

EJ

Elon Journal
of Undergraduate Research
in Communications

201+ Fall
Issue
School of Communications
Elon University

Joining the World of Journals

Welcome to the nation's first and, to our knowledge, only undergraduate research journal in communications.

We discovered this fact while perusing the Web site of the Council on Undergraduate Research, which lists and links to the 60 or so undergraduate research journals nationwide (<http://www.cur.org/ugjournal.html>).

Some of these journals focus on a discipline (e.g., Journal of Undergraduate Research in Physics), some are university-based and multidisciplinary (e.g., MIT Undergraduate Research Journal), and some are university-based and disciplinary (e.g., Furman University Electronic Journal in Undergraduate Mathematics).

The Elon Journal is the first to focus on undergraduate research in journalism, media and communications.

The School of Communications at Elon University is the creator and publisher of the online journal. The first issue was published in Spring 2010 under the editorship of Dr. Byung Lee, associate professor in the School of Communications.

The three purposes of the journal are:

- To publish the best undergraduate research in Elon's School of Communications each term,
- To serve as a repository for quality work to benefit future students seeking models for how to do undergraduate research well, and
- To advance the university's priority to emphasize undergraduate student research.

The Elon Journal is published twice a year, with spring and fall issues.

Articles and other materials in the journal may be freely downloaded, reproduced and redistributed without permission as long as the author and source are properly cited. Student authors retain copyright ownership of their works.

Celebrating Student Research

This journal reflects what we enjoy seeing in our students -- intellectual maturing.

As 18 year olds, some students enter college wanting to earn a degree, but unsure if they want an education. They may question whether communication theory has anything to do with real life. Ready to start their media careers, many would rather focus on workplace skills than analyze issues and concepts.

In Elon's School of Communications, we strive for a balance among concepts, writing and production. All are important.

Student media and organizations are terrific venues for the practice of journalism, broadcasting, public relations, advertising and cinema.

In turn, this journal celebrates the life of the intellect through undergraduate research. It represents the intellectual maturing that occurs by the senior year.

These published articles make us aware of the solitary hours that students spend in research and the untold hours in which student and teacher-mentor work together to revise a paper for public consumption. It's exciting to see students conducting research in such arenas as social media and press freedom.

By focusing attention on undergraduate research, this journal helps reinforce all that we think a university should be.

Dr. Paul Parsons, Dean
School of Communications

Editorial Board

Twenty-five faculty members in Elon's School of Communications served as the Editorial Board for the 2012 fall issue: Janna Anderson, Lucinda Austin, Vanessa Bravo, Naeemah Clark, Vic Costello, Michelle Ferrier, Michael Frontani, Kenn Gaither, Mandy Gallagher, Jessica Gisclair, Don Grady, Anthony Hatcher, Derek Lackaff, Julie Lellis, Harlen Makemson, Barbara Miller, Phillip Motley, Thomas Nelson, George Padgett, Paul Parsons, Glenn Scott, Michael Skube, Amanda Sturgill, Frances Ward-Johnson and Qian Xu.

From more than 100 research papers written in advanced School of Communications classes, 25 papers were submitted to the journal by Elon communications students through the encouragement and mentoring of capstone teachers and other professors in the school. Only 9 were selected by the board.

Thanks should go to not only Capstone teachers, but also Jason McMerty, who videotaped student introductions to their projects, Bryan Baker who uploaded video in high definition to Youtube, and Colin Donohue, who uploaded the PDF version of this issue.

Editor's Note

Congratulations to the students whose research papers were selected for publication in this issue of the *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*. Numerous papers were submitted for consideration for inclusion in the journal and we applaud the efforts of all students who offered their work for competitive review.

The papers in the journal represent many different ways to conceive of research projects. Fundamentally, each of these studies may be partitioned into two parts: the first consists of the explanation of the topic and literature review; and the second is all the rest, and may include a description of the methodology, research findings and discussion. For many students, the literature review produces the most anxiety because it can take many routes, while the methodology and results typically follow more routine procedures. Although the literature review is difficult, it is worthwhile for student researchers who must learn to focus and provide a proper context and support for a specific topic of investigation.

In a recent *New York Times* article, Mark B. Templeton, president and C.E.O. of Citrix, mentioned two types of learning: paint-by-numbers and connect-the-dots. Students who paint-by-numbers always require the guiding hand of a teacher to tell them exactly what they must do, while students who learn to connect-the dots learn to think critically and seek solutions to new problems and situations. A literature review requires students to read as much as possible about a topic and select the most valuable works for support. Students learn to detect the dots buried in the literature and in previous research studies.

Korean PGA Golfer Choi Kyung-Ju once said that he must be able to see a clear line between a golf ball and the hole before making a successful long-range putt. Students who read thoroughly and think critically about how materials relate to a topic are like Mr. Choi, who must visualize the points along the path of his putt a million times before each shot. Similarly, a well-done literature review enables students to successfully guide their research, by knowing the parts of a topic and the relationships that exists among those parts. When students study enough, the dots will loom large and the lines between them will become apparent.

Rather than reading without a plan, students must find the logical categories to support the organization and summary of important works. As students read more, they find that big categories require division and smaller categories require merger with one another. A thorough literature review also enable students to learn how previous studies were conducted and the results, so they may consider their own contribution in answering important research questions.

The knowledge and skills learned by students while conducting a literature review is also applicable to the workplace. Media technologies and practices are changing rapidly and many of the topics addressed by the papers in this issue of the journal are valuable to evolving communications professions. Generally stated, these topics include the importance of an online presence, the use of social media in branding, new online advertising strategies, the use of "image restoration" in crisis communications, and the cross-cultural pollination of media forms. To the credit of our students and their faculty mentors, the topics in this issue of the journal required students to apply old knowledge in new contexts and to examine issues from new perspectives.

Dr. Byung Lee
Journal Editor

The Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications

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Facebook Pages and Benefits to Brands

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Abstract

Facebook fan pages allow a brand to create an online community of brand users through the social networking site. By pressing Facebook's "like" button, a Facebook user can become a fan of the page and can interact with the brand and other consumers. This research aimed to examine whether liking and interacting with a Facebook fan page has an effect on brand loyalty and purchase intentions, and Facebook fan pages create an online brand community. An analysis of 104 online survey responses indicates that interaction with fan pages is not a strong indicator of consumer brand loyalty or purchase intentions, suggesting that brand communities are not formed on the basis of liking a page.

I. Introduction

As an increasing number of people get their news and connect to others through social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, brands are turning to social networking sites to supplement their communication with consumers. With over 845 million users, Facebook is currently the largest social networking site ("Fact Sheet," 2012). Facebook allows users to connect and interact with others, express themselves, and maintain social relationships. On average, Facebook reports 483 million user logins each day. Kerpen (2011) describes social networking sites as a cocktail party where anyone can listen to what others are talking about, and can join the conversation if they wish. But what makes social networking more effective than one's average cocktail party is that instead of joining just one conversation, one has the ability to have conversations with thousands or millions of people at once.

With such a large user base, Facebook is becoming a popular tool for public relations and advertising professionals to reach mass audiences. Facebook fan pages allow brands to create an online community of brand users on the social networking site. These public profiles, which operate in a similar manner to individual user profiles, allow a brand to share information and post updates, photos, and more. According to Facebook fan pages, "by leveraging the real connections between friends on Facebook, a public profile lets users connect to what they care about. Facebook pages give you a more dynamic relationship with the public figures and organizations you are interested in" ("Facebook Pages," n.d.). As of December 2011, there were over 37 million fan pages with 10 or more "likes" ("Fact Sheet," 2012). Fan pages create an online presence for a brand and allow the brand to actively engage with its publics. To join the community, a user simply has to click the like button to subscribe to information and updates from the brand.

* **Key words:** Facebook fan pages, "like," online communities, brand loyalty, purchase intentions

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Facebook's like button was introduced to the public in April of 2010 (Kerpen, 2011). The like button receives over one billion clicks each day and allows Facebook users to express approval of pages, photos, statuses, articles, and more. Kerpen (2011) claims that it is this personalization of the web that is driving the social media revolution. The like button is a powerful tool because after it is pressed, Facebook shows the individual's entire network what he or she has just liked, spreading information and affiliations in a viral manner. Therefore, when an individual likes any page on Facebook, the individual's Facebook friends can see which page that person liked.

While a lot of research examined individuals' motivations behind joining a brand community and liking a Facebook fan page, only limited research has looked at what implications the like button has for brands. A fan page may have millions of likes, but is clicking the like button a reliable measure of brand loyalty and purchase intentions? What is individuals' intention when they like a Facebook fan page? Using the Uses and Gratifications Theory as a theoretical framework, this research tested whether or not an individual becomes a member of a brand community when he or she likes a fan page and examined how liking and interacting with a fan page affects brand loyalty and purchase intentions. Overall, the research will help determine if Facebook fan pages are an effective and useful tool in communicating with consumers.

II. Literature Review

This study extends the Uses and Gratifications Theory to test whether or not liking a Facebook fan page influences brand loyalty and purchase intentions. This section examined previous research on Facebook fan pages, brand communities, brand loyalty, and purchase intentions.

Online Brand Communities

A brand community is a group of individuals forming ties and relationships centered on a brand (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). According to Muniz and O'Guinn, "a brand community is a specialized, non-geographically bound community based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand" (p. 412). Like a traditional community, a brand community is defined by a shared sense of belonging in the community, shared rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility.

According to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), brand communities are causing a shift from the consumer-brand dyad to the consumer-brand-consumer triad. In the triad, a brand is viewed as a social object, which is developed and constructed by consumer feedback and consumer insight, giving the consumer an active role in the brand's development. Consumers become active loyalists who are committed to that brand. Additionally, brand communities allow the consumer to have a greater voice and provide its members with social benefits.

For the brand, a community allows it to share information about the brand, its history, and its culture of the brand (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Further, a brand can become an informational resource for the members of the community and provide customer service. Creating a strong brand community is a key step in developing a strong relationship marketing strategy. A brand community leads to interpersonal bonds between a consumer and the brand, developing long-term relationships rather than individual, one-time transactions.

Motivations behind clicking the "like" button

An individual always has a motivation behind liking a Facebook fan page. Brand community members join a community based on either the positive or negative feelings they have towards a brand (Wilimzig, 2011). Further, individuals choose to join a Facebook brand community because they are loyal to that brand. Other motivations for joining these brand communities are economic benefits, such as discounts, competitions, and lotteries, and entertainment. Providing exclusive deals and discounts available only to members of the Facebook brand community is an incentive for individuals to join the community (Vorvoreanu, 2009). Weman (2011) found that consumers are not joining brand communities to make new friends or socialize and connect with strangers.

Hedonic motivations, related to fun or playful goals, are related to contribution behavior on a Facebook fan page (Malmivaara, 2011). Those motivated by hedonic notions are more likely to join a page in order to comment on or interact with the page and brand. In comparison, utilitarian motivations, driven by some

sort of goal, are strongly related to browsing behavior. An individual with utilitarian motivation is more likely to look through and browse a page, rather than interact with that page. Overall, most individuals and their online behaviors are shaped by both utilitarian and hedonic motivations.

Authenticity + honesty + transparency = Trust

Authenticity, honesty, and transparency are three qualities that help develop trust in online brand communities. To create a positive impression of a Facebook brand community, users need to trust the brand and other members of the community (Lin, 2006). Kerpen (2011) stated that the fan page must be authentic, or real. Operators of a fan page must be human, rather than robotic, in order to create a personal atmosphere. Having a scripted and generic voice online will have a negative impact on site users.

According to Kerpen (2011), “You must be as honest and transparent as possible when using social media. Honesty and transparency build a direct relationship between you and the customer, and any deviation from these values can erode brand trust forever” (p.109). Facebook fan pages are a simple and effective tool for honest and transparent word of mouth marketing (Kerpen, 2011). The Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA) has developed an ethics code for what is appropriate and inappropriate on social networking sites. As cited by Kerpen (2011), the code of ethics encourages honesty of relationships, honesty of opinion, and honesty of identity—saying who you are speaking for, saying what you truly believe, and never falsifying your identity.

Engagement and interaction

According to Lin (2011), “Operators of fan pages should increase opportunities for fans to interact to promote the development of deeper relationships both among fans and between fans and the organization” (p. 568). Social interaction ties increase the value of the trust that people have in brand communities (Lin & Lu, 2011). Increasing interaction between fans develops relationships among them and between them and the brand, which in turn add value to the brand as a whole. Social interaction among fans and between the fans and the brand facilitates shares value and trust of fan pages. Facebook encourages individuals to share information about themselves, and exchange thoughts and opinions with others.

College-aged students, who were the original users of Facebook, developed an online culture, and brands need to be aware of it when using the site for advertising. According to Vorvoreanu (2009), Facebook users want to interact with brands on their own terms and would prefer that brands do not use an “in-your-face” strategy. College-aged students also believe that the official corporate webpage, email, and telephone are more appropriate channels than Facebook for dealing specifically with customer service as well as brand policies and issues. Facebook is appropriate for increasing awareness of large brands, but not for in-depth conversation between the brand and its publics. In comparison, small companies can be more successful on Facebook because their size allows for more personal communication.

McCorkindale (2010) found in her study of Fortune 50 companies’ efforts on Facebook that most companies are not using Facebook to its full potential. Most Fortune 50 companies are not using Facebook to share company information and disseminate information to their publics. Similarly, Waters, Burnett, Lamm, and Lucas (2009) concluded that nonprofits recognize what benefits social networking sites provide, but fail to take advantage of them. Facebook allows companies and nonprofits to disseminate information through press releases, photographs, and videos, but more companies need to take advantage of these opportunities (McCorkindale, 2010; Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). The ability to share information allows a company or nonprofit to be honest and transparent and aids in the development of trust.

Many companies are not taking advantage of the two-way communication opportunities that Facebook offers (McCorkindale, 2011; Waters, et al., 2009). Companies need to be more engaged with their Facebook fans to give them an incentive to return to the page.

Brand loyalty and purchase intentions

Wilimzig (2011) suggested that association with a brand community implies some sort of brand loyalty, regardless of community participation and feelings of association. Consumers turn to online brand communities as a trustworthy and reliable source for brand related information (Punjumemi, 2009). These online brand communities are convenient, easily accessible, and enable consumers with similar brand preferences to interact with one another. Lee (2009) concluded that loyalty to a brand community predicts brand loyalty.

Therefore, participation in a brand community has a positive effect on loyalty to a brand.

Brand loyalty affects brand community members' purchase intentions (Lee, 2009). Wilimzig (2011) concluded that a high sense of association with a brand community suggests that group members are more likely to purchase that brand. Data collected indicated that members of brand communities are more sensitive to advertising and therefore have a greater likelihood of purchase. The more a consumer gets involved with the brand community, the more likely they are to model their purchasing behavior on other community members (Punjumemi, 2009).

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory argues that "audiences use media to meet their needs and fulfill their personal gratification" (Lee, 2009, p. 16). According to Blumler and Katz, as cited in Davis et al. (2009), this theory emphasizes "the active role of the audience in making choices and being goal directed" (p. 2). An individual's goals and priorities drive what information is consumed and by what means he or she uses to consume that information.

According to Rubin (as cited in Lee, 2009), audiences can be divided into ritualized and instrumental audiences. A ritualized audience focuses on the medium itself, rather than the content. The ritualized audience is more habitual in their actions. In comparison, an instrumental audience, who is goal-oriented, selects the media based on their content.

According to Sicilia and Palazon (as cited in Lee, 2009), "the gratification of individual needs in a virtual community depends on the perceived value of being a member" (p. 17). Virtual communities offer functional, social, and entertainment values. The functional values allude to an individual's need to give and seek information and advice. Social values cover friendship and social enhancement. Finally, entertainment values are fun and relaxation from an individual's interaction with others.

III. Research questions

Previous research suggests that individuals join brand communities or like Facebook fan pages for both entertainment and fun purposes as well as goal-oriented reasons. Facebook users feel that there must be a sense of trust in the page before they like the page. In order to cultivate trust, a fan page must be authentic, transparent, and honest. A Facebook fan page is a two-way method of advertising that allows for interaction and engagement between brands and community members. Researchers have found that being a member of a brand community indicates some affiliation with that brand through brand loyalty and purchase intentions. Previous research fails to identify what implications the like button has for a brand. This research will aim to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What types of relationships might exist between the amount of time an individual interacts with a fan page (playing games, viewing photos, watching videos, commenting, participating in contests, etc.) and that individual's brand loyalty?

RQ2: How does liking a page on Facebook indicate a user's affiliation with that brand?

RQ3: Is there a relationship between the amount of time an individual interacts with a Facebook fan page and the likelihood that the individual will purchase the product or service promoted by that page?

RQ4: How does becoming a fan of a brand on Facebook predict that individual's purchase intentions?

IV. Methodology

Data were collected through an online survey, a link to which was active for five days. Some survey questions were adapted from previous studies. The online survey was advertised to the researcher's Facebook network via three status updates on three separate days. The survey was posted over a five-day period from March 30, 2012 through April 3, 2012. Further, the researcher emailed classmates to encourage them to take the survey. Among the researcher's 878 Facebook friends and 60 classmates who received emails, 104

(11% response rate) completed the online survey. The survey assumed that participants are active Facebook users because most saw the survey link through the researcher's posts on Facebook. This survey, based on a convenience sample, aimed to discover why the participants like Facebook fan pages, how often they visit and interact with the pages that they like, and for what purposes they like Facebook fan pages. Survey questions can be found in the Appendix.

Before completing the survey, participants were informed of the study purpose and the general outline of the survey. The online survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete. Respondents were given the opportunity to opt out of the survey any time before submitting by closing the browser window.

V. Results

Among a total of 104 individuals who completed the online survey, 84% (87 respondents) were female, and 16% (17 respondents) were male. Also 94% of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 22, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Age Distribution

Age	Frequency	Percentage		Age	Frequency	Percentage
18	8	8%		23	3	3%
19	14	13%		24	1	1%
20	14	13%		30	1	1%
21	35	34%		54	1	1%
22	27	26%				

When asked how many fan pages they like on Facebook, the largest number of 24 respondents (23%) indicated they like either 3-5 pages or 21 pages or more, as shown in *Figure 1*.

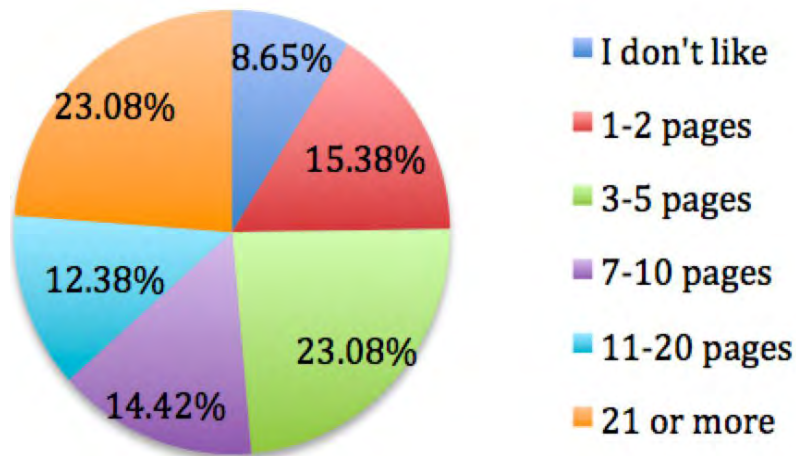


Figure 1. Number of fan pages respondents like on Facebook

Participants were then asked about what types of Facebook fan pages they like and were given the opportunity to select all that applied. Books/movies were most liked, followed by celebrities, fashion brands and others, as shown in *Figure 2*.

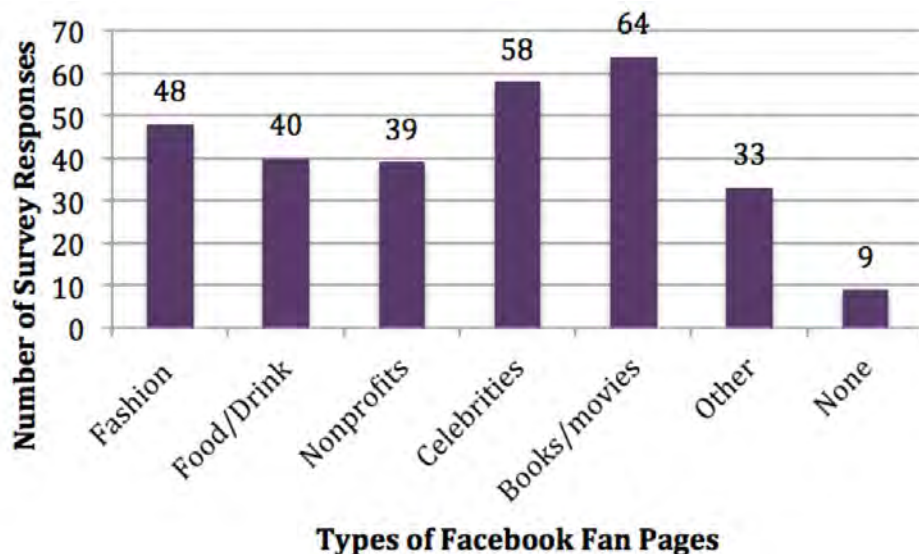


Figure 2. Types of fan pages that respondents like on Facebook

Some brand fan pages that multiple respondents like include Lilly Pulitzer, Tory Burch, YoZone Frozen Yogurt, Buffalo Wild Wings, Disney, TOMS, Barnes and Noble, Habitat for Humanity, Best Buddies, JCrew, Kate Spade, and Starbucks.

When asked how often they visit the pages they like, one participant (1%) stated that they visit the pages multiple times a day, 8 participants (8%) visit a couple of times a week, 6 participants (6%) visit once a week, 16 participants (15%) visit every couple of weeks, 25 participants (24%) visit monthly, and 28 respondents (27%) never visit the pages. Table 2 indicates how much time the respondents spend on a fan page when they visit.

Table 2. How much time participants spend on fan pages they like

Time Spent	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	67	64%
2-3 hours	1	1%
4-5 hours	0	0%
5 or more hours	0	0%
Don't visit pages	26	25%
Don't "like" pages	10	10%
TOTAL	104	100%

Respondents were asked to indicate how they interact with Facebook fan pages. Options given were to "watch videos," "view photos," "write on the page's wall," "comment (on posts, photos, videos)," "participate in contests or sweepstakes," and "I do not interact with fan pages." The responses are displayed in Figure 3.

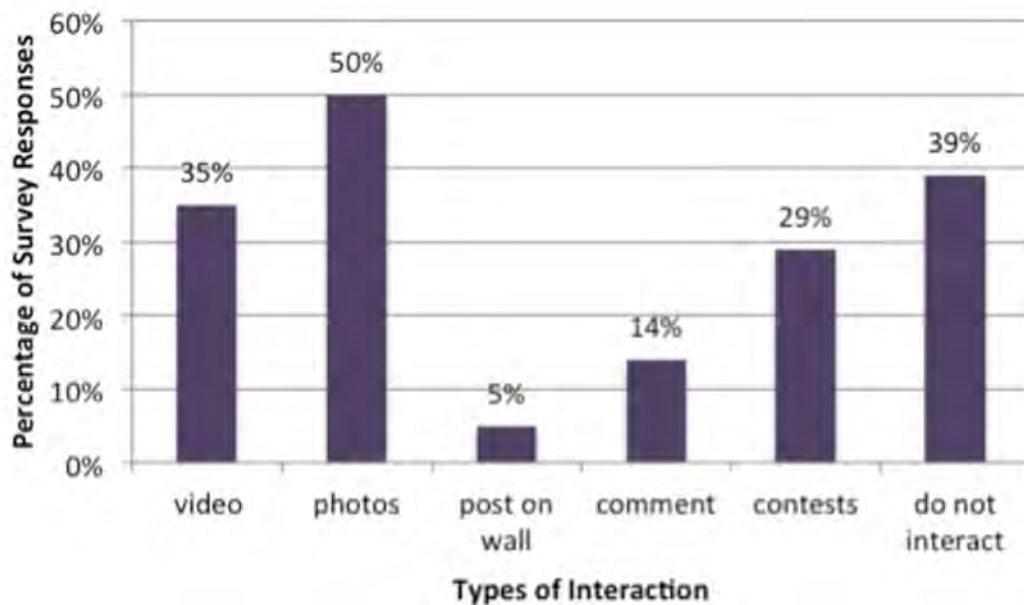


Figure 3. How survey participants interact with fan page features

Respondents were then asked how often they interact with the features on fan pages that they like. The responses are displayed in Figure 4.

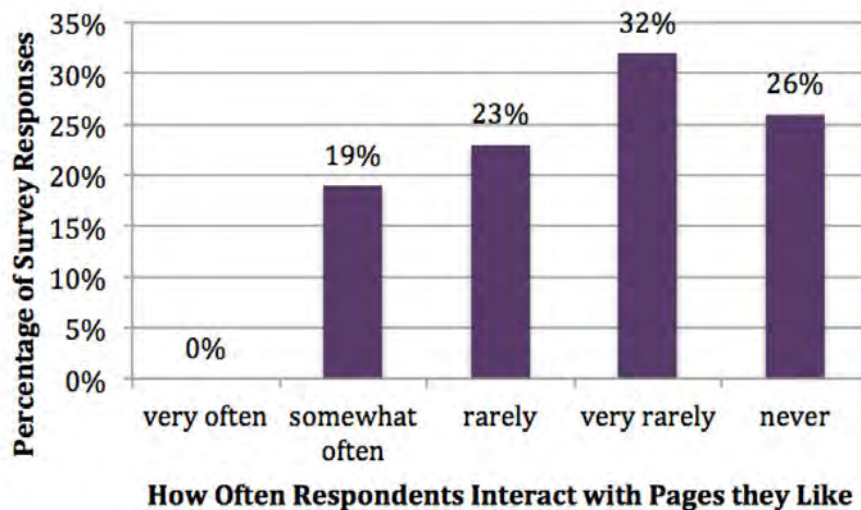


Figure 4. How often participants interact with fan page features

Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with three statements regarding brand loyalty, connection to fan pages they “like” and purchase intention on a scale of one to five, with one being strongly disagree and five being strongly agree. Brand loyalty was defined for participants as a preference of one brand over all others and will only purchase other alternative brands as a last resort.

When asked to rate how they feel about the statement, “I consider myself a brand loyal user to brands I ‘like’ on Facebook,” on a scale of one being strongly disagree to five being strongly agree, 26% of respondents strongly disagreed, 27% disagreed, 20% were neutral, 22% agreed, and 5% strongly agreed.

Participants were then asked to rate the level of their agreement with the statement, “I feel connected to the fan pages that I ‘like.’ ” The result was that 27% strongly disagreed, 25% disagreed, 30% remained

neutral, 16% agreed, only 2% strongly agreed.

Participants were also asked to rate the level of their agreement with the statement, “Being a member of a Facebook fan page makes me more likely to purchase that brand,” on a scale of one to five, with one being strongly disagree and five being strongly agree. Among the participants, 26% said they strongly disagree, 28% disagree, 20% remained neutral, 22% agreed, 4% strongly agreed. The distribution of responses to the three statements can be seen in *Figure 5*.

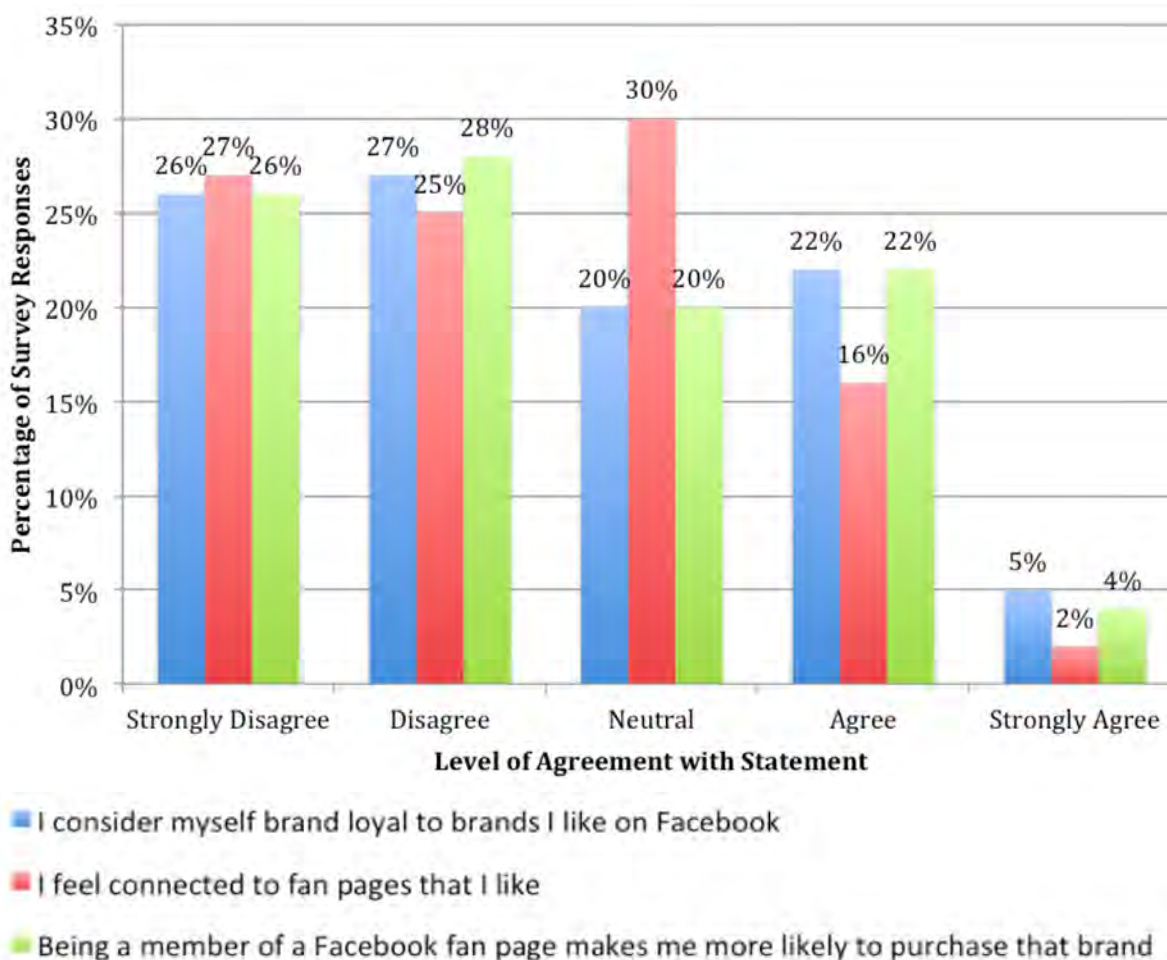


Figure 5. The distribution of responses to the three statements

Survey participants were asked how likely they were to purchase a product or service promoted by a Facebook fan page that they like on a scale of one to five, with one being never and five being very likely. The percentage of respondents and their answers are displayed in *Figure 6*.

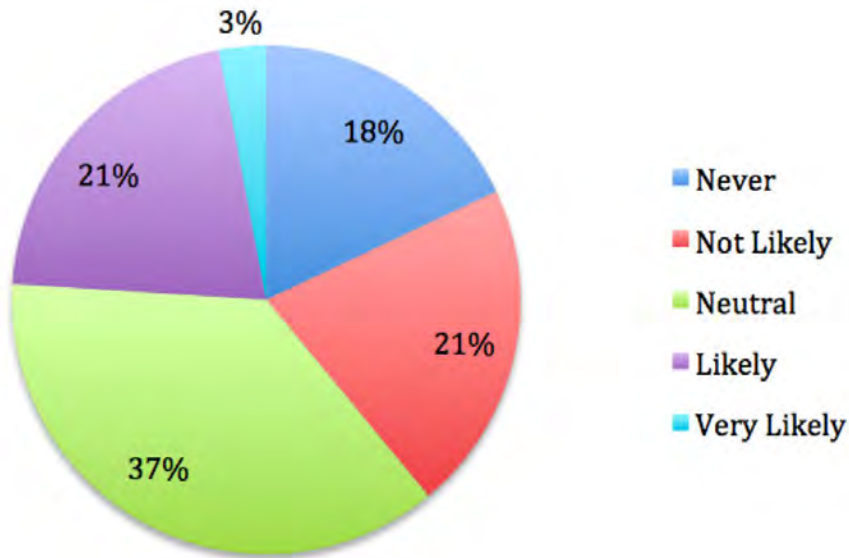


Figure 6. Likelihood of purchasing a product or service promoted by a fan page respondent's like

Eighteen (18%) respondents said they would “never” purchase the product or service promoted by a Facebook fan page that they like, followed by “not likely” by 21% of respondents; “ambivalent” by 37% “likely” by 21%, and “very likely” by 3%.

Finally, participants were asked to select all responses that indicated their motivation behind liking a brand's Facebook fan page. The options were “sweepstakes or contest,” “monetary (coupon or free offer) games/entertainment,” “to post positive or negative comments,” “to interact with other brand users,” “just love the brand/brand loyal user,” or “other.” Just love the brand/brand loyal user was chosen by the largest number of respondents, followed by sweepstakes or contest, monetary rewards, etc. as shown in Figure 7.

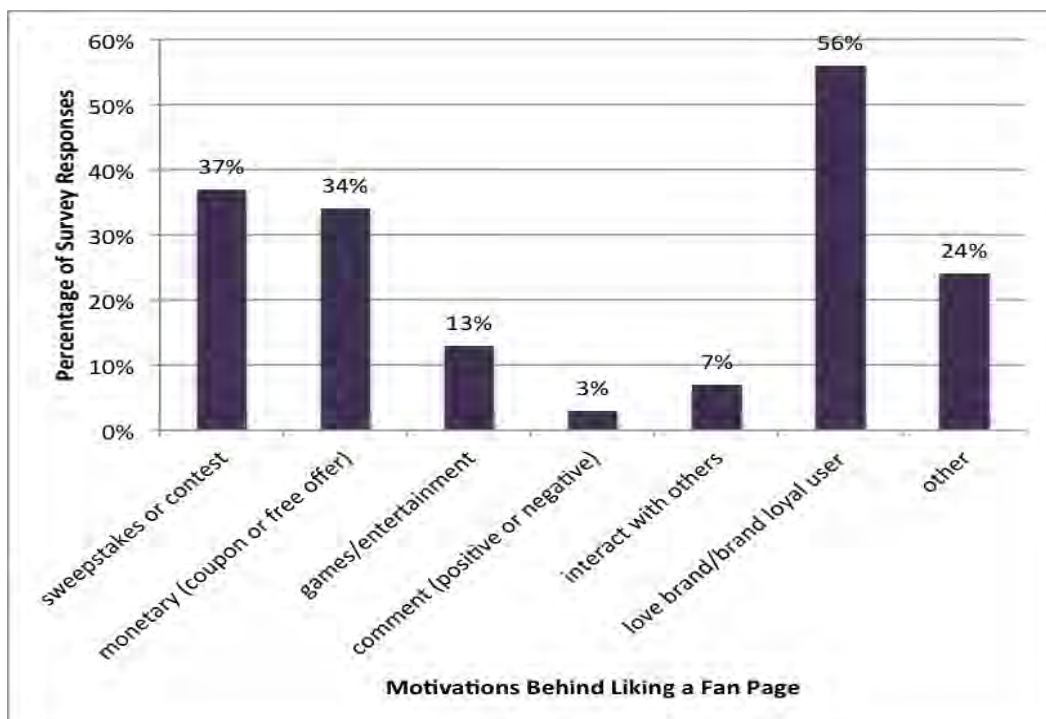


Figure 7. Motivations behind liking a brand's Facebook fan page

VI. Discussion

On Facebook, there are many pages that have millions of likes, but it is unclear what exactly a like means for a brand. Previous research has looked at an individual's motivation for liking a Facebook fan page, but none has looked at the implications that the like button has for a brand. The purpose of this study is to determine what motivates individuals to like brand fan pages on Facebook and whether or not that individual becomes a member of a brand community by liking that page. Additionally, the study looked at how liking a Facebook fan page affected an individual's brand loyalty and purchase intentions. Overall, the study aimed at determining whether or not creating and maintaining a Facebook fan page is a beneficial tool for brands to communicate with their consumer base.

The findings from the study do not provide a conclusive answer to RQ1. Data do not indicate a strong relationship between the amount of time an individual interacts with a fan page and the individual's brand loyalty. A crosstab of how often an individual interacts with a fan page and the respondent's agreement with the statement "Being a member of a fan page makes me more likely to purchase the brand" can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Crosstab of interaction time and agreement with likelihood to purchase a brand

		Very Often	Somewhat Often	Rarely or Very Rarely	Never
Agreement with the statement "Being a member of a fan page makes me more likely to purchase the brand"	Strongly Agree	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	3 (6%)	0 (0%)
	Agree	0 (0%)	8 (40%)	13(23%)	2 (7%)
	Neutral	0 (0%)	4 (20%)	12 (21%)	5 (18%)
	Disagree	0 (0%)	5 (25%)	16(29%)	8 (29%)
	Strongly Disagree	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	12(21%)	13 (46%)
	Subtotal	0 (0%)	20(19%)	56 (54%)	26(25%)

Overall, only 19% of study participants responded that they interact with fan pages somewhat often, as shown in Table 3. Of that 19%, only 45% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I consider myself a brand loyal individual to brands I like on Facebook." This small percentage of people who interact with fan pages on a somewhat often basis consider themselves brand loyal does not support a relationship between the amount of time spent interacting with a page and brand loyalty.

Among the participants, 54% responded that they rarely or very rarely interact with the fan pages that they like. Of that 54 percent, 29% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I consider myself a brand loyal individual to brands I "like" on Facebook," while another 50% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (the rest of respondents remained neutral).

In contrast, 46% of study respondents who indicated that they never interact with the features of fan pages that they like strongly disagreed with the statement "I consider myself a brand loyal individual to brands I like on Facebook." This supports the research question that the amount of time an individual interacts with a fan page affects the individual's brand loyalty. Based upon the overall findings, it seems as though an individual's brand loyalty is not strongly affected by how often he or she interacts with the brand's Facebook fan page.

Considering also low numbers in the cells on the top left corner, which should show a big number for a strong relationship between the amount of time an individual interacts with a fan page and brand loyalty, there is no strong evidence here to support RQ1 that there is a strong relationship between the two variables.

Through RQ2, the study aimed to determine if an individual is expressing an affiliation with the brand by liking a page. This question is not supported by the findings. Over 50% of study participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "I feel connected to the fan pages that I like." Based upon these findings, it can be concluded that when an individual likes a Facebook fan page, they are not expressing a connection with the brand itself. It can be concluded that liking a Facebook fan page does not make that individual a part of a brand community.

RQ3 explored the relationship between the amount of time an individual interacts with a fan page and the likelihood that he or she is to purchase a product or service being promoted by the page. Findings do not provide conclusive evidence to suggest that the amount of time an individual interacts with a fan page predicts that individual's likelihood to purchase the product or service promoted by that page. A cross tab of how often an individual interacts with a fan page and his or her likelihood to purchase the product or service promoted by that brand can be found in Table 4.

Table 4. Crosstab of interaction time and likelihood to purchase product or service

		Very Often	Somewhat Often	Rarely or Very Rarely	Never
How likely are you to purchase a product or service promoted by a fan page that you like?	Very Likely	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	1 (4%)
	Likely	0 (0%)	9 (45%)	11 (32%)	2 (7%)
	Neutral	0 (0%)	5 (25%)	23 (32%)	10 (36%)
	Not Likely	0 (0%)	5 (25%)	13 (24%)	4 (14%)
	Never	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	7 (8%)	11 (39%)
	Subtotal	0 (0%)	20 (19%)	56(54%)	28(27%)

Nineteen percent of participants indicated that they interact fan pages they like somewhat often. Of that 19%, 45% responded that they would be likely to purchase a product or service promoted by a fan page that they like. Only one-quarter responded that they would be unlikely to purchase this brand, and 5% responded that they would never purchase this brand, while the other quarter remained neutral. Similarly, of the 27% who indicated that they never interact with the fan pages that they like, 53% claimed that they would be unlikely (14%) or would never purchase the brand (39%) promoted by a page they like. This data suggests that the more time an individual interacts with a page, the more likely he or she is to purchase that brand.

In contrast, of 54% of participants indicated that they rarely or very rarely interact with Facebook fan pages, 32% claimed that they would be unlikely to (24%) or would never purchase a product or service (8%) promoted by a fan page that they like. Thirty-six percent indicated that they would be likely (32%) or very likely (4%) to purchase the product or service being promoted, while 32% remained neutral. This data suggests a positive correlation between interaction with a fan page and intent to purchase. Considering 0% for a few cells on the top left corner of the table, which should show a big number if there is a positive relationship between the amount of time an individual interacts with a Facebook fan page and the likelihood that an individual will purchase the product or service promoted by that page, it can be concluded that there is not a strong relationship between the two variables.

RQ4 looked at whether or not liking a Facebook fan page affects a consumer's purchase intentions. Study results indicate that purchase intentions are not correlated with liking page on Facebook. More than 50% of participants responded that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "being a member of a Facebook fan page makes me more likely to purchase that brand." About one quarter of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 20% were ambiguous. Because more than half of the participants are not more likely to purchase a brand they like on Facebook, liking a Facebook fan page is not an indicator of purchase intentions. This research does not agree with Wilmzig's (2011) findings that the higher sense of association an individual has with a brand community, the more likely he or she is to purchase the brand.

Research findings also indicate that many individuals, especially in the 18-22 year-old age group, like celebrities and books/movies on Facebook, rather than fashion brands and nonprofits (see Figure 2). According to the survey results, 58 respondents (56%) like some sort of celebrity (actors, politicians, sports figures, bands, musicians) and 64 respondents (62%) like books or movies. When asked to list pages an individual likes on Facebook, many respondents listed specific singers, books, and movies, although asked to exclude those categories. Based on these findings, Facebook fan pages are an effective way for celebrities, books, and movies to communicate with the public.

VII. Conclusion

According to this research, there is no evidence that Facebook fan pages create a brand community for those who like the page. There is no strong evidence that the amount of time an individual interacts with a Facebook fan page affects brand loyalty or the likelihood that an individual will purchase the product or service promoted by a fan page. The study's findings show no strong support for the relationship between interaction with fan pages and affiliation with the brand. Further there is no strong support for the likelihood of purchasing a brand just because the individual likes the brand on Facebook. Therefore, Facebook fan pages are not the most effective communications tool for brands to effectively reach their consumers. While a fan page can be used as an extension of communications techniques, using solely Facebook will not be effective.

This study is limited in scope because it is based on a convenience sample of Facebook users and the researcher's classmates. For future research on this topic, the survey should be distributed to a more diverse and random population of Facebook users. In the future it would also be beneficial to conduct focus groups or one-to-one in-depth interviews to gain a deeper and more qualitative understanding for an individual's motivation to like and interact with a brand's Facebook fan page. For a different spin on research on Facebook fan pages and the implications of the like button, researchers can explore what Facebook fan pages should be used for if a brand cannot expect brand loyalty or intent to purchase when an individual likes a page.

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Appendix

The following survey will take less than 10 minutes to complete. The purpose of this survey is to determine what implications the Facebook “like” has for brands when an individual chooses to “like” a fan page. The survey will contain questions about your habits on Facebook and your interaction with the “like” button and with Facebook fan pages. All of your responses will be anonymous and will only be seen by the researcher, and when requested, the researcher’s professor. Once you click the “submit” button at the end of the survey, your results will be logged and analyzed. If you feel uncomfortable at anytime during the survey, please opt out by closing your browser.

Thank you for your participation in this study. If you have any questions, please contact [removed for peer review]

1. How many hours per week do you spend on Facebook?
 - Less than 1 hour
 - 1-3 hours
 - 4-7 hours
 - 8 or more hours
 2. How many fan pages do you “like” on Facebook?
 - I don’t “like” pages on Facebook
 - 1-2 pages
 - 3-5 pages
 - 7-10 pages
 - 11-20 pages
 - 21 or more pages
 3. What types of fan pages do you “like” on Facebook? (Check all that apply)
 - Fashion brands
 - Food brands
 - Nonprofits
 - Celebrities (actors, politicians, sports figures, bands, musicians)
 - Books or Movies
 - Other
 - I do not “like” pages on Facebook
 4. Please list some of the nonprofits, brands, companies, or organizations that you “like” on Facebook. (Excludes: movies, books, bands/singers, celebrities)
 5. How often do you visit the pages that you “like”?
 - Multiple times a day
 - Once daily
 - Couple of times a week
 - Once a week
 - Every couple of weeks
 - Monthly
 - Never
 6. When you visit the pages you “like,” how much time do you spend on them?
 - Less than one hour
 - 2-3 hours
 - 4-5 hours
-

- 5 hours or more
 - I don't visit pages I "like"
7. How do you interact with the features on a fan page?
- Watch videos
 - View photos
 - Write on the page's wall
 - Comment (on posts, photos, videos)
 - Participate in contests/sweepstakes
 - I do not interact with fan pages
8. How often do you interact with the features on a fan page that you "like"? (watching videos, viewing photos, playing games, commenting, participating in contests/sweepstakes)
- Very often
 - Somewhat often
 - Rarely
 - Very rarely
 - Never
9. I consider myself a brand loyal individual to brands I "like" on Facebook (I prefer this brand over all others, and will only purchase an alternative brand as a last resort)
- 5 – Strongly Agree
 - 4 – Agree
 - 3 – Neutral
 - 2 - Disagree
 - 1 – Strongly Disagree
10. How often do you click through an update on your newsfeed to a fan page?
- Very often
 - Somewhat often
 - Rarely
 - Very rarely
 - Never
11. I feel connected to the fan pages that I "like."
- 5 – Strongly Agree
 - 4 – Agree
 - 3 – Neutral
 - 2 - Disagree
 - 1 – Strongly Disagree
12. How likely are you to purchase a product or service promoted by a Facebook fan page that you "like"?
- 5 – Very Likely
 - 4 – Likely
 - 3 – Neutral
 - 2 – Not Likely
 - 1 – Never
13. Being a member of a Facebook fan page makes me more likely to purchase that brand.
- 5 – Strongly Agree
 - 4 – Agree
 - 3 – Neutral
 - 2 - Disagree
-

- 1 – Strongly Disagree

14. What is your motivation behind “liking” a fan page? (Check all that apply)

- Sweepstakes or contest
- Monetary (coupon or free offer)
- Games/entertainment
- To post comments (positive or negative)
- To interact with other brand users
- Just love the brand/brand loyal user
- Other

15. Do you ever view fan pages of a brand or company that you have not “liked”?

- Yes
- No

16. What is your age?

17. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

Thank you for your participation in this study. If you have any questions, please contact [removed for peer review]

The Invisible Become Visible: An Analysis of How People Experiencing Homelessness Use Social Media

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Abstract

This research examined how people experiencing homelessness use the social media platforms of blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Through 15 interviews at a day shelter in a central North Carolina city, the author discovered that people experiencing homelessness use Facebook for three main reasons: to remain connected with family and friends; to find support; and to share ideas in a safe space. This research conclude that homeless service providers should offer classes that teach their clients how to use social media websites. Also, people experiencing homelessness may be more likely to use a wider variety of social media websites if service providers post valuable information for their clients on those web pages.

I. Introduction

@beckyblanton wrote in a reflection, “Homeless people have one story—or so people think. No one bothers to stop and ask the homeless for their story or even expects to see a story other than, ‘I’m broke, addicted, mentally ill, angry, hurt and dangerous.’ It’s up to you to add to, or go beyond that negative story. If you ever wanted the keys to life, to possibility, to freedom, social media and a blog are those keys. Get them. Use them. They can change your world.” (Horvath, 2010, para. 3)

This research examined how people experiencing homelessness use the social media platforms of blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. It also studied how this group of people bridges the digital divide by gaining access to computers and the Internet. This research was conducted through a series of interviews with clients at The Center, a day shelter in a central North Carolina city.¹ This research is important because people experiencing homelessness have been largely misunderstood and ignored. By understanding how members of this population use social media, the community can develop a deeper insight into the lives of people experiencing homelessness and better understand their stories.

We rarely hear homeless individuals’ voices. Instead, others speak for them, creating a stereotypical image of a “homeless person.” People experiencing homelessness are changing this image through their use of social media. Mark Horvath, founder of InvisiblePeople.tv and the We Are Visible network, has empowered homeless and impoverished individuals by teaching them how to share their voices, stories, and needs via the Internet. After experiencing homelessness, Horvath discovered that social media provides innumerable

¹ The name of the center and its location has been changed in order to protect the privacy of the respondents.

* **Keywords:** homelessness, social media, social connections, sharing ideas, digital divide
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resources to homeless individuals that offline resources cannot. These resources include locating services, finding support, sharing stories, and obtaining jobs (Tabb, 2011).

Horvath said 100 percent of the sheltered homeless he has met were using Facebook (Gustafson, 2011). Therefore, he thought it was necessary to create WeAreVisible.com to teach people experiencing homelessness about the benefits of using other social media outlets. He launched this website in September 2010 after receiving a Pepsi Refresh grant. On WeAreVisible.com, Horvath provides simple tutorials for people experiencing homelessness on how to use Gmail, WordPress, Facebook, and Twitter as survival tools ("Social media," 2010). By encouraging this population to use social media, Horvath has helped housed individuals see past the cardboard sign by providing real insight into the problems that homeless individuals face every day (Tabb, 2011). Ben Bates, a man experiencing homelessness who is known to the Twitter world as @cardboardblog, said, "Without social media I would feel like a complete outcast of society" (Horvath, 2010, para. 7).

In addition to providing a platform to share individual stories, social media has helped people find housing and the necessary resources to get back on their feet. Rd Plasschaert, a woman experiencing homelessness from California, said, "Quite frankly, I would be sleeping on the streets if I hadn't opened myself up to social media. I'm off the streets because of it . . . People, do you realize what we have available to us?" ("Social media," 2010, para. 11).

Finally, people experiencing homelessness use social media to connect to family and gain support. Daniel Morales acquired national attention when he used Facebook to locate his daughter, Sarah, whom he had not seen in 11 years (Adams, 2011). Likewise, Elisa Melo uses Facebook to talk to her family in Brazil twice per week. After fleeing an abusive relationship, she entered a shelter. "That helps a lot—reading the stuff they're writing me, telling me to go on and to keep myself healthy," Melo said (Adams, 2011, para. 8).

There are many newspaper reports about the use of social media by people experiencing homelessness. However, little academic research has been conducted about how this population accesses computers and why they use these alternative media outlets.

II. Literature Review

Research has been conducted about how the media portray homelessness. However, little research has examined how people experiencing homelessness engage with the media, particularly social media. Social media has helped homeless individuals become an increasingly well-connected group (Kline, 2005). Therefore, research about how people experiencing homelessness engage with and access social media is important because it will help the community understand how this population uses social media to positively impact their lives and share their stories.

Several studies reported that people experiencing homelessness access computers at public and university libraries, social service agency centers, coffee shops, and hotel lobbies (Eyrich-Garg, 2011). In addition, homeless shelters have responded to the web-based needs of their clients by creating computer labs (Taylor, 2011). The location and context of a computer lab is important to people experiencing homelessness and determines whether or not they use that resource, especially in libraries (Bure, 2005; Holt, 2010).

Middle-aged, educated homeless individuals are more likely to use computers and social media than their older, less-educated counterparts (Taylor, 2011; Le Dantec, 2008a). People experiencing homelessness use computers to remain socially connected with others, to find jobs, housing and leisure opportunities, and to locate other resources (Eyrich-Garg, 2011; Roberson, 2010). Internet technology provides people experiencing homelessness with the opportunity to interact with the larger community, including housed individuals and politicians (Roberson, 2010). Computers build life skills by helping people experiencing homelessness work toward achieving personal goals, such as managing time, doing research, writing resumes, and dealing with a fear of learning new skills. Researchers found the increased self-esteem that accompanies learning to use a computer helps people experiencing homelessness see themselves as capable individuals with a vision of life other than homelessness (Swenson Miller, 2005).

Researchers questioned if the rise in digital technology will increase the digital divide or help bridge the gap by integrating impoverished individuals into mainstream society. Christopher Le Dantec and W.K. Edwards (2008) applied the digital divide to the homeless community. The researchers conducted three

interviews with 28 homeless individuals at outreach centers. They found there is a digital divide within many homeless communities as some people experiencing homelessness are disinterested or do not know how to use computers, while others are skillful at using computers and other digital technologies.

To remain connected, some people experiencing homelessness have created blogs. Researchers have discovered that there are four benefits to writing and maintaining blogs to homeless individuals. First, blogs provide an outlet for people experiencing homelessness to communicate with others on their own terms. Second, blogs are a space where stereotypes are challenged. Third, blogs act as a support system. Finally, blogs are emotionally beneficial because they help people experiencing homelessness stay connected (Yost, 2009).

People experiencing homelessness have access to computers to blog and use social media. Karin M. Eyrich-Garg (2011) studied computer use among 100 unsheltered homeless men and women in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She discovered that almost half (47%) of her sample used a computer and cell phone in the past 30 days for a variety of reasons, including job searching and connecting to others. Eyrich-Garg found that people experiencing homelessness perceive themselves as having access to a social network through digital technology and therefore have better physical and mental health in addition to lower levels of victimization. She concluded that healthcare providers could use technology as a cost-effective way of communicating with people experiencing homelessness because technology can facilitate prevention and intervention strategies with this computer-connected population.

Other researchers echoed the benefits of social support groups. Stephen Hwang (2009) and his team of researchers sampled 544 homeless adults and discovered that there is an increased need for services that encourage the integration of people experiencing homelessness into social networks. These social networks can be in person or on the Internet.

Another common thread in the literature is the importance of staying connected to family, friends, and the community. Eyrich-Garg reported that networking websites could help people experiencing homelessness meet their social needs while giving them a stable place to portray themselves. Le Dantec and Edwards also reported that these social connections help people experiencing homelessness survive on the streets. Losing contact with these support groups exacerbates the emotional stress of being homeless.

Technology, such as cell phones, is also correlated with identity and self-esteem. Le Dantec reported that cell phones are important to managing the presentation of self. For people experiencing homelessness, having a cell phone helps comfort their concerned friends and family. In addition, it is a way to be in control of others' perceptions because a cell phone number reassures people experiencing homelessness that their cell phone is not associated with their current situation. This reassurance provides them with a sense of hope and a vision for a life that does not involve being homeless. Even though cell phones are the preferred way to keep in touch with others, owning a cell phone is a challenge since cell phones need to be recharged, are expensive, and can also be lost or stolen (Bure, 2005; Le Dantec, 2008b).

Clare Bure (2005) studied the use of cell phones by people experiencing homelessness in central Scotland. Her research illustrates the complexities of promoting inclusion into mainstream society through technology. Bure reported that people experiencing homelessness could be digitally included while remaining socially excluded because they use communication tools in ways that are relevant to their own lives. However, Bure noted that digital technology is helpful because it provides access to practical information on affordable housing, jobs, healthcare, and other topics.

Some researchers focused on the challenges that people experiencing homelessness face with computer and Internet use. Many do not have the necessary literacy and technical skills to access the Internet and computers (Bure, 2005; Le Dantec, 2008a). Lack of access is the biggest deterrent. Shelter computers are only available at certain times, public library computers are often booked, and Internet cafes are expensive (Taylor, 2011). In addition, many homeless support workers do not know where free Internet and computer access points are located so they cannot encourage their clients to use these resources (Bure, 2005). Finally, safety is a major concern because laptops and other electronic equipment can be stolen (Roberson, 2010).

Overall technology provides the opportunity for productive interventions in homeless individuals' lives. Social support networks result in a better life and health for people experiencing homelessness. The positive benefits that technology brings to this population causes researchers to seriously think about the digital divide. While there are numerous venues for free Internet access, such as shelters and libraries, there is also

an increased need for people experiencing homelessness to own a laptop or Smartphone. Since many cannot afford these digital technologies, there is a possibility that vulnerable populations will fall through the cracks and the digital divide will increase.

This research examined how people experiencing homelessness use social media and the benefits these outlets provide for members of this population. It focused on what information they seek online and how they remain connected to society and share their voices by engaging with blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Finally, the research discussed how people experiencing homelessness gain the necessary skills to effectively use these social media outlets and the Internet.

III. Methodology

There is no single homeless community because many factors contribute to homelessness. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development classifies a person as homeless if that person lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. A person is also considered homeless if his or her primary nighttime residence is: 1) a shelter that provides temporary living accommodations; 2) an organization that provides residence to individuals who need to be institutionalized; or 3) a place that is not designed for sleeping ("Federal definition," 2011). Despite this definition, it remains difficult to obtain a complete picture of the homeless population.

The 2011 annual point-in-time count discovered about 13,000 people as homeless on any given night in North Carolina ("State totals," 2011). In the central North Carolina city examined in this study, more than 1,000 people experience homelessness on any given night. Many of these people have found help at The Center, which is a day shelter in the downtown portion of the city that provides resources for people experiencing homelessness. Every month, more than 180 "intakes," or new people who have never been to The Center before, use the services provided by the day shelter, which is open from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. These services include case management, mental health screenings, spiritual empowerment classes, job skills classes, and support groups. In addition, a computer lab with 15 computers provides clients with the opportunity to browse the Internet, check e-mail, apply for jobs, and use social media.

This research study was conducted through 15 interviews with clients at The Center (see Appendix A for interviewees). These interviews were advertised through fliers for one week in The Center's common room and computer lab. The interviews were also announced at the daily morning meeting at The Center so guests at the shelter would be aware they could participate in an interview on that particular day. Over the course of two days, the author spent eight hours at The Center and asked participants four main questions about how they interacted with social media and how they learned to use these media outlets (see Appendix B for questions). Each session lasted 15 minutes in a small, quiet conference room at The Center. The clients' involvement was voluntary, so they could withdraw from the interview at any time. In addition, each participant signed a consent form and was informed that their words may appear in a widely circulated research paper. Finally, participants were not paid for their time. After the interviews were completed, the researcher analyzed the data to look for trends in their responses.

IV. Findings

This research found that people experiencing homelessness in this central North Carolina city mainly use Facebook. Respondents are engaged with this social media tool for three main reasons: 1) to remain connected with family and friends; 2) to find support; and 3) to share ideas in a safe space. These same respondents were hesitant to use Twitter because they did not want to update others about every moment of their lives. No respondents had LinkedIn accounts or maintained blogs.

The age of respondents ranged from 25 to 55 years old, with the average age being 36 years old. The amount of time respondents spent on the computer ranged from 1 to 10 hours per day. The average amount of time spent on a computer was four hours per day. Respondents gained computer access at The Center and local libraries. No respondent owned a personal computer, but if they did, they said they would spend more time on the Internet. For example, Respondent #2 said he was on the computer and Internet more often

before his laptop was stolen.

Facebook

Thirteen respondents had Facebook accounts that were used on a regular basis. The amount of time spent on Facebook ranged from five minutes to four hours per day. Most respondents spent about one hour per day on Facebook and had been active on their Facebook accounts for a wide variety of times, ranging from one to six years. Almost a half of respondents had their Facebook accounts for only one year.

Staying Connected: Overall, those with an account said they use Facebook to stay connected. People experiencing homelessness easily lose contact with their family and friends. Respondent #14 said, “It’s a lonely life when you don’t have people in your immediate atmosphere that want to talk about things that are important to you.” Facebook is a free and easy way that people experiencing homelessness can remain connected to their support networks.

These connections are maintained through the “little things” people can do on Facebook. Respondent #11 appreciated that Facebook reminds him about people’s birthdays so he can send his friends celebratory messages. His ability to share this joy in a free way helped Respondent #11 feel like he can remain a part of the community despite his lack of economic resources. In addition, three respondents emphasized that they like commenting on people’s photos. Doing this helped the respondents remain updated about people’s lives and made them feel more connected to their friends and family.

People experiencing homelessness also use Facebook to stay connected with the community by researching details about local events and by searching for jobs. Three respondents specifically mentioned they used Facebook to gather details about community events, such as meals, parties, and cultural events. Another three respondents used Facebook as a networking tool to locate jobs. For example, Respondent #9 thought Facebook was beneficial because it allows people to “network, advertise, and connect with the world.”

In conclusion, people experiencing homelessness use Facebook to remain connected with their family, friends, and community. They strengthen this sense of connectedness by accepting friend requests, sharing celebratory messages, commenting on people’s photos, obtaining details about local events, and by locating jobs.

Support: In addition to serving as a connection tool, Facebook provides people experiencing homelessness with a sense of support. Respondent #14 said the support he gained from his family and friends on Facebook helped him overcome many challenges. In addition to receiving personal messages from friends, five respondents specifically mentioned they joined Facebook groups that matched their personal and professional interests, such as animal advocacy or faith-based groups. Being a member of these groups made the respondents feel like their ideas are validated and accepted, regardless of their homeless condition. Respondent #15 said he likes Facebook groups because they helped him find “my kind of people.” Respondent #7, a minister, said he used Facebook to join religious groups to share his ideas and help people discover “the truth.” Therefore, Facebook groups help people experiencing homelessness meet online friends that share similar interests. Establishing these connections provides members of this population with the sense of support they need from the community.

Safe Environment: The third and final theme that emerged from this research is that Facebook is a safe space for people experiencing homelessness to share their ideas. Respondent #6 said that because users must accept a “friend request” in order for someone to view their profile, Facebook provides a relaxing and safe environment for people to share their ideas. “No one can get in unless they’re invited,” Respondent #6 said. Therefore, Facebook provides privacy and a space where people experiencing homelessness are in control of how they are perceived by other people.

Other Social Networking Sites

Twitter: People experiencing homelessness perceived Twitter as a way to provide others with minute-by-minute updates about a person’s day. Therefore, they are often reluctant to create Twitter accounts. “I don’t think that anyone is very interested in what I am doing at every moment of the day,” Respondent #10 said with a smile on his face. Respondent #14 even said he is “afraid” of Twitter because he thinks it is a “confirmation of what our self-deluded society is becoming.” No respondents mentioned following service providers or news organizations on Twitter. Only Respondent #6 had a Twitter account, but he did not know how to use it. When asked why he signed up for this account, he laughed and said, “I don’t really know. It just felt like

the right thing to do.”

LinkedIn: People experiencing homelessness perceive the main benefit of LinkedIn to be networking with professionals in the community. However, no respondents had LinkedIn accounts. Most respondents were interested in this social media tool, but they did not know how to create an account or how to use LinkedIn’s website.

Blogs: No respondents had blogs because they thought others did not want to read what they wrote. Respondent #6 was interested in putting his poetry and artwork on a blog, but he did not have the necessary computer skills to do this.

Other Findings: Only two respondents did not have Facebook accounts. Respondent #1, a woman in her mid-50s, did not have enough confidence in her computer skills to use Facebook, even though her daughter encouraged her to do so. Likewise, Respondent #4, a woman in her mid-40s, did not know how to use a computer. This finding illustrates that there is a large gap in computer skill levels among members of the homeless population, which supports Le Dantec’s research on the digital divide within the homeless community.

It is also important to note that Respondent #10 specifically mentioned that he is interested in using Foursquare because he thinks this website has a stronger community focus than Twitter or Facebook.

V. Discussion

This research examined how people experiencing homelessness use the social media platforms of blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. It also looked at how members of this population gain access to computers to use this type of media. This research is important because people experiencing homelessness are a largely misunderstood population. By learning more about how this population uses social media, other people will gain a deeper understanding of the homeless condition. Respondents in this study were eager to discuss their involvement with these social media outlets and to share how they locate computers.

This research discovered that people experiencing homelessness use Facebook because it allows them to connect with others and find support in a safe space. The respondents perceive the main benefit of Facebook to be maintaining relationships with their family and friends who are scattered across the country. People experiencing homelessness think it is invaluable to maintain these social connections because this type of support helps them overcome challenges. Respondents argue that Facebook is the most beneficial social networking tool to use, and they are hesitant to use Twitter, LinkedIn, or create their own blogs.

Privacy

One of the most interesting ideas discovered by this research is the importance of privacy on social media websites. Many respondents view their Facebook profile as a safe space where they are in control of how their image is presented to the community. Therefore, they are leery of permitting other people to enter that safe space. This causes respondents to be cautious when accepting friend requests, joining groups, posting photos, and commenting on people’s walls. Respondents are also very aware of how they present themselves in their profiles because information remains on the Internet forever. This is an interesting discovery because people experiencing homelessness rarely have the opportunity to control other people’s perceptions of them, causing them to have a heightened awareness of the power of their Facebook profiles. This finding makes sense because a reduction of privacy and feelings of personal safety often accompany being homeless.

Computer Training

People experiencing homelessness do not often have the opportunity to attend computer classes that teach them necessary skills. Therefore, unless a person was familiar with using a computer before they became homeless, they are not able to acquire the computer skills they need to use a wide variety of social networks. For example, clients at The Center are offered classes that teach them how to create a resume, set up an e-mail account, and do other basic tasks. The clients can only learn additional skills, such as social media skills, if a teacher or computer specialist volunteers to hold classes at the day shelter. For example, in June 2011, a professor from a local university held a one-month class at The Center that expanded clients’

knowledge of how to use social media, particularly Facebook. Twitter was mentioned in this class, but participants found it challenging to maintain their accounts after the class ended.

In conclusion, respondents are more willing to use other social networks if they learn the necessary computer skills to use these social media tools. Therefore, it would be beneficial for homeless service providers to offer these computer skills classes to their clients because, without the necessary knowledge, clients may become victims of the digital divide.

Homeless Service Providers

No respondents mentioned using Facebook or Twitter as a tool to locate resources or services for them. Most respondents were surprised when asked if they knew that The Center has Facebook and Twitter pages. One possible reason for this is that many non-profit service providers are not regularly updating their Facebook or Twitter accounts with valuable information for their clients. For example, The Center is one of the largest homeless service providers in this central North Carolina city. However, this organization does not update its Twitter account with information about services provided or opportunities for their clients. In addition, The Center's Facebook page primarily serves as a public relations tool because it provides photos, videos, and calls for donations. This same description can be applied to other service providers in this central North Carolina city. Therefore, if service providers' Facebook and Twitter accounts provide pertinent information to their clients, people experiencing homelessness may be more likely to create Twitter accounts to follow this information or to become fans of the service provider's Facebook page.

It is important for people experiencing homelessness to use a variety of social media outlets. Homeless service providers play a large role in providing members of this population with the necessary computer skills to do this. They can also influence how people experiencing homelessness perceive social media. If service providers share valuable information with their clients on their social media accounts, people experiencing homelessness may be more likely to use Twitter or other social media tools.

The "We Are Visible" Project

Twitter and other social media tools are changing the way that communities perceive people experiencing homelessness. These benefits are not largely understood by homeless individuals in this central North Carolina city. No respondent was aware of Mark Horvath's "We Are Visible" project and many did not realize that the benefits of Twitter extend far beyond a person's ability to update others about their daily activities. Twitter can be used to locate resources, find out services available to people experiencing homelessness, and find links to helpful websites.

VI. Conclusion

This research found that people experiencing homelessness in this central North Carolina city use Facebook as their main social networking tool. They spend about one hour per day on Facebook connecting with family and friends, finding support, and sharing ideas in a "safe space." These same respondents are hesitant to use Twitter because they do not want to update other people about every moment of their lives. No respondents had LinkedIn accounts or blogs.

This research leads to the following two conclusions: 1) Shelters and other homeless service providers need to provide classes about how to use social media so people experiencing homelessness have the confidence they need to engage with these websites; and 2) People experiencing homelessness may be more likely to use Facebook and Twitter if service providers post valuable information for their clients on these social media pages.

Homeless service providers need to offer computer training classes and share valuable information with clients on their social media websites. If this happens, more people experiencing homelessness will be plugged into social media. This will create a ripple effect in the community as housed people become more aware of the homeless condition, causing them to put a face to homelessness. Like @beckyblanton said, social media can change homeless individuals' worlds by providing the community with actual stories of people who are homeless (Horvath, 2010).

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Appendix A

Respondent Demographics

Respondent #	Age	Gender	Respondent #	Age	Gender
1	55	Female	9	28	Female
2	mid-20s	Male	10	43	Male
3	mid-40s	Male	11	43	Male
4	mid-40s	Female	12	mid-50s	Female
5	early 30s	Male	13	late 20s	Male
6	25	Male	14	31	Male
7	early 30s	Male	15	early 30s	Male
8	Early 30s	Male			

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. On a daily basis, how often do you use a computer?
 - a. Where do you access a computer?
 - b. How much computer experience have you had?
 2. Do you use Facebook? Why? What information do you seek on Facebook?
 - a. Twitter? Why?
 - i. What information do you seek on Twitter?
 - b. LinkedIn? Why?
 - i. Why did you signup for this service?
 - c. Blogs? Why?
 - i. What information do you share on your blog or seek on others' blogs?
 3. What do you think are the benefits of social media to people experiencing homelessness?
 - a. Why is social media a powerful way for people experiencing homelessness to connect with others?
 4. How did you learn to use these social media outlets?
 - a. Have you ever heard of WeAreVisible.com?
-

The Interactive Indulgence: The Use of Advergames to Curb Childhood Obesity

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Abstract

As childhood obesity rates in the United States continue to rise, health professionals and pro-health advocates are looking to utilize interactive media tactics for childhood obesity prevention. This study analyzed the viewpoints of interactive media agency professionals regarding the strategy, measurement, and future potential of advergames. Research was conducted through intensive interviews with agency professionals. This study found that advergames can influence an audience's behavior through their various interactive elements and entertaining platforms. Application of Fisher's Narrative paradigm provides additional insight into the persuasive nature of advergames. Successful advertising campaigns utilize integrated forms of media, with interactive media technologies serving to complement traditional media. Despite the ever-changing media landscape, advergames may prove to be a sustainable strategy for childhood obesity prevention.

I. Introduction

Interactive media technologies have exploded in recent years. Advergaming, a new advertising trend utilizes "branded products or images within an interactive video game" and offers a unique hybrid of brand messaging (Cicchirillo, 2011, p.1). In efforts to utilize new media outlets and to optimize their online brand presence, many major food corporations have started implementing the use of advergames to market to children. Such gaming technology is very popular with kids, as more and more children spend increasing amounts of time on these advergaming websites (Moore & Rideout, 2010). However, ethical questions regarding the types of behavior learned from these games have caused concern among many health advocates and health professionals. Controversies have emerged that discuss child-targeted food advertising potentially linking to childhood obesity.

To compete against the overwhelming amounts of unhealthy food-based advergames, many pro-health initiatives have begun implementing advergames and other forms of interactive media into their campaigns (Lu et al., 2010). While such interactive media technologies have the potential to influence children's food preferences and snack consumption, more research is needed to fully understand how advergames can be used as an educational tool to teach children about nutrition and healthy eating habits (Harris, Speers, Schwartz, & Brownell, 2011). There are various ways in which advergames can influence children's behavior; however, Fisher's Narrative Paradigm offers a new and critical look into the persuasive power of stories embedded in an advergame.

* **Keywords:** Childhood obesity, Interactive media, Advergames, Narrative Paradigm, Branded Entertainment
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This study sought to examine the fundamentals of an advergame: how its persuasive power can influence children and how the success of an advergame is measured from the perspectives of interactive media professionals. Using the knowledge gained from these professionals, this study analyzed how pro-health initiatives can use such interactive media as an educational tool in promoting healthy habits and whether or not advergames are a sustainable advertising strategy in the long-term fight against childhood obesity.

II. Literature Review

In the following literature review, the author examined various articles on childhood obesity in the U.S., the impact of food marketing on childhood obesity, the delivery of advertising messages to children through interactive media, the use of advergames to prevent childhood obesity, and theoretical implications associated with processing advergames.

Childhood Obesity in the United States

Obesity is on the rise. Recognized as a nationwide epidemic, obesity in the United States has steadily climbed every year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, obesity prevalence has dramatically increased within recent decades, doubling among adults and tripling among children and adolescents (“Overweight and Obesity,” 2012). Rates remain high: approximately 35.7% of adults with a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher and 17% (or 12.5 million) of children and adolescents with a BMI at or above the 95th percentile are obese (Ogden, Carroll, Kit, & Flegal, 2010; Ogden, Lamb, Carroll, & Flegal, 2012). These trends have been well documented, and statistics reveal a disturbing reality: People are getting heavier and it’s happening at a younger age. Today, one in three children are overweight or obese (Ogden et al., 2012).

Obesity in early life can lead to serious health consequences, putting children at risk for various diseases in adulthood such as diabetes, heart disease, and severe adult obesity (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). In addition to long-term health effects of excess weight, studies have also found numerous short-term effects during childhood like development of atherosclerosis, impaired glucose tolerance, and musculoskeletal discomfort (“Overweight and Obesity,” 2012). Research reports that 70% of obese children had at least one cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk factor, and 39% had two or more risk factors (Freedman, Mei, Srinivasan, Berenson, & Dietz, 2007). As the childhood obesity epidemic continues to sweep the nation, many researchers are investigating the causes and contributors to the problem.

Childhood Obesity and Food Marketers

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there is no simple answer to the question, “What contributes to [being] overweight and obesity?” (“Overweight and Obesity,” 2012). This is a complex health issue; various factors such as behavior, environment, and genetics all play a role in causing people to be overweight or obese (“Overweight and Obesity,” 2012). One particular contributor has received considerable criticism and research attention: Television food advertising has sparked controversial debates about food advertising targeting children and the potential link of such marketing to childhood obesity. A comprehensive study conducted by the CDC Institute of Medicine (IOM) investigated the impact of food marketing on childhood obesity and found that television food marketing does play a role in the obesity epidemic by influencing key dietary precursors, including food-related beliefs, health preferences, and purchase requests of children and youth (Koplan, Liverman, & Kraak, 2005). Research completed by the American Academy of Pediatrics confirms the IOM’s findings. After viewing toy or food commercials, the children in the study were asked to complete three food preference measures. Results revealed that all children who viewed the food commercials selected fat-rich and carbohydrate-rich items from food preference checklists (Boyland, Harrold, Kirkham, Corker, Cuddy & Evans, 2011).

In response to the correlational evidence between children’s exposure to food marketing and the increasing rates of obesity, several companies in the United States have pledged to transform their child-targeted advertising. In November of 2006, the Council of Better Business and 10 leading food and beverage companies launched the Children’s Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI), which aims to “shift the mix of advertising primarily directed to children to encourage healthier dietary choices and healthy lifestyles” (“Children’s Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative,” 2012). The CFBAI will go into effect on December 31,

2012 with company-specific nutrition standards that govern what food participants advertise to children. Since the initiative's founding, the number of participants has increased to 16, and 3 participants have elected not to engage in child-directed advertising ("Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative," 2012). Positive trends have emerged with the initiative and participants have enhanced the nutritional profile of foods advertised to children. The CFBAL's 2010 progress report revealed improvements among the participants' child-targeted ads, as more than three-quarters of the advertisements included foods with essential nutrients like fiber, calcium, and potassium (Kolish, Hernandez, & Blanchard, 2011). Many initiatives like the CFAI have positively impacted food marketing on television and recent research reveals a decline in television food advertisements targeted to children (Powell, Szczypka, & Chaloupka, 2010); however, many companies have turned to another form of advertising to market their products to younger audiences.

The Rise of Branded Entertainment

Technological advancements and digital innovations have created a media landscape that is constantly changing. The exclusive use of traditional media outlets no longer satisfies target audiences. According to a Kaiser Family Foundation Study, there has been an increase in online media use among young people, with the average youth spending an hour and a half per day on the computer (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). In an effort to make the transition from traditional advertising outlets to interactive media, many major food corporations have increasingly turned to the Internet to market food products to children (Thomson, 2010). Branded entertainment, which is a popular advertising strategy that imbeds branded messages in entertainment-oriented media content, allows marketers to utilize new media technologies and techniques (Wise, Bolls, Kim, Venkataraman, & Meyer, 2010). Many companies are jumping on the branded entertainment bandwagon, expanding their child-targeted marketing to commercial, social media, video, and third party websites (Harris, Speers, Schwartz, & Brownell, 2011). According to a report by PQ Media Research, spending efforts in the branded entertainment sector is expected to exceed \$40 billion by the end of 2012, despite slower economic growth (Ames & Marx, 2008).

Advergaming

One particular segment of branded entertainment has become part of the fastest growing interactive media effort for advertising campaigns (Wise et al., 2010). Advergaming, which is "the delivery of advertising messages through electronic games," has become an accepted tactic among food marketers to reach a target audience (Hernandez & Chapa, 2010, p.59). These kid-friendly games are typically simple in design with short playing times, allowing for seamless distribution across various media platforms, such as websites, mobile phones, interactive digital television, and email (Cauberghe & Pelsmacker, 2010). Examples of advergaming include "puzzles and classic games, arcade-style games, and other highly engaging features such as building avatars or using candy to 'paint' pictures" (Harris et al., 2011, p.4).

Brand placement is not a new phenomenon. Advertisers have utilized this strategy for decades. Product placement agreements for movies, television programs, and video games allow advertisers to promote a brand within the content created by third-party media companies; however, advergaming offer a unique form of product placement that is different from traditional practice (Wise et al., 2010). Advergaming are specifically designed for the purpose of promoting the sponsored brand, therefore, offering a hybrid form of brand messaging: "Advergaming merge the level of advertiser control found in traditional advertising with the entertainment communication context associated with product placement" (Wise et al., 2010, p. 27-28).

The Persuasive Advergaming Environment

Due to their fun and interactive nature, many child-targeted food companies are featuring advergaming on websites to increase exposure and positive associations with their brand (Harris et al., 2011). Several studies have revealed that children are willing consumers of these interactive marketing efforts, as gaming is one of the most popular online activities of children and youth (Rideout et al., 2010). In spot advertising through traditional channels like television or print media, children are passive in their exposure to brand placement. With branded entertainment, however, children receive a fundamentally different experience. Advergaming, which are designed to be amusing and engaging, demand focused attention from the player, and children are active seekers in their interactions with the content (Wise et al., 2010). They are engaging with the brand. A content analysis of four popular children's websites revealed that advergaming utilized branded characters and other attention-getting features like animation, colorful text, and dynamic images to appeal

to children (Alvy & Calvert, 2008). Various studies have found that production features like these encourage children to return to the website and to play the advergame multiple times, therefore maximizing the players' interactions with the promoted brand (Harris et al., 2011).

Research demonstrates that children are taking the bait. A study examined children's exposure to U.S. food company websites featuring advergames and found that 1.2 million children visit these sites every month, spending as much as one hour per month on some sites. The study also found that children were 77% more likely to visit websites featuring advergames and spent 88% more time on these sites than other pages (Harris et al., 2011). Many food companies recognize the tremendous marketing opportunity of advergames to children and have readily adopted this interactive media strategy, as approximately 80% of U.S. food websites promoted on children's television networks include advergames (Culp, Bell, & Cassady, 2010). A content analysis of major food advertisers' websites found that 90% of the promoted brands were of poor nutritional quality, containing high levels of fat, sodium, and sugars that are unhealthy for children (Moore & Rideout, 2007). Other studies have confirmed that the most commonly promoted products within advergames are candy, cereals, and fast food (Koplan, Liverman, & Kraak, 2005).

The power of play has proven to be highly effective in persuading children to visit certain websites, but researchers recently began investigating the impact of such food-related advergames on children. Some researchers argue that advergames may be more effective than television advertising because of their unique combination of commercial and noncommercial content packaged in an entertaining format. This blend makes it difficult for children to identify the advergame's origin and web promotion (Mallinckrodt & Mizerski, 2007; Moore & Rideout, 2007). Other research suggests that children are more easily influenced by interactive gaming content and advertising messages because of their lack of developed cognitive and reasoning abilities (Cicchirillo & Lin, 2011). Failure to understand the persuasive intent of advergames can cause unhealthy eating behaviors in children. Harris et al. (2011) examined the effects of playing advergames on children's food consumption and found that, like television advertising, advergames have the potential to negatively affect snack food consumption. Children who played advergames promoting unhealthy foods consumed 56% more unhealthy snack foods and consumed one-third fewer fruits and vegetables than children who played the control and healthy games. The study argues that such advergames may contribute to an increase in unhealthy food consumption and high caloric intake in children, which is a behavior that can lead to obesity (Harris et al., 2011).

Additional studies have yielded similar results. Participants in research completed in 2010 were offered a snack after playing food advergames. Of the total participants, 65% selected the brand promoted in the advergame, demonstrating that advergames have the potential to influence players' food preference (Hernandez & Chapa, 2010). Mallinckrodt & Mizerski (2007) examined branding effects of food advergames on children aged 7-8, who played a Froot Loops cereal advergame. Results revealed that children who played the advergame reported higher preferences for Froot Loops over other cereals as compared to the children who played a different game. Interestingly, the study also found that the children who played the Froot Loops advergame did not demonstrate a higher intent to request the brand from their parents (Mallinckrodt & Mizerski, 2007).

A Source of Concern for Health Professionals

In response to the evidence that food-branded advergames "may contribute to increased consumption of nutritionally poor foods in children, which over time can lead to obesity," many health advocates and public health researchers have expressed concern and discussed restrictions on companies' use of advergames to market unhealthy foods to children (Harris et al., 2011, p.3). Harris et al. (2011) examined the exposure and impact of advergames on children and recognized the efforts of the CFBAI and the improvements made by the participating companies; however, the study cited two noteworthy limitations in the companies' self-regulatory pledges. First, the CFBAI only sets nutrition criteria for foods advertised to children younger than the age of 12, which is typically defined as advertising that appears in the media with a child audience composition of 35% or higher (Harris et al., 2011; Peeler, Kolish, Enright, & Burke, 2010). This definition is inapplicable to Internet marketing, as audience compositions are lower for even obvious child-targeted websites. Therefore, participating companies are able to market to children, while still meeting the terms of their CFBAI company pledges (Harris et al., 2011). The second limitation regards the CFBAI's permission for participating companies to market "better-for-you foods" as long as their nutritional criteria matches the government guidelines and recommendations (Harris et al., 2011; Peeler et al., 2010). Research revealed

that promoting somewhat less unhealthy foods through advergames still increases unhealthy snacking and induces negative eating habits among children (Harris et al., 2011).

Other researchers suggest that marketing organizations recognize food-related advergaming as a controversial topic and to “tread these waters with caution and engage advergames with the mindset of ethical consideration for the viewer” (Cicchirillo & Lin, 2011, p. 495). Additional managerial implications for ethical practices include advertising literacy education programs to help children understand the persuasive nature of ads and the addition of direct links to nutritional sites within the company’s advergames (Cicchirillo & Lin, 2011).

Advergaming and Childhood Obesity Prevention

Despite the abundance of research that highlights their negative effects on children’s unhealthy food consumption, advergames are not all bad. There has been some discussion among scholars and health practitioners regarding the use of interactive media for childhood obesity prevention. Research on the effects of healthy advergames reveals an encouraging possibility for health advocates. In one study, children who played video games with goal-setting, interactive content consumed more fruits and vegetables than children who played nutritional, knowledge-based games on popular websites (Baranowski, Baranowski, Thompson, Buday & Jago, 2011). In another study, children who played advergames that promoted fruit and vegetable consumption ate 50% more healthy food compared to the children who played unhealthy advergames, suggesting that healthy advergames have the potential to improve children’s eating behaviors (Harris et al., 2011).

In an effort to reduce childhood obesity, the Children’s Nutrition Research Center of Baylor College of Medicine collaborated with design firm Archimage to develop a series of behavioral intervention projects, specifically designed to merge behavioral theories with interactive media content (Lu et al., 2010). Numerous health-based, interactive videogames have been developed and yielded successful results, offering guaranteed effectiveness (Lu et al., 2010). While promising strides have been made in this area of research, there are many opportunities for further explorations into interactive media as a tool in the fight against childhood obesity (Lu et al., 2010).

Theoretical Implications for Children’s Processing of Advergames

In examining the persuasive power of advergames, many researchers offer various models and theories to provide insight into how children process such interactive, branded entertainment. The cognitive capacities of children are limited to early developmental stages; therefore, their ability to process large amounts of simultaneous information is hindered (Cicchirillo & Lin, 2011). Employing the elaboration likelihood model, some researchers argue that children process advergames peripherally, based on simple associations and cues (Moore & Rideout, 2007). Thus, children may center their attention on simple aspects of the advergame like branded characters, colorful animation, and stimulating music, which, in turn, impacts their perceptions and attitude towards the brand (Moore & Rideout, 2007). Other researchers suggest behavioral and learning theories, such as the Social Cognitive Theory, to provide insight into how advergames influence children’s attitudes and responses (Cicchirillo & Lin, 2011).

Little research has examined the narrative discourse of advergames and its persuasive effects on children’s food preferences and attitudes towards the brand. Thomson (2010) analyzed the marketing stories associated with advergames on two child-targeted websites; however, the research lacked focus on the narrative elements within the advergames.

The Narrative Paradigm

Application of Fisher’s Narrative Paradigm offers a different look at the persuasive power of advergames. The Narrative Paradigm emphasizes the effectiveness of influence through narration (Fisher, 1984; Fisher, 1987). Proposing that human beings are fundamentally storytelling creatures, Fisher argues that the most persuasive and influential message is not based on rational decision-making and sound arguments. Instead, persuasion is accomplished through an emotional process based on narrative storytelling. If a narrative is engaging, truthful, and congruent with an audience’s experiences, then it can convince them of good reasons to engage in a particular action or belief (Fisher, 1984). The Narrative Paradigm includes five assumptions: 1) Human beings are storytellers; 2) narrative rationality relies on good reasons as the basis for most

decision-making; 3) reasoning is determined by an individual's unique perspective; 4) rationality is based on an individual's awareness and consistency of a narrative as compared to other experiences; and 5) individuals create and recreate reality through a selection of narratives (Fisher, 1984; Fisher, 1987). Importantly, Fisher emphasizes that the most influential narratives must be both convincing and appealing to the emotions and experiences of an audience to achieve persuasion (Fisher, 1984). The Narrative Paradigm serves as a theoretical base for this research, as narrative persuasion offers new analysis of the influential power of advergames on children.

Although a considerable amount of research exists regarding the nature of food-related advergaming, there is a lack of research in building a theoretical foundation for understanding the current role and future potential of advergaming as a strategy in the long-term fight against childhood obesity. This research is intended to fill the gap in previous research and to create a platform of discussion among advertisers and pro-health advocates on the topic of advergaming and its impact on children's behaviors and food preferences. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

RQ1: In what ways can childhood obesity campaigns and other pro-health initiatives use interactive media as an effective strategy in changing food habits and behaviors in children?

RQ2: What makes branded entertainment like advergames successful for an advertising campaign?

RQ3: Are interactive media tools like advergames a sustainable strategy for advertising campaigns?

This study is unique in that it seeks to understand the strategy behind advergames from the point-of-view of interactive media agency professionals. Their expertise and experience with branded entertainment provide a credible and interesting perspective on the current role and future potential of advergames. This research is important because it provides a breakdown of the use of advergames from an agency standpoint, which could foster discussion and education for pro-health advocates looking to implement interactive media in childhood obesity prevention campaigns.

III. Method

This study uses intensive interviews and secondary research to tackle research questions from various perspectives. Intensive interviews were conducted with three communications professionals who specialize in the interactive media and/or branded entertainment industry. The participants were selected based on their familiarity with the use of advergames. To provide a greater perspective on the topic of advergaming, the researcher interviewed professionals from agencies of different sizes and locations. One interviewee is employed by a full service e-consultancy, while the other two interviewees are employed by the same independent advertising agency. The sizes of the agencies range from 51 employees to 500 employees. Both agencies are privately held, and located within the United States. One interview was conducted via telephone, and the other two were conducted via email correspondence. All participants held top-level positions, with titles including Director of Creative, Interactive Production Coordinator, and Interactive Production Director. While the sample size is small, the qualitative techniques of in-depth interviews offer rich insight and textual data that is crucial to this area of study (Zhou & Sloan, 2009, p. 289). Each interview followed the same structure, based on 10 questions (see Appendix). Depending on the varying responses, other questions were sometimes asked to provide further depth or clarification on a particular topic. Interviewees were asked to articulate their experiences, knowledge, and opinions about the use of advergames in general.

IV. Findings and Analysis

The Persuasive Power of Advergames and their use in pro-health campaigns

Secondary research confirms that advergames promoting fruit and vegetable consumption have the potential to influence children's food preferences and snack consumption in a positive way, suggesting that advergames may serve as an effective educational tool to teach children about nutrition and physical activity (Harris et al., 2011). However, the vast amount of persuasive elements involved in advergaming makes it difficult to understand how exactly such interactive technology can persuade its audience to change eating

habits and behaviors. The majority of research regarding the influential nature of advergames speaks to the entire package of an advergame (Alvy & Calvert, 2008). Vibrant and stimulating colors, influential branded characters, thrilling sound effects, dynamic animation, and embedded brand messaging are all wrapped up in an interactive gaming environment to effectively engage an audience.

From an agency standpoint, the primary function of advergames is to promote brand awareness and repeated play; therefore, the game is specifically designed with the total package in mind. The mixture of the game's engaging elements promotes repetitive play, persuading an audience to return to a site and interact with the branded message again and again. Interactive elements such as badges, high scores, multi-player scenarios, and online credits all play into the addictive and persuasive nature of advergames. One interviewee, the Director of Creative at a full service e-consultancy, said, "If an advergame pairs these elements with a known commodity like Mario & Luigi, Sonic the Hedgehog, Legos, Transformers, or Batman, then it is a home run strategy" (personal communication, April 24, 2012). Advergames also offer compelling game mechanics like competition, as seen in leader boards for multi-player scenarios or when beating one's own score, to appeal to an audience (personal communication, April 24, 2012). The Interactive Production Coordinator from an independent advertising agency further explained how the fun, unique content of advergames is attractive to an audience, especially children.

"It's the repetitive and addictive nature of a game that hooks kids. Just like we can recall a jingle in a heartbeat or sing a song from Sesame Street that we haven't heard for 20 years, if you do something often enough it becomes engrained. Games last longer than a 30 second jingle and are more engaging, so they're probably even more powerful in becoming a part of the user's mind." (personal communication, April 23, 2012)

In addition to the repetitive and addictive nature of advergaming, perhaps another way in which advergames influence its players is through the use of narrative persuasion. Although advergames are usually short in length and simple in design, the game offers a mini version of a narrative story through its animation and branded characters. Fisher's Narrative Paradigm points to the potentially powerful effects of storytelling, suggesting that narratives can convince an audience of good reasons to engage in a particular behavior (Fisher, 1984). Many narratives in association with advergaming position the promoted brand in a way that is essential and desirable to the player (Thomson, 2010). Because children are more likely to focus on the advergame itself rather than the advertising component, they are less skeptical and more receptive to the branded messaging (Moore & Rideout, 2007). Therefore, if a certain product holds high value in the virtual world of an advergame, then a child has good reasons to believe it has the same power in the real world (Fisher, 1984).

Based on the notion that persuasion is accomplished through an emotional response rather than a rational process, the Narrative Paradigm also offers a descriptive lens in explaining advergames' ability to influence brand preferences and attitudes among children. Positive experiences with an advergame can translate to positive feelings towards the brand (Hernandez & Chapa, 2010), as children utilize their emotions to shape their beliefs and actions (Fisher, 1984). Analyzing the various persuasive aspects of advergames can provide researchers and pro-health advocates with information and insight into ways to influence children's behavior within a fun and interactive context.

Measuring success

Depending on a client's specific goals for an advertising campaign (whether it is to promote a specific product or to educate and influence a behavior), there are numerous aspects in measuring advergaming success. From an agency standpoint, the advergame must be fun, engaging, and addictive in nature, which translates to extended playing time and repetitive play. This interaction time is also an indicator of a website's success, as the longer an individual remains on a site, the more he or she is exposed to a particular brand through various product placements (Alvy & Calvert, 2008). Email signups and social media interactions, including Likes, Follows, and Re-pins, are other indicators of positive results. A successful advergame is also viral, as the brand is shared and promoted among users, allowing for maximum exposure and extended interaction rates with the brand across all channels. In addition, the advergame should be interesting and memorable, encouraging an audience to play again and again, instead of something they will forget as soon as they close the window (personal communication, April 23, 2012).

In examining the use of advergames that encourage healthy lifestyle choices, some research suggests providing performance feedback as a way to improve children's self-efficacy (Cicchirillo & Lin, 2011).

Perhaps a major success of such advergames could be measured by each player's health improvements and long-term record with making healthy choices. The online environment of advergames is helpful in collecting consumer data and in analyzing campaign results. In order to effectively measure the quantitative success of an advergame, companies should track the game's various interactions: every click should be measured, every page view should be counted, and time interacting with the property should be accurately reported. Furthermore, the reported statistics should be provided to the client and compared with the client's specified definition of success for the campaign (personal communication, April 24, 2012).

According to agency professionals, the game should also correspond with what the promoted brand stands for and what the targeted audience expects. Although advergaming is a powerful tool in promoting brand messaging and building brand awareness, it is not necessarily applicable for every client. The use of advergaming is most effective for clients who target a demographic with high social involvement (personal communication, April 23, 2012). Children and youth are active agents of social involvement, as they spend more and more time online each year. Additionally, home Internet access has expanded from 74% to 84% in the last five years (Rideout et al., 2010). With the increase in online media use among children and youth, advergaming is an effective outlet in which pro-health advocates and other health professionals can promote their messages.

The Future of Advergames

Like all aspects of digital media, interactive media tools are likely to evolve. The technologies employed to implement these types of interactions will continue to change at a blistering rate. One interviewee, the Director of Creative at a full service e-consultancy, said, "With Flash essentially gone, the gaming platforms will move to native applications and Facebook practically exclusively. Desktop variations of advergaming may become viable, but the expense associated with these games may not be sustainable" (personal communication, April 24, 2012). Another interviewee, the Interactive Production Coordinator at an independent advertising agency, discussed another aspect of advergames that is likely to evolve: "The future for advergaming will be further development in seamlessly syncing real money with game money. The easier it is to spend within the game to get a real product, the better" (personal communication, April 23, 2012). Because the market is so saturated with constantly evolving technologies, the use of advergames for a campaign must not only be relevant to a brand's target audience, but it should also appeal to a wider audience (personal communication, April 23, 2012).

The changing media landscape might pose a challenge for interactive media tools; however, the persuasive power of advergames on players' brand perceptions and preferences is hard to dismiss. Therefore, the strategy behind advergames may prove to be sustainable in the long-term fight against childhood obesity. The influential nature and interactive components of interactive media tools, such as advergames, offer promising effectiveness (Lu, 2010). Additionally, children's Internet use is at an all-time high, as research suggests a continued increase in trends (Rideout et al., 2010). Research on the link between behavioral and cognitive theories and new media offers additional promise in sustainable efforts of interactive media for childhood obesity prevention (Lu et al., 2010).

Unless the brand is specifically in the gaming space, agency professionals suggested that the use of advergaming technology for an advertising campaign should complement traditional advertising, rounding out other multi-channel efforts that a client is leveraging (personal communication, April 23, 2012). Successful campaigns use both traditional and innovative advertising techniques to promote a brand. The use of advergames can drive users to traditional messages in order to engage them with the business, as interactive media tools like advergames generally play more of an experimental role for most clients, supplementing traditional ads, such as banners, print, and television (personal communication, April 24, 2012).

V. Conclusion

This study found that advergames can influence children's food habits and behaviors in various ways, including the use of branded characters, visual features, and repetition; however, it is the combination of all gaming components that makes advergaming so influential. Advertising professionals spoke to the addictive

nature of the games, emphasizing that increased playing time translates to maximized exposure to the brand and its messages. Additional insight into the narrative persuasion of advergames was provided through the application of Fisher's Narrative Paradigm. Children, whose cognitive abilities are age limited, are impacted by the stories created through advergames, as they use good reasons and emotion-based logic to make decisions on brand preference and behavior (Fisher, 1984).

In addition, this study revealed the various aspects in measuring an advergame's success in an advertising campaign. Different clients demand different results; however, the primary indicators of success for advergames are increased interaction time and repetitive play. The longer an individual plays the game, the longer he or she is engaged with the brand and with the branded message. Many pro-health advergames offer performance feedback to their players, and such results can be measured as well. It is important to note that advergaming is not an effective strategy for every type of client; therefore, demographics and consumer data should be appropriately analyzed before incorporating the use of advergames into a campaign. As children and youth use online media more and more every year, pro-health advocates and other childhood obesity initiatives would be wise to utilize this strategy.

The study also found that interactive media tools are likely to evolve with the ever-changing media landscape. However, the strategy behind advergames is concrete in nature: "Provide an edutainment (combining education with entertainment) modality by creating theoretically precise, personalized, meaningful, and immersive environments that embed functional knowledge and change procedures" (Lu et al., 2010, p.1). Therefore, advergaming may prove to be a sustainable strategy in the long-term fight against childhood obesity. Importantly, if advergames are implemented into an advertising campaign, then they should work as a complement to traditional media. Successful campaigns take a multi-faceted approach and utilize integrated forms of media to reach their audiences.

This study relied on phone and email interviews from a small sample of agency professionals to gather information and insight. Face-to-face interviews may foster better explanations, more in-depth answers, and greater accuracy than phone and email interviews for future researchers looking to collect primary information. While the present findings are limited in their small sample size and data collection method, this study adds foundation to the belief that interactive media may prove to be an effective prevention tool in the long-term fight against childhood. Future research into the use of advergaming and childhood obesity prevention should focus on communication theories dealing with the persuasive nature of advergames to gain a greater insight into how such interactive media can influence children. Additional research on advergames that promote healthy food and their influence on children would provide more credibility and knowledge of interactive media as an educational tool for obesity prevention.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. What is your official title at your place of work?
 2. What is the typical role of branded entertainment like advergames for clients?
 3. How do companies use interactive media like advergames to promote brand image?
 4. Why should companies consider online entertainment and interactive games (whether through Facebook, mobile apps, promotional software, etc.) as a part of their advertising budget? What are the benefits?
 5. For what type of client is adver gaming most effective?
 6. Is the use of advergames an effective alternate or complement to traditional advertising? Please explain.
 7. What makes branded entertainment like advergames successful for an advertising campaign?
 8. How do you track adver gaming interactions? Are there specific analytic channels a company can use?
 9. What sort of results do clients typically want from adver gaming interactions?
 10. Working in a constantly changing media landscape with emerging trends in social media and technological advancements, do you think interactive media tools like advergames are a sustainable strategy for marketing professionals? From your point of view, what is the future for adver gaming?
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Image Restoration in Political Sex Scandals: What To Do (And What Not To Do) When You're Caught With Your Pants Down

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Abstract

This study sought to apply a Crisis Communications lens to the area of American political sex scandals. Applying William Benoit's "Theory of Image Restoration" to 24 American sex scandals, ranging from 1987 to 2011 and all of which received significant national attention, this study examined each official's public statements in response to allegations of sexual impropriety and coded them for their adherence to the five strategies outlined in Benoit's work. The study found "Evading Responsibility" to be most frequently used, while "Denial" was the least utilized of his tactics. This study served to help answer the question of whether or not today's politicians are held to a higher standard, and what this means for the future of political accountability.

I. Introduction

On December 3, 2011, amidst looming allegations of sexual impropriety and harassment, Herman Cain, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City and hopeful Republican Presidential nominee, suspended his campaign after "a lot of prayer and soul-searching."¹ The scandalous allegations were covered in both print and online news, with bloggers and late-night talk show hosts eager to comment on Cain's indiscretions. While sex scandals are by no means new to American Politics, the recent onslaught of new and faster media of the past two decades has dramatically fixated the public's attention on instances of political misconduct, and in doing so, has increased the frequency with which scandals are publicized. Whereas sex scandals of the 1950s and 60s were largely concealed due to the limited number of media outlets, today's media landscape consists of a seemingly endless parade of journalists, bloggers, and gossip sites. A second area in which increased scandals have affected politics is in the standard of accountability to which politicians and officials are now held. Almost every month there is a new story of impropriety, and calls for the targeted individual to respond to allegations and explain himself or herself. The rapid growth of the Internet as well as new media outlets has led to increased scrutiny of virtually all areas of political public affairs, but has also led to an information-driven society in which private lives can easily be made public.

This study sought to examine political sex scandals with a Crisis Communications lens. By understanding the strategies and tactics used by each official in response to allegations against him, this paper outlined the most effective methods used, and examined if there are certain variables (party affiliation, year of scandal) that can serve as a predictor of response. Because of the increased publicity of sex scandals, even just in the past decade, this paper explored the various techniques that officials and their press offices used to combat the negative press surrounding the reported event. By reading and analyzing public statements made from each official in response to allegations, the author hoped to find an explanation as to why some

1 "A Defiant Herman Cain Suspends His Bid for Presidency." *New York Times*, December 3, 2011.

* **Keywords:** Image Restoration, Sex Scandals, American Politics, William Benoit, Crisis Management
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image restoration strategies were used more than others, and perhaps clarify what makes the aftermath of one scandal more successful than another. Crisis management is generally discussed on an organizational or corporate level, so by applying the same image restoration theory to individual scandals and political crises, this paper sought to determine which strategies are most highly regarded, and why some are more effective than others in quashing negative public opinion.

II. Literature Review

Scandals by Definition and Practice

To determine the expectations of effectively managing and controlling scandals, it is important to first understand what constitutes a scandal. Political rhetoric scholar, John Thompson, argued that for an event to be a scandal rather than simply a piece of news, it must include five specific characteristics. First, the event must involve a “transgression of certain values, norms or moral codes” (Thompson, 2000, p. 14). Second and third, the incident must include some aspect of secrecy, and there also must be a level of disapproval by non-participants surrounding the action. Fourth, there must be “public denouncing” of the actions or events by non-participants and finally, that the actions must “damage the reputation of the individuals responsible for them” (Thompson, 2000, p. 14). Because cultural and societal norms vary throughout history and region, there is a level of scandal sensitivity that must be considered; what constitutes a scandal for some may not for others. Additionally, David Rosen has written that scandals do not take place in an “historical vacuum,” but rather arise a great deal of their meaning as a result of the culture and context in which they occur (Rosen, 2009, p. 11). Perpetrators of a scandal or transgression, as a result of the current political spectrum and increased media attention and scrutiny, can largely be divided into two categories: “Those living a lie and those living out a lifestyle” (Rosen, 2009, p. 9). Politicians largely fall into the first category, feeling that they have something to hide, something that would undermine their public image, and choose instead to “go for the moral high ground,” and cling to values that would separate themselves from a given action (Thompson, 2000, p. 23).

Clinging to that high ground, however, in response to scandal can be a risk in that publics are more likely to criticize or mistrust a representative deemed a hypocrite. In observing the differences in sexual and financial political scandals, David Doherty has found that “a representative who has previously taken a strong stance in favor of ‘family values’ and who is later caught in an infidelity scandal may be punished particularly harshly” (Doherty, 2011, p. 753). In scandals, William Benoit has written that “perceptions are more important than reality” and thus, when allegations are made against an official, whether or not there is evidence initially, the public’s view of him shifts, and it becomes his job to tailor his response to a specific public (Benoit, 1997, p. 178). In a media climate filled with 24-hour news stations, extreme polarization of political parties, and a growing need to both entertain and inform the public, scandals are no longer mere judgments on moral wrongdoings, but are deliberate political acts with intended outcomes (Rosen, 2009, p. 12). When sex scandals increased in frequency throughout the 1990s, a pattern began to emerge in the process by which officials would respond: “attack, apology, and community expulsion” (Achter, 2000, p. 324). This narrative frame enabled rhetorical scholars to explore trends in scandals and image restoration, and how scandals were handled in different cultural and historical contexts.

Political Responses to Scandals

Due to the rise of the Internet and new media outlets entering the 21st century, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of political sex scandals uncovered, and with it, public statements, speeches, and apologia in response to allegations. Candidates and elected officials today are held to a much higher moral standard than those elected officials campaigning before the Internet and advent of social media “since their improprieties will be fodder for late-night comedians, websites, partisan news channels, and talk radio outlets” (Dagnes, 2011, p. 8). While they have historically been held accountable for their actions by the constituents they represent, today’s politicians must also realize that their conduct can easily receive national attention if it is deemed a scandal (Aday, 1998, p. 857). While coverage can be reported nationally, the overall outcome of a scandal is largely dependent on demographics and societal norms of a specific constituency. Although the scandal may be covered on a national level, the politician must address his constituents specifically, and cater his message to best mirror the values and norms of those he is representing (Dagnes, 2011,

p. 7).

By applying John Dowling's work on organizational legitimacy to elected officials, it appears that in order to win back their targeted public, he or she must work to "establish congruence" between the social values associated with their actions and the "norms of acceptable behavior" in the area they are representing (Dowling, 1875, p. 122). Officials must align their response or apology with the values of their own constituency, which is why the content of public apologies varies. Ultimately, it is the decision of one's constituency and the voting public that will determine his or her political future, as long as the official knows his public well enough to understand how to "behave in the face of adversity" (Dagnes, 2011, p. 89).

Goals of Crisis Management

Once "scandal" is defined within the parameter of American politics, it is important to then understand the role of public statements and communication in combating or controlling negative events. Although crisis communication was initially explored through a frame of business, the basic elements of a successful strategy are mirrored in an individual's response. Matthew Seeger has written that "a crisis creates high levels of uncertainty with key stakeholders and thus an intense need for immediate communication about important information" (Seeger, 2010, p. 128). In the case of political scandals, key stakeholders represent an official's public, and he or she must tailor a response to satisfy the goals and expectations of that audience. Image restoration strategies in political scandals, then, echo the tactics used in crisis response plans of business, because maintaining reputation and public perception are paramount in both fields (Seeger, 2010, p. 130).

Heralded as the architect of perhaps the most widely accepted theory of image restoration strategies in crisis management, William Benoit believed that communication in all forms was goal-oriented, but was defined more narrowly by genre criticism (rhetoric), and analyses of "guilt, purification, and goals" (Burns, 2000, p. 29). Maintaining a positive reputation and image, Benoit has argued, is one of the most central goals of communication. He wrote that "as human beings, we inevitably engage in behavior that makes us vulnerable to attack," and that these allegations can manifest themselves as an attack on one's reputation (Benoit, 1995, p. 67). There are two main components that must both exist in order for an action to threaten one's reputation: "(1) An act occurred which is undesirable, (2) You are responsible for that action" (Benoit 1995, 71). When one's reputation is threatened, Benoit argued that he or she would feel compelled to offer "explanations, defenses, justifications, rationalizations, apologies, or excuses" for the damaging behavior (Benoit, 1995, p. 70). His "Theory of Image Restoration" established a set of five strategies of image repair evident in virtually every response to scandal. He attempted to determine why an individual is more inclined to use one strategy than another, and how each strategy satisfies a certain goal of communication.

Theory of Image Restoration

Benoit's five strategies of Image Restoration are: Denial, Evading Responsibility, Reducing Offensiveness, Corrective Action, and Mortification (Benoit, 1995, p. 74). He defines *denial* as, "the accused [denying] that the offensive act actually occurred or denies that he or she performed it" and finds that, if the public accepts this denial, he or she should be relieved of any blame for the action (Benoit, 1995, p. 75). In *evading responsibility*, "the actor attempts to suggest that lack of information, volition, or ability means that he or she should not be held fully responsible for the act" (Benoit, 1995, p. 76). *Reducing offensiveness*, the most inclusive of Benoit's strategies, occurs when the accused "attempts to reduce the unfavorable feelings toward the actor by increasing the audience's esteem for the actor or by decreasing their negative feelings about the act" (Benoit, 1995, p. 78). The category includes six different techniques: bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, attacking one's accuser, and compensation (Benoit, 1995, p. 77). The fourth strategy, *corrective action*, may take two forms: "restoring the situation to the state of affairs before the objectionable action and/or promising to 'mend one's ways' and make changes to prevent the recurrence of the undesirable act" (Benoit, 1995, p. 79). The final strategy, *mortification*, occurs when the accused "admits responsibility for the wrongful act and asks for forgiveness" (Benoit, 1995, p. 79). This study uses Benoit's theory as a way of coding each public statement made in response to allegations of misconduct, to determine which methods were used most frequently, and by whom, and in which contexts.

Political Sex Scandals in Today's Media Landscape

Regardless of which image restoration techniques an individual utilizes, the salacious nature of sex scandals will ensure that the scandal, whether on a national or state level, receives significant national at-

tention (Carpini, 2001). Prior to the emergence of the Internet, bloggers, and the growing number of news outlets, politicians as well as their publics could distinguish between public and private lives, and officials were largely protected from the probing nature of today's media climate (Carpini, 2001, p. 168). There was a perimeter around a candidate's family and private life that news outlets abstained from entering—a concept foreign in today's media outlets. "Shaming," notes David Rosen, "has become a form of entertainment, meant to distract or fascinate the public—a twenty-first century gladiator sport with the camera replacing the lion" (Rosen, 2009, p. 8).

The sheer frequency with which scandals are unearthed today represents a public struggle between being entertained and disgusted by the significant attention news outlets place on scandals (Williams, 2004, p. 3). Juliet Williams writes that Americans on both sides of the ideological spectrum "wonder whether so much fanfare over the sexual lives of political leaders is genuinely necessary to a well-functioning polity" (Williams 2004, p. 3). Given the need for media outlets to profit, they often look for the most scintillating stories, the ones that will entertain the public and draw the largest audience. No longer is reporting on policy or congressional proceedings enough; "In a climate where candidates must rely heavily on popular approval, reporting is equated with investigating, personalities prevail over issues, and scandals flourish" (Achter 2000, p. 320). Paul Achter writes about the emergence of the "media scandal," in which the media assigns a narrative form to scandal, developing a complex story focused around the rhetoric and behavior of a given official. In today's media structure, "at the very moment an allegation is made, a scandal is born" (Achter 2000, p. 319). A candidate's background is rummaged through for the faintest trait of impropriety or misconduct, giving way to a political system in which politicians must convey morality in every facet of their lives, both publicly and privately. Virtually all literature written on this separation cites President Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky as a turning point in "the distinction between private and public character" (Aday 1998, p. 856).

The attention paid to President Clinton's affair while in the White House marked the beginning of the "ubiquitous presence and coverage by the modern media," and with it emerged a journalistic grey area between news and entertainment (Dagnes, 2011, p. 12). Hard news outlets began to include more lewd details in their coverage and "traditional journalism lost its position as the central gatekeeper of the nation's political agenda" (Carpini, 2001, p. 174). No longer were news outlets as concerned with providing the "facts"—even the most traditional media outlets understood that covering the scandal attracted a larger audience, and so they "adapted to the new rules by increasingly mimicking the form of substance of its new media competitors" (Carpini, 2001, p. 174). This scandal served as an archetype for those to follow: no crevice of a politician's life was off limits, with news organizations trying to fill their 24-hour cycles with stories that would attract the largest possible audience (Carpini, 2001). Realizing that scandals attracted larger audiences, news outlets and Internet sites began delving deeper into the private lives of officials, searching for misconduct or any behavior that strayed from societal norms (Carpini, 2001, p. 168).

President Clinton as a Deviation from Scandal 'Norms'

The vast majority of officials involved in a sex scandal understand and accept that the publication of their transgressions likely signifies the end of their career, most of whom elect to resign or not seek reelection. Given this understanding, many scholars have closely examined the case of President Clinton to uncover why he was able to emerge from scandal with his public opinion virtually unscathed (Just, 2000, p. 179). With unprecedented national attention paid to his affair with Monica Lewinsky and his impeachment hearings, many believed that his image would be forever tarnished as accusations surfaced, which concerned his conduct both as a "public servant and private citizen" (Woessner, 2005, p. 97). What made Clinton able to withstand the constant public scrutiny was the fact that his leadership image was not centered around morality, but rather specific policy areas and domestic successes (Just, 2000, p. 179). Marion Just finds that ultimately "President Clinton was able to preserve his public image through the impeachment debacle in large part because of low public expectations about his personal moral behavior" (Just, 2000, p. 179). As the scandal broke out in 1998, in the transition of media focus from public to private lives, the public was able to accept Clinton's affair because they had not elected him because of his ethical character, but because they believed he was best suited to serve the office of the Presidency. Joseph Blaney feels that the level of attention paid to political scandal is too great, asking, "Do we want our Chief Executive and Commander-in-Chief distracted by scandal when facing decisions of great domestic and foreign importance?" (Blaney, 2001, p. 1). Today, however, candidates must prove themselves equally as being good and decent citizens as well as individuals with strong ideas and exceptional awareness of the qualities and challenges of being a fit and faithful leader.

Exploring the different actors involved in the publication of, response to, and image restoration strategies following scandal, it is crucial to understand how the system has shift, and the impact of media on political responses. Representatives must continuously prove that they are moral, establishing a political system in which rhetoric and personality have become more important than intellect and good judgment. Using a crisis communication lens in order to analyze different political scandals, this study sought to find patterns and trends in the way in which history, context, and media have changed the nature of response, and the image restoration strategies used most frequently today. It is important to understand that although scandals are in no way a new issue in politics, the fusion of public and private lives of officials had led to new scandals being uncovered virtually every month. In applying William Benoit's "Theory of Image Restoration" to American political sex scandals, this study demonstrates how different strategies were implemented pre-Internet, during its emergence, and in today's information/entertainment driven media landscape.

III. Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

The more forthcoming a politician is when responding to scandalous allegations, the more likely he is to regain popular support and ultimately be reelected. Due to Benoit's findings that people strive to maintain a positive reputation, especially when that reputation is threatened, it is reasonable to believe that officials will want to quickly, honestly, and delicately disseminate the facts so that they can work towards restoring their image (Benoit, 1995).

Hypothesis 2

The increase in Internet and new media focus has forced politicians to make more statements regarding their actions. Because there are so many more outlets from which news and events can be covered, and with the advent of the 24-hour news cycle (Carpini, 2001), this research expects that officials will use a variety of media to inform their publics. More media outlets could likely mean more public statements. While the limited scope of this study does not delve into many scandals prior to the advent of the Internet and increased media scrutiny, the focus on more recent events seeks to enforce the notion that with increased media outlets comes an elevated political accountability standards.

Hypothesis 3

Reducing offensiveness will be the Image Restoration strategy most frequently used in responding to scandalous allegations. Returning, again, to Benoit's findings, individuals are "goal driven" and committed to "maintaining a positive reputation" (Benoit, 1995). In the wake of scandal, this research presumes that strategies of reducing offensiveness, like bolstering and minimization, will be frequently used in public statements (Benoit, 1995).

IV. Methodology

As a way of collecting a comprehensive list of political sex scandals receiving national attention, a web-based search engine was used to compare lists. Using lists generated by NPR², MSNBC³, and Newsweek⁴, the author then cross-referenced them to compile a list of 24 scandals. The timeframe for this research ranged from May of 1987 until June of 2011. Each of the 24 selected scandals received significant national attention and media coverage, and involved an official in an elected position (with the exception of Supreme

2 "Sanford the Latest in a Series of Political Sex Scandals," NPR. http://www.npr.org/blogs/politicaljunkie/2009/06/sanford_just_the_latest_sex_sc.html

3 "A Decade of Sex Scandals," http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2009/06/24/4439169-a-decade-of-sex-scandals

4 "Sex Scandals Through the Years: Both Parties Even," <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/blogs/the-gaggle/2009/06/25/sex-scandals-through-the-years-both-parties-even.html>

Court Justice Clarence Thomas). The final list of scandals included 15 Republicans and 9 Democrats.

In collecting public statements, the author used a search engine to gather full texts of public statements made by each official. In some cases, she was unable to find full transcripts, and relied on comparing relevant newspaper articles that quoted their statements. As some scandals were publicized and drawn out over several years, there were more public statements for some officials than for others whose corrective action took place in a matter of hours of being publicized. As a way of coding each statement, the author used William Benoit's widely accepted five "Theories of Image Restoration," indicating each time an individual method was used (Benoit, 1995, p. 74). The five methods she coded for were:

Denial: When coding for Denial, the author looked for statements and phrases in which the official denied any accountability, or that the event even occurred. Examples of denial: "I have no personal relationship with the individual you are following" (Hart), "The story is false. It's completely untrue, ridiculous" (Edwards), "I categorically denied all of the allegations and denied that I ever attempted to date Anita Hill. I strongly reaffirm that denial" (Thomas).

Evading Responsibility: When the individual cannot categorically deny allegations, evading responsibility may be used to reduce his or her apparent responsibility. Examples of evading responsibility are "The committee has been the judge, jury, and prosecution. This process makes the Inquisition look like a study in fairness" (Packwood), "Certain members of the media have begun digging into my personal life. They have harassed innocent people in an effort to embarrass me" (Burton), "I believe the reason it happened is because I had gone through this long process where I became, at least on the outside, something different than that young boy who grew up in a small town in North Carolina" (Edwards).

Reducing Offensiveness: Coding for Reducing Offensiveness included many different efforts individuals have used to remain in positive public opinion. Examples of this are: "I know that as a public servant, I and the remarkable people with whom I worked have accomplished a great deal" (Spitzer); "Almost immediately after I said the lie, I knew that I was putting people in a very bad position and I didn't want to continue doing it" (Weiner); and "I've never asked any of my opponents to discuss their personal lives and I'm not going to discuss mine" (Sherwood).

Corrective Action: Corrective Actions occur when the individual commits to correct the issue or problem, and explains how they are going to do so. Instances where the author coded for corrective action included: "I must put it right, and I am prepared to do whatever it takes to do so" (Clinton); "I am announcing that I have resigned my seat in Congress effective immediately" (Lee); and "I made arrangements to enter a renowned in-patient facility to address my disease and related issues" (Foley).

Mortification: Mortification is the strategy in which officials confess and seek forgiveness. Examples of mortification include: "I want to, again, offer my deep, sincere apologies to all those I have let down and disappointed with these actions from my past" (Vitter); "I hope that my family, constituents, and fellow Members of Congress can accept this apology as being both genuine and heartfelt" (Massa); and "I am sorry that I have disappointed the citizens of the state of New Jersey who gave me this enormous trust" (McGreevey).

Breakdown of Statements

The author developed a comprehensive spreadsheet that included each official's party affiliation, office held, the state represented by each official, the year each statement was made, word count for each statement, how many specific times each strategy was used, and a percentage breakdown of how often each statement included each strategy. In this spreadsheet, each statement was broken down individually, with between one and nine public statements for each official. she also calculated the total number of statements that each official made, as well as the total number of times that each strategy was used overall,

The following spreadsheets she created then separated the scandals by party affiliation (Republican and Democrat). She then combined the frequency of each strategy in each statement so that every official had one dataset that covered all of his public statements. Instead of analyzing frequencies, she used percentages to interpret how often each official used each specific strategy. All graphs and tables were calculated using the original spreadsheet for each official, from each the relevant information was chosen.

V. Results

The research conducted in this study analyzes the various aspects of political sex scandals, their public response, and the different techniques used in image restoration. The various correlations, charts, and spreadsheets help to highlight the relationships between each variable, and explain why (or why not) certain correlations exist. The figures in Appendix demonstrate the differences between political candidates and the strategies of image restoration with which they position themselves.

VI. Discussion

Hypothesis Findings

Hypothesis 1: The more forthcoming a politician is when responding to scandalous allegations, the more likely he is to regain popular support and ultimately be reelected.

Finding: Rejected. This hypothesis was too general in that it does not consider the fact that no two sex scandals are alike, and thus the nature in which an official responds to allegations, as well as the way he or she is received by the public, is largely subjective and cannot be predicted by his initial honesty. An example of this is seen in former Governor Mark Sanford's case, in which he was extremely forthcoming and apologetic upon allegations, but was not reelected by his constituents.

Hypothesis 2: The increase in Internet and new media focus has forced politicians to make more statements regarding their actions than in previous scandals.

Finding: Rejected. This hypothesis was also too general in nature, assuming that there would be clear predictors of an official's response. Because the rate in which scandals are uncovered has increased substantially in recent years, the timespan of a scandal has decreased, with many officials forced to resign just hours after a story breaks. In those cases, the number of public statements made is very limited, often with just one statement being covered by various news outlets. An interesting follow-up study would break down the scandals by timespan as well as number of public statements to determine if a correlation exists.

Hypothesis 3: Reducing offensiveness will be the Image Restoration strategy most frequently used in responding to scandalous allegations.

Finding: Confirmed. This hypothesis is validated through the findings of this study. Reducing offensiveness was the strategy most frequently used by virtually all officials.

In analyzing each table and graph, there are several noticeable trends in the strategies implemented in the formatting of their statements to the public. While there does not appear to be one distinct method that can be classified as the most effective approach in responding to the allegations, the results helped to suggest that some strategies, reducing offensiveness and corrective action, are used more often than others in drafting a response. The most significant inferences that can be made from the results are reducing offensiveness is the most frequently occurring strategy; denial is the least frequently used strategy and its rate has declined in recent years; and that the percentage of resignations in response to scandal has increased in recent years likely due to increased media scrutiny.

Reducing Offensiveness as Most Used Overall Strategy

Accounting for an average of 34% of the total image restoration strategies, reducing offensiveness is clearly the most commonly used tactic in the 24 scandals observed. With 322 observed statements to reduce offensiveness, there are several possible explanations for why this is true for both Republicans (32%) and Democrats (37%). First, when broken down by description, it is reducing offensiveness that has the broadest scope, with six sub-sections within its definition (Benoit, 1995, p. 77). Because within this strategy there are different tactics like attacking the accuser and bolstering, both of which were used in the majority of statements, the probability of a phrase or action falling into this category is higher than in those sections with a more limited scope.

It is also possibly true, however, that officials used reducing offensiveness as a way to try and maintain a positive reputation in light of scandal. Of the five strategies Benoit outlines, it is reducing offensiveness

that can be most closely linked with maintaining a positive reputation through bolstering one's positive attributes (Benoit, 1995). Figure 3 shows that of the 24 cases examined, only one official (Ed Schrock) used a low level of reducing offensiveness (between 0% and 29%), and is unique in that he only utilized one image restoration strategy, corrective action, and released only one statement following his scandal. Omitting his scandal, in fact, alters the averages for each statement (see Table 1). This data confirms Benoit's finding that "maintaining a positive reputation" remains a central goal of all communication (Benoit, 1995, p. 63).

Denial as Least used Overall Strategy

With an average of 6% of the total breakdown of statements, denial is clearly the least utilized strategy of image restoration in these scandals. Only 73 out of 885 coded statements were expressions of denial, with a fairly even distribution between Republicans (7%) and Democrats (6%). Statements of denial and evading responsibility, the two strategies used least frequently, seem to have declined or remained stagnant through the years. An explanation for the infrequency of statements of denial may be that, in responding to allegations by first categorically denying them, there is the greatest likelihood that they could be caught in a lie. Relating these findings back to Benoit, it is also possible that officials are hesitant to categorically deny allegations because they understand that being caught in a lie could negatively impact their reputation (Benoit, 1995).

The likelihood of officials being caught in a lie related to their scandals has greatly increased with the surge of Internet and new media outlets, many of which are dedicated to unearthing the truth. Perhaps the reason for the decline in statements of denial and evading responsibility is that officials are less able to lie by denying their involvement in a scandal than they were in the pre-Internet era. With the multitude of new bloggers and journalists that have emerged through online research, it is possible that officials are aware that they will have a more difficult time misinforming the public than officials in previous decades (Carpini, 2001). It is the development of this new media system that is likely the reason, too, that the results indicate a dramatic increase in the number of officials resigning in the wake of scandal.

Increased Resignation

As Figure 7 indicates, the number of officials resigning after allegations of sexual misconduct has increased dramatically. From 1987 until 1998, only two men accused of participation in sex scandals resigned over the matter, while the number jumps to six in a two-year period from 2009 to 2011. An added effect of increased Internet and media presence, the growing number of resignations is likely congruent with the number of sex scandals that the media have uncovered. During the 11-year period examined in the pre-Internet era, there were six scandals, resulting in two resignations, two officials serving out the remainder of their term, and two representatives still currently serving today. In analyzing just the scandals that have broken out in the past two years, however, there have been seven incidents, with officials having resigned in all but one case. These results when combined with corresponding literature indicate that it is not necessarily that there have simply been more scandals in recent years, but rather more media and gossip sites that have uncovered these events. Increased scrutiny is likely the most effective explanation for both the decline of statements denying allegations or evading responsibility, as well as the growing number of officials being forced to resign over their misconduct.

Outliers and Special Cases

Ed Schrock (2004)—Former Congressman Ed Schrock's case is the most significant outlier of the 24 scandals examined, as he made only one public statement (a press release on his behalf) using only two examples of image restoration strategy. His brief message conflicts with this study's findings that reducing offensiveness is the most frequently used strategy, and to an extent, his results skew the total averages (see Figure 11). His decision not to seek reelection was swiftly reached, and after releasing his statement, he refused to comment any further on allegations.

Bill Clinton (1998)—Former President Clinton's infamous affair with Monica Lewinsky is considered by many political scientists as well as public relations practitioners an anomaly (Dagnes, 2011). His scandal is exceptional not only because it was the first public presidential sex scandal, but also because he initially denied all allegations of sexual impropriety (famously announcing, "I did not have sexual relations with that woman"), and was later found to have falsely denied those claims (Dagnes, 2011). Though he was publicly found lying, public opinion of him remained very strong throughout the scandal, and was able to remain in of-

fice despite the yearlong media frenzy and his own admission of guilt. His scandal remains an anomaly, as he had one of the highest percentages of denial (18%) and lowest percentage of mortification (14%) throughout his statements, but was still viewed favorably by most Americans (Aday, 1998).

Clarence Thomas (1991)—Justice Thomas is a special case, as he is the only Supreme Court Justice to have been involved in a public sex scandal. During his Supreme Court confirmation hearings in 1991, salacious claims of an affair with Anita Hill were brought forth, which Thomas ardently denied (20% of his total statement). His case is unique, as he is the only official examined who was not subject to election by constituents for his position. It was perhaps the nature of his confirmation hearings that enabled him to gain his seat despite the national attention surrounding the affair (Thompson, 2000). As such, Thomas only made one public statement in which he denied his involvement and viciously attacked his accuser. The lifetime appointment granted to a Supreme Court justice is one reason that Thomas is one of the only three appointments still currently serving his position.

Absence of Scandal from 1999-2004

There is a noticeable five-year period from 1999 until 2004 in which there were no sex scandals that received significant national attention. This research does not examine the reasons that this phenomenon may have occurred, but further studies could help to explain the cause of this gap. There are several inferences that can be made from comparing the results from this study as well as existing literature on the subject. In the wake of the media frenzy surrounding President Clinton's affair, it is possible that officials were more cognizant of the media's presence, and were less likely to participate in improper actions. More likely, however, is that current events in the early 21st century (September 11, 2001, War on Terror) dictated significant media coverage, and that media outlets did not need to search as extensively for captivating stories to draw in their audience. An interesting follow-up study would examine this period for any patterns or trends, or to investigate whether there were sex scandals that simply did not garner the same national media coverage as those included in this research.

Implications of Increased Media Coverage on Political Accountability

The research conducted in this study confirms an idea that has been largely discussed by political scientists: the increased scrutiny and lens of the media have led to increased levels of accountability for politicians. Their mistakes, transgressions, and successes are broadcast throughout America, as well as internationally, and this larger stage has forced officials to hold themselves accountable for their actions, and not to hide behind others. Press coverage has an undeniable impact on public opinion and political knowledge, and officials must always be cognizant of media presence in both their public and private lives. This notion of political accountability can perhaps explain the noticeable increase in levels of mortification in public statements (see Figure 10). When the media uncovers a salacious truth, officials must take responsibility and apologize for their transgressions in an effort to maintain a positive reputation (Benoit, 1995). Increased levels of mortification support the hypothesis that increased media coverage has led to higher standards of political accountability. With more officials apologizing for their actions rather than denying the events or attempting to evade responsibility, it appears that the public demands a certain level of accountability, and that politicians must live up to those standards.

VII. Conclusion

The dramatic growth of media and Internet outlets in the last decade alone has called for an increased focus on communication and higher standards of accountability. No longer can officials hide their discretions from the public by arguing the distinction between their public and private lives. Benoit's "Theory of Image Restoration" is widely accepted as a standard of effective crisis management, as they stress the fundamental importance of communication as a response tool. If communication is a "goal-directed activity," then the statements analyzed in this research support the various goals targeted with each strategy (Benoit, 1995). Although the majority of officials relied heavily on reducing offensiveness in their responses, it is interesting to identify under which circumstances the strategies were used differently. For some, the scandals proved to be too damaging to their reputations, and they were forced to resign often a matter of hours after the story was made public. There were others who were able to weather the scandal through a combination of restoration

techniques as well as their political histories and public opinions of them.

While it cannot be concluded that one restoration strategy is most effective or can predict the outcome of a scandal, this research can support the growing role that communication plays in today's digital age, and that this increased media attention has forced more and more politicians to admit to their transgressions. Sex scandals in American politics have not necessarily increased in recent decades, but the rate in which they are disseminated to the public certainly has. By applying Benoit's theory to a collection of scandals, as well as analyzing their outcomes, this research can support the idea that communication is, in fact, a "goal-directed activity," and that the strategies and tactics used to respond to scandals must evolve with the changing media landscape.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix

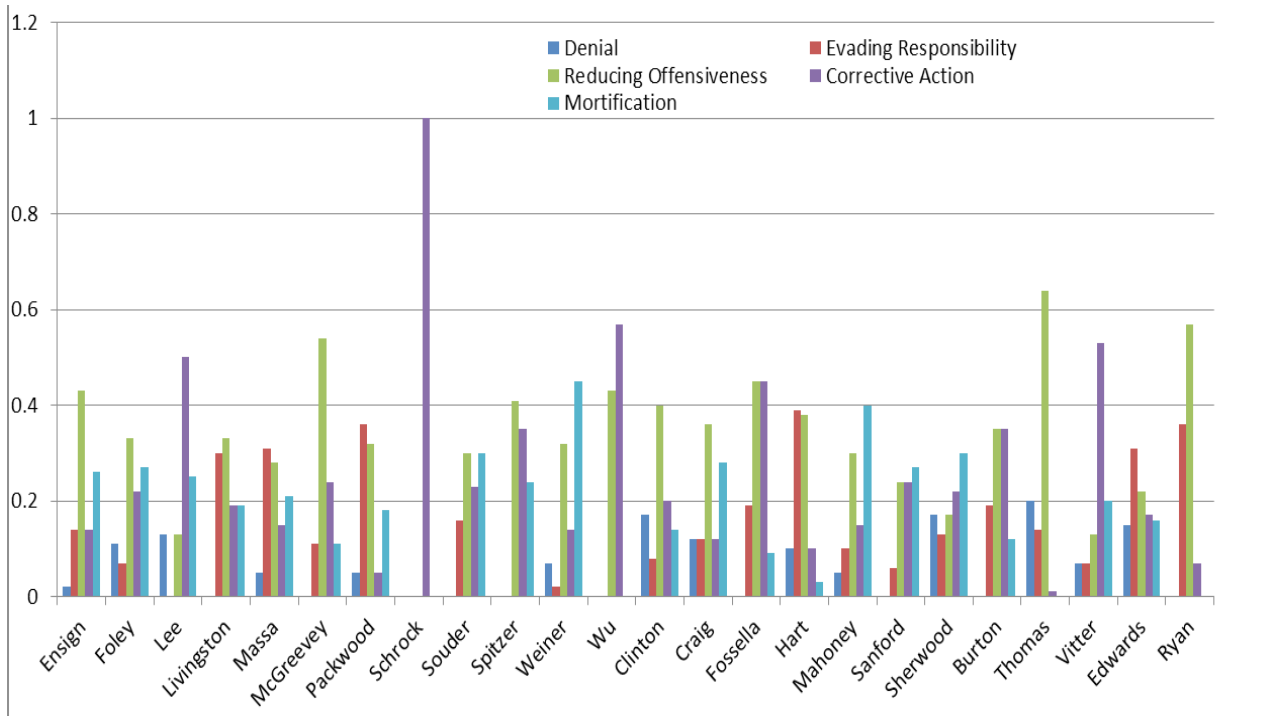


Figure 1. Use of image restoration strategies by official

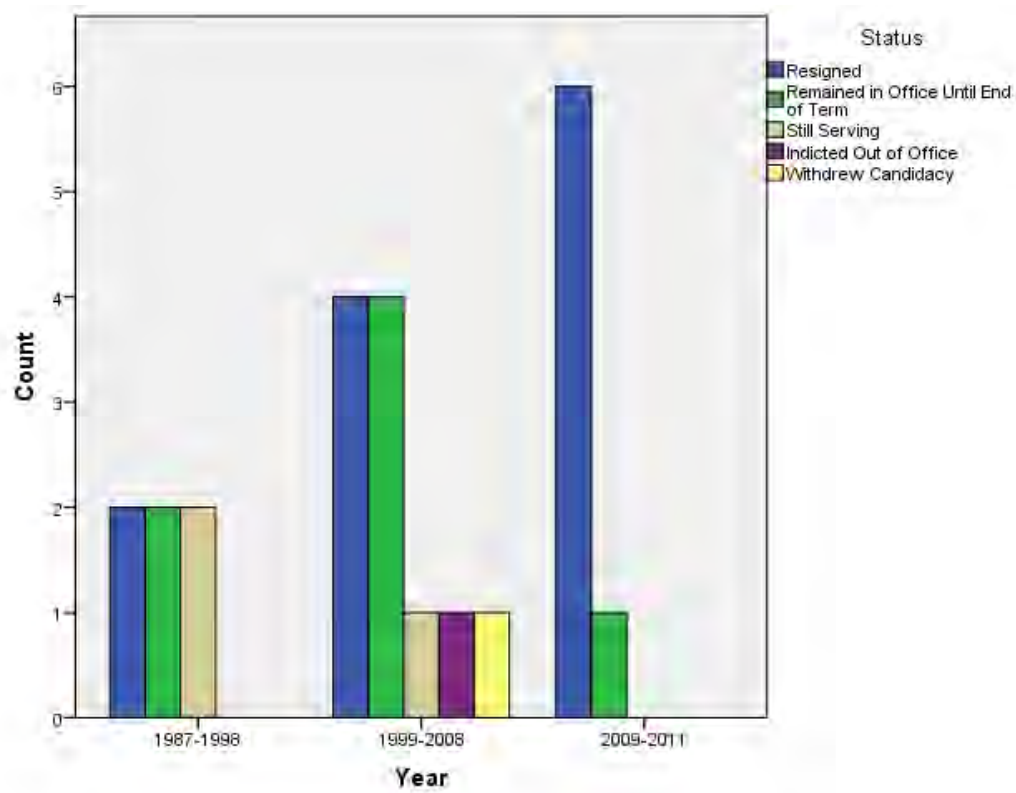


Figure 2. Post-scandal status of office held by year

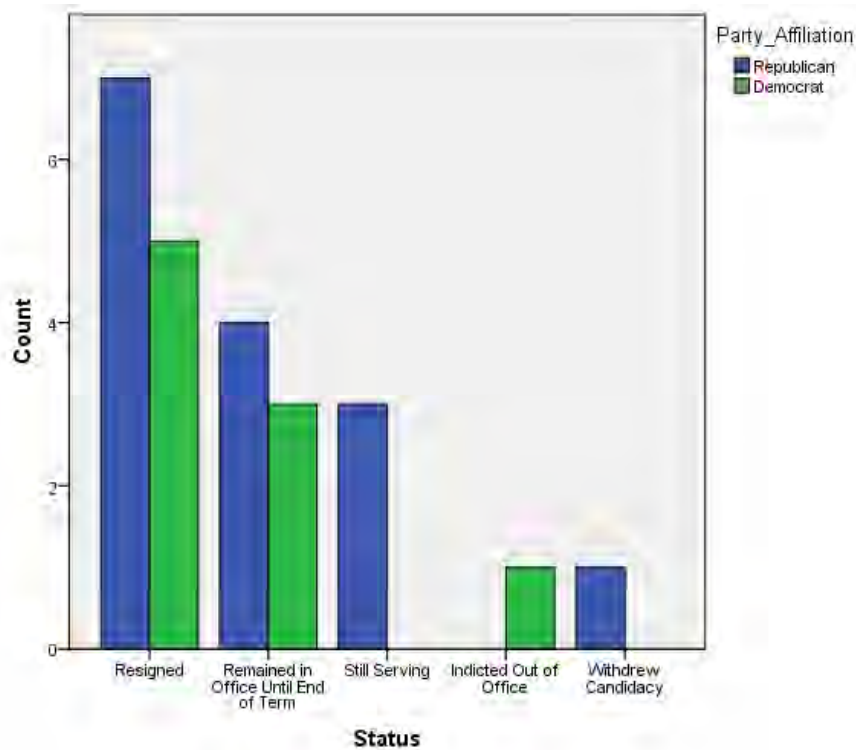


Figure 3. Post-scandal status of office held by party affiliation

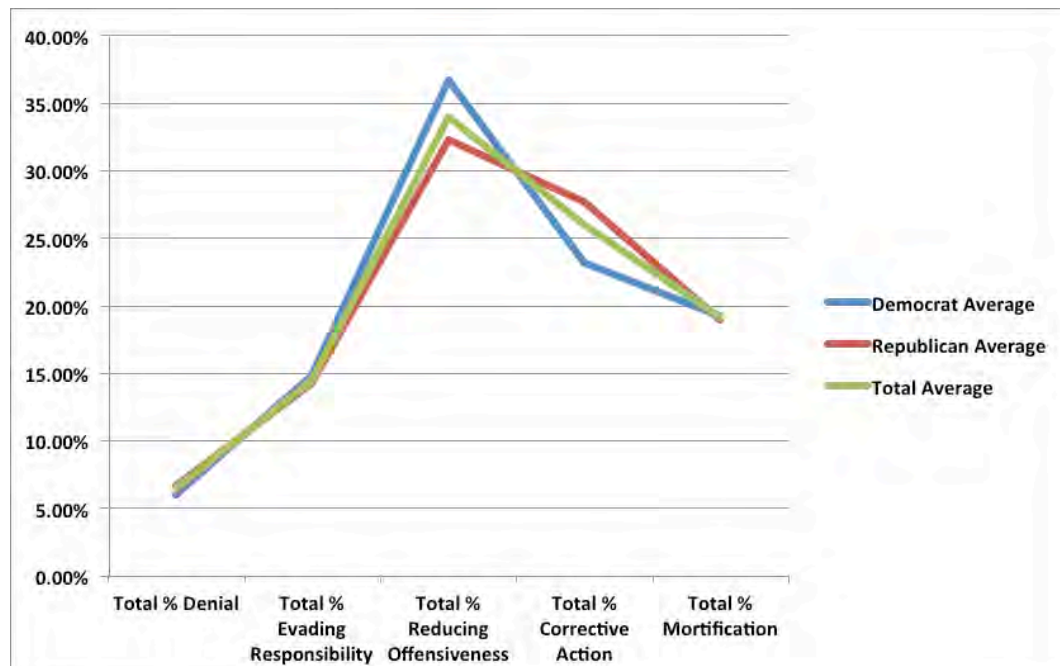


Figure 4. Average use of image restoration strategies by party affiliation

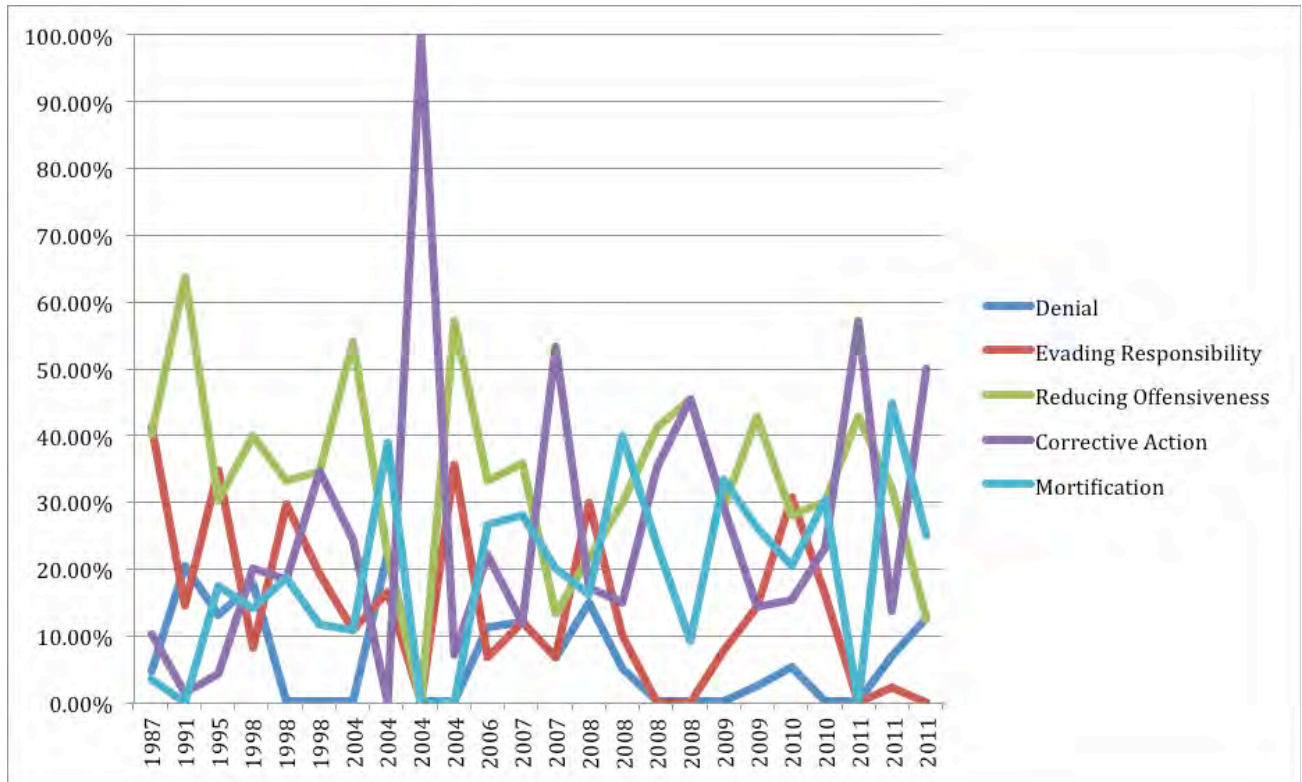


Figure 5. Image restoration strategies by year

Table 1. Percentages by Party Affiliation (With and Without Congressman Schrock)

Totals	Denial	Evading	Reducing	Corrective	Mortification
Democrat Average	6.02%	14.82%	36.73%	23.17%	19.26%
Democrat (No Schrock)	6.02%	14.82%	36.73%	23.17%	19.26%
Republican Average	6.68%	14.28%	32.31%	27.74%	18.99%
Republican (No Schrock)	7.16%	15.30%	34.62%	22.57%	20.35%
Total Average	6.43%	14.48%	33.97%	26.02%	19.09%

Table 2. Detailed Breakdowns of Each Scandal

Year	Name	Status of Held Office	Position	State	Party Affili
1987	Gary Hart	Remained in Office until term expired	Senator	Colorado	Democrat
1991	Clarence Thomas	Still Serving	Supreme Court Justice	United States	Republican
1995	Bob Packwood	Resigned	Senator	Oregon	Republican
1998	Bill Clinton	Remained in Office until term expired	President	United States	Democrat
1998	Dan Burton	Still in Office	House Representative	Indiana	Republican
1998	Robert Livingston	Resigned	House Representative	Louisiana	Republican
2004	Don Sherwood	Remained in Office until term expired	House Representative	Pennsylvania	Republican
2004	Ed Schrock	Remained in Office until term expired	House Representative	Virginia	Republican
2004	Jack Ryan	Withdrew	Senate Candidate	Illinois	Republican
2004	James McGreevey	Resigned	Governor	New Jersey	Democrat
2006	Mark Foley	Resigned	House Representative	Florida	Republican
2007	David Vitter	Still in Office	Senator	Louisiana	Republican
2007	Larry Craig	Initially claimed he would resign, but served out the Remainder of his term	Senator	Idaho	Republican
2008	Eliot Spitzer	Resigned	Governor	New York	Democrat
2008	John Edwards	Indicted Out of Office	Senator (Out of Office)	North Carolina	Democrat
2008	Tim Mahoney	Remained in Office until term expired	House Representative	Florida	Democrat
2008	Vito Fosella	Remained in Office until term expired	House Representative	New York	Republican
2009	John Ensign	Resigned	Senator	Nevada	Republican
2009	Mark Sanford	Remained in Office until term expired in January 2011	Governor	South Carolina	Republican
2010	Eric Massa	Resigned	House Representative	New York	Democrat
2010	Mark Souder	Resigned	House Representative	Indiana	Republican
2011	Anthony Weiner	Resigned	House Representative	New York	Democrat
2011	Chris Lee	Resigned	House Representative	New York	Republican
2011	David Wu	Resigned	House Representative	Oregon	Democrat

Table 3. Strategy Breakdown by Frequencies

Name	Party Affiliation	# of Statements	Denial	Evading	Reducing	Corrective	Mortification	Totals by Scandal
Anthony Weiner	Democrat	6	6	2	28	12	39	87
Bill Clinton	Democrat	9	15	7	34	17	12	85
David Wu	Democrat	2	0	0	3	4	0	37
Eliot Spitzer	Democrat	2	0	0	7	6	4	87
Eric Massa	Democrat	3	2	12	11	6	8	20
Gary Hart	Democrat	4	4	36	35	9	3	17
Jim McGreevey	Democrat	2	0	4	20	9	4	39
John Edwards	Democrat	6	13	26	19	15	14	7
Tim Mahoney	Democrat	3	1	2	6	3	8	87
Christopher Lee	Republican	2	1	0	1	4	2	69
Clarence Thomas	Republican	1	14	10	44	1	0	23
Dan Burton	Republican	2	0	5	9	9	3	27
David Vitter	Republican	2	1	1	2	8	3	26
Don Sherwood	Republican	3	4	3	4	0	7	18
Ed Schrock	Republican	1	0	0	0	2	0	2
Jack Ryan	Republican	2	0	5	8	1	0	14
John Ensign	Republican	3	1	6	18	6	11	45
Larry Craig	Republican	2	3	3	9	3	7	25
Mark Foley	Republican	4	5	3	15	10	12	15
Mark Sanford	Republican	4	0	4	15	15	17	11
Mark Souder	Republican	2	0	7	13	10	13	51
Robert Livingston	Republican	2	0	8	9	5	5	42
Robert Packwood	Republican	3	3	8	7	1	4	43
Vito Fosella	Republican	2	0	0	5	5	1	8
Totals by Strategy		885	72	73	152	322	161	

Tables 4 & 5. Strategy Breakdown by Party Affiliation
(Republicans)

Name	Year	Status of Held	% Denial	% Evading Responsibility	% Reducing Offensiveness	% Corrective Action	% Mortification
Hart	1987	Remained if Offic	4.60%	41.38%	40.23%	10.34%	3.45%
Clinton	1998	Remained if Offic	17.65%	8.24%	40.00%	20.00%	14.12%
McGreevey	2004	Resigned	0.00%	10.81%	54.05%	24.32%	10.81%
Edwards	2008	Indicted Out of O	14.94%	29.89%	21.84%	17.24%	16.09%
Mahoney	2008	Remained if Offic	5.00%	10.00%	30.00%	15.00%	40.00%
Spitzer	2008	Resigned	0.00%	0.00%	41.18%	35.29%	23.53%
Massa	2010	Resigned	5.13%	30.77%	28.21%	15.38%	20.51%
Wu	2011	Resigned	0.00%	0.00%	42.86%	57.14%	0.00%
Weiner	2011	Resigned	6.90%	2.30%	32.18%	13.79%	44.83%

(Democrats)

Thomas	1991	Still Serving	20.29%	14.49%	63.77%	1.45%	0.00%
Packwood	1995	Resigned	13.04%	34.78%	30.43%	4.35%	17.39%
Livingston	1998	Resigned	0.00%	29.63%	33.33%	18.52%	18.52%
Burton	1998	Still Serving	0.00%	19.23%	34.62%	34.62%	11.54%
Sherwood	2004	Remained if Offic	22.22%	16.67%	22.22%	0.00%	38.89%
Schrock	2004	Resigned	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Ryan	2004	Withdrew	0.00%	35.71%	57.14%	7.14%	0.00%
Foley	2006	Resigned	11.11%	6.67%	33.33%	22.22%	26.67%
Craig	2007	Remained if Offic	12.00%	12.00%	36.00%	12.00%	28.00%
Vitter	2007	Still Serving	6.67%	6.67%	13.33%	53.33%	20.00%
Fossella	2008	Remained if Offic	0.00%	0.00%	45.45%	45.45%	9.09%
Sanford	2009	Remained if Offic	0.00%	7.84%	29.41%	29.41%	33.33%
Ensign	2009	Resigned	2.38%	14.29%	42.86%	14.29%	26.19%
Souder	2010	Resigned	0.00%	16.28%	30.23%	23.26%	30.23%
Lee	2011	Resigned	12.50%	0.00%	12.50%	50.00%	25.00%

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Crisis Management and Sports in the Age of Social Media: A Case Study Analysis of the Tiger Woods Scandal

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Abstract

Tiger Woods saw his reputation crumble as reports of infidelity leaked to the press in November of 2009. This research evaluated the crisis management strategies of Woods and his crisis management staff, as well as social media's role and reaction to the scandal. The eight press statements issued by Woods between November 29, 2009, and August 23, 2010, served as the primary documents for this case study analysis. Results found that mortification was the most frequently used crisis management strategy. Despite the criticism Woods received for his handling of the crisis, social media research indicates that his team's approach has been effective in shifting online conversations away from the scandal and back to Woods and golf.

I. Introduction

The term crisis has a wide variety of definitions and interpretations. Typically, it is understood to be an extraordinary disruption of standard operations that threatens the safety, reputation and success of an organization or individual. In some instances of crises, there is an opportunity for a company or person to subdue a situation before it causes serious damage. However, too often the problem spirals out of control before it can be contained. The way in which the problem is prepared for or handled, also known as crisis management, can determine how devastating the event is to the bottom line of an organization. Though crises occur in every industry, none receive a more disproportionate share of media attention than in sports (Henry, 2008). Sports organizations and the lives of highly paid athletes are of great interest to the American people. Given the spotlight on athletics, it has become necessary for teams and players to employ crisis management staff who specialize in keeping their names out of the negative press. The growth of the Internet and social media makes the jobs of these crisis management teams more difficult than ever before. Stories, from both internal and external sources, can spread in a matter of minutes through sites like Facebook and Twitter and have the ability to impact public opinion.

The present study focused on crisis management strategies and their application to the 2009 Tiger Woods scandal. A case study analysis was conducted of Woods' official press statements following the scandal to evaluate what strategies and tactics his crisis management team used and how successful they were in restoring Woods' image. This review relied upon prior research of crisis management and image restoration techniques (Burnett, 2002; Caywood & Stocker, 1997; Coombs, 2007; Curtin, Hayman & Husein, 2005; Fink, 1986; Gottschalk, 2002; Larsen & Massey, 2006; Mitroff, 2000) as well as the development of social media (Cross, 2011) and its impact on sports scandals (Brown, Dickhaus & Long 2012; Davie, King & Leonard, 2010; Henry, 2008; Len Rios, 2010; Phua, 2012; Reed, 2011; Teitelbaum, 2010).

* **Keywords:** crisis management, Tiger Woods, scandal, social media, image restoration
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II. Literature Review

Definition of Crisis and Crisis Management

According to Steven Fink, crisis is defined as “an unstable time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending—either one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome or one with the distinct possibility of a highly desirable and extremely positive outcome” (1986, p.15). Some experts on the subject have placed emphasis on the idea that crises create as much opportunity for organizational perseverance and growth as it does for failure (Burnett, 2002; Fink, 1986). There are three basic categories with which all crises are classified: crises that befall an organization or individual, those that are manufactured, and those that escalate from an accident (Curtin, Hayman & Husein, 2005). For an incident to qualify as a full-blown crisis, the situation must be “escalating in intensity, falling under close government or media scrutiny, interfering with normal business operations, jeopardizing public image and damaging a company’s bottom line in anyway” (Fink 1986, p.15). Crises can range from industrial accidents to sex scandals to company lawsuits and have the potential to threaten public safety, as well as reputation and financial loss (Coombs, 2007; Larsen & Massey, 2006). According to Caywood and Stocker, a crisis and how it’s managed can be the “life-or-death difference for a product, career or company” (1997, p. 189). The purpose of crisis management is to prevent or minimize the damage of an organizational crisis at all costs. Effective crisis management involves a combination of pre-crisis preparation and post-crisis action. In the past, prior to the world of instant communication, handling these situations could be deliberate and well thought out. Organizations had time to draft responses and arrange for legal consultation before dealing with media. That has obviously changed with the rapid development of the online community and the demand for immediate answers. Given the many interpretations of crisis and the ever-evolving forms of communication, it is difficult for experts to agree on a universally applicable crisis management approach (Larsen and Massey, 2006). There are, however, some generally accepted components to it.

Stages of Crises

All crises have a lifespan. There are patterns of when they begin, worsen, plateau and return to normalcy. Experts on crisis management have debated how exactly to classify these different stages of a crisis. Fink (1986) established a generally accepted four-stage model that can be applied to all situations. The prodromal crisis stage is the initial stage of any crisis, where warning signs may be apparent. The creation of a crisis management plan (CMP), discussed later in the review, can help an organization identify the warning signs of a crisis in this early stage. If a crisis is flagged at this stage, the organization can recover more easily than otherwise. Next is the acute crisis stage. Once an event has reached this stage, damage has been done. The amount of damage depends on how swiftly and appropriately a crisis management team can react. An organization’s goal in this stage is to control details like how or when the story is released (more easily done with a CMP). Third is the chronic crisis stage, which is all about regrouping and recovering after the crisis. Depending on the success of the crisis management team, this stage, the longest of the four, can be met with celebrations or total staff overhaul. Lastly, the crisis resolution stage signals the successful recovery of an organization or individual. Business operations return to normal. However, employees need to be aware that crises are cyclical and have a tendency to reappear in the future.

Crisis Management Plans

As previously mentioned, a critical element to successfully navigating any crisis is the development of a well-organized crisis management plan (CMP) (Caywood & Stocker, 1997; Coombs, 2007; Fink, 1986; Henry, 2008). A CMP functions as a short guideline or contingency plan, should any crisis arise. Caywood and Stocker (1997) described a CMP as a step-based plan that prepares for the dynamic changes of a crisis. It includes decisions like who to contact, what resources will be needed, and how and when to handle the media. Businesses of all sizes, regardless of industry, need to have a CMP established and updated annually. John Burnett stated that “50 to 70 percent of the largest profit-making organizations, surprisingly, do not have a written disaster plan” (2002, p. 7). It is often companies that do not have CMPs in place that suffer the most following a substantial crisis. Organizations should prepare by looking at past crises related to their industry and identifying trends, and determine what the warning signs were and the techniques that were previously effective (Mitroff, 2000). According to Ian Mitroff, companies should produce CMPs for at least one crisis in

each of the following categories: informational, economic, physical, human resources, reputational, psychopathic acts and natural disasters.

But before establishing a CMP, there must be a crisis management team (CMT) in place. This is a group of employees, ideally from various departments, that will be responsible for developing the CMP and implementing it (Curtin, Hayman & Husein 2005; Fink, 1986).

Fink found it is not uncommon for companies to either outsource their crisis management, or to bring in consultants that simulate crisis scenarios and evaluate the performance of the CMT. Studies have shown that very few companies, even those with CMPs, have actually practiced their plan and made adjustments according to its success (Larsen & Massey, 2006). While the CMP should be thorough, it is important for staff to not get distracted in its specific details. The plan is designed to be broad, but should help companies avoid making major decisions in the “heat of the moment.” The growth of instant communication requires organizations to respond with speed; avoiding the media for too long can be viewed as deceptive. It is common that when decisions or speech are rushed, responses can be inadequate and therefore, detrimental to the resolution of the crisis.

Social Media’s Impact on Crisis Management

Crisis management has always been a difficult task. However, it is safe to conclude that the development of social media amplifies the challenges facing crisis management teams today. In Mary Cross’s book, *“Bloggerati, Twitterati: How Blogs and Twitter are Transforming Popular Culture”* (2011), she discussed the birth of social media and the impact it has had on communication. Twitter, a social media site created by Jack Dorsey in 2006, allows users to post 140 character updates on any topic they choose. As of March 2011, Twitter had over 300 million users with about 140 million tweets posted daily. That comes out to almost a billion tweets a week. The site allows for the rapid dissemination of information and has become a resource for bloggers, analysts and journalists alike. Facebook, another popular social networking site, was launched by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. It allows users to create profile pages, where they add photos and share links and comments on various topics with friends. According to Sada Reed’s article in the *Journal of Sports Media* (2011), Facebook had more than 500 million users as of May 2011.

The development of social media and its high levels of user participation, though beneficial to mass communication, creates two dilemmas for organizations or individuals dealing with a crisis. First, messages and stories can spread instantaneously. The primary concern is no longer what the *New York Times* will write about you in the newspaper tomorrow—but what will be written 15 seconds from now online. The speed of online communication makes it more challenging for the crisis management team to get out in front of a story (Gottschalk, 2002). It allows for the prolonged discussion of any scandal. The other problem these sites pose for organizations is that internal members can post information that reflects poorly on the company, creating or augmenting a crisis entirely on its own. Given that sports fans reportedly spend 13 hours online each week searching for information on their favorite teams and players, it is almost guaranteed that anything published on these sites will be seen and spread fast (Phua, 2012). It is after a crisis has broken that a CMT is forced to employ a series of crisis management or image restoration strategies to minimize the damage.

Best Practices and Strategies

There are several basic words of advice for any crisis management team: be quick, accurate and consistent (Coombs, 2007). It is often difficult for an organization to manage both speed and accuracy simultaneously unless previous preparation for a crisis has been done. Initial response is critical, as every sound bite, interview, or press conference will be available for replay on YouTube.

There are five well-accepted categories of crisis management responses, including non-existent strategies, distance strategies, ingratiating strategies, mortification strategies, and suffering strategies (Brown, Dickhaus & Long, 2012; Coombs, 2007; Larsen & Massey, 2006; Len Rios, 2010). With non-existent strategies, CMTs look to avoid any ownership of wrongdoing by denying, clarifying, or attacking claims of fault on behalf of the organization (Larsen & Massey, 2006). Next are distance strategies. With distance strategies, the goal is to remove any association of the company with the crisis (Larsen & Massey, 2006). Distance can be created through a series of excuses or justifications. Justifications involve minimizing the perception of damage (Coombs, 2007). Third are ingratiating strategies that aim to generate support on issues beyond the crisis event, including bolstering and transcendence. Bolstering is defined as the attempt to create credibility

based by referencing prior good behavior (Brown, Dickhaus & Long, 2012; Len Rios, 2010). On the other hand, transcendence, which is used to deflect attention onto something else, is placing a fact or sentiment in a larger context that viewers are not currently seeing (Brown, Dickhaus & Long, 2012). Mortification strategies are strategies that admit involvement and simply request public forgiveness for the issue, specifically involving remediation, repentance, and rectification (Larsen & Massey, 2006). Mortification is also commonly referred to as atonement. Last are suffering strategies, which are used in an attempt to garner public sympathy (Larsen & Massey, 2006). It is up to the CMT to determine which strategies will be most effective given the situation and audience. Often, the type of strategy may change over the lifespan of the crisis.

Crisis management and image restoration take on a bigger role in today's society, specifically in sports, due to the increased media coverage of athlete scandal (Teitelbaum, 2010). No sports story is too small or insignificant for social media users to grab a hold of. Considering that an athlete's public image is worth more monetarily than it ever used to be, the ability to successfully implement these strategies and control how a story spreads is a highly valuable skill (Brown, Dickhaus & Long, 2012).

Research Questions

In considering the basic principles of crisis management and their role in the 2009 Tiger Woods scandal, this case study aimed to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What crisis management strategies were used most frequently following Woods' scandal?

RQ2: How did the type of strategies used change throughout the life cycle of the crisis?

RQ3: What was the reaction to the crisis on social media and did it differ from traditional media coverage?

RQ4: What effect, if any, did Woods' crisis management approach have on public opinion and company sponsorship?

III. Case Study Analysis of Tiger Woods Scandal

Data for this research were collected through Tiger Woods' press statements following the break of his 2009 sex scandal. It included the examination of eight statements, all released from the official Tiger Woods website, that ranged from November 29, 2009, two days after the initial accident, until August 23, 2010, with the announcement of his divorce from Elin Nordegren. Of the eight statements, two were press conferences held at professional golf tournaments. The crisis management strategies used (non-existent, distance, ingratiating, mortification and suffering) within each press statement were identified and recorded. This data helped determine how often certain strategies were employed. To provide context for the case, social media feedback and news coverage reports were also examined.

Overview of the Tiger Woods Scandal

In 2009, Tiger Woods, an American professional golfer, was caught amidst one of the most high-profile sex scandals of all time. Since the beginning of his professional career in 1996, Woods was regarded as one of the best—if not the best—golfer in history. He won 96 golf tournaments, 72 on the PGA tour and recorded the fastest progression to the No.1 spot on the Official World Golf Ranking ("About Tiger Woods," n.d.). Woods was estimated to be the highest paid athlete in the world in 2009, earning about \$110 million (Badenhausen, 2009). Part African American, Asian, American Indian and Caucasian, Woods broke countless ethnic barriers in the sport of golf and became the face of minority athletes across the world (Davie et al., 2010).

His fame and popularity made his fall from grace in 2009 that much harder. Reports of infidelity with a woman named Rachel Uchitel surfaced on Thanksgiving Day of that year from a tabloid magazine (Davie et al., 2010). It was immediately met with disbelief, but the situation became increasingly suspicious following a 2:30 a.m. car accident two days later. It was reported his wife, Elin Nordegren, was chasing his Cadillac Escalade with a golf club. Over the next several weeks, 10 other women came forward admitting to having had affairs with the married-Woods. The *New York Daily News* reported there were 120 allegations of adultery

(Davie et al., 2010). The mistresses ranged from prostitutes to porn stars to waitresses. Woods saw several big-name sponsors like Accenture, Gillette, and Gatorade, drop him as a spokesperson, stating that he no longer represented the values of their organizations. It led to extensive media backlash, his withdrawal from tournament play, a stint in a sex rehab facility, and an eventual divorce from his wife, Elin.

Crisis Criteria

The Tiger Woods scandal meets all criteria of a typical crisis. It was a period of instability that arose from the misbehavior and indiscretions of an individual, in this case, an athlete. The crisis threatened not only reputation loss but also financial loss, as more and more sponsors chose to part ways with Woods. Media paid close attention to each twist and turn of the scandal and information spread rapidly with the availability of social media. The stories of the affairs had a significant, negative influence on public opinion.

Stages of the Crisis

It is difficult to define specifically when the prodromal stage of the crisis began. The earliest report of infidelity came on November 25, 2009, from the *National Inquirer*. However, it is possible that there were warning signs prior to then that were not made public knowledge. There has been no discussion as to whether or not Tiger Woods' PR staff prepared a crisis management plan—likely because admitting the existence of one would imply they were aware of his indiscretions prior to the scandal. So given the knowledge available, the prodromal stage started on Thanksgiving Day and lasted for approximately two days. It marked the first ripple in Tiger's perfect public image, but at the time, the opportunity to discredit the rumor of a single affair from a non-credible source still existed.

Just 48 hours later came the accident that sparked the beginning of the acute crisis stage. As mentioned, Tiger Woods left his house in the middle of the night and moments later crashed into a nearby fire hydrant. It was then that it became a full-fledged crisis. It was no longer a single allegation of an affair from the *National Enquirer*. There were police reports and hospital intake forms that corroborated the stories of unusual behavior. The press was immediately made aware of the accident and the crisis reached a point-of-no-return. It escalated as voicemail messages he left mistresses were leaked, and several more women came forward admitting to sleeping with him. Stories of his checking in to a sex rehabilitation facility and his unwillingness to answer the media's questions extended the length of the acute crisis stage.

The Woods' scandal entered the chronic crisis stage, also known as a period of regrouping and recovering, on February 19, 2010. It was the first time Woods spoke directly to reporters since the incident. He offered an apology to his family and fans, making it clear he was ready to move on. Though a handful of sponsors continued to drop him after his public statement, no new information surrounding the scandal was released. He began granting interviews and making his way back into the professional golf circuit. Social media conversation slowly returned to talking about Woods in conjunction with golf.

Some analysts and fans believe that Tiger began the crisis resolution stage on March 26, 2012, at Bay Hill with his first PGA Tour win since the scandal. Reports of "Tigers Back!" filled newspapers headlines and social media. Woods experienced a drought in victories when the crisis broke. His win in Bay Hill was a sign of restored confidence, confidence that will likely yield a return in positive media coverage and more company sponsorships.

Crisis Management Strategies by Statement

Statement 1, November 29, 2009: On November 29, 2009, two days after the initial crash and four days after the report of infidelity, Woods' PR staff issued their first public statement on the rumors circulating in the media ("Statement from Tiger Woods," 2009). The statement was written as a direct letter from Woods (see Table 1). By explaining the accident and the injuries he sustained from it, he took sole responsibility for its occurrence. Woods used mortification strategies, like accepting blame for the incident and apologizing, but did so referring exclusively to the car accident. He avoided any mention of infidelity and went so far as to use non-existent strategies like denial and attacking the accuser when addressing those allegations.

Table 1. Statement 1. Crisis Management Strategy

Strategies	Quotes
Mortification -Repentance	"This situation is my fault, and it's obviously embarrassing to my family and me. I'm human and I'm not perfect. I will certainly make sure it doesn't happen again."
Non-existent -Denial -Attacking accuser -Clarifying	"Although I understand there is curiosity, the many false, unfounded and malicious rumors that are currently circulating about my family and me are irresponsible."
Suffering	"This incident has been stressful and very difficult for Elin, our family and me."

Woods' initial attempt to deny indicates that his PR team likely did not have a CMP in place prior to the scandal. If they did, they would not have initially managed the crisis through outright denial. The fact he openly reprimanded the media for creating these stories when they turned out to be true is a poor reflection on Woods' credibility. It was in essence, a lie, the cardinal sin of any crisis management team. Towards the end of the statement, Woods sought to generate sympathy for him and his family by pointing out the stress these allegations have caused.

Statement 2, December 2, 2009: The statement issued by Tiger Woods on December 2, 2009, (see Table 2), marked the first apology for his implied extramarital affairs ("Tiger on Current Events," 2009). Though he never specifically mentioned infidelity or cheating, he alluded to his "transgressions." He used mortification strategies at great length in the second statement. Not only did he apologize to his family and fans but made a promise to do better by both parties in the future.

Table 2. Statement 2. Crisis Management Strategy Table

Strategies	Quotes
Mortification -Repentance -Redemption	"I will strive to be a better person and the husband and father that my family deserves. For all those who have supported me over the years, I offer my profound apology."
Suffering	"Although I am a well-known person and have made my career as a professional athlete, I have been dismayed to realize the full extent of what tabloid scrutiny really means. For the last week, my family and I have been hounded to expose intimate details of our personal lives."
-Clarifying	"The stories in particular that physical violence played any role in the car accident were utterly false and malicious. Elin has always done more to support our family and shown more grace than anyone could possibly expect."

Woods called for the respect of his family's privacy and emphasized that whatever issues may have gone on needed to be dealt with behind closed doors, not in front of the media. To elicit feelings of sympathy from the general public, he described being followed by the paparazzi and its negative impact on his family. Woods used non-existent strategies like clarification and denial in this statement, however, not in regards to his own indiscretions, rather in an effort to absolve his wife of any blame for a physical assault.

Statement 3, December 11, 2009: Woods announced on December 11, 2009, that he would be taking a hiatus from professional golf ("Woods Taking Hiatus," 2009). He stated that it was a decision he came to after much thought and that he needed to focus his attention on becoming a better husband, father, and person. It was also the first time Woods directly took responsibility for cheating, rather than just implying it. It took a total of 15 days from the time of the accident until Tiger would specify he had betrayed his wife, a period of silence that would earn him heavy public criticism. He used mortification strategies exclusively throughout the remainder of the statement (see Table 3).

Table 3. Statement 3. Crisis Management Strategy Table

Strategies	Quotes
Mortification -Repentance -Redemption	"I am deeply aware of the disappointment and hurt my infidelity has caused to so many people, most of all my wife and children. I want to say again to everyone that I am profoundly sorry and that I ask forgiveness." "It may not be possible to repair the damage I've done, but I want to do my best to try."

Statement 4, February 17, 2010: The fourth statement from Woods' staff announced that Tiger would address the media publicly for the first time since the scandal on February 19 in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. ("Tiger Gives Remarks," 2010). It was not a news conference, therefore, eliminating the opportunity for a question and answer period. This was the first report from Woods in more than two months, which allowed for long periods of speculation and criticism. Though it was a brief statement, his staff utilized the opportunity to employ mortification strategies like atonement and remediation once again (see Table 4).

Table 4. Statement 4. Crisis Management Strategy Table

Strategies	Quotes
Mortification -Repentance -Redemption	"He also recognizes that he has hurt and let down a lot of other people who were close to him. He also let down his fans. He wanted to begin the process of making amends, and that's what he's going to discuss."

Statement 5, February 19, 2010: The speech given by Tiger Woods on February 19, 2010, was the most extensive made during the scandal ("Tiger's Public Statement," 2010). It was written and designed to signal the end of the acute crisis stage and transition into a period of recovery and regrouping. He began with more mortification strategies, primarily atoning for his sins wherever possible. Woods made an effort to not only acknowledge the hurt he caused family and fans, but his business partners as well. It is then that he included a reference to his foundation and the good work it had done in the past, an ingratiating strategy known as bolstering (See Table 5). Many media members criticized him for his attempt to pitch his foundation during a speech that was meant to center around his apology.

He finally came clean about his 45-day stint from the end of December to early February in a sex rehabilitation facility during the 13-minute speech. Woods discussed his Buddhist background and how he planned to use his faith to return to a life of happiness and restraint. He included suffering strategies by drawing attention to the harm the media attention had caused his family. He stated that he would return to golf when he was ready but that it would be dependent on his progress and ability to establish balance in his life.

Table 5. Statement 5. Crisis Management Strategy Table

Strategies	Quotes
Mortification -Repentance	<p>“Now every one of you has good reason to be critical of me. I want to say to each of you, simply and directly, I am deeply sorry for my irresponsible and selfish behavior I engaged in.”</p> <p>“I am also aware of the pain my behavior has caused to those of you in this room. I have let you down and I have let down my fans. To those of you who work for me, I have let you down personally and professionally.”</p>
Ingratiating -Bolstering	<p>“Thirteen years ago, my dad and I envisioned helping young people achieve their dreams through education. This work remains unchanged and will continue to grow. From the Learning Center students in Southern California to the Earl Woods’ scholars in Washington, D.C., millions of kids have changed their lives and I am dedicated to making that continue.”</p>
Suffering	<p>“However, my behavior doesn’t make it right for the media to follow my two-and-a-half-year-old daughter to school and report the school’s location. They stalked out my wife and they pursued my mom.”</p>

Statement 6, March 16, 2010: On March 16, 2010, Woods announced that he would return to professional golf at the Masters (“Tigers Return,” 2010). He reminded readers of the therapy he had undergone and the efforts he made to restore his family life. Woods also offered an apology for the tournaments he had to miss as a result of his rehabilitation, the use of yet another mortification strategy (see Table 6).

Table 6. Statement 6. Crisis Management Strategy Table

Strategies	Quotes
Mortification -Repentance	<p>“I have undergone almost two months of inpatient therapy, and I am continuing treatment. Although I’m returning to competition, I still have a lot of work to do in my personal life.”</p> <p>“I called both Joe Lewis and Arnold Palmer and expressed my regrets for not attending the Tavistock Cup and the Arnold Palmer Invitational. I again want to thank them both for their support and their understanding.”</p>

Statement 7, April 8, 2010: After completing day one at the Masters, Woods held a press conference open to all reporters (“Tiger’s Masters Conference,” 2010). It was the first time he took questions from the media since the scandal. During the duration of the interview, Tiger was able to deflect all questions that related back to the scandal and spoke specifically on his golf game. He mentioned the warm reception he received from the fans out on the course. There were no identifiable crisis management strategies used throughout the duration of the interview.

Statement 8, August 23, 2010: The final statement in the 2009 Tiger Woods scandal was a joint statement by both him and his wife (“Nordegren, Woods Statement, 2010). It announced that they were divorced and that though they were no longer married, they would remain wonderful parents to their two children. The statement called for sympathy from the public, a suffering strategy, as a way to encourage others to respect their privacy and move on from the scandal (see Table 7).

Table 7. Statement 8 Crisis Management Strategy Table

Strategies	Quotes
Suffering	"We are sad that our marriage is over and we wish each other the very best for the future." "The weeks and months ahead will not be easy for them as we adjust to a new family situation, which is why our privacy must be a principal concern."

Social Media's Reaction to the Woods Scandal

In the days immediately following the accident, traditional media outlets allotted 2 to 7% of its coverage to the Woods scandal (see Appendix Figure 1), good for the second leading story between November 30 and December 6 (Jurkowitz, 2009). Since the details of Woods' infidelity took the back seat to President Obama's speech on the War in Afghanistan (see Appendix Figure 2), the level of traditional media coverage did not accurately reflect the fervor the Woods' scandal created among social media users.

Online communications saw dramatic spikes in how often Woods' name was mentioned and how often it was mentioned on issues unrelated to golf performance. According to a Nielsen Wire report (2010), Woods' name was almost always associated with words like "cheater," "infidelity," and "crash" on social media sites (see Appendix Figure 3). This pattern continued for several weeks as Woods avoided directly addressing the public and failed to provide the media with consistent updates on his progress. The same report found that between January 29 and March 19, 2010, online conversations slowly began to return to their discussion of Woods and golf (see Appendix Figure 4). A majority of these more positive conversations were likely triggered by his first press conference on February 19.

Summary

Woods relied predominately on mortification strategies to manage the crisis and restore public perception. Of the eight statements made, six included mortification strategies and often more than one instance of them. He initially employed non-existent strategies like denial when addressing rumors of infidelity, which suggests that his staff did not have a CMP in place. As more and more information regarding his indiscretions was released, he was forced to take greater ownership for the scandal and change the types of approaches used. Woods was criticized for his initial denial of the affairs and for going more than two months between statements (December 11 till February 17). A swifter approach may have shortened the length of the acute crisis stage and minimized the number of dropped sponsors. Four of the five types of crisis management strategies were incorporated into his statements throughout the lifespan of the crisis, all with the exception of distance strategies. The media drew attention to his attempt at "bolstering" with the mention of his foundation and his repeated use of suffering tactics. Traditional media coverage was common, but not as potent as the discussion of the scandal on social media. Woods' name was mentioned frequently in association with his wrongdoings up until his first press conference. Though it may have been a prolonged process, research indicates that discussion of Woods and the scandal has died down on social media sites. Woods' slightly restored image has landed him two new sponsorships with Rolex and Fuse Science Inc. since the scandal.

IV. Conclusion

Crises can arise at all times, in all industries. But no industry sees a more disproportionate share of media attention than sports. The growing interest of the American people and the development of social media have created an environment that disseminates rapidly information surrounding athlete scandal and extends its discussion. It has increased the need for pre-crisis planning and post-crisis responses. In 2009, Tiger Woods experienced it firsthand, as stories of alleged mistresses and a furious wife made their way to the media. Woods' PR staff relied primarily on mortification strategies to manage the crisis, accepting blame and apologizing to his wife, family, and fans whenever he spoke. Though it is highly unlikely Woods' image returns to what it used to be, social media research indicates conversations regarding the professional

golfer are slowly returning to the discussion of his game. Public opinion of Woods has improved, since the break of the scandal; and though the public disapproved of his behavior and occasionally the way the crisis was handled, the mortification strategies used were mildly effective. One can conclude that atonement helps humanize once larger-than-life athletes. But ultimately, his success on the course will have the biggest impact on how people regard Tiger Woods.

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Appendix

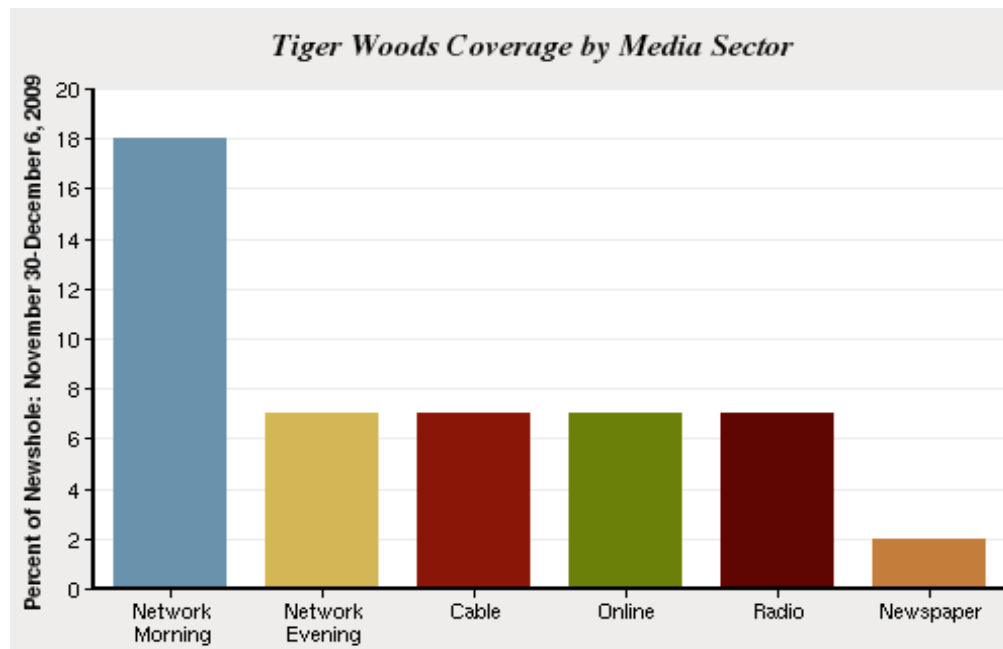


Figure 1. Tiger Woods' coverage by media sectors. Copyright by Pew Research Center Publications

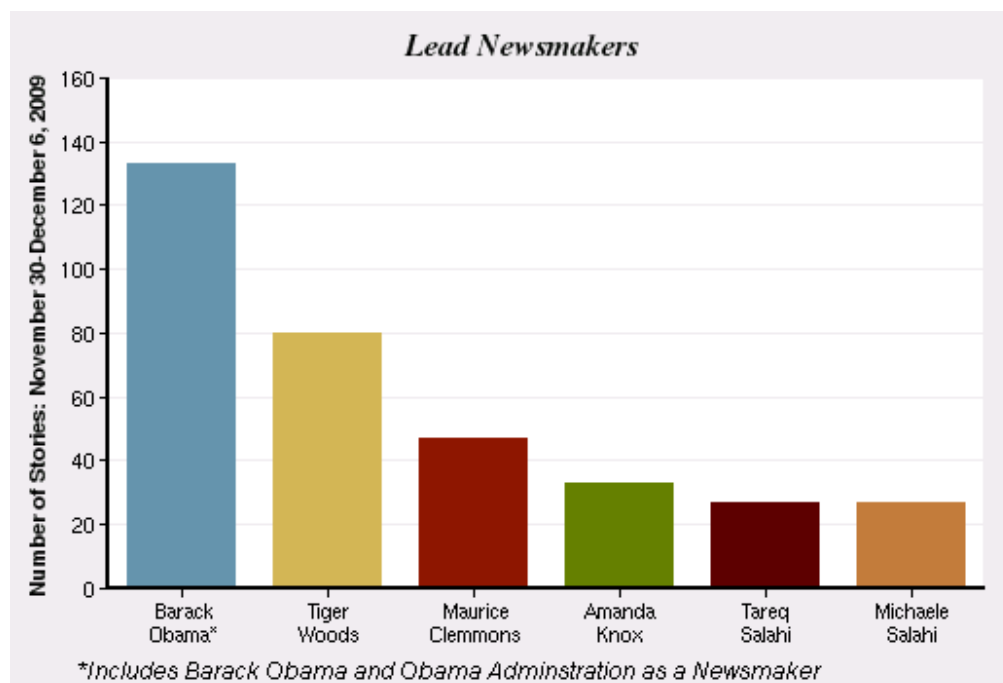


Figure 2. Lead newsmakers' coverage. Copyright by Pew Research Center Publications

Tiger Woods Brand Association Map Post Controversy

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Corporate Use of Environmental Marketplace Advocacy A Case Study of GE's "Ecomagination" Campaign

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Abstract

This study explored the concept of marketplace advocacy within the context of General Electric's "Ecomagination" environmental campaign. The study looked at what makes marketplace advocacy campaigns successful, how these campaigns are used to conceal environmental issues, and what concerns the public has with the corporations that implement these campaigns. The results indicated that marketplace advocacy is a powerful strategic communications tool that can be used by corporations to successfully alter public opinion and impact policy surrounding environmental concerns and issues.

I. Introduction

The field of communications continually evolves to include profoundly influential campaigns. "Marketplace advocacy" is one specific tool being used by corporations worldwide. This powerful strategic communications tool, a form of issue advocacy, is used by corporations to promote a product, service or industry function while influencing policy and public opinion (Miller, 2012). These campaigns are profoundly integrated into a corporation's core and require support from all stakeholders. Due to the strategic value of these campaigns, they are often used to address environmental concerns.

Scholars have determined that corporations' motivations behind these campaigns are primarily driven by extrinsic goals, such as political favor, financial gain and risk management (Basu & Palazzo, 2008). This has stirred debate over the ethicality of marketplace advocacy campaigns. Environmentally based campaigns serve as one example of deliberated campaigns. For example, General Electric's "Ecomagination" campaign works to influence a broad range of stakeholders to support its efforts in creating clean technology to solve environmental problems (GE, 2012). There is concern, however, about whether or not General Electric is being honest with the public through the outreach tactics being used (Kranhold, 2007).

This example served as the inspiration for this study—to explore how a successful marketplace advocacy campaign is implemented and to identify the factors that influence how and why a corporation uses marketplace advocacy to conceal environmental concerns. Specifically, this study sought to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What techniques contribute to the success of a marketplace advocacy campaign?

RQ2: What concerns does the public have with corporations' use of marketplace advocacy campaigns?

RQ3: How are marketplace advocacy campaigns being misused to conceal environmental issues?

* **Keywords:** marketplace advocacy, environmental communications, Ecomagination, corporate communications, advocacy campaigns

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Understanding how marketplace advocacy is used, the issues surrounding this strategy, and its ability to conceal environmental issues will establish the first step towards future research to fully comprehend this communications tool as it develops and begins to be used widely by corporations around the world.

II. Literature Review

The author reviewed scholarly articles on marketplace advocacy campaigns, qualities of successful marketplace advocacy campaigns, public concerns surrounding marketplace advocacy campaigns, and the use of marketplace advocacy campaigns to conceal environmental issues.

Understanding Marketplace Advocacy Campaigns

To fully comprehend marketplace advocacy, it is important to first understand issue advocacy. Issue advocacy campaigns are used by corporations to reduce the potential for government intervention resulting from public calls for investigation. These campaigns aim to inform, educate, and persuade the public about the positive contributions the corporation is bringing to society and the economy (Miller, 2012). The functions of an issues advocacy campaign include integrating public policy issues into corporate strategic planning, perceiving stakeholders' opinions that may influence operations, prioritizing issues of greatest operational, financial and political significance, creating strategic response plans, communicating on issues to change opinion and mitigate regulations, and evaluating the impact of the campaign to make changes to the management core (Nelson & Heath, 1986).

Marketplace advocacy is a type of issue advocacy that seeks to protect a company's market by specifically influencing public policy. This form of advocacy represents a significant portion of issue advocacy campaigns. It allows companies to promote their business while addressing any public concerns associated with the product, service or manufacturing processes used. Research has shown that marketplace advocacy may effectively influence public policy because of its ability to persuade without seeming to do so (Miller, 2012).

This method of communications can be used by any organization, but is often used by organizations promoting risk-related products such as tobacco, gas, oil, coal and pharmaceuticals. Marketplace advocacy appeals to common values and beliefs and can be used to distract attention from serious concerns about possible issues, while gaining public support for an organization (Miller, 2012). Its target audiences can range from the general public to narrowly defined audiences. Targeting smaller groups allows corporations to develop messages that specifically address opinions and attitudinal predispositions of the audience (Davis, 1995). Perhaps the most important audience group is composed of individuals who live where a business is located. Community stakeholders, those who live within geographic proximity to the business, are of importance because of the potential support they offer to corporations after gaining economic and psychological benefits such as employment, community pride and a sense of heritage (Miller, 2012). Other stakeholders include shareholders, employees, customers, investors, suppliers, competitors, the media, and government organizations (Haroon & Nisar, 2010).

When targeting the general public, marketplace advocacy tactics are seen frequently on public media outlets. Advertisements appear during morning and prime-time television, in national newspapers, in popular magazines, on billboards, and in public transportation facilities such as airports and train stations. Other strategies include media relations, sponsorships, the use of opinion leaders and hosting events (Miller, 2010).

The Qualities of a Successful Marketplace Advocacy Campaign

Once the target audience is decided and a campaign is implemented, various evaluation procedures may be used to evaluate the success of the campaign. Research shows, however, that many corporations have made minimal efforts to fully understand the impact of these campaigns. Instead of following a pretest and posttest model, many corporations that have used marketplace advocacy evaluate only through post interviews and response rate monitoring (Miller, 2010). Corporations also monitor media coverage, public opinion polls, and outcomes in political decisions and elections.

The success of a marketplace advocacy campaign can be defined as the advancing of an organization's position on an issue. In other words, success is the altering of the public's opinion on an issue that may

have brought about a public call for government intervention (Miller, 2012). One way of assessing this is to examine the media's portrayal of the campaign and corporation. In some cases, the media may negatively react to a campaign by producing stories that are skeptical or adverse. A successful media portrayal, however, would show positive stories written about the campaign and a shift in media coverage from criticism to praise and support.

Another method to measure success is performing post research. Surveys can be taken of target audiences to see how their attitudes toward the marketplace advocacy sponsor have changed since the campaign implementation began. Studies like these have shown that marketplace advocacy campaigns have the ability to influence the public's opinion regarding industry-related issues and increase acceptance and approval of the organization (Miller, 2012).

The main goal of marketplace advocacy campaigns is to avoid government intervention. Therefore, the success of a campaign can be observed through the corporation's ability to operate under no government intrusion, while also gaining support from political parties to continue their current operations without restrictions. Continued support and positive political positions all give encouragement for the necessity of marketplace advocacy campaigns.

Lastly, marketplace advocacy is successful if it has affected the corporation's organizational environment and adjusted its strategic plans. Due to its links to management and public relations, marketplace advocacy is an internal as well as an external form of communications. Managers of marketplace advocacy campaigns must train employees to understand their impact on public perception of the organization. A campaign is successful if it has become a vital part of the corporation's planning, operating and communicating activities and all employees understand and help support the agenda the campaign is aiming to set (Nelson & Heath, 1985).

Public Concerns Surrounding Marketplace Advocacy Campaigns

A campaign that is able to penetrate deeply into a corporation's working model while influencing public policy is likely to have risks of disputes and concerns. These problems may be seen among the organization's employees or from the target audience of the campaign. A unique function of marketplace advocacy campaigns is that there is no requirement for a corporation to visibly state what issue or concern they are trying to change the public's opinion on. In some cases, the issue may be obvious, but in other cases, the campaign may be able to alter the public's perception without them realizing. In most circumstances, however, the corporation is reluctant to openly admit that it is managing an issue or seeking to change public's perception for its own benefit (Nelson & Heath, 1985).

Tactics used in marketplace advocacy campaigns can individually cause dispute. An example of this is the use of advocacy advertising. Controversy surrounds corporations' use of advocacy advertising because of legal and regulatory freedoms. Since the advertisements are not specifically selling a product, but instead trying to persuade public opinion, there is debate on whether to classify these advertisements as commercial or political speech (Cutler & Muehling, 1989). Commercial speech would allow for government control to ensure that viewpoints are presented in an honest, accurate and balanced manner. Political speech protects corporations under the First Amendment and does not allow government regulators, including the Federal Trade Commission, to substantiate any claims made. Currently, the classification of commercial or political speech pertaining to marketplace advocacy is not clear.

An additional problem associated with marketplace advocacy tactics is the public's general controversial view of marketing. While some companies employ ethical and truthful marketing strategies, others have been accused of being misleading and even causing societal problems (Jahdi & Acikdilli, 2009). Studies have found that campaigns, similar to those of marketplace advocacy, that aim to increase positive public perception of an organization are not always driven by intrinsic and ethical motives, but are instead driven by extrinsic motives including political pressures, opportunity for financial gain and risk management (Basu & Palazzo, 2008). This triggers an issue because the public has no way of knowing what motives the campaign stems from.

Commonly, stakeholders desire to know more about corporations in order to make decisions on what businesses to financially support. Corporations are fully aware of this and seek to expand their marketing efforts to include positive aspects of their company that will boost their reputation and encourage the public's investments. Through positive advocacy campaigns, corporations seek to fulfill the consumer's desire to learn

more about the company while also gaining a competitive edge, avoiding penalties for unethical behavior, preventing negative impact of future legislation and ensuring long-term investment in their brand image. In order to avoid suspicion, corporations use powerful and effective communication tools to implement their marketplace advocacy campaigns, including public relations and sponsorships (Jahdi & Acikdilli, 2009).

The issue predominant among marketplace advocacy campaigns is that of transparency, with transparency being defined as a business operating in a way that is easy for consumers to see, understand and openly criticize its actions. Researchers often question transparency of marketplace advocacy campaigns because the audience does not know the campaign foundation. As stated earlier, sponsorships are often used to implement stronger marketplace advocacy campaigns. In these cases, corporations sponsor a campaign where the corporation's name and brand are omitted from all marketing materials or are hidden by misleading pseudonyms (Miller, 2010).

The challenge with marketplace advocacy campaigns is that they assume a central role in corporate strategy where the public is interested in learning more about the corporation. When marketplace advocacy campaigns are implemented, the public often questions their legitimacy (Nazari, Parvizi & Emami, 2012). For years, commentators and researchers have challenged corporations to communicate issues and campaigns in a more responsible and meaningful manner (Nelson & Heath, 1985).

The Use of Marketplace Advocacy Campaigns to Conceal Environmental Issues

Marketplace advocacy campaigns are often used to change the public's perception of risk-related industries. These campaigns can, however, greatly mislead the public through their lack of transparency. This is commonly seen when corporations attempt to conceal environmental issues through marketplace advocacy campaigns.

Energy and environmental issues are often targets of marketplace advocacy campaigns because of the ability to influence social opinions and political outcomes. At a community level, environmental issues may include industrial health hazards, noise, odors and hazardous discharges to land, water and air. At a general public level, environmental issues commonly revolve around energy production and the use of potentially harmful fossil fuels over renewable energy sources (Miller, 2010). It is interesting to point out that research indicates that corporations' shareholders are perceived as the least interested group in environmental communications (Collison, Lorraine & Power, 2003).

Environmental marketplace advocacy campaigns tend to strategically praise societal beliefs and values and associate these with environmental issues in a confusing and conflicting way with pro-environmental goals (Miller, 2010). Framing an environmental issue in this seemingly manipulative way influences audience behavior to support the corporation's attended policy goals (Davis 1995). The use of marketplace advocacy campaigns to conceal possible environmental issues and concerns is a valuable tool for risk-related industries. The campaigns allow corporations to defend their images and reputations while influencing political decisions and broad public opinion.

III. Methods

To further explore the use of marketplace advocacy in today's market, this research looked to General Electric's "Ecomagination" campaign as a case study. "Ecomagination" serves as an example of the effectiveness of a marketplace advocacy campaign to influence public opinion and policy surrounding environmental concerns.

Case Study: General Electric's "Ecomagination" Campaign

General Electric (GE) is a corporation that researches, develops and manufactures a variety of technologies for use in a wide-range of industries. These include the health care, transportation, city infrastructure, home construction, finance, entertainment, and power generation industries. The global corporation has over 300,000 employees and 3,000 facilities (GE, 2012). Since 2005, GE has been implementing the "Ecomagination" campaign to increase public awareness of the commitment GE has made to develop clean technology and sustainable infrastructure to solve environmental challenges while increasing financial gains (GE, 2012). The campaign takes the form of a companywide strategic business initiative to promote GE's environmentally

friendly practices and products (Creamer, 2005). It is targeted at a vast audience including investors, consumers, corporate customers, lawmakers, and employees (Miller, 2012).

The campaign kicked off with eight-page inserts in four major newspapers, advertisements in magazines, TV commercials being aired during prime time and large amounts of news coverage. The company also conducted an internal communications effort featuring a children's magazine that explained "Ecomagination" to employees and their children. At the beginning of the campaign, GE estimated that it would double its revenue from environmentally friendly products to \$20 billion in five years (Creamer, 2005).

Over the past seven years, GE has utilized various communications tactics as part of their "Ecomagination" campaign. These tactics include television commercials, a high-tech website, social media, news coverage, internal communication initiatives, and a print advertisement campaign. In 2006 alone, GE spent \$150 million on advertising for the campaign (Miller, 2012). Advertisements range on topic but always showcase the innovative technologies GE has created to help solve environmental problems. One example of an advertisement is of a young boy catching the wind. This ad aired during the 2009 Super Bowl. The boy catches the wind in a jar and runs home to use the wind to blow out the candles of his grandfather's birthday cake. The voice over explains, "Capturing the wind and putting it to good use—Wind Energy from GE, the cleanest renewable energy on earth" (GE, 2012). This advertisement, promoting GE's wind turbine technology, gained widespread attention and was nominated for an Emmy.

To further increase consumer engagement, GE also created competitions and consumer interaction opportunities. The "Ecomagination Challenge" gave businesses, entrepreneurs, innovators, and students a chance to share their ideas on designing renewable energy technologies, grid efficiency technologies and environmentally friendly homes and buildings. GE partnered with four other organizations to award the winning entries with a total of \$200 million to help fund their projects. The "Ecomagination Photo Project" encouraged the public to upload photos representing Light, Wind or Water to Flickr, a photo sharing website. For each photo that was uploaded, GE donated money to three different charities working in rural Peru. The final contribution provided 4.8 million gallons of clean water through fresh water wells, 17 million hours of light through solar powered lanterns and 45,000 kilowatt-hours of energy through wind turbines. One last engagement example is "Tag Your Green." This social media based campaign let users share ideas and show how they were being environmentally responsible in their daily lives. Customers could use YouTube, Flickr, Howcast or Foursquare to showcase environmental innovations in their area or create their own media advocating for a more sustainable future (GE, 2012).

In the political arena, GE's "Ecomagination" advisory board fully supports political changes to promote and require cleaner technology. The "Ecomagination: 2010 Annual Report" explains that it is necessary for GE to know that its investments are aligned with policy and supported by government (GE, 2010). To this end, Jeffrey Immelt, GE's CEO, has been active in helping to draft environmental government rules. In 2006, Immelt asked the U.S. government to limit carbon-dioxide emissions and has since recruited other CEOs to do the same (Kranhold, 2007). Government support and regulations would allow for GE to continue building clean, efficient technologies and increasing its revenue.

"Ecomagination" fits into marketplace advocacy not because of the large amount of planning and money spent on audience engagement, but because of the message and the integration of the campaign into the core business model. In the "Ecomagination 2010 Annual Report," GE specifically states that the campaign is a business strategy. The message of the strategy is that GE does not harm the environment when it brings good things to life (Creamer, 2005). This message and strategy have since been integrated into every aspect of the corporation. The integration starts with products. Every product that has qualified to be part of the "Ecomagination Portfolio" must significantly improve consumers' operating performance and environmental performance. GE has partnered with an organization called GreenOrder that ultimately decides if a product meets the necessary criteria (GE, 2010).

GE is also incorporating the eco-friendly practices into their own facilities and offices. Each GE division is encouraged to invent and restructure products to be more environmentally responsible and a team has been hired to oversee the campaign (Gwynne, 2010). The company doubled its investment in clean technology research and development, reduced its green house gas emissions and improved water reuse (GE, 2010). Employees are also responsible for holding to the set environmental standards. GE links its external communication efforts with its internal efforts to better penetrate the campaign goals. All efforts are supported and encouraged by Jeff Immelt, GE's CEO, who also participates in political efforts to take a stand for environmentally responsible efforts (Kranhold, 2007).

With its global reach and integrated components, “Ecomagination” fully meets the criteria to be considered marketplace advocacy. A careful look at the advertisements and communication efforts reveal that GE is not attempting to sell a specific product, but instead is promoting a general idea. The idea is centered on environmental responsibility and the opportunity for growth in the clean technology sector. GE has the ability to rise greatly in this arena and earn higher revenue if clients decide to invest in environmentally responsible products. By forming this positive image of both the corporation and innovative technologies, GE is impacting the public’s opinion and altering the politics around clean energy. GE’s lobbyists have already discussed with Congress about reviving the wind industry’s tax incentives, standardizing rules for connecting solar panels to energy distribution systems and multiple other clean energy related policies (Fairley, 2004).

Marketplace advocacy campaigns are designed to protect a company’s market by generating both public and political support. GE has met these criteria with its “Ecomagination” campaign by engaging with multiple stakeholders to convey the importance of clean technology. It has also strengthened relations with original supporters and shareholders by showing that innovation can lead to both better environmental practices and increased stock prices. GE earned more than \$85 billion in “Ecomagination” product sales in its first five years of implementation (GE, 2010).

Often with marketplace advocacy campaigns, however, the company is attempting to reduce public calls for government intervention and regulation (Miller, 2012). GE is a huge corporation and emits a large amount of toxins from its facilities. In GE’s first official greenhouse gas inventory, completed in 2004, the corporation estimated its yearly emissions at 11.26 million metric tons. This is equal to the yearly emissions from two million cars. The inventory, however, did not include GE’s investments in power plants. GE continues to sell coal-fired steam turbines and seek opportunities with nonrenewable energy facilities (Kranhold, 2007). The corporation is investing in research and development to make these energy processes cleaner, yet some of the public have called out GE for not being transparent with its practices. A search on environmental news sites like TreeHugger and Grist brings up headlines like “Greenwash Watch: Slick Movies from GE Ecomagination” and “General Electric fights for change from the inside ... of a coal industry front group!” GE has, however, cut its emissions to set an example of “Ecomagination,” but for some, the campaign will not be considered trustworthy until the corporation stops supporting nonrenewable energy sources.

Another environmental issue that was brought up by critics and the press soon after the announcement of the “Ecomagination” campaign was that of GE’s pollution catastrophe in the 1970s. One of GE’s facilities located on New York’s Hudson River had been discharging toxic polychlorinated biphenyls into the Hudson River for over a decade. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, GE battled with regulators and advocacy groups over whose responsibility it was to clean up the river. It was not until 2001 that the new CEO of GE agreed with the United States Environmental Protection Agency to develop a cleanup plan (Kranhold, 2007). Marketplace advocacy campaigns can work to overshadow issues like these and show the public all of the good the corporation is doing to avoid possible environmental devastations in the future.

“Ecomagination” as a whole has made great strides toward innovative technologies that help increase environmental responsibility. The corporation has seen much success surrounding the campaign. According to the “Ecomagination: 2010 Annual Report,” GE generated more than \$85 billion in revenue from “Ecomagination” services since the launch of the campaign. In 2010, there were 22 new products introduced that met the necessary criteria to be considered an “Ecomagination product.” These products provide value to investors because of their increased value proposition and environmental performance. The report states that GE has exceeded every “Ecomagination” goal originally set including \$5 billion dedicated to clean-tech research and development, a 22% reduction in facilities’ greenhouse gas emissions, a 30 percent reduction in facilities’ water use, and \$130 million in energy efficiency savings (GE, 2010).

GE itself does not claim any heritage to environmental responsibility. The campaign instead talks to the future opportunities of clean technologies. It highlights the positives of the technologies, but does not make false claims about the corporation’s sales or investments (Garfield, 2005). Nevertheless, “Ecomagination” serves its marketplace advocacy purpose of showcasing the opportunities GE has to offer to this innovative field while impacting the public’s opinions and the political environment surrounding GE’s industry developments and financial goals.

IV. Recognizing Marketplace Advocacy

Marketplace advocacy is a controversial communications tool. It is beneficial to a corporation because it can successfully protect a company's image while changing the political and public atmosphere surrounding an issue. It is important, however, for stakeholders to be able to perceive a marketplace advocacy campaign because of the campaign's great persuasion ability. A study completed in 1996 on consumer's understanding of advocacy advertising found that the audience's understanding of an advocacy message was based on three perceptions, which included the individual's perception of the organization, the issue, and self (Haley, 1996). If the organization was recognizable, likable, and understood, then the viewer would be more likely to support the advocacy message. Also if the message personally related to the viewer, then it would be easily accepted. Lastly, if the issue was of importance to the viewer, then it was likely to be understood and contemplated by the viewer.

In the GE case study and through other corporations' uses of environmental marketplace advocacy, it is important to assess how environmentally-minded people will react to the campaign. Research has shown that a viewer's reaction to an environmentally-oriented message is drastically different between those who have an ecological-centered consciousness and those who are more anthropocentric (Cantrill & Chimovitz, 1993). Viewers who have more environmental concern are less susceptible to persuasion by environmental marketplace advocacy campaigns. These viewers are also likely to base their opinion of a corporation on the transparency and environmental concern they see being displayed by the corporation (Miller, 2012).

The ability to recognize environmental marketplace advocacy is a positive aspect for pro-environmental advocacy groups (Miller, 2012). In the case of GE, however, research showed that the corporation is both commended for its dedication to inventing new clean technologies and criticized for its continued investment in coal power plants and other nonrenewable energy sources. Personal preference and opinion may be the leading factor in an individual's choice of whether or not to support the corporation. The ability to discern marketplace advocacy is beneficial for individuals because they can learn not to take campaigns at face value, but to first research the company's motives and determine if the corporation is trying to cover up a larger issue.

V. Conclusion

Marketplace advocacy is a form of issue advocacy where corporations implement a campaign to impact the public's opinion and the political environment surrounding a specific topic or issue (Miller, 2012). Marketplace advocacy is unique because it involves an integrated approach by management to implement the campaign in every aspect of the corporation. Since marketplace advocacy is so powerful, the campaigns can be used for "good" or "bad" (Garfield, 2007). "Good" campaigns can be considered as transparent and implemented for the better wellbeing of the target audience. "Bad" campaigns are manipulative and cause the target audience to support a cause or idea that they are not fully educated on and that actually may worsen their well-being. Detailed research is needed on each individual marketplace advocacy campaign to understand if it is a "good" or "bad" campaign.

Through a case study of GE's "Ecomagination" campaign, one can perceive the tactics and dedication needed for a successful marketplace advocacy campaign. The campaign must be thoroughly implemented in all parts of the corporation and the public must be kept informed. GE's "Ecomagination 2010 Annual Report" stated that the public was kept engaged through the website, annual report, citizenship report and collaborative opportunities in communities. GE has also invested a large amount of resources in creation and distribution of print, online and televised advertisements, while also keeping the public engaged through social media. Every aspect of GE's "Ecomagination" campaign fits the criteria of a marketplace advocacy campaign.

GE is an interesting example of environmental marketplace advocacy, and the case study should be used as a model for other corporation's environmentally focused campaigns. It is important for the public to understand marketplace advocacy because of its successful persuasion techniques and its likelihood of covering a concern or serious issue. This is especially relevant to environmental issues because environment-degrading companies commonly sponsor marketplace advocacy campaigns (Miller, 2010). Individuals should be aware of advocacy tactics and look for transparency in the messages.

Marketplace advocacy is an incredible communications and business strategy. It discovers an issue and forms a full campaign around the issue in order to alter the public's opinion and political environment. It penetrates deeply into a corporation's core so that all involved understand the importance of the campaign and can speak on its behalf. As an outcome, marketplace advocacy can allow corporations to change their business strategies in order to turn the political environment in their favor, increase revenue, protect their market and form a positive brand image. It is the corporation's final decision on whether to use this strategic tool for "good" or "bad".

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Coupons of the 21st Century: The Golden Age of The Daily Deal Industry

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Abstract

Since its introduction in the late 1800s, coupons have transformed drastically to appeal to the changing needs and behaviors of the common consumer. Although still existing, the classic paper coupon went digital with the introduction of the Internet. Now, companies such as Groupon and LivingSocial offer discount gift certificates in a “deal-of-the-day” format. This research focused on the unique features of daily deal promotions and the impact they have on persuading consumers to purchase goods and services. Additionally, this research analyzed how Groupon and LivingSocial use social networking as a relationship-building tool to reach consumers on a local and national level. The case study analysis found both companies rely on witty advertising content to relate to consumers as well as actively utilize social media sites for feedback from customers.

I. Introduction

This study examined the word choice or rhetoric used in Groupon and LivingSocial advertisements, two giants in the online daily-deal industry. The rhetorical structure, featured throughout most daily deal promotions, aims to target a mass audience through the use of humorous and witty content. This research also examined how Groupon and LivingSocial use Twitter and Facebook for marketing and communications, and their reliance on these platforms for relationship and reputation-building to actively communicate with consumers.

A coupon, a ticket, or document that can be exchanged for a discount or rebate, is often used as a key marketing and advertising technique. In 1887, Coca-Cola created the world's first coupon (Collard & Pustay, 2001, p. 1). The ticket, mailed to homes throughout the country and strategically placed in magazine periodicals, offered potential customers a free glass of the year-old drink. According to Collard and Pustay (2001), between the years of 1894 and 1913, approximately 8.5 million copies of the coupon were redeemed at soda fountains nationwide, marking the first coupon campaign a success.

By the early 20th century, coupons became a ubiquitous tool in promotional advertising. Couponing developed into a key strategy for attracting the attention of new customers, building brand awareness for businesses, and increasing sales and profits. The introduction of the Internet at a massive or commercial level in 1990 established the presence of printable and downloadable coupons. Thus, for the first time, consumers had continuous access to promotions and daily discounts. Online coupons gained popularity at a rapid pace due to their constant availability and option to print deals in unlimited quantities. Today, daily online deals have become the latest advertising sensation, providing discounted offers to consumers for restaurants, services,

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ticketed events, goods, and other items (Byers, Mitzenmacher, & Zervas, 2010). The majority of online coupons offer a discount or reduction in cost, a percentage discount, or free shipping (Collard & Pustay, 2001).

Groupon and LivingSocial, founded respectively in 2008 and 2009, feature discounted gift certificates and coupons to local or national companies. In order to reach consumers, these sites use special marketing techniques intended to match the needs of their target markets. Additionally, both companies rely on the benefits provided by social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to actively reach consumers on both a local and national level. Groupon and LivingSocial utilize social media sites as a public forum, posting the daily discounts and promotions, and as a relationship-building tool to maintain communication with consumers (Arasbshahi, 2010).

Groupon, headquartered in Chicago, serves over 500 markets and 44 countries. The company was launched in 2008 by Andrew Mason and now has over 10,000 employees located throughout the world. According to its website, "We want each Groupon purchase to feel too good to be true, from the moment you buy the deal to the day you use it" (Groupon, 2012, p. 1). A unique feature to the company is its tailored "Groupon Now" service as well as its Groupon VIP program. Groupon Now is a smartphone and tablet-friendly application that allows users to push an "I'm hungry" or "I'm bored" button to view the best and closest deals for food and entertainment. The Groupon VIP program, launched in February 2012, offers members access to deals 12 hours earlier than non-VIP members at a fee of \$30 a month (Groupon, 2012, p. 1).

Living Social, based in Washington, D.C., operates in over 600 markets across six continents. The company has more than 60 million members worldwide and the numbers of vouchers purchased since the company was founded in 2009 total 63 million. (LivingSocial, 2012, p. 1) The company specializes in daily deals for escape and travel packages, family friendly activities, adventures, takeout and delivery, and gourmet dining. According to its website, "We help great local businesses grow by introducing them to high-quality new customers, and give merchants the tools to make our members their regulars" (LivingSocial, p. 1).

II. Literature Review

In the following literature review, the author reviewed scholarly articles on theoretical framework behind Groupon and LivingSocial, audience perception and attitudes toward them, and use of rhetoric and social media in daily deal promotions.

Theoretical Framework

Persuasion, with roots dating back to the ancient Greeks and Aristotle, is a key concept in modern-day advertising. Much of Aristotle's early research recognized that one specific approach to persuasion did not generally fit all situations. Instead, a persuasive speaker must adapt based on the context of the message and its intended audience (Larson, 2010, p. 20). Although advertising and mass media were not yet invented, Aristotle recognized the idea of segmented audiences and the value of customizing the message to a target market.

Both Groupon and LivingSocial have been recognized for their reliance on persuading consumers through targeted language and rhetoric. Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, considered by many as the founding work on persuasion, focused on artistic proofs or appeals that persuaders use to create, manipulate or inspire action (Larson, 2010p. 20). Furthermore, effective persuasion consists of both artistic and inartistic proofs. Larson states, "The persuader controls artistic proof, such as the choice of evidence, the organization of the persuasion, style of delivery, and language choices" (Larson, 2010, p. 20). On the other hand, inartistic proofs include instances that cannot be controlled by the speaker.

Aristotle believed that persuasion can be judged as successful or unsuccessful based on three forms of artistic and inartistic proofs: ethos, pathos and logos. These aspects of communication appear in almost all forms of persuasion as an attempt to appeal to an audience. Ethos refers to the ethical appeal or sense of the author's credibility while pathos, or emotional appeal, means to persuade a receiver by appealing to their emotions (Killingsworth, 2005, p. 251). Pathos is commonly associated with 'colorful' language and imagery used by the persuader to spark strong emotion and feelings. Larson notes that pathos can be developed through the use of meaningful language, emotional tone, emotion evoking examples, stories of emotional events, or implied meanings (Larson, 2001, p. 21). Logos, the final criteria for judging a persuasive message,

is the appeal to logic or reasoning. For example, many forms of persuasion, including advertising, cites specific facts and statistics to appeal to a receiver. Successful persuasion must use a combination of these three tactics to relate to an audience.

Audience Perception and Attitudes

Although the majority of the research finds a strong customer relationship between daily deal websites and their subscribers, room for growth remains. Groupon and LivingSocial have positioned themselves successfully within their subscribers and the businesses they promote. Streitfeld (2010) explains, "The hope instead is that users will eventually perceive it as an impartial guide to a city or a neighborhood, somewhat in the manner of the local paper's weekend section" (p. 2). This research highlights the successful tactics and appeals utilized by the most popular daily deal companies. Consumer perceptions and attitudes specifically regarding Groupon and its competitor, LivingSocial, will be discussed in greater detail in the findings section.

Rhetoric and Daily Deal Promotions

Aristotle's findings on persuasive communication set the groundwork for the advertising and marketing industry. Successful advertisers must appeal to their audiences through the three persuasive proofs as outlined by Aristotle. (Killingsworth, 2005). Therefore, many companies, such as Groupon and LivingSocial use certain types of language and rhetoric to play on the emotions of the audience. In other words, daily deal sites focus heavily on word usage and rhetoric to establish a strong relationship with potential customers. By building and maintaining this relationship, daily deal websites will continue to build a healthy reputation among its target markets.

LivingSocial and Groupon offer a new deal each day to all members who subscribe via email. Both web services email subscribers at least two times a day to promote discounts on products and services offered by merchants at both a national and local level. In terms of local promotions, the deals depend on the geographic region chosen by each subscriber. Through the initial enrollment process, the subscriber indicates their zip code, gender and age. Then, the companies send consumers the most relevant deals based on the information provided through email messages, Twitter blasts, and Facebook posts.

Both Groupon and LivingSocial employ a large number of copywriters to draft descriptions of each deal featured by email, website, and social media postings. The promotional text has been seen as a contributing factor to the success and popularity of the sites (Dholakia & Kimes, 2011). More specifically, copywriters rely on a unique mix of thorough fact-checking statistics and witty humor to relate to their target market.

Daily Deal Promotions and Social Media

Within the decade, companies have consistently utilized social media as a marketing and advertising tool. Social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. constantly post promotions and daily discounts for companies, restaurants, trips and escapes, and so forth. (Streitfeld, 2001).

Businesses and corporations are beginning to view social media as channels to reach their key audiences and publics. Social media sites have transformed the way people operate their businesses by expanding at an exceedingly rapid rate (Ye, Wang, Aperjis, Huberman & Sandholm, 2011). Many individuals rely on social networking sites, for example, to assess peer reviews on products and services. For businesses, social media allows them to communicate with dissatisfied consumers, build brand awareness, and actively advertise their product or service. Erik Qualman (2011) outlines specific tools and tactics often used to engage the attention of consumers via social media marketing. These tactics include communicating with dissatisfied customers on their own social networks, creating brand profiles on popular social networks, and creatively advertising within social media through the creation of brand-related applications, promotions, and podcasts. (Qualman, 2011).

Research Questions

This research sought to answer the following three questions:

Q1: How do Groupon and LivingSocial connect with consumers through their use of strategic word choice, language, content and humor?

Q2: What are the common characteristics, demographic information, and needs and wants of the typi-

cal Groupon user versus the typical LivingSocial user?

Q3: How do Groupon and LivingSocial actively communicate with subscribers through social media sites?

III. Methodology

This study sought a clearer understanding of how Groupon and LivingSocial connect with consumers through advertising content and social media usage. Additionally, the research discussed common characteristics among typical daily deal users. To achieve the desired results, the researcher conducted a case study analysis of the two daily deal companies, Groupon and LivingSocial. The case study is a qualitative analysis of the two companies based on prior quantitative research conducted on each company's consumer demographics, levels of awareness and usage and subscriber base. According to Yin (1984), "Case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research" (p. 23). Case studies provide a systematic method for effectively collecting data, analyzing information, and reporting and responding to the results.

The second part of the study examined how Groupon and LivingSocial are using social networking sites through a qualitative content analysis of each company's Facebook and Twitter page. Two consecutive weeks were chosen at random, and were used to collect content from both company's national Twitter and Facebook accounts. The weeks chosen by the researcher for content analysis were March 1 (12:00 a.m.) to March 15 (11:59 p.m.). Posts were analyzed based on dialogue and feedback from consumers. This case study focused on the ways in which each company communicates with subscribers through social media as well as the consideration of rhetoric and word choice when advertising deal promotions. The researcher looked to gain detailed insight into the characteristics of both companies, tactics used to communicate with their customers on social media sites, and the importance of rhetoric and reliance on humor to communicate with their target markets.

IV. Findings

Groupon Case Study

Groupon's heavy subscriber base—surpassing 50 million according to recent news reports (Streitfeld, 2011)—is essentially an email distribution list segmented by geographical boundaries. Email is a cheap and successful mechanism to reach subscribers in an easy and timely fashion. Email and social media sites allow Groupon to target the maximum relevant geographic area when promoting a local merchant.

Utpal M. Dholaki and Kimes (2011) examined the insights of a diverse sample of 973 respondents. Their results show that consumers are more willing to buy deals that appeal to them through creative images and languages. Also, it indicates that despite previous worries and anxieties, there is no evidence of daily deal fatigue. Their survey-based study found that the 'heaviest' daily deal users were the most enthusiastic about daily deal sites. This indicates that Groupon established itself as a credible business and has formed strong relationships between customers and the company.

They [heavy users] indicate the greatest interest in checking their email for deal offers every-day, have little trouble in using the deals before they expire, believe that daily deals help them save money on things they would have purchased anyway, and say they have integrated these deals into their usual shopping behavior. (Dholakia & Kimes, 2011, p. 1)

In terms of demographic information, Dholakia and Kimes' research indicates that the majority of Groupon subscribers lived in urban areas. Additionally, most of the users were female (p. 5). Although promotions can appeal to both men and women, Groupon often speaks to women by focusing promotions on the health, fitness and beauty markets.

Finally, Dholakia and Kimes' (2011) analyzed subscribers' awareness, usage, and perception of various daily deal websites. According to their results (2011), awareness levels for Groupon were the high-

est with 93.6%, followed by Restaurant.com (83.1%), and LivingSocial (80.2%) (p. 16). Similarly, Groupon had the largest proportion of users (56.6%), followed by Restaurant.com (46.1%), and LivingSocial (45.8%). The participants in this study were asked which of the daily deal sites was their favorite, the website with the largest “heart share.” The results showed Groupon had the highest heart share with 43.3% of the respondents indicating Groupon as their favorite daily deal site. Following Groupon, Restaurant.com has 16.2% heart share and LivingSocial has only 7.3%. The conclusion of the research showed:

Where the two major daily deal sites are concerned, these numbers are positive from the standpoint of Groupon, indicating its relative brand strength, and may be a cause of concern for LivingSocial given the relatively few daily deal users who consider it as their favorite site. (Dholakia & Kimes, 2011, p. 17)

Thus, these results indicate Groupon as the daily deal company with the highest brand awareness, most subscribers, and highest heart share.

Arabshahi performed an analysis on Groupon’s business model in December of 2010. According to his research (2010), “Each deal region—usually a densely populated urban best described as an ‘expanded local’—is large enough to cover any subscriber with the potential to participate” (p. 1). His research asserts that Groupon and LivingSocial are mediated platforms that connect people seeking bargains with merchants willing to provide them. He believes the harvesting of the maximum geographic area maximizes Groupon’s ability to generate customers for local merchants.

Additionally, Arabshahi noted that an integral part of every Groupon deal is the actually message embedded in the deal email, tweet, or Facebook post. The creative and humorous messages, prepared by Groupon’s expert writers, aims to highlight the attributes of the offered product or service. Many attribute their use of unique language to generate emotion as one of their key tactics for success. For example, a recent article from *The New York Times*, asserts, “Groupon’s breakthrough sprang not just from the deals offered but also from an ingredient that was both unlikely and ephemeral: words” (Streitfeld, 2011, p. 1). Borrowing tools and terms from journalism, Groupon softened the traditional heavy content of advertising and added banter, attitude, playfulness, emotion and humor to relate to their subscribers on a lighter level. The primary goal of their messages is to spark excitement for the deal and coax subscribers into purchasing the offered deal.

Groupon’s brand of subtle humor is often referred to as the “Groupon Voice” (Streitfeld, 2011). For example, currently, Groupon is offering a deal with Cary Yoga and Kickboxing in Cary, N.C. This deal is available to all subscribers but is sent specifically to subscribers that live in the Cary, Durham, Raleigh or greater Triangle region. The message on this advertisement is a clear example of how Groupon’s uniquely written copy.

Perspiration gets mischievous when cooped up inside the body, acting out by drenching armpits on first dates and disguising itself as tears during job interviews. Release disgruntled body water with this Groupon to Cary Yoga and Kickboxing. (Groupon, 2012, p. 1)

This artistically scripted message proves Groupon relies on poetic and humorous word choice as an attempt to appeal to subscribers and to persuade them to purchase their promotional deals. Some of the company’s rules for their written content is that the passive voice must be avoided at all times and pop culture references are verboten. According to *The New York Times*, (2011), “A write-up for a teeth-whitening service said it was equivalent to being punched by God twice. Angry letters followed” (p. 3). Groupon’s “comedy writers,” as they are referred to throughout the company, sit together and often share office space at the company’s headquarters in Chicago.

Dholakia and Kimes (2011) also focused on the typical behaviors of Groupon subscribers and their reliance on social media sites. The study indicates that heavy deal users, those who have purchased more than 11 daily deals, are interested in checking their email, Facebook, or Twitter account for Groupon’s daily deal promotions. All three-user groups, novice users, users and heavy users, indicated they actively check social media sites for daily deal updates. However, the study found most users rely more heavily on automatic email subscriptions to purchase daily deals rather than Facebook and Twitter. Additionally, the researchers noted, “It appears that the ‘social’ aspect of daily deals is not as important to our sample respondents as is the personal aspect of looking for and receiving a good deal” (Dholakia & Kimes, 2011, p. 7). Heavy daily-deal users indicated email as their main means of communication with Groupon. The respondents in the survey were not as enthusiastic as sharing promotions through social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. The results indicated that Groupon subscribers are more likely to purchase deals when received via email notifications. In

terms of additional social media promotions, Groupon offered \$10 in “Groupon Bucks” whenever a consumer referred a friend to Groupon through email links, Facebook or Twitter.

With a heavy subscriber base of over 50 million, Groupon uses social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook to engage in conversations with consumers, advertise promotions to followers, and keep up on the latest trends of the industry. Currently, Groupon has 445,313 likes on their international Facebook page, 57,723 followers on their Twitter page, 480,000 monthly users on the international Groupon application (Patel, 2011). As an example of a local site, the Groupon Facebook page for Raleigh/Durham has 3,309 likes. Although these numbers are high, the potential for continued growth is evident based on their market of more than 50 million subscribers. The engagement on both social media sites, however, is very interactive. Twitter tends to be more interactive in terms of consumer relations as they give specific replies to most, if not all, tweets from customers. Facebook, used more as a tool to advertise and post daily deals, interacts with fans as well, however, not as often or as heavily as with followers on Twitter. Posts on Facebook are often done on a daily basis while Twitter posts tend to be on an hourly or more frequent basis. However, on Facebook, there is constant access to the Groupon application, which allows individuals to download, view, and purchase daily promotions from their Smartphone. Groupon’s reliance on social media is highly compared to many other international companies; however, there is clear room for improvement in the future.

The Groupon case study indicates that consumers use social media sites to learn about daily deal; however, they mostly rely on automatic daily emails for purchasing their deals. The majority of subscribers use Facebook and Twitter solely as a means of communication with the company. Many customers tweet their feedback to the national Groupon Twitter as well as the Groupon Twitter of their city or region. With social properties in over 500 cities around the world, Groupon actively maintains Facebook and Twitter accounts for nearly all of their market cities. Groupon uses Facebook and Twitter to post deals, initiate conversation with consumers, and post relevant information, tips, or pointers. Their reliance on Twitter and Facebook helps the company build and maintain close customer relations and strong brand awareness. Additionally, the case study proved that content in all advertisements and promotions is crucial to the success of the company. Creative and humorous messages are created for each deal to sway and persuade subscribers to purchase the promotions. Groupon hires expert and experienced writers to use unique language to appeal to the emotions of each subscriber. This persuasion tactic and technique speaks directly to Aristotle’s belief of the power of appeal to ethos, logos, and pathos in successful communication. Finally, the case study indicated that the ‘heaviest’ or most active daily-deal users were the most enthusiastic about daily deal sites.

LivingSocial Case Study

Neither Groupon nor LivingSocial require any up-front money investment or subscription fee. However, the majority of Groupon and LivingSocial users are in search of a bargain or daily promotion. Like Groupon, a subscriber is able to access LivingSocial through an email address, Facebook login, Twitter application or mobile device. LivingSocial offers several daily deals in a wide array of categories to accommodate many different users.

After analyzing the user demographics, advertising content, and social media usage of Groupon subscribers, this case study examines the users of LivingSocial and highlights their common characteristics, persuasion tactics and reliance on language, and social media practices. A Nielsen Co. survey, conducted in April 2011, claims that individuals purchasing coupons from LivingSocial tended to be more successful, younger and smarter than Groupon customers (Flinn, 2011). The results indicate LivingSocial users are 49% more likely than the average American to make at least \$150,000 annually, compared with 30% for Groupon. Furthermore, LivingSocial users are more likely to have college graduate degrees and be younger than 35 years old. Approximately one third of LivingSocial buyers are in the 21-to-34-age range. Also, the study claimed 46 percent of LivingSocial users had attended or previously graduated from college, compared with 39 percent for Groupon (Flinn, 2011). Although these numbers are pretty similar, it is very interesting to note that LivingSocial users tend to be more profitable, educated, and younger compared to Groupon subscribers. Furthermore, based on demographic-driven research, LivingSocial is stronger in the Eastern region of the United States, while Groupon tends to be more successful in the Midwest and Pacific regions (Flinn, 2011).

Although LivingSocial is not directly known for its use of humor in its advertising content, as Groupon is, the company does rely on subtle humor and emotional language to appeal to consumers. For example, the opening line explaining a deal offering ten jazzercise classes at a Chapel Hill gym read, “Obsessively checking Facebook to untag unflattering pics posted by your friends is hardly the right way to procrastinate. Swap

sweating the small stuff for sweating the pounds off at Jazzercise Fitness Center of Chapel Hill” (LivingSocial, 2012, p. 1). The description of this deal is a strong example of the light and airy language LivingSocial writers use to reach consumers on a friendly and comfortable level. The advertisement used words such as ‘untag’ and ‘pics’ as an attempt to communicate with the consumer on a relatable level. Similar to Groupon, the description for each daily deal is carefully and artistically scripted to appeal to the emotions of each subscriber.

LivingSocial is relatively active on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Currently, the LivingSocial Facebook page has 1,278,076 likes (compared to Groupon’s 445,313), has 2,300,000 monthly users for the LivingSocial application (Groupon’s is 480,000), and 132,355 followers on Twitter (compared to Groupon’s 57,723 followers). Obviously these numbers prove LivingSocial, as an international company, has a much larger base of followers and fans on social media. However, this analysis does not account for the fact that Groupon has additional Facebook and Twitter accounts for nearly all of the participating cities. Therefore, many subscribers may solely follow or “like” the account for their particular geographic region for Groupon. LivingSocial, on the other hand, only has a handful of Twitter and Facebook accounts for participating cities. Instead, they rely more on building awareness at the international brand level.

LivingSocial utilizes social media sites in a unique fashion. According to its website, a consumer has the option of sharing their purchased deal via email, Twitter or Facebook to friends, family members and followers. If three people buy the deal through the link, the deal is free to the original purchaser. This exclusive tactic encourages consumers to spread the word about specific deals and promotions. It also has the potential to raise brand awareness and positive association with the company if the consumer receives a free deal.

As the second highest grossing and most successful daily deal site in the world (behind Groupon), LivingSocial CEO, Tim O’Shaughnessy must attempt to keep pace with the company’s largest competition and must work to plot his own course for setting his company apart. A key aspect in O’Shaughnessy’s plan is to start moving beyond promotions for mom-and-pop businesses. For example, in September 2011, LivingSocial offered \$20 worth of goods at Whole Foods for \$10. According to MacMillan (2011) from *Bloomberg Businessweek*, approximately 80 people bought the deal per every one-second, marking it the company’s fastest-selling coupon. Approximately 100,000 new subscribers joined LivingSocial to get access to this specific deal. Similarly, in January 2011, LivingSocial offered \$20 Amazon gift card for \$10, resulting in a sale of over 1.4 million vouchers and an incredible amount of media attention. Although offering national deals means LivingSocial paying more than usual out of pocket, subscribers are more likely to purchase deals offered at a national level (MacMillan, 2011).

According to another research conducted by Steiner (2010) in an article published in *Forbes* magazine, “Chief Executive Timothy O’Shaughnessy thought LivingSocial has a long-term edge on Groupon and other competitors because it puts a handful of full-time salesperson in each of the cities the company has relationships and active promotions with” (p. 2). Furthermore, a key study regarding group deals (2011) found deals in LivingSocial tended to grow faster than Groupon in the first few hours the deals are offered. The research claimed that a possible reason for this is due to the different incentives LivingSocial uses to promote each deal (Ye, Wang, Aperjis, Huberman & Sandholm, 2011).

The case study conducted on LivingSocial indicates continued growth for both the company and the online coupon market. Although still working to catch up with the overwhelming success of its number one competitor, Groupon, LivingSocial is constantly increasing merchant base, brand awareness, loyalty among subscribers, unique advertising content, and reliance on social media sites. Over one million LivingSocial subscribers have purchased three or more deals. Customers, therefore, are relatively happy with the results.

V. Conclusion

Coupon purchasing is at an all-time high. The 2012 Coupon Fact Report, issued by NCH Marketing Services, reported \$470 billion of coupon value was offered by marketers to consumers in 2011 (NCH, 2012). Shoppers responded to the report by redeeming \$4.6 billion in savings, an increase of 12.2% over the year prior, and 58.6% higher than five years ago (NCH, 2012). Coupons have adapted to the 21st century shopper by appealing to the masses on the Internet. Online coupon sites, such as Groupon and LivingSocial, are the new couponing system offering daily deals to subscribers through email, Facebook and Twitter.

The case study analysis indicates the heaviest daily deal users are the most enthusiastic about

receiving daily deal alerts and notifications. Despite worries from the online coupon industry, users did not indicate a fatigue of daily deals. On the contrary, the market is continuing to grow and businesses continue to be interested in working with daily deal websites to increase their revenues. The majority of users of both Groupon and LivingSocial are interested in purchasing a deal in the near future.

In terms of demographic information, most subscribers of Groupon and LivingSocial were women and lived in urban cities. The case study indicated LivingSocial subscribers as more successful and younger than the typical Groupon user. Additionally, LivingSocial users tend to live in the Eastern regions of the United States, while Groupon users live in the Midwest and Pacific regions of the country.

When comparing the two companies, Groupon has the higher percentage of awareness among consumers. They also have the higher number of subscribers, although the number of LivingSocial subscribers is growing at a faster rate. Users indicated Groupon as their favorite daily deal website, followed by Restaurant.com and LivingSocial in third. Although research found Groupon as the most popular daily deal company, the market for both sites continues to expand. According to Patal (2011),

Even though Groupon has undoubtedly fallen from the grace of the press in recent months after drawing back its financial curtain for an initial public hearing, the fact remains: U.S. consumers are still gaga for deals and Groupon is their favorite site by far, with few reporting any shade of deal fatigue. (p. 79)

Both Groupon and LivingSocial relate to subscribers through emotion-provoking language and word choice in each daily deal description. Both companies rely on the message embedded in the email, tweet, or Facebook post to effectively persuade subscribers to purchase the promotion.

Groupon, in particular, uses creative, humorous and witty content to relate to subscribers on a friendly and lighter level. Each company scripts artistic content through poetic and humorous word choice to entice subscribers to purchase deals. This advertising technique directly relates to Aristotle's early research on appeal to the audience in terms of the three forms of artistic and inartistic proofs: ethos, pathos and logos. These aspects of communication appear in almost all forms of Groupon's and LivingSocial's advertising content to relate to an individual receiver.

The case study analysis found that Groupon and LivingSocial rely on social media sites to increase their subscriber base, intensify brand awareness, advertise daily deal promotions and communicate with consumers at a friendly and comfortable level. Although the heaviest of daily deal users indicated email as their main means of communication with the two companies, respondents remained enthusiastic about sharing promotions with friends and followers through social networking sites. Interestingly, LivingSocial has more Facebook fans and Twitter followers; however, Groupon offers subscribers the chance to follow Facebook and Twitter sites for all cities involved in the promotions. LivingSocial, on the other hand, focuses more on the company's general and international Twitter and Facebook accounts. Both companies tend to rely more on Twitter rather than Facebook to interact with customers.

Groupon, LivingSocial and other companies in the daily deal industry have potential for growth and expansion. If daily deal websites continue to relate to its audience on a national and local level, communicate with subscribers through humorous and witty messages, rely on social media sites to provide open and honest feedback with users, they will continue to see success in the coming future. The business model used by both companies will be sustainable as long as they continue to offer value to both subscribers and businesses involved in the daily promotions. According to Arabshahi (2010), "Almost 88.2 million people, half of all U.S. adult Internet users, will redeem an online coupon in 2011, and this number should increase to 96.8 million by 2013" (p. 6). At the end of the day, consumers are always going to search for the best deal, thus, fueling the long-term growth and sustainability of the daily deal industry.

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Anime: From Cult Following to Pop Culture Phenomenon

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Abstract

This study examined the scope of influence that Japanese anime had on American people born in the '80s and '90s. Relying on secondary research and a survey using a convenience sample of 107 students and young adults, this study found that anime conveys a negative image associated with violence and fringe culture, but people see anime as more of an art form than tasteless violent film. The study also found that piracy, though not overly common, was still practiced in the case of Japanese media, but some major studios are not impeding these fansubbing (fan-made subtitles) movements. They believe that fansubbing promotes their brand and that merchandising can help recover the profits lost on film sales.

I. Introduction

One of the biggest movies to hit the box office this decade was *Toy Story 3*. Its Oscar-winning animation along with its Pixar title made it a huge hit among cinema lovers. Something that makes Pixar films so lovable to audiences is the meticulous animation. Pixar is known for leaving “Easter Eggs,” or references to past and future movies, in its films for guests to find. For example, people will notice that the Pizza Planet truck from the original *Toy Story* is in every Pixar film at least once. While watching *Toy Story 3* and carefully scanning every scene for the “Easter Eggs,” people may be shocked to see a plush Totoro doll. Totoro, a character from the 1988 Hayao Miyazaki movie, *My Neighbor Totoro*, was a surprise because Totoro is a character not at all associated with Pixar Animation (Napier, 2001). In fact, Totoro is not even an American animated character, but a Japanese one.

These references should not come as a surprise. Japanese animation, or anime, is a huge industry nowadays, even in the United States. Hayao Miyazaki is the most famous anime animator of this generation, having won an Oscar for his animated film *Spirited Away* (Lunning, 2006). Studio Ghibli, which Miyazaki co-founded, works with Disney on occasion, and Miyazaki has been nicknamed the Walt Disney of Japan (MacWilliams, 2008). Even John Lasseter, who directed the *Toy Story* saga, has found inspiration in his Japanese contemporary, Miyazaki (Napier, 2001). Miyazaki, Osamu Tezuka, Isao Takahata, and many other animators are responsible for bringing anime into the mainstream culture of America. Yet, many Americans are either hesitant to accept this switch in cinema pop culture or are oblivious to the pervasiveness of Japanese culture in what they watch. Though many people do not realize it, Japanese animation's influence has become more common in both animated and live-action American cinema since the 1960s, when television shows such as *Astro Boy* and *Speed Racer* made it to the United States (Ladd, 2009). However, it is important to understand the implications of the cultural immersion of anime in order to understand the animation industry as it stands today.

In analysis of how and why Anime is so popular in the United States the diffusion theory can be applied to see how a new idea is disseminated, often through a foreign community (Severin & Tankard, 2001).

* **Keywords:** anime, Japanese, television, fansub, and soft power
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Knowing how anime got into the U.S. and grew from a small cult following to a major popular culture phenomenon is important because anime is highly influential when it comes to what people watch (Borrelli, 2003).

Understanding anime is also important because anime is a huge powerhouse in the cinema industry and carries a lot of weight as far as consumer behavior goes (Lalor, 2002). For example, so-called 'American' popular icons have produced bountiful revenue streams. *Pokémon*, *Dragonball Z*, and the ever-popular live-action show, *Power Rangers*, would not be here if it were not for anime and the Japanese film industry.

Anime, which now has a viable industry in America, was widely distributed through international piracy practices during the '80s and '90s. Despite the presence of anime in current American pop culture, scholars predicted wrongly earlier that anime would not survive in the West long due to cultural and social disparities between Western and Eastern animation. For example, there are certain cultural practices depicted in anime that do not translate over to American viewers; therefore, the references are lost on them, and themes that are socially acceptable to the Japanese are not as acceptable in America. However, others argue that the ability of the human mind to develop an understanding of these cultural differences through exposure is apparent.

Anime is a multi-genre enterprise, unlike the traditional animation industry in the United States (Hallsall, 2010). American viewers originally thought anime was socially inappropriate because they acted under the impression that all animation was for children. Therefore, when they saw the adult anime that was being produced, they condemned the entire style and did not attempt to understand it and appreciate it for its artistic value.

People who watch anime regularly eventually develop the ability to understand these cultural references and artistic value through repeated exposure (Napier, 2001). These understandings and appreciation of anime result in a form of soft power exercised over American consumers through Japan (Otmazgin, 2008). Through this paper, the author intended to analyze how anime became so popular in America and how it affects the American cinema industry and its consumers.

II. Literature Review

A Brief History of Anime

Anime and manga are terms that are often used interchangeably even though they address two distinctly different art forms. Manga is the graphic novel and comic book cousin of anime. Manga was the foundation upon which anime was built, just as still drawings were the foundation for American animation. Though manga continues to be a somewhat prevalent influence on anime, with many anime titles originating from older manga publications, these two types retain distinct differences from each other just as an American animator would claim independence from a painter or caricaturist (MacWilliams, 2008). Due to these differences, this research focused exclusively on the history of anime's immersion in American culture.

Anime's first major breakthrough into American culture was the notable *Astro Boy*, originally titled *Tetsuan Atom* (Mighty Atom), a story of a heroic robot child created by a scientist who lost his real son. From *Astro Boy*, American companies such as NBC Enterprises began to acquire various titles from Japanese production companies such as *Kimba the White Lion* (*Jungulu Taitei Leo*, which anime fans herald as being the original *The Lion King*, claiming that Disney stole the idea), and *Gigantor* (*Tetsujin 28*).

In order to show these titles on American children's television, production companies would have to cut scenes deemed too violent, change the direct translations for redubbing, and even alter plot lines to make them more socially acceptable to Western audiences. Despite the initial popularity, the anime industry in the West came to a standstill in the late '70s for two main reasons (Ladd, 2009).

First, cult followings of people who also happened to watch violent anime porn (hentai) carried out a series of violent actions that gave the entire anime genre a negative stereotype. The first and most notorious of these crimes was called "The Otaku Killer," Otaku being a slang term for a fanatical anime fan (Bolton, Csicsery-Ronay Jr., Tatsumi, et al, 2008). This crime involved a man who violently murdered four young girls and was found to be in possession of hentai, thus casting the entire anime style in a negative light.

Second, American animation and Japanese anime began to drift in two separate directions when it came to content. Americans, who were wary of the effects of cartoon violence on children, began to censor

more often in animated films. One of the groups that most affected the fate of anime was an overzealous group called Action for Children's Television, or ACT. This censor not only included cartoon violence, but also material containing homoeroticism, gender ambiguity, or anything that suggested the main protagonist was not one hundred percent 'good-guy material' (Ladd, 2009).

Anime, on the other hand, began to expand into other genres and ratings just as live action film in America is not restricted to producing exclusively PG films. The protagonists in anime often had vices, thus making them human (Gorica, 2007). Content that contained androgyny, adult language, and pornography was seen as permissible for adult entertainment, though not necessarily in children's films (Newitz, 1995). Even death was considered to be an appropriate topic in children's anime. The Japanese acknowledged that death was a part of life by occasionally allowing characters to die instead of having the characters stay immortally young as in many American television shows.

In short, anime was not just a children's genre anymore, and adult anime films immortalized anime in history as an inappropriate, lowbrow medium despite the overabundance of appropriate children's anime being produced. This unspoken ban on anime in the United States continued up until the 1980s, when President Ronald Reagan "dismantled agencies created to protect the public, and signaled to broadcasters that the FCC, which had bowed to the demands of ACT, would no longer be so stringent in its oversight" (Ladd, 2009).

According to Dr. Susan J. Napier, a professor of the Japanese Program at Tufts University and acclaimed anime critic, anime did not see its full revival until much later in the 20th century:

"Japanese anime was initially very hard to come by in the West. A few series like *Star Blazers* crossed into American television, but they were almost always Americanized beyond recognition with infelicitous dubs, American names, and sometimes, mangled plot lines. Somehow, however, a few of the viewers began to recognize that they were seeing something different from American television fare and ultimately became aware of the Japanese origins." (2007)

Anime began its recovery and subsequent success in the United States during the 1980s. At the beginning of the new decade, 56% of Japanese television exports were anime. American viewers began to find anime during this time and, since businesses in the United States did not sell these titles, appropriated the videos among themselves through networks of Otaku in fan clubs and, eventually, online communities (Newitz, 1995). Many of these viewers were people who would have seen series such as *Astro Boy* as children and rediscovered these shows in their adult lives.

Fan groups for anime sprang up all over the country, mainly on college campuses, but eventually in high schools and extracurricular clubs (Animation, 1991). By 1995, the Japanese style of animation had a modest-yet-devoted base of fans in the West (Newitz, 1995). This created the foundation upon which hugely popular shows like *Pokémon* were able to thrive, thus cementing anime's presence in American media (Ladd, 2009). Despite anime's newfound success in America, the viewers who started these fan clubs during the '80s and '90s recognized the extent to which anime had been altered by Americanization and were disappointed by it (Napier, 2007).

These fans began the fansubbing phenomenon that has created such a huge market for anime in the United States today. Cartoon segments such as Cartoon Network's popular *Toonami* act as regular anime outlets amidst American shows (Borrelli, 2002). Now, even in American culture, people have produced adult-oriented animation such as *Family Guy* and *Futurama*, thus following the anime model in which animated material is not restricted to solely children (Ladd, 2009). Though anime is popular, the question still remains as to whether or not the negative stereotypes about anime from the 1970s still exist today.

Fansubbing

Fansubbing is the practice of taking the original Japanese anime and translating it word-for-word in fan-made subtitles. This can be time consuming for a person partaking in fansubbing and is generally carried out by amateurs who have to learn the language. But in fansubbing, there is no American studio middleman as there was in the 1960s to cut out any content deemed culturally inappropriate, therefore fans are given access to more accurate content.

Fansubbing has quickly grown into one of the most influential amateur subtitling movements of the modern era, with many of these anime fansubbers receiving little to no compensation for their work except for the personal satisfaction of receiving and distributing authentic translations of content. With fansubbed media,

anime fans get the exact translation every time, provided the person translating them is fluent in Japanese. This can prove difficult, since some words do not have direct English translations, which is why fansubbed versions of anime occasionally have slight variations within the text. Many fansubbers will note this discrepancy in the margins of the subtitles in order to authenticate their works.

With fansubbing, however, there are legal repercussions. Back in the 1990s, the Otaku turned to fansubbing because there was no other way to obtain the material. When American distributors did not sell anime titles during that time, anime fans obtained the Japanese titles for individual translation, and then distributed free copies to other fans (González, 2006).

However, with the digital age now in full swing and the abundance of anime distributors vying for consumers in the United States, the practice of fansubbing is more heavily frowned upon. Fansubbing and distributing free copies of anime works has always been considered a form of piracy, but now that anime is more readily available through legal means in the United States, the practice of fansubbing has less of a purpose for being used.

Many fans who still practice fansubbing and receive fansubbed copies of work argue that American companies still act as a barrier between authentic work and consumers by cutting out important translations in lieu of translations that are easier to understand, but not as true to the original text (Lee, 2011). Cost is also a factor in the fansubbing dilemma, as many people who obtain fansubbed material choose piracy in order to forgo buying pricey anime from American retailers (Sugimoto, 2011).

Overall, there is a split in opinions among Japanese creators and producers of anime. Some feel that international consumers of fansubbed material should pay for intellectual property just as any other consumer would, but others argue that fansubbing is the reason their material experienced international stardom in the first place and that they should be more lenient towards the practice.

Soft Power and the Anime Image

The fansubbing dilemma, to most, seems as though it is irrelevant in the scope of American cinema. Many believe that anime is just a small portion of the cinema industry in America and that fans of anime “tend to be on the edges of society, resolutely nonmainstream” (Lunning, 2007). Others argue that anime has a larger fan base than most people think, since when most people think of anime fans, they only think of the Otaku. In reality, there may be people who enjoy anime who are not rabid fans, but casual consumers of anime, just as there are people who enjoy Alfred Hitchcock films but are not diehard fans of his works.

There is also a lot of speculation about how much power anime wields over the average American consumer. Soft power, or the ability to exercise influence over another individual or community by means of attraction and fascination instead of force and coercion, is commonplace in the 21st century because so many products are of foreign origin and have impacts upon their consumers. Soft power through the dissemination of culture is “seen as a means of public relations and a method of strengthening a country’s influence” (Otmazgin, 2008). American consumers are attracted to products of other countries just as other countries are fascinated by American imports (Ladd, 2009). This same theory can just as easily be applied to film. American film has huge leverage over culture in other countries, so it is just as feasible that Japanese film could impact the cultural values of American viewers.

The hypotheses of this study are

- 1) Even though Americans have been exposed to a lot of television media with heavy Japanese influence, most people are not aware of how anime came to the United States and its influence on them, and
- 2) People are still operating under the dated stereotype that anime is inappropriate as a whole. This study also investigated the use of soft power in media such as anime and how people are subjected to this influence.

III. Methods

To identify the scope of influence that Japanese pop culture, specifically anime, had on Americans born in the '80s and '90s, this study relied on secondary research and a survey.

The researcher reviewed books published between 1990 and present to gain insight into what was occurring during the anime boom of the early '90s and how the Otaku were perceived. The researcher also conducted a survey to gauge the size of the modern anime fandom and its influences on American culture.

Through the survey, data was collected regarding anime, how modern-day American consumers receive the anime film medium, and how anime made its way into the United States. To garner honest responses about the piracy practices of those involved, the survey was implemented anonymously.

In the online survey, a convenience sample of 107 students and young adults was asked a series of 18 questions. These questions contained both multiple choice and short answer types. The survey asked how people obtained their media, whether through fansubbing or other means, legal or illegal. It asked how influenced people felt Japanese animation and media are. It also asked people how much they are aware of specific titles that were prevalent during the '80s and '90s to see how much people actually know about Japanese animation and television. Questions were also asked about piracy, the main way anime made its way into the United States, in order to see if there was a correlation between those watching anime and their preferences for obtaining material.

The survey participants, whose ages ranged between 18 and 32, were selected among those who attended college at one point, since college campuses were where most anime titles were first introduced to the United States. The survey was used to confirm what secondary research suggested in journals and other scholarly materials: the influences of anime on American audiences

IV. Findings and Analysis

The Otaku stereotype was a prevalent theme in almost every literary work from the literature review. However, it seems that the negativity toward Otaku culture progressively lessened as the articles approached modern times. There is still a slight negative stigma to anime, despite attempts to educate people on the nature of anime, and people still believe anime to be a violent art form (Borrelli, 2002). Acceptance of Otaku culture and the anime wave has become more acceptable, however, as more scholarly research is conducted and more libraries stock anime (Halsall, 2010).

Fansubbing was another issue altogether that was addressed in some of the articles. In the earlier articles, fansubbing was touched upon lightly without alluding to the fact that the practice was considered piracy simply because the content was not available in the United States (Animation, 1991). As time progressed, more articles were published regarding the controversies surrounding fansubbing, thus suggesting that it was becoming more of an issue.

A 2006 study of fansubbers conducted by Luis Pérez Gonzáles of the Centre for Translation and Intercultural Studies at the University of Manchester stated that over 200,000 fans worldwide participated in the fansubbing phenomenon either as translators or as benefactors. Gonzáles also noted that the illegal nature of fansubbing earned it a negative stigma in professional realms (2006).

More recent articles containing information on fansubbing have even said that this *participatory media fandom* has unsettled the global media landscape by providing an alternate form of content distribution. The motivations for English-speaking fansubbers were indicated as the strong desire to perpetuate the anime culture and provide accessibility in other countries, thus reaffirming that fansubbers generally receive little to no payment for their work.

The reactions from publishers and producers has been mixed (Lee, 2011). Some producers see the perpetuation of anime through fansubbing as a way to access remote markets through merchandising, which would recover some of the profits lost through fansubbing. Other companies are opposed to the idea because of its illegality (Sugimoto, 2009).

Survey participants were asked to answer how familiar they were with anime as a style of animation. Among the five choices of extremely familiar, very familiar, moderately familiar, somewhat familiar, and not

at all familiar, only 19.4 percent of the participants said they were not at all familiar with anime. Most of them acknowledged that they were somewhat familiar with anime at 32 percent. In response to another question, 40.8 percent of them said that they still watched anime as adults.

The participants were asked to check off any of 58 anime or anime-influenced titles that they saw as a child or young adult. All these were at one point aired on television in the United States. The response was that 85.1 percent of those surveyed had seen at least one of the shows on the list, and the rest had never seen any. Of the shows listed, the top shows were *Pokémon*, *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (an American-made show with heavy anime influences), *Sailor Moon*, *YuGiOh!*, *Dragon Ball Z*, *Digimon*, and *Full Metal Alchemist*. What is intriguing is that all of these shows, with perhaps the exception of *Full Metal Alchemist* to some extent, are shows that were initially heavily Americanized when they first appeared on American television screens. One of the most notorious changes made in the films listed above was in *Pokémon*, when the 4Kids and Warner Bros. studios rotoscoped, or traced over, the original film frame by frame to add new elements to, or hide old ones in several *Pokémon* episodes. Most of the rotoscopes involved changing traditionally Japanese food into American foods because the studios worried that American children would not make the connection that items such as a rice ball were food (Lunning, 2007). Another example from *Pokémon* is that all the characters were given American names despite their Japanese origins (Ladd, 2009). Although Japanese animation certainly made an impact on the survey participants, it was mainly through shows that had been filtered and redubbed by American stations.

In order to address the stereotypes about anime, the participants were asked to write as many adjectives that they associated with anime as possible. The researcher chose the seven terms that were mentioned by at least 4 percent of the participants: interesting, colorful, dramatic, artistic, Japanese, weird and violent. All the terms, other than Japanese, indicate people's perceptions of anime in American culture. The two terms 'colorful' and 'artistic' are telling because many people who have never been exposed to anime do comment on the heavy detail and colorful nature of most anime. 'Dramatic' makes sense as a term associated with anime because of anime's origins in Kabuki theatre and because American audiences perceive certain Japanese social cues as over-the-top (Napier, 2007). The two terms that are most interesting are 'weird' and 'violent'. It seems that the negative typecast from the 1970s and hentai have carried on to modern times, but these terms were relatively low on the list of the top terms associated with anime. While these terms still have an association with anime, the other terms in the list appear to have cast a more positive light on anime as a style of animation.

Fansubbing was the next topic to be addressed in the survey. Through a series of questions regarding piracy and distribution as well as the importance of accurate translations, participants in the survey spoke about their participation, if any, in fansubbing and piracy as well as their opinions on subtitled works. The first question in the series asked whether or not accurate translations were important even if the direct translation had a cultural reference that did not translate well into American culture. Among the participants, 79.4 percent said that it was important that the integrity of the direct translation be preserved. Regarding questions about piracy, the overwhelming majority (88.3 and 93.2 percent respectively) stated that they had neither received nor given copyrighted DVD copies. When it came to Internet distribution, only 60.2 percent of people surveyed said that they did not participate in pirating shows online. Of those who had pirated video content from the Internet, 20.8 percent of that content originated from Japan. When asked for justification for pirating, survey participants listed free content as a motivator, followed by the content being unavailable for purchase in the United States.

Anime's soft power as a factor in America was analyzed through questions regarding merchandising of anime shows, as merchandising is one of the key ways in which anime makes its money. Merchandise in this case extends to apparel, trading cards, figurines, action figures, or anything with a logo or design associated with one of the 58 anime or anime-influenced titles mentioned earlier. Of the 107 surveyed, 54.4 percent of people said that they had bought merchandise from an anime series for themselves. Some had purchased anime merchandise, but only as a gift for a friend (8.7%), and others had never bought anime merchandise for themselves but had someone else who had purchased it for them (6.8%). This indicated that, even though fansubbing and piracy does have a strong presence in the international anime industry, merchandising is popular enough to recover some of those costs.

V. Conclusion

For organizational purposes, this section will be broken down into three parts.

Dated Stereotypes

The secondary research and the survey confirmed that anime still conveys a negative image associated with violence and fringe culture, even though many advocates of anime clearly state that “anime wasn’t all blood, guts, and porn” (Borrelli, 2002). However, new terms are being used to describe anime in today’s culture. Terms, such as ‘colorful’ and ‘artistic’ used by the survey participants to describe some shows in the survey, indicate a shift that people see anime as more of an art form than tasteless violent film with no redeeming qualities. The secondary research also portrayed anime as more of a misinterpreted art form, especially when it comes to the misunderstood Otaku culture, which is more prevalent than the average American consumer would think. The majority of news sources cast anime into a favorable light, saying that anime provides entertainment for everyone (Halsall, 2010). Consumer behavior as portrayed in the survey indicates that anime has more of a following than people may have imagined with over 80 percent of people surveyed ages 18 to 32 having watched anime titles. This data matches with news articles published during the time period, which indicated in the past that anime “has a very serious foothold on the edge of American culture” (Borrelli, 2002). This foothold has expanded out beyond the edges of American society. The data reveals that there is a shift in perceptions and stereotypes of anime in America and that people are turning the peripheral culture into a more mainstream popular culture, but that four decades may be too short a period of time for strong negative labels to dissipate completely.

Fansubbing

In the case of fansubbing, both the literature review and the survey showed that, even though many saw the ethical dilemma of fansubbing, it was still practiced without substantial repercussion. The survey showed that piracy, though not overly common, was still practiced in the case of Japanese media. The two main reasons for piracy were cost and lack of material in the United States, though participants also said that accurate translations is a factor as well. While fansubbing and piracy of anime is a substantial issue, most major studios are not taking the time to impede these fansubbing movements because fansubbing perpetuates their brand into places they would otherwise have not been able to reach and because merchandising can help recover the profits lost on film sales.

Anime and Soft Power

Soft power is reflected in a wide variety of consumer behaviors ranging from purchasing items from different countries to adopting the mannerisms and cultural values of foreign countries (Otmazgin, 2008). Anime does carry some soft power because Americans are attracted to the content of these Japanese films, and anime is prevalent in American society. The soft power is, of course, somewhat diminished by the extent to which Japanese films are typically Americanized, but some Japanese ideals have still been preserved even in the Americanized versions of the films. The American Otaku culture is a perfect example of how soft power can greatly influence a group of people in a different country. Otaku generally use mannerisms they picked up from anime and share those same social ideals within other groups of anime fans (Ladd, 2009). The most compelling example was the amount of anime merchandise purchased by participants in the survey. The large percentage of people have spent money on anime merchandise, which indicates clearly how anime wields soft power in the form of economic presence within the American market. Some scholars even implied that while the influence is not yet a financial windfall to American entertainment companies, it could amount to something more impressive in the next few years (Borrelli, 2002). Anime’s journey to America through legal television broadcasts as well as illegal modes of fansubbing and piracy has given anime a strong economic foothold in American culture.

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U.S. Media's Failure to Set the Agenda for Covering Sex Trafficking

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Abstract

The sex trafficking industry poses a clear and present threat in society, but the American public seems to be unaware of the gravity of the issue within the U.S. Analyzing the agenda setting theory by focusing on stories on the New York Times and CNN websites gives evidence that the media failed to inform the public. The public's lack of awareness was found to be due to the presence of social media and the birth of online newspapers. For a bigger impact, the media can create a social consensus through more high profile articles and personal stories and place them in prominent, high trafficked areas of their websites.

I. An Outlook of the Sex Trading Industry

Human trafficking is a broad and multifaceted issue, which contains the illegal activity of sex trafficking. Sex trafficking falls under the umbrella of human trafficking, but is specifically targeted at exploiting, vandalizing and coercing women and children into sex without their consent. This form of modern day slavery has been a problem around the world for centuries, but the realization that millions of people are being trafficked specifically for sex in the United States has only recently been covered as a top story within the past two years. The number of people who are actually aware of the problem appears to be shockingly low, although human trafficking is the second largest illicit business in the world.

This is not a new problem at all. In the 1900s America shipped workers from China for the purpose of forced labor, which also led to the selling of Chinese girls because of their erotic appeal (Shelly 237). The other issue, both abroad and in the U.S., that has created barriers in attempts to fight the issue is the perception that these women are prostitutes and therefore are choosing it as a career. Prostitution became more public and even accepted during the late 19th century because it would "provide sexual outlets for military men and laborers in metropolitan and colonial areas . . . by ensuring police oversight of brothel areas, state officials and their supporters believed they could provide for men's presumed sexual needs, maintain public health and social order" (Limoncelli 7). This "necessity" meant that women were starting to be trafficked to fill brothels over borders like cattle throughout the world.

Evidence of this problem is seen in the League of Nation's documents. There have been conventions in 1904, 1910, and 1921 to fight trafficking through anti-trafficking laws (Limoncelli 8). More recently in 1978, the United Nations held another convention and drafted rights for immigrants, but it was not signed until 1990 and not enforced until 2003. By 2005 only 27 countries had ratified the treaty (Naim 103). This shows the slow progression of laws and action at the governmental level.

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The other reason sex trafficking has particularly received little attention in the past was due to the perceived value and rights of women. In many countries and cultures, women were not seen as important or equal with men. The International Abolitions Federation helped to show that all women, including prostitutes, deserved equality, justice and liberation (Limoncelli 51). Fighting against stereotypes that trafficked women were prostitutes further stifle the call to action. In 1935 the secretary for the British committee of the International Abolitionist Federation said, "I have always believed that if you believe in liberty you will see to it that your weakest link in the chain is secure. The weakest link is the prostitute since few people care whether she is justly treated or not" (69). Her argument then is still pertinent today, as the fight for the marginalized and hurt needs to be societies' first priority.

Anti-sex trafficking awareness fell out of the public light until the 1980s, when the fall of the Soviet Union combined with the start of globalization sparked the return of trafficking at a global level (Limoncelli 150). The reemergence of trafficking no longer took the old form, but with the accessibility of the Internet and new technology, traffickers were now able to communicate around the world to move a woman to the desired customer.

With the fall of the Soviet Bloc, there was hope of new freedom. Ironically, slavery of women has increased to tens of thousands of girls being exported from Ukraine, Moldova, Romania and Russia (Naim 92). Before the 1990s trafficking was mainly geared toward mail-order brides, but once the Soviet Union collapsed, a new sex market emerged, facilitated by criminal groups operating internationally (Kelly 87). Today, traffickers, or pimps, are able to take the women and children across borders more easily due to the international gang movement. Gangs no longer operate in one area, but members are located across the world, just as they are spread across the U.S. (Shelly 232). With the increase of communication, trafficking women from one country or state to another is easier.

A third major problem is the economic gain combined with political corruption and government failure. In China alone, there is an estimated profit of \$1-3 billion a year in smuggling women (Naim 88). This is partly made possible by the political corruption to help deport women out of the country. Some Chinese coast guards "conveniently disappear" when a shipload of illegal girls are sent out to another country (101). The problem that has been seen across borders is that "those in charge of curbing these illicit businesses are in fact personally profiting from them" (100). In the past, the problem was addressed by helping those victims, but the issue is rooted in the economic gain that is driving the industry.

Sex trafficking is on the rise in the 21st century due to the slow process of governments creating, signing and then enforcing new laws. Looking into multiple forms of illicit activities, Robert Kelly reported that "the favorable economic conditions also provide an environment conducive to transnational crime . . . the global commerce system offers so many opportunities for rapid growth that law enforcement agencies cannot keep pace" (Kelly 7). With acts and laws taking three to ten years to be ratified, nothing is stopping this profitable trade. The laws, however, are seen as a threat to globalization because the basic nature of the acts are calling for increased border security, less trade between nations and enforcing ways to make travel between nations more expensive (Naim 107). Governments have to take away the profit motive by making the consequences severe enough in order to tackle the core of the issue. While data for illegal activity is hard to confirm, and is usually underestimated, the Trafficking In Person (TIP) recently reported that the industry generates about \$57 billion by trafficking 800,000 women and children each year (Parrot 9). The supply and demand chain is how the industry keeps growing. Unlike other illicit trade, such as drugs or weapons, people can be used again and again, and so supply does not get depleted (Kelly 87). In Cambodia alone girls are forced to serve 7-10 men a day, maybe more if the girls are younger because they are seen as more desirable (Parrot 10). In the United States the Polaris Project reported that Latino gangs in particular have women serve 20 to 35 men a day for 15 minutes costing the men \$30 each (Comparison Chart). Their bodies are used and abused until they are no longer profitable and then they are literally thrown out.

The industry is able to find so many children and women because of the dire social condition in which they are found. The one child law in China, the destructive nature and displacement of war or the status of being an illegal immigrant in the U.S. all feed into the industry (Parrot 12). Pimps use the allure and promise of giving the girls a better life or giving them passage into the United States. But once they arrive in America, their passports that have often been bought in the black market are taken from them and they are told they have to work off their "debt" to the pimps before they are released. This debt is usually intangible and simply made up by the traffickers (Naim 95). Due to the abuse, both physical and mental, fear of being caught by authorities and the threat of hurting their family, the trafficked victims are bonded to their pimps. Being seen

as illegal immigrants also has made it difficult for the victims to seek any help from authorities in the past, especially in America. Police have arrested some of these women for being illegally in the U.S. or for being prostitutes instead of arresting the pimps or buyers of the sex (Bennets). Illegal drugs are also the main way the pimps are able to bind their victims, since they force them to become addicted so they stay with or come back to their owners in order to feed their forced addiction (Shelly 241). The combination of seeking a better job or life, parents selling their children for money to merely survive, economic imbalance, unequal rights for women, political corruption and economic gain all have made the sex trafficking industry the fastest growing illicit trade in the world.

Analysis of this issue in the United States gives perspective to how the industry has grown and changed with little coverage on the degree and danger of the problem. There are three different aspects that have resulted in 100,000 to 300,000 child victims of sex trafficking in the U.S. each year, which do not include the thousands of women trafficked into the U.S. for sex ("Media Coverage"). First, the girls are not only brought in from other countries, but are often kidnapped or coerced into the industry due to lack of means to survive or with promises of love or a better life. Often the trafficked woman knows the pimp. Girls and women from within the U.S. are preferred since transporting them across the borders is not needed. The another major contributor to the sex industry is pornography. Over \$9 billion is spent on pornography each year (Parrot 8). This small subset of sex trafficking is often forgotten due to its being online. Women and children are still forced to participate, as shown in one sex video called "Rape Camp." The women in the video were from Cambodia, but the video could be seen in the U.S. The men could choose how the women would be humiliated and tortured through voting over the Internet. While the creator was arrested by Cambodian authorities, the site still stayed up because the server was based in the U.S. (9). Finally, the sex trafficking industry primarily started as mail order brides but has expanded into a network of shipping and selling women across the U.S. "The boom in trafficking women and children for sex has utilized the Internet to display the wares in cyberspace equivalent of slave auctions . . . women are listed 'for sale' on the web at several points of the supply chain" (Naim 102).

Another misconception is that trafficking only happens near the border or in a few big cities. This is an epidemic that has reached far across the nation and into suburban areas. The most recent studies have found that "Johns," or men who buy the women, live primarily in the most affluent counties in the U.S. like "in Montgomery and Fairfax counties, around Washington D.C., and in states with a strong commitment to the welfare of their citizens, like Minnesota" (Shelly 246). California, Florida and Texas, due to their location near the coast or the border, are the top states with trafficked women, and North Carolina is rising since most trafficking happens on trucking routes (241). The connection of highways 85/40/95, with the immigrant working force in the area plus one of the largest military bases, makes it a prime place for traffickers to travel to (252). The U.S. is one of the leading countries introducing legislation to stop trafficking, but there is still a lag between drafting laws and arresting the actual pimps and Johns. Presently, people who are caught with marijuana have to spend more time in jail than someone caught trafficking women and girls (Naim 104). These facts only begin to scratch the surface of the underground sex trafficking industry, but also point to the need for this issue to be more prominent among the news and media, not just in the non-profit world.

II. Changing Roles of the Mass Media in Setting Agenda

The agenda-setting theory was proposed by McCombs and Shaw in 1968 and since then has created a strong structure and basis for how the news generates awareness and operates (Takeshita 275). The well-established definition for agenda setting is "the phenomenon of the mass media selecting certain issues and portraying them frequently and prominently, which leads people to perceive those issues as more important than others" (Wu 776). The understanding that the news has this power also presents a responsibility for reporters to seek out and portray critical and unjust problems in society. The immense number of studies on the theory have shown the effects and responses of the public when the news is able to "set the agenda." Yet, the emergence of the Internet and newspapers going online, as well as clips of TV being found on the different websites, have started to weaken the power of reporters to set the national agenda.

Agenda setting should not be confused with "framing," which is concerned with how the news portrays an issue. Framing is not based on the issue itself, but more the applicability of the issue after it is reported (Scheufele 15). The distinction is important because the main issue of sex trafficking already has a particular

perception, but the problem is the frequency of news media and so awareness of the issue.

Another aspect of this theory is called second-level agenda setting, which is based on the evolution of the agenda-setting theory in the past 30 years. Research in 2009 has proposed that the strength to set the agenda is driven not solely by the frequency but also feelings about the problem (Wu 777). This is strongly correlated with the addition of images to a story to convey the meaning. The study showed that the addition of personal video clips and pictures to create a story to produce a feeling or attitude has only partial correlation to whether the public thought the person in the visuals more prominent or important (781). When looking at international issues instead of politics, second-level agenda setting played more of a role on how the public thought either positively or negatively about a nation due to the media's report on it (Wanta 367). Though, the mere negative or positive portrayal of that country did not automatically determine the participants' view of that country. Both of these findings confirm that second-level could have the potential to convey importance about how people personally felt about the issue, but that the frequency of an issue is still more significant in raising the awareness of issues.

The agenda setting effect of print and broadcasting media outlets also differs. After looking at stories in the *New York Times* and on the national news channel, participants were asked to recall stories that they perceived as the most important. While stories on the news channel seemed to have more impact on what they thought were the most pressing matters in the world, it was the newspaper readers that had a better recall of the stories after a two-week time gap (Hu 233). Salience cues, like stories being displayed on the front page, also played a role in readers' remembering stories and in determining their importance when the readers were asked to recall the stories they read. The category of the top stories they remembered was international problems, followed by the economy. Newspapers had a more powerful influence on an individual's retaining the information of an issue, while broadcast stories had a more initial impact, but were more quickly forgotten (235). The issue of how often a story is repeated and which medium is chosen can have dramatic effects on the perceived importance of the story. This highlights the importance of salience cues.

Salience cues and selection are integral parts of the theory. Agenda setting is determined by which stories are selected by the news media; the salience cues tell the reader or viewer that which story is important. If a story is not printed on a newspaper or given adequate time on television, there are no ways to show that it is important to the general public (Wanta 365). Selection is, therefore, the first step, but cues like the headline displayed in bold, appearing on the front page, or being broadcast on different networks have proven to point the public to issues demanding attention (Conway 41).

A new factor that has disrupted the agenda setting theory slightly is the addition of the Internet, which has blunted salience cues. A study conducted with 15 college students watching a CNN news broadcast and visiting a CNN website confirmed the importance of TV news, but also revealed the fragmentation the Internet brought to the perception of news importance. The students ranked the importance of stories more consistently with each other after watching their broadcasts than when they ranked the top stories immensely differently after going online (Conway 43). The important stories on TV were determined by salience cues, but the stories that the participants chose online were decided based on their interest. The stories that were perceived as more exciting, like a car race, were remembered more easily by the participants, but they were ranked less important by both the online users and TV watchers (45). The two studies highlighted the inconsistencies in the agenda setting theory. Salience cues like length guided viewers to identify the most important stories on TV, but the absence of prompts online led readers to veer from the media's intended prominent stories.

With the increasing use of the Internet for seeking and gaining information, other studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of agenda setting. The theory may now suggest a loss of consensus on main issues among the general public. In one study, some participants read the online version of the *New York Times* and others read the print version for a total of one week, and then were asked to rank the most important stories. The online readers had broader responses to the question of what was important, as the online channel gave more choices on stories that the individual identifies with. Print readers chose the stories that in general had more cues, bigger headline, on the front page, etc., and were less varied in their responses (Althaus 179). It was reported that "online news sites encourage users to be highly selective in their consumption of news content . . . readers of printed newspapers are likely to be exposed to stories that they might not have been actively seeking, particularly if those stories appear on the front page. In contrast, online newspapers tend to organize the news into topical categories that draw readers immediately to those stories most likely to fit their information preferences" (182). This process of division and personal selection could lead to a public that is ill-informed and divided on issue importance (Takeshita 285). In the past, agenda setting was a tool

that helped build consensus and build themes for the public.

The role of the media has helped bring together different demographics to form shared experiences, but with the increasing use of the Internet as a primary news source, the news is being tailored by the individual (Althaus 197). The Internet created an environment that enables people to connect with like-minded others around the world and “make the identification with special-interest agendas more likely. The disruption of broadly shared public agendas, which the traditional mass media have helped sustain, would likely maximize social cleavages” (Takeshita 286). Personalization has been implied as a positive development since the gatekeeping role of journalists might be dispelled and more accountability is demanded (Althaus 198). Journalists can no longer form the consensus, but are made to be experts in specific areas to find out the truth. This could mean the end of the media setting the agenda, but there are still reports that people will not completely shift to online news sources. Thus, the discussion of issues online is based on the amount of coverage they receive on TV. Research still has yet to be done on the influence that blogs have on the news and the topics that are chosen or discussed (Takeshita 289). The idea that everyone is a journalist removes the role of gatekeeping by the media, and also removes the hierarchal nature of bringing the nation together around one issue, since now every person can report on their personal agenda.

The final issue relevant to agenda setting is the actual type of story and the priming effect of a story. When the mass media try to set the agenda by reiterating it, there is a danger of desensitizing the public if the story is overplayed. When a group was instructed to watch crime stories during the news broadcast, researchers found participants were ambivalent to the violence, as present culture has amplified the occurrence of violence in order to entertain and captivate the audience. In the news, homicides took up 29% of the total broadcast time on average, but only accounted for 2% of all crimes in America (Young 1676). This sensationalistic style reflects the research that a story creating fear is perceived to be more important than otherwise.

There is another limitation that journalists must consider. Reversal theory by Apter has countered the sensationalistic type of reporting. He thinks there is a threshold point when the fearful stimuli become too personal and so threatening that people switch from “sensation-seeking” to “sensation-avoiding” (Young 1690). Sensational news keeps the viewers’ attention, but there is a limit to its power. This was further supported by the finding of a study where participants were asked to watch both the local news about crime in their area and then national news about crime. The results were contrary to the original hypothesis that participants would fear more due to the amount and degree of crime in their area reported; instead personal connection to a crime was the main reason that fear was produced after viewing a crime on TV. The fear people felt did not correlate with the degree of importance participants placed on it (Gross 421). The agenda setting power is, therefore, not determined by the personal experiences of the viewers. The study showed that “there is no evidence however, that the news induces people to think or feel about those issues in a certain way. The news may make crime a salient topic for audiences, but it does not make them afraid” (423). Media portrayal and influence is not all-powerful: It helps to sway what topics receive attention but not how people feel about them; this takes personal action and experience.

Understanding the personal component of news was the subject of a study in 2010, which gives powerful insight into agenda setting. The study surveyed participants throughout the 2000 gun control controversy as three events were happening in the news: few violent gun shooting incidents, President Clinton’s address, and a march on Washington for gun control. While the coverage continued for consecutive weeks, the importance of the issue for citizens dramatically increased. What created the most attention and awareness was the public demonstration, not President Clinton’s speech or the shooting. The research showed that citizens thought that the gun law was important due to the response of the march against guns, which was several months after the shooting itself and made the issue “new” again (Smidt 82). The success of the march might be important because it was last in sequence and already supported by the credibility of prominent figures addressing the same issue (85). Combining a dramatic event, a political figure’s address, and then a personal response, led the public to believe in the high importance of an issue and communicated the power of the agenda setting theory. This new research has shed light on the discrepancies and failures of the media to set the agenda about sex trafficking.

III. The *New York Times* Coverage of Sex Trafficking

To see whether the media have succeeded in, or failed at, setting the agenda, the author counted the number of articles in the *New York Times*' website archives regarding sex trafficking in the U.S. Not only counting the number of relevant articles, the author analyzed their content to find their story types. The types were divided into "political," "opinion based," "hard news," "art or movies," "human interest" and "sports coverage." Though the agenda setting theory focuses on accessibility and frequency, the types of articles written on sex trafficking in the U.S. could reveal the reason the weight of this issue has not been registered in the public eye.

When the author entered "sex trafficking" into the search bar of the New York Times homepage, a total of 5,080 results were generated. When the option of 'articles only' was selected, deleting all blogs from the search, the number came down to 1,030 articles. In comparison, search words of "drug trafficking" generated 11,040 results and 4,530 articles, respectively.

Since the focus of this research is on the sex industry over the last 10 years, the author ignored the articles previous to 2000 and had a total of 980 results left. One problem with the search results was due to the different connotation of both human and sex trafficking. Human trafficking was automatically factored into the search results, but did not necessarily correspond to sex trafficking. Some articles used the two interchangeably, which made it more complicated to find specially the articles about sex trafficking. A lot of the results were also connected to drug and organ trafficking. Another error to consider was that searches produced a different number of articles each time the phrase was put into the search bar.

After going through each page, the author found only 270 articles specifically focused on the problem of sex trafficking. Among them, 131 referred to the sex industry only in the United States from 2000 to 2012; 88 articles focused only on international incidents; and 51 stories focused on the sex industry both in U.S. and other countries. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of the 131 stories only on the U.S. sex industry: news stories were the most numerous type, followed by opinions, arts, political stories, human interest, and sports.

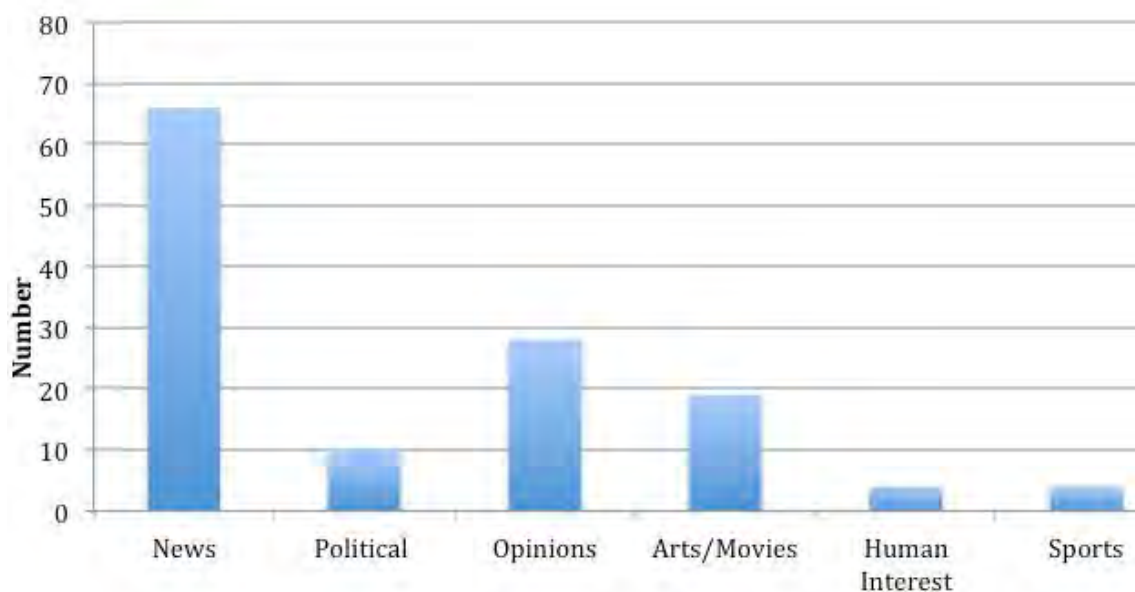


Figure 1. Types of Sex Trafficking Stories in the NYT website

Frequency of coverage on this topic each year gives insight into the progression of sex trafficking in the media. In 2000 there were no specific articles about sex trafficking in the U.S. The one that referred to the United States was actually an international story on failing to tighten international laws on the problem. In 2001 there were more sex trafficking articles about the industry in Asia, Italy and Cambodia, but only one slightly geared to United States, as they highlighted how passports were being faked to import women into the

country and around the world. In 2002 the coverage continued to highlight other countries that were dealing with the problem including the rising problem in Europe and Thailand even with the help from America. One article detailed an arrest of six accused of trafficking women from Mexico for the purpose of selling sex.

By 2003 more articles were printed about the sex industry, but any necessary arrests or actual accounts did not come to light. The upcoming 2004 election created some pressure on the Bush administration to tackle the problem, but more on what would be done worldwide. Nationally, the most dramatic was the article *The Girl Next Door* in 2004. This was the first documented instance of a trafficked girl talking about her situation anonymously, forcing the realization that this happened in America and could be happening next door to you.

During 2005 columnist Nicholas Kristof came forward as the leading opinion writer and advocate against sex trafficking. This also marked the increase of opinion articles and letters about the subject. Kristof wrote six opinion pieces within 2005 alone, and continued to write an average of five each year. This was also the first year a movie that had a message on sex trafficking was reviewed. In 2006 the number of opinion articles about sex trafficking outnumbered any other types of articles. The focus of these articles was also still on international problems.

Throughout the following six years there were about half a dozen more movies, TV shows or books that tackled the problem through a fictional story line. The attempts to get the attention of those watching a fictional show to this problem could help raise awareness of the topic, but also runs the risk of blinding them to the severity and factuality of the industry.

Starting in 2007, the number of articles that focused on the issue in United States dramatically increased. The articles, however, were more opinion based and less hard news about the actual arrests of pimps or crackdown of the industry. In consecutive years the number of articles on arrests and the breaking up of brothels increased, but still only made up a small percentage of the total coverage. Also 2007 was the first time an article was written on the Craigslist sex ads. In 2008 - 2012, except for 2009, several articles were written about Craigslist and other online selling community websites putting up ads for sex. The response from readers on these articles included questioning if those girls were trafficked or chose this as a job, which created a muddled understanding of the horrors of what was going on. In 2009 coverage of domestic and international sex trafficking was almost even, marking a growing shift of awareness.

From 2010 on, the author categorized articles on the sex trafficking problem in America and counted the number of stories under each category. The author also counted the total number of articles on other countries' sex industry; however, she did not identify the category of each story. That's why Figure 1 reflects only stories on the domestic sex industry.

There have been more articles within the past two years, but they mostly came from the editorial/opinion section of the paper. In 2010, there were several articles on the response of celebrities or causes that hoped to help raise awareness. The larger number of articles in 2010 was due to one event that generated multiple articles: Americans were jailed in Haiti. While the reason for being jailed centered on sex trafficking, all the follow-up articles focused primarily on their jail time and their release, not necessarily the sex trafficking problem. In both 2011 and 2012, Kristof wrote most articles focusing on sex trafficking. Especially in 2011, he wrote most articles on the breakdown of criminal activity of pimps—totaling four articles. Already in 2012, there have been a large number of articles on the subject. If the previous trend is any guide, there should be an increase in articles on the issue in the U.S. during the rest of the year.

IV. Breakdown of CNN Videos

The video clips on the CNN website could reveal if the media are powerful as suggested by the agenda setting theory. Research indicates that television news had a more immediate impact on the viewer than written articles (Hu 223). The procedure of searching the *Times* for stories on sex trafficking was also used on the CNN website. The results totaled 331 articles, but when only videos were selected, there were 68 videos dating back to 2005. About 22 videos were dedicated solely to sex trafficking around the world and seven that mentioned both U.S. and world problems, leaving 39 clips that mentioned the problem in U.S. for the past seven years.

The videos were almost evenly split between documentaries focused on personal stories of victims

and personal advocacies. In 2011, most videos focused on special reports on the sex trafficking industry, either as a whole or as part of specific details of the industry. There were only several videos on actual arrests of pimps or Johns. CNN has dedicated a whole program, called the Freedom Project, to the problem of modern day slavery, which includes sex trafficking. Since 2011, it has been posting and uploading videos weekly to raise awareness about the larger problem of human trafficking. In early 2012, it contains videos that are also geared toward the personal stories and shocking reality of individuals who have been trafficked.

The most common type of videos on the CNN website was news, followed by personal and documentary stories, as Figure 2 shows the 39 clips that focused on U.S. sex trafficking issues.

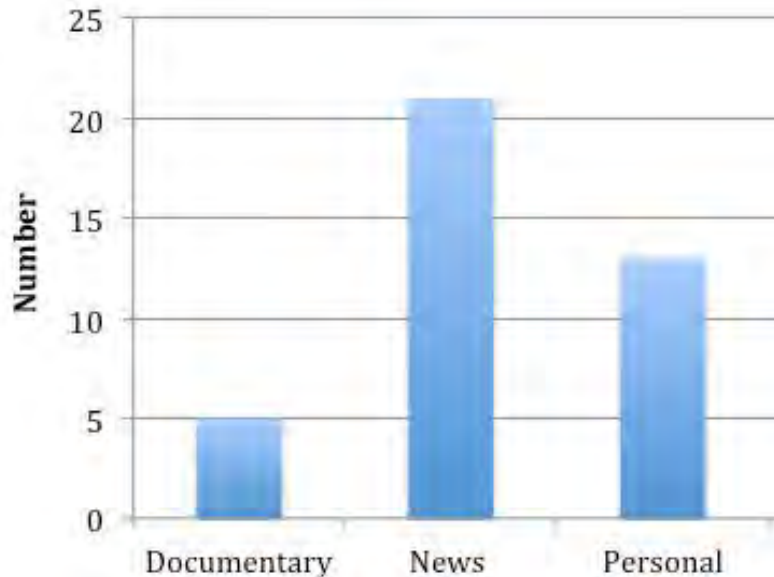


Figure 2. U.S. coverage of Sex Trafficking in the CNN website

V. The Next Step and Hurdles to Face

The *New York Times* and CNN have produced a small number of stories, but they have sought out and produced increasingly more stories each year on this dire issue of sex trafficking. The understanding that human trafficking as a whole exists is no longer a point of contention, but the simplistic coverage as well as the public's misunderstanding that sex trafficking does not occur in the United States is the responsibility of the media community to correct (Kloer). According to the agenda setting theory, more coverage in different manners will produce more social awareness. According to the agenda setting studies, most people will consider the problem in America to be important when it is dynamic, longer in length, is aided by personal stories, a video report is produced, and a public demonstration takes place, but a written article is better remembered.

The stories at the *Times* and CNN websites have been dynamic and about the issue as a whole, but didn't connect them to the personal implications nor documented public demonstrations. Kristof's opinion articles were strong and emotionally gripping, but were from one voice and were not on the front page, so they failed to give the public the salient cues they needed to know that this is a prominent matter. The other articles were mostly letters and editorials, which attracted only the readers who are seeking out the issue.

A study by Smidt (2010) correlated a public mass demonstration with the elevation of a problem to highly important, which supports the need to write about what 'real' people are doing to elevate the issue. The hard line to walk is how to convey the issue without turning people away due to the graphic nature of the industry. The stories can help the victims, but more could have been said about the force, destructive nature and motives of the pimps. A UN study challenged the media that "the coverage of trafficking has also been naïve . . . the media hasn't done a good job of focusing on trafficking as an economic issue as well as a hu-

man rights issue. We haven't held corporations as accountable as we should for their connection to slavery" (Kloer). Simple awareness of the problem is starting to be covered, but the consequences, law enforcement failures and the arrest and prosecutions should be covered if the press aims to follow the agenda setting theory to bring about a social consensus. Most people read what they think affect them personally. Economic issues are relevant to most Americans and are often on the front page; the sex trafficking industry can be covered as an economic issue to gain attention from readers. The depth of the problem has yet to be felt by the press or media as a whole.

There are several large hurdles in this endeavor. The biggest one is whether the agenda setting theory is applicable when people are increasingly using the Internet. It leads to the personal selection of news, and this individualistic nature has lessened the power of the agenda setting theory and made the social consensus fall apart (Althaus 179). Everyone has his or her own cause and fight, which then facilitate new movements or non-profits, but hamper the emergence of the most prominent issues in the world. There is a lack of information here because more studies on the selective nature of the Internet potentially causing the agenda theory to lose its power have yet to be published. This does not mean journalists or the media should stop doing their job. Journalists should not to be advocates, but they are called to pursue issues and bring all the dirty details into light (Saar).

Another hurdle is how to do this without inflicting more harm or putting a girl in danger of being found by her pimp. The use of personal stories is effective, but not the only outlet to pursue. First, there is confusion on the use of terms of sex trafficking because articles use prostitution, child abuse, human trafficking and mail order brides when talking about the same issue. A UN correspondent who understands this issue mentioned that "we haven't come up with a common language, a common message or even a common goal in our reporting and coverage of human trafficking" (Kloer). Consensus on the media's part will help bring about a social consensus on the gravity of the sex trading industry in America.

The media are not fighting alone. It has been strengthened through advocates who place human rights and change at the forefront. Countless websites, non-profits and individual groups have started campaigns, awareness programs and profit shares to help end human and sex trafficking in the world. The problem is that even with these programs, sex trafficking is still on the rise and is still a non-existent issue to many Americans. The perception of illicit trade and the mobilization to confront it has not changed, and that "gap in perception—and ultimately in action—is not shrinking despite the growing daily evidence of its importance and our ineffective ways" (Naim 218). The media causing awareness in all spheres of life through front-page action and infiltrating all interest areas to show the effects of sex trafficking could help narrow that gap. It could then catch the attention of individuals, which would create a social consensus to end the demand of the industry. The fight needs to start with the men who watch, buy and sell sex. Using media that confront the demand and call to every person to do the same is the next step in fighting this awful trade and hopefully ending an unspeakable crime.

"As long as there are men who objectify women and prefer to buy sex . . . as long as there are pedophiles intent on sexual gratification, and as long as there are individuals for whom financial gain is the only concern, women and children will continue to be kidnapped and enslaved" (Parrot 35).

The media might not have the same power to set the agenda as they did in the past, but it is also not fulfilling the role to put the most important stories at the forefront, not once, but continually to enlighten the public. The media's job is harder than ever before with the advancement of the Internet, but this issue is one of the gravest injustices that humans have seen. The reports should not cease until every woman and child no longer fears being used as a commodity, but is treated with justice and equality.

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