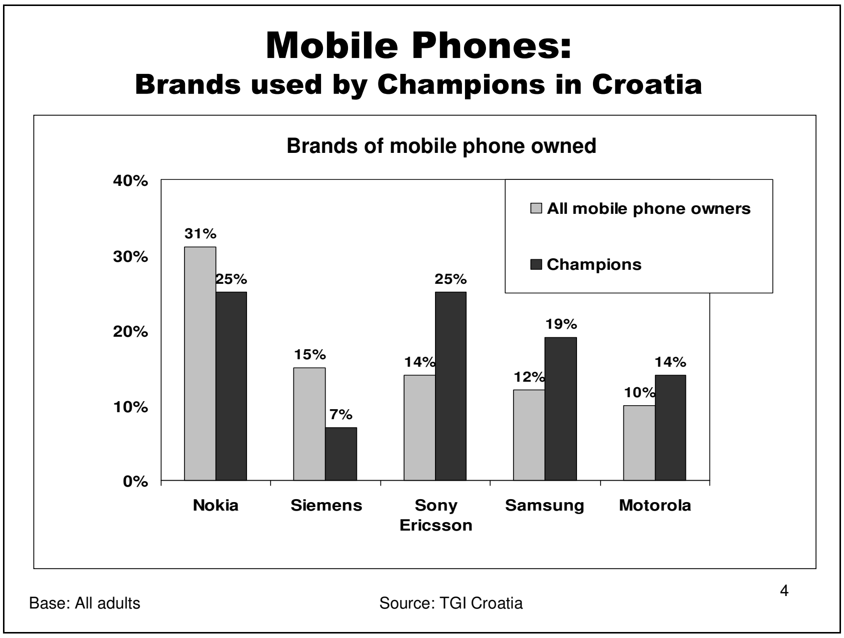


It is also interesting to observe that 'Champion'-ship tends to be specialist in nature. As Chart 3 shows, the vast majority of adults in Hungary (82%) are not Champions in any of the product sectors – only 18% qualify. Furthermore, people who are Champions tend to have this status in one sector only. This applies to 10% of adults. Just 1% are Champions in five or more of the product sectors. And when we look at other markets in Europe, we see a similar pattern emerge. This supports the notion of there being opinion-formers who set the agenda for others across all types of subjects is unrealistic. Knowledge is more specialised than this, and the concept only works on a sector-by-sector basis.

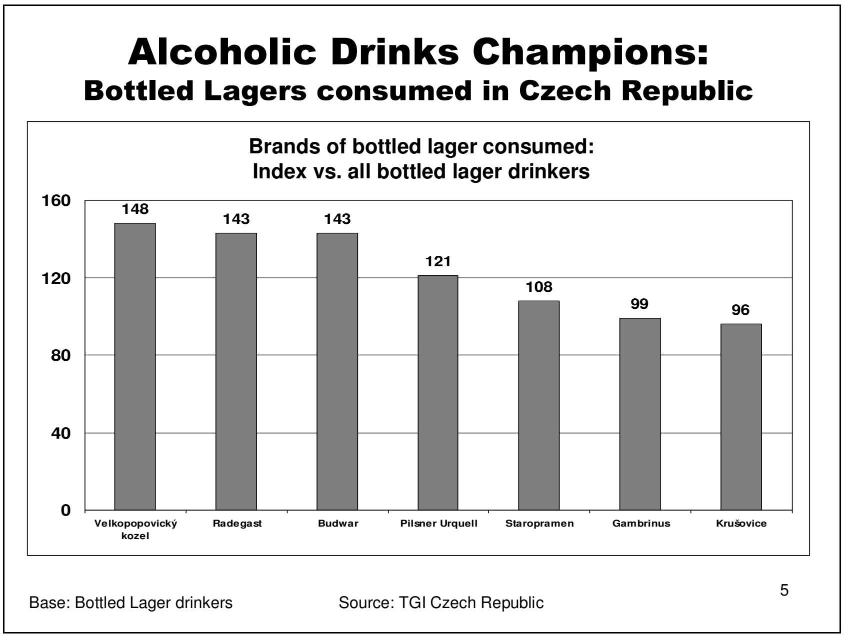


The value of targeting and influencing word of mouth transmitters – on the assumption that the messages that they pass on will be positive ones – is potentially enormous. Is a brand well-placed to do this however? Any word of mouth marketing activity by advertisers will have much greater credibility if the Champions are already convinced by the brand. They are more likely to carry positive messages forward if this is the case.

The Champions' own behaviour in any given sector can tell us more about their opinions. Taking the mobile phone sector in Croatia as an example, TGI analysis also lets us see which brands the Champions themselves use. Chart 4 reveals that, in absolute terms, Nokia and Sony Ericsson are the most popular brands amongst mobile phone Champions. Relative to mobile phone owners in general however, we can see that Sony Ericsson, Samsung and Motorola all perform particularly well.



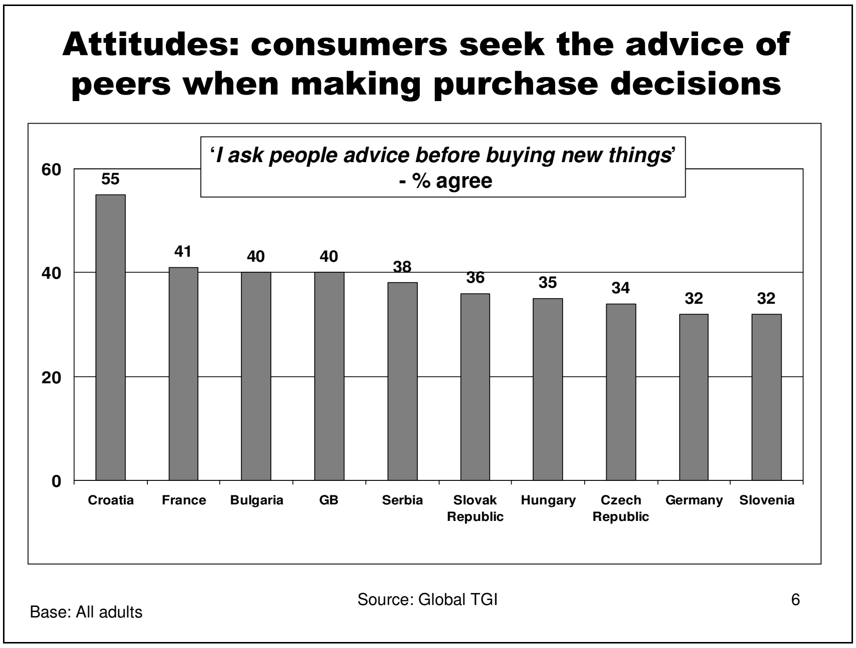
In a more frequently purchased category, bottled lager, Chart 5 illustrates alcoholic drinks Champions' usage biases for a small selection of brands in the Czech Republic. Brands including Velkopopovický Kozel, Radegast and Budwar are favoured by Champions, which puts them in a strong position within the category.



Is the level of buzz comparable across Europe? What is on the minds of consumers in different nations?

The fact that the word of mouth questions are carried on the TGI questionnaires in many different markets allows us to make comparisons across countries which can be used to inform international media planning activity.

But first, we should try to establish whether word of mouth really is a Europe-wide phenomenon. Analysis of TGI attitudinal data in ten European markets suggests that it is. Chart 6 shows the level of agreement amongst respondents with the statement '*I ask people for advice before buying new things*'. The first conclusion we can draw from this is that word of mouth does play a significant role in people's purchase decisions across all markets – at least a third of respondents in each country agreed with the statement. The second inference is that the extent to which consumers seek out advice from their peers is approximately the same. In all markets, the agreement level ranged from about 30% to 40% (with the exception of Croatia, where 55% of people agreed).



However, a more complex story emerges when looking at the top three topics that respondents have talked to many different people about and this reveals some interesting variations between countries. Chart 7 shows that the most commonly talked about topics overall are clothes, food and mobile phones. However, in Great Britain, alcoholic drinks make it into the top ranked discussion topics and in Serbia, both toiletries and electrical equipment do. This implies that whilst many topics are universal in their appeal, cultural nuances also have an influence.

Top 3 Discussion Topics by Country

Talk to many different people about…

Country	Top	Second	Third
Bulgaria	Clothes (15%)	Mobile phones (14%)	Food (10%)
Croatia	Mobile phones (22%)	Cars (21%)	Clothes (21%)
Czech Republic	Clothes (16%)	Mobile phones (14%)	Cars (12%)
France	Food (11%)	Clothes (10%)	Mobile phones (8%)
Germany	Clothes (13%)	Cars (10%)	Food (10%)
Great Britain	Food (27%)	Clothes (21%)	Alcohol (14%)
Hungary	Mobile phones (12%)	Clothes (12%)	Cars (12%)
Serbia	Mobile phones (22%)	Toiletries (5%)	TV/Audio/Video (5%)
Slovenia	Food (27%)	Cars (22%)	Mobile phones (21%)
Slovak Republic	Clothes (14%)	Mobile phones (14%)	Cars (12%)

Base: All adults

Source: Global TGI

7

When it comes to the topics that consumers feel they know a lot about, there appears to be some degree of uniformity across Europe. As illustrated in Chart 8, in nine out of the 10 markets analysed, food emerged as the topic that most people felt knowledgeable about – perhaps because food plays such an important role in people's lives, regardless of demography or where they live. It is worth noting that healthy living was ranked within the top three topics in Germany and Great Britain. Whilst this isn't necessarily a product sector in its own right, perhaps it is a reflection on the growing influence that issues of health and wellbeing have across all aspects of consumer life.

Topics Have Most Knowledgeable About
Can give a large amount of information about…

Country	Top	Second	Third
Bulgaria	Food (15%)	Clothes (11%)	HH products (9%)
Croatia	Food (25%)	Clothes (15%)	HH products (14%)
Czech Republic	Food (18%)	Clothes (13%)	Mobile phones (10%)
France	Food (10%)	Clothes (7%)	Mobile phones (7%)
Germany	Food (21%)	Clothes (18%)	Healthy Living (14%)
Great Britain	Food (18%)	Healthy Living (11%)	Cars (9%)
Hungary	Food (19%)	Mobile phones (13%)	HH products (11%)
Serbia	Clothes (17%)	Food (15%)	Alcohol (4%)
Slovenia	Food (21%)	Clothes (12%)	Cars (11%)
Slovak Republic	Food (21%)	Clothes (14%)	Mobile phones (11%)

Base: All adults Source: Global TGI 8

Finally, in terms of the topics respondents feel they can persuade others of their opinions on, food and clothes again are popular (see Chart 9). It is interesting to observe that in six of the seven Central and Eastern European markets analysed, household products are ranked within the top three topics despite it being one of the lowest ranking topics that people like to talk about.

Most 'Saleable' Topics by Country
Very/quite likely to convince others about…

Country	Top	Second	Third
Bulgaria	Food (42%)	Clothes (39%)	HH products (31%)
Croatia	Food (51%)	Clothes (40%)	HH products (35%)
Czech Republic	Food (38%)	Clothes (30%)	HH products (25%)
France	Food (33%)	Clothes (25%)	Healthy Living (17%)
Germany	Clothes (37%)	Food (33%)	Toiletries (26%)
Great Britain	Food (31%)	Healthy Living (28%)	Clothes (26%)
Hungary	Food (44%)	Clothes (34%)	HH products (34%)
Serbia	Clothes (16%)	Food (14%)	Alcohol (4%)
Slovenia	Food (47%)	Clothes (36%)	HH products (26%)
Slovak Republic	Food (43%)	Clothes (35%)	HH products (29%)

Base: All adults Source: Global TGI 9

In addition to the varying appeal of different topics, Charts 7-9 also demonstrate a disparity in the extent to which people in each country say they talk about/have knowledge of/can persuade people about products and brands. As noted previously, word of mouth plays an equally important role across Europe, but we might say that the level of buzz within particular product categories varies from country to country.

All of this suggests that whilst the influence of word of mouth 'Champions' can help to increase the reach of communication messages in all markets, the method will often need to be tailored to local characteristics and preferences.

Where does word of mouth fit into the media planning process?

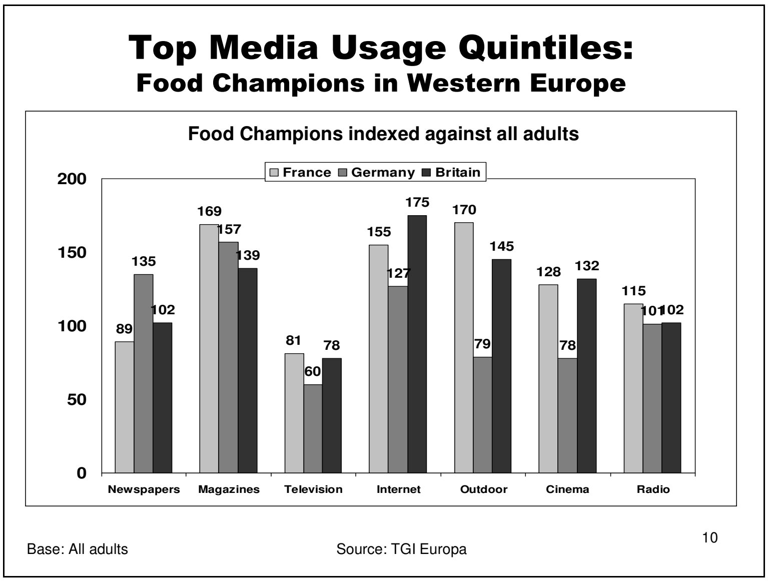
It is important to bear in mind that brand messages generated by consumers can be positive or negative. We have all heard horror stories about damaging spirals of bad publicity through the internet, where message boards, blogs and other forums are outside the advertiser's control. Negative stories are hard to counter.

With controllable media, we can manage the process of communication, and the message will be a positive one of our choosing. For many, increasingly, part of the communications effort is the attempt to influence word of mouth positively. One of the keys to achieving this is the identification of the likely word of mouth transmitters, and then the communication of messages to them.

When planning the messages to be conveyed as part of communications campaigns, different types of word of mouth transmitters will be the targets for different advertisers – or indeed for the same advertiser at different times. For those attempting to reach large numbers of consumers via the secondary transmission of a message then the Connectors are likely to be of most value. For categories in which it is desirable to convey high levels of information (e.g. financial services or mobile phone networks) the Mavens could be a key target. If the objective is to target consumers who could act as advocates for a brand, the advertiser will most likely want to focus on the Salesmen.

So how do we determine which media are most efficient for communicating with our word of mouth transmitters? Analysis of the media consumption behaviour of each group reveals that the channels which work most effectively for reaching them are not always the same. It makes sense that the Champions will often be a group that advertisers would want to target. Given that they have lots of conversations about the subject, and are both well-informed and persuasive, they could be ideal brand advocates if they are motivated to be positive.

Taking the example of food Champions in Western Europe, we can begin to explore what sort of media planning decisions one might take. Chart 10 looks at the top TGI usage quintile for seven major media against this group. We can see that heavy usage of magazines and internet typifies these Champions across all three markets, and so these media might be considered seriously for a pan-European communications campaign. However, it is interesting to note that the overall media consumption profile of food Champions in Germany is quite different to that in France and Great Britain. In Germany, unlike France and Great Britain, newspapers perform strongly amongst this group, but cinema and outdoor are far less efficient.



We can also look at different vehicles within a particular medium. An example of this is shown in Chart 11 which looks at the readership of four national quality newspapers in Great Britain by those who are defined as Connectors, Mavens and Salesmen in the car sector. According to TGI, the best title for reaching Connectors in terms of efficiency is the *Independent*: 18% of its average issue readers fall into this category, as compared to 14% among all adults – an index of 134. For reaching Mavens however, the *Times* (index 158) is more efficient, and the *Independent* is not as strong. Both are above average at reaching Salesmen.

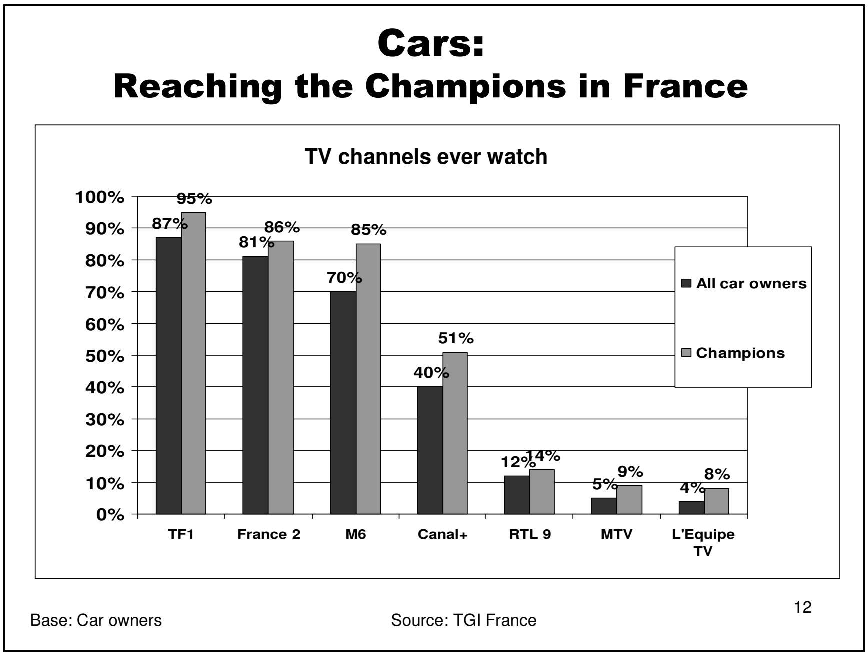
Word of Mouth:
Quality Newspaper Reading in GB

Quality Newspapers read by Word of Mouth 'transmitters' in the car sector

		Connectors	**Mavens**	**Salesmen**
All Adults	Profile	14%	9%	18%
	Index	100	100	100
The Times: average issue readers	Profile	16%	15%	24%
	Index	115	158	131
The Guardian: average issue readers	Profile	10%	9%	15%
	Index	71	95	83
Daily Telegraph: average issue readers	Profile	13%	8%	19%
	Index	92	89	103
The Independent: average issue readers	Profile	18%	9%	22%
	Index	134	94	119

Base: All adults Source: TGI Great Britain 11

Likewise, in the case of television, we can see which of the commercial channels are watched by car Champions as compared to all car owners. Taking France as an example, we find that most of the mainstream commercial channels more niche sports and music channels perform well in relative terms for reaching car Champions (Chart 12).



Having this kind of information available to media planners should help significantly in allowing the planning of word of mouth activity alongside and in combination with advertising in more traditional media, across and within markets.

Planning communications campaigns to benefit from Word of Mouth: augmenting GRPs with GAPs

How then can we start to build a media planning structure that allows word of mouth to be considered in combination with the controllable channels? Following on from the concepts already discussed, we have devised a scheme which allows us to do this. It involves the calculation of 'Gross Amplification Points' (referred to as GAPs) to sit alongside the well-established measurement of Gross Rating Points (GRPs).

As we have already noted, given that formal communications activity is controllable, our starting point is that the message will be positive. In other words, it is a process that media planners are in a position to control and plan.

Traditional media planning models are based on the first contact. However, our approach is to consider not only the people that can be reached with a marketing campaign, but also the people that they themselves reach. This approach has also been referred to as propagation planning. The relative impact and value of this is likely to vary considerably on a case-by-case basis, but the same can be said of the relative value and impact of a piece of creative work. We can still establish some broad parameters.

These parameters require making some assumptions about the value of particular groups of individuals to the transmission of word of mouth. Let us assume for the purposes of setting up our model that:

* Word of mouth 'Champions' are worth on average three times as much to us to reach among members of our target audience;
* Other influencers (in other words all 'Connectors', 'Mavens' and 'Salesmen' who are not 'Champions') are worth on average twice as much to us to reach among members of our target audience.

We believe that these are conservative assumptions, based on the answers given by TGI respondents, and on the analyses of those answers that we have conducted. We could argue that the Champions should be given a weight of more than three, on the basis of their many contacts, their level of knowledge and their persuasiveness; however for the purposes of this paper we will take a cautious view.

In practice, a planner might have a different target, or choose to apply a different balance of weights to different elements of the word of mouth groups, and this would be perfectly possible. Equally the planner might have specific evidence from previous brand experience or a relevant case study. Again, different weights could be applied. However where such evidence does not exist, general assumptions have to be made.

USING BUZZ AS AN ARGUMENT FOR PRINT

Chart 13 illustrates how the amplification factor works. This example uses the vitamin category in Great Britain, and assumes a basic target of all category users (20,184,000 people). We have taken the word of mouth information for pharmaceutical products and used our definitions of Champions (245,000) and other influencers (3,211,000). We have defined the remaining members of the target as 'receivers' (16,728,000).

The Amplification Factor:
Print Vehicles in Great Britain

Word of Mouth definitions for the Pharmaceutical sector

	Champions	Other Influencers	Receivers	Total
All Vitamin Users (000s)	245	3,211	16,728	20,184
Daily Telegraph: average issue readers (000s)	9	156	934	1,099
Assumed Amplification Factor	x3	x2	x1	
Amplified Contacts (000s)	27	312	934	1,273
Amplification Factor	3	2	1	1.16
Reader's Digest: average issue readers (000s)	19	208	857	1,084
Assumed Amplification Factor	x3	x2	x1	
Amplified Contacts (000s)	57	416	857	1,330
Amplification Factor	3	2	1	1.23

Base: All adults Source: TGI Great Britain 13

This example focuses on two publications with very similar readership levels among category users. *The Daily Telegraph* is read by 1,099,000 vitamin users, and *Reader's Digest* is read by 1,084,000 vitamin users. Among readers of *Reader's Digest*, 19,000 are pharmaceutical product champions, and on the basis of our assumption we have given them an amplification factor of three. From 19,000 impressions as normally calculated, this gives a figure of 57,000 amplified contacts. Similarly applying an amplification factor of two to the other influencers gives 416,000 amplified contacts in their case. The 857,000 impressions achieved among receivers are given a weight of one.

The resulting total number of amplified contacts achieved by *Reader's Digest* is 1,330,000. Against the basic number of 1,084,000, *Reader's Digest* can be expressed as having an amplification factor of 1.23 for this target audience. The same calculation for *The Daily Telegraph* results in a lower amplification factor, of 1.16, due to the different proportion of Champions, other influencers and receivers among its readership.

So, although the standard readership level amongst vitamin users for *The Daily Telegraph* is higher than that for *Reader's Digest*, when we take into account the number of amplified contacts, *Reader's Digest* performs slightly better than *The Daily Telegraph*. To quantify this, *Reader's Digest* achieves 1,330,000, which is 5% more than the 1,273,000 achieved by *The Daily Telegraph*.

This example illustrates the potential augmentation of a message that might result from the word of mouth effect. Taking this approach into consideration could result in different media decisions being taken and could well be used by media owners as a powerful tool for supporting ad sales.

Chart 14 shows how a selection of women's magazines perform against a target of cosmetics users in Hungary, with the amplification factors calculated on the same basis as above, but for the toiletries sector. The range in the amplification factors calculated for the titles (based on the 3:2:1 assumption) goes from 1.38 to 1.97. The two titles with the highest amplification factors, a consequence of their being read by the highest proportions of word of mouth Champions and other influencers are *Joy* and *Best*. Note the change in the rank order of the publications based on amplified contacts as against the order based on standard readership: *Kiskegyed* moves from third to second position.

The Amplification Factor:
Toiletries Champions in Hungary

Women's Magazines –Target of Cosmetics Users

	Target Reach (000s)	Amplification Factor (3:2:1)	Amplified Contacts (000s)	Original Rank Order	Revised Rank Order
Story	602	1.52	917	1	1
Nõk Lapja	509	1.38	703	2	3
Kiskegyed	491	1.54	757	3	2
Meglepetés	310	1.43	443	4	4
Blikk Nõk	216	1.56	336	5	5
Best	205	1.62	333	6	6
Tina	185	1.58	292	7	**7**
Maxima	171	1.43	245	8	**8**
Joy	89	1.97	173	9	9
Cosmopolitan	83	1.39	115	10	10

Base: Cosmetics users Source: TGI Hungary 14

We can extend this concept into the construction of print schedules. Charts 15 and 16 summarise two schedules which have been optimised to perform well among word of mouth Champions in their respective cases.

The first example, shown in Chart 15, uses a target of ready meals users in Great Britain, and builds a plan using a selection of women's magazines. The optimised schedule uses 27 insertions across nine of these publications. Expressed in the usual terms, this schedule reaches 37.5% of our target (7,509,000 of 20,037,000 ready meals users) with an average frequency of 4.01. This equates to 150 Gross Rating Points (GRPs).

Schedule Construction and Gross Amplification Points

Word of Mouth definitions for the Food at Home sector: Target of Ready Meals Users

	Champions	Other Influencers	Receivers	Total Target
All Ready Meals Users (000s)	855	8,800	10,383	20,037
Women's Magazine Schedule Insertions	27	27	27	27
Schedule Reach (000s)	400	3,731	3,474	7,509
Schedule Reach (%)	46.8%	42.4%	33.5%	37.5%
Average Frequency	4.96	4.06	3.73	4.01
Gross Rating Points (GRPs)	232	172	125	150
Gross Impressions (000s)	1,983	15,147	12,946	30,076
Assumed Amplification Factor	3	2	1	
Amplified Contacts (000s)	5,949	30,294	12,946	49,189
Gross Amplification Points (GAPs)	696	344	125	245

Base: All adults Source: TGI Great Britain 15

Breaking the schedule performance out among food Champions, other influencers and receivers allows us to build Gross Amplification Points (GAPs) into the picture. Among the Champions, the gross impressions are again multiplied by three to become amplified contacts, and the 232 GRPs become 696 GAPs. Similarly among the other influencers, 172 GRPs are doubled to 344 GAPs. For the total target audience, the final calculation gives 245 GAPs to compare to its 150 GRPs.

Expressed in terms of contacts, rather than the 30,076,000 that would typically be imagined, our assumptions about the amplification delivered by word of mouth mean that our message has perhaps been transmitted more than half as many times again. Based on this calculation, 49,189,000 amplified contacts have been achieved.

The second example, shown in Chart 16, is based on bottled lager drinkers. From a starting point of a range of newspapers and magazines, the optimised schedule uses 35 insertions. The same process of calculation brings us to 180 GAPs in comparison to 109 GRPs, and 27,610,000 amplified contacts in comparison to 16,700,000 usually counted.

Schedule Construction and Gross Amplification Points

Word of Mouth definitions for the Alcoholic Drinks sector: Target of Bottled Lager Drinkers

	Champions	Other Influencers	Receivers	Total Target
All Bottled Lager Drinkers (000s)	1,490	5,632	8,195	15,317
Schedule Insertions	35	35	35	35
Schedule Reach (000s)	896	3,313	4,006	8,322
Schedule Reach (%)	60.2%	58.9%	48.9%	54.3%
Average Frequency	2.25	2.08	1.95	2.01
Gross Rating Points (GRPs)	135	122	95	109
Gross Impressions (000s)	2,013	6,884	7,803	16,700
Assumed Amplification Factor	5	3	1	
Amplified Contacts (000s)	6,039	13,768	7,803	27,610
Gross Amplification Points (GAPs)	405	244	95	180

Base: All adults Source: TGI Great Britain 16

If we argue that a GAP has the same value as a GRP, then in both cases we have constructed plans that give an increase in total impact of over 60%. The fact that these schedules were optimised for their performance against the respective Champions means that the enhancement to the number of contacts is greater than it would be for a schedule put together under normal conditions. However, if one was planning a schedule designed to maximise the amount of amplified word of mouth transmission, this sort of approach would be beneficial.

The aggregated effect achieved when collateral contacts resulting from word of mouth activity are added to the first-stage paid-for media contacts can be considerable.

These calculations of amplified effect are admittedly based on a set of fairly simple assumptions resulting from our investigations. As noted above, we believe that they are conservative, but we acknowledge that further research to confirm that they are realistic would be beneficial. The next step we plan is to design a study to assess the weighting of these factors and how they work in combination with media consumption.

Utilising Word of Mouth for pan-European media planning

Using the approach already described for calculating GAPs we are able to assess how well international print titles perform across markets in terms of their buzz potential.

Again, we can illustrate this by looking at two publications with very similar readership levels among category users. The category chosen for this example is mobile phones across five markets in Europe: France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary and Slovenia. The print titles we have chosen to compare are *FHM* and *Cosmopolitan*. The mobile phone category was deliberately selected because there should not be a gender bias which might affect the word of mouth influence for each title.

Focusing first on the men's monthly magazine *FHM*, Chart 17 illustrates how GAPs can work across markets. The results show that *FHM* achieves a high amplification factor across all five markets, ranging from 1.60 in France to as high as 1.91 in Slovenia. The aggregated effect across the markets is therefore an increase in amplified contacts of around 66%, or almost 3 million contacts, which makes a compelling ad sales case for *FHM* across the region.

The Amplification Factor:
Mobile Phone Champions across Europe

Readers of *FHM* –Target of Mobile Phone Owners

	Target Reach (000s)	Amplification Factor (3:2:1)	Amplified Contacts (000s)
France	1,300	1.60	2,082
Germany	431	1.62	698
Great Britain	2,327	1.69	3,923
Hungary	128	1.71	221
Slovenia	34	1.91	65
Total	**4,220**		**6,989**

Base: Mobile Phone owners Source: Global TGI 17

A second example repeats the process, this time for the women's monthly magazine *Cosmopolitan* (Chart 18). Here we find that whilst the word of mouth influence is visible, the impact is not as great as with *FHM*. For *Cosmopolitan*, the amplification factor ranges from 1.37 in France to 1.73 in Slovenia, with an increase in amplified contacts of 44%, or almost 2 million contacts.

The Amplification Factor:
Mobile Phone Champions across Europe

Readers of *Cosmopolitan* –Target of Mobile Phone Owners

	Target Reach (000s)	Amplification Factor (3:2:1)	Amplified Contacts (000s)
France	1,373	1.37	1,885
Germany	782	1.55	1,212
Great Britain	1,708	1.42	2,432
Hungary	118	1.61	190
Slovenia	79	1.73	137
Total	**4,060**		**5,856**

Base: Mobile Phone owners

Source: Global TGI

18

Since both magazines have a similar standard readership level, the additional amplified readership could be a vital differentiator when making media planning decisions.

The simplicity of the word of mouth questions on TGI is such that they require less than one page of the questionnaire. This leads us to believe that they could also be carried on other industry media research studies, meaning that amplification effects could also be incorporated in the currency measures for all major media.

CONCLUSION

Many marketers are now turning to word of mouth as a valuable method for capturing the attention and trust of consumers. Mass media still offers broad reach and remains a critical part of most media plans, but the incorporation of the word of mouth into the planning process can add a powerful new dimension.

Our concept of Gross Amplification Points provides a credible methodology for enabling planners to apply word of mouth measurements alongside and in combination with traditional media measures, and within traditional media planning systems.

Advertisers will try to influence word of mouth in all its forms alongside paid-for advertising and our analysis shows that careful selection of media can improve the targeting of those individuals who themselves are strong word of mouth communicators. This amplification of the message brought about by word of mouth is clear from our analysis of TGI both within and across markets.