

ELON JOURNAL

OF UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATIONS



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ELON
UNIVERSITY

School of Communications

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The Elon Journal focuses 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.

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

As 18-year-olds, some students enter college possibly wanting to earn a degree more than they want to earn an education. They may question whether communication theory and research have anything to do with their future. But they get excited at studying great ideas and topical issues.

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.

This journal celebrates the life of the intellect through undergraduate research. It represents the intellectual maturing that occurs by the senior year, reinforcing all that we think a university should be.

Dr. Paul Parsons, Dean
School of Communications

Editorial Board

Thirty-two faculty members in Elon's School of Communications served as the Editorial Board that selected 13 undergraduate research papers for the 2017 spring issue.

From more than 100 research papers written in advanced School of Communications classes, 33 papers were submitted to the journal for blind review by students through the encouragement and mentoring of capstone teachers and other professors in the school.

Professors who served as the Editorial Board were Bill Anderson, Janna Anderson, Lee Bush, Naeemah Clark, David Copeland, Vic Costello, Kelly Furnas, Kenn Gaither, Jessica Gisclair, Don Grady, Sana Haq, Anthony Hatcher, Dan Haygood, Jooyun Hwang, Jonathan Jones, Derek Lackaff, Julie Lellis, Harlen Makemson, Barbara Miller, William Moner, Phillip Motley, Max Negin, Tom Nelson, George Padgett, Paul Parsons, Glenn Scott, Michael Skube, Jessalynn Strauss, Amanda Sturgill, Hal Vincent, Frances Ward-Johnson, and Qian Xu.

Thanks also go to Bryan Baker, who recorded the website's student introductions; Associate Dean Don Grady, who reviewed articles to help ensure the quality of the journal; and Tommy Kopetskie, who proofread articles and updated the publication's website.

Editor's Note

This edition of the journal covered many communications-related topics. Five articles dealt with portrayal of people in newspapers, social media, and a TV drama. Two articles investigated the responses of corporations to a social event or corporate crisis while four others covered promotion for restaurants, a Broadway musical, musicians, and universities. The two final articles analyzed advertisements.

Through content analysis of published print articles in *The New York Times* and ESPN during the 2016 Summer Olympics, Killoran found articles mentioned female stereotypes, which detracted from their athletic ability and performance. Dzilewski also analyzed the content of online news coverage of migration by national news media in the U.S., Germany, and Spain. She found that journalists used different frames and offered multiple narratives even within individual articles, reflecting the complexity of the migrant or refugee experience. Bohjalian investigated Instagram posts that tried to inspire followers to attain their fitness goals. The majority of the so-called fitpiration posts did not relate to fitness, but rather featured non-workout related content. After analyzing 10 episodes of a telenovela, *Jane the Virgin*, Grell found Latino stereotypes were minimal in comparison with progressive ideas and positive representations. Jackson analyzed YouTube videos emphasizing Black natural hair, and these videos revealed that content creators provide a positive discourse surrounding natural hair, and that content consumers tend to express gratitude and use the platform to deepen their understanding of hair care.

Schulz examined corporate responses to the Black Lives Matter movement and concluded that companies should consider main stakeholders before responding to polarizing social movements. Koehler analyzed Abercrombie & Fitch's responses to public criticism of its refusal to sell oversized clothing for women, which, she found, were not up to the level suggested by Robert Sims in a Redressive Actions framework. After analyzing websites and social media accounts of regional fast food restaurants, Condon found they succeeded based on development of a strong brand and ability to cater to the specific tastes of regional consumers. A survey and an interview led Ackman to conclude that Broadway's hit musical, *Hamilton*, offered online content to engage audiences that could not directly watch the musical in the theater. Berk interviewed music industry professionals and found promotions have become focused on digital marketing and streaming sites, but traditional methods of promotion are still relevant. After analyzing images on the webpages of universities in North Carolina and Pennsylvania, Del Vecchio found overrepresentation of non-White students on their websites. Fusco analyzed 36 *New York Times* articles containing sponsored content and found the paper complied with the disclosure and distinguishability standard most of the time, but that FTC guidelines have become blurred with evolving technology. Halle analyzed Hillary Clinton campaign advertisements during the 2016 presidential election and showed that the ad strategy shifted from focusing on policies to attacking characters as Election Day drew nearer.

These students should be congratulated for writing an excellent research paper within a short period of time for publication in this journal. Of course, as they acknowledged, it would not be possible without their mentors' effective guidance. I hope the articles in this issue will inspire students in future semesters to commit to examining important research questions and submit their papers to this journal.

Dr. Byung Lee
Journal Editor

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A Content Analysis of Online Coverage of Female Athletes in the 2016 Rio Summer Olympics

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements in
an undergraduate senior capstone course in communications

Abstract

News coverage of the Olympic Games, considered one of the largest planned media events in the world, can play a prominent role in influencing audience perception across the globe. Past studies have concluded that women athletes are often marginalized within the Olympic sportscast. This paper studied common stereotypes that surrounded female Olympians in the online coverage of the 2016 Summer Rio Olympics. The author performed a content analysis on 40 articles from ESPN and The New York Times written during the Games. The research concluded that the online coverage did in fact contain female stereotypes that deemphasized their athletic ability and/or performance.

I. Introduction

Every two years, people around the globe huddle in front of televisions to cheer on their respective country in the Olympic Games, considered one of the largest planned media events in the world (Billings & Angelini, 2007). As a result, millions of viewers watch and read the content that various media outlets produce over the 16 days that the Games take place. Because the media play such a prominent role in influencing audience perception, it is crucial that their portrayal of the events are accurate. However, this is not the case in the Olympic Games: Research has shown that the content seen by television and print media audiences is not of the Olympics itself, but of an event that has been carefully produced by a media organization (Eastman, S. T., & Billings, 1999). More specifically, the portrayal of Olympic athletes is heavily controlled and biased, especially when it comes to the representation of female athletes. It is no secret that female athletes in general tend to be underrepresented in the media compared to male athletes. Billings (2007) noted that the Olympics have proven to be a primary venue to analyze gender bias in sport because it meshes men's and women's competitions under one athletic frame. As a result, several studies have been conducted surrounding the theory that athletes are generally portrayed in alignment with their gender stereotypes. The majority of these works have concluded that women athletes are marginalized within the Olympic sportscast (Billings & Angelini, 2007).

The current study focused on the print media coverage of female athletes in the most recent Summer Olympic Games, held in Rio de Janeiro from August 5 through August 21, 2016. In order to study the portrayal of female Olympic athletes, this study looked at articles in *The New York Times* and ESPN.

Keywords: Olympic Athletes, Sexism, Media's Portrayal of Females, Olympic Coverage, Rio Olympics
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II. Literature Review

In an effort to better understand the research topic, the author reviewed pertinent literature on the power that television has on viewer perception, historical depiction of male and female athletes in the media, framing theory, and gender schema theory. While the author did not analyze television coverage in this study, literature on TV was reviewed because it contributed crucial information that helped her identify trends and themes.

The Power of Television on Viewer Perception

Mass media have the power to influence the beliefs, attitudes, and values of consumers (Koivula, 1999). Through research, Eastman and Billings (1999) exemplified ways in which television narratives shape the way viewers interpret sporting events, specifically “in selection, narration, and description of the events” (p. 141). Because television is the primary way for consumers to experience the Olympic Games, the portrayal of the events should be unbiased and packaged for the sole purpose of viewer enjoyment. However, the Olympics are thoroughly mediated by producing organizations, especially when it comes to American network broadcasters (Eastman, S. T., & Billings, 1999). This mediation heavily controls the outlook that viewers have on the Olympic Games. Koivula (1999) noted that mass media play an even larger role when it comes to sports because the majority of sporting events are observed through media outlets, such as television. In addition, research has shown that the language used in media plays a prominent role in the depiction of gender distinctions in the media, especially when it comes to the portrayal of male and female athletes (Koivula, 1999). These findings confirm the evident control that television producers have over the messages that are sent to consumers, especially when it comes to sports and the portrayal of athletes. Further, this type of TV coverage influences the themes that are often found in print media.

Historical Depiction of Male and Female Olympic Athletes

Generally, sports, especially professional sports, are viewed as male territory and receive more attention from the male population. In regards to the depiction of women in sports, Koivula (1999) concluded, “It is well documented that women receive strikingly less coverage than men” (p. 591). Thus, male versus female athlete portrayal and representation in the media have often been called into question.

Research indicates that women are less likely to be mentioned in the media, and more likely to be portrayed stereotypically, with commentary relating to topics such as their physical attractiveness rather than their athletic ability (Billings & Angelini, 2007). Not only do female athletes receive less media coverage than male athletes, but in the circumstances where females are covered in the media, they are portrayed in a manner that creates the image of a woman first, and an athlete second (Smith & Bissell, 2014). Typically, media coverage of female athletes focuses on their appearance, emotions, and relationships, while male athletes are praised for their athletic ability, strength, and masculinity (Smith & Bissell, 2014). In addition, the descriptive language that is used by television commentators and print journalists surrounding female athletes typically involves descriptions and characteristics that are in alignment with female gender stereotypes (Eastman & Billings, 1999). Often, these phrases undercut women athletes’ achievements and recognitions, and focus more on their physical attributes.

Women, Koivula (1999) pointed out, also tend to be framed in terms of their social positions by the media, for example, as mothers, girlfriends, or wives. As a result, women are generally viewed as less athletic or able than men, when in reality, they perform just as well as, if not better than, their male counterpart. Smith and Bissell (2014) confirmed the notion that the continued marginalization of the coverage of women athletes impede not only their ability to build an audience or fan base, but support the ongoing idea that female athletes and sports are undeserving of the overwhelming support and attention that male athletes receive.

Theories Surrounding Gender Bias in Sports

Several theories can be applied to aid in the explanation of how people interpret information they consume. Goffman’s (1974) framing theory suggests that mediation provides social views that aid in the interpretation of events. In sports, Smith and Bissell (2014) noted, “Framing theory establishes that the framer has more agency than those being framed, thereby the theoretical connection between framing and hegemonic masculinity is that those framing female athletes through commentary and visual coverage of

them will do so with a lens that keeps female athletes with less power in the venue of sport” (p. 50). This means that the media’s portrayal of female athletes is going to sway and influence the way consumers view those athletes. For example, females are generally framed in a way that highlights their femininity through comments on their attractiveness and emotionality. As a result, viewers might recognize female athletes for these characteristics before recognizing them for their athletic ability (Smith & Bissell, 2014).

Gender schema theory, another theory behind viewer consumption, suggests that society has shaped the way individuals view one another through stereotypes and norms (Jones & Greer, 2011). In an effort to make sense of society, individuals develop expectations, or schemas, as to how one should act to meet societal norms. When this proposition is applied to gender, this creates what is known as gender schema theory (Jones & Greer, 2011). Individuals subconsciously attempt to fit gender norms, and base the stereotypes on these schemas. When the media subscribe to this type of gender schema, their portrayal of athletes reinforces the existing stereotypes.

The current study aimed to determine whether or not any prominent gender bias existed in the media coverage during the 2016 Summer Rio Olympics, specifically in their coverage of female athletes. Previous research on past Olympic Games found that men tend to receive more coverage in the media compared to women. In addition, the language surrounding male athletes in media coverage typically contributes positively to their image as an athlete, while the language for female athletes takes away from their athletic performance and ability. A content analysis study was performed to answer the following research question:

RQ: What themes were prominent in media coverage among female Olympians?

III. Methods

Content analysis has been used by scholars in communication research because it effectively analyzes quantitative data that is grouped and categorized in research (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998). For this study, content analysis was chosen as the best method of research because the materials being analyzed will provide evidence that clearly answer the study’s research question. This study looked at the parts of each article for common themes or trends that would contribute to gender stereotypes that take away from the athlete’s performance, specifically female athletes, rather than each article in its entirety. The author read a total of 40 articles: 20 articles each from the websites of *The New York Times* and ESPN. These articles were chosen based on the date written, and whether they mentioned individual Olympic athletes. *The New York Times* had an average of 1.90 themes per article, while ESPN recorded an average of 1.75 themes.

IV. Findings

The author found that a female athlete was mentioned 180 times in 40 articles from *The New York Times* and ESPN combined. As shown in *Figure 1*, the analysis of these mentions revealed six common themes in order of decreasing frequency: physical appearance and/or age, female athletes mentioned or compared to their male counterpart; family; emotions; credit of female athlete success being given to a male or a coach; and the unnecessary use of belittling language, such as “an impressive time for a female.”

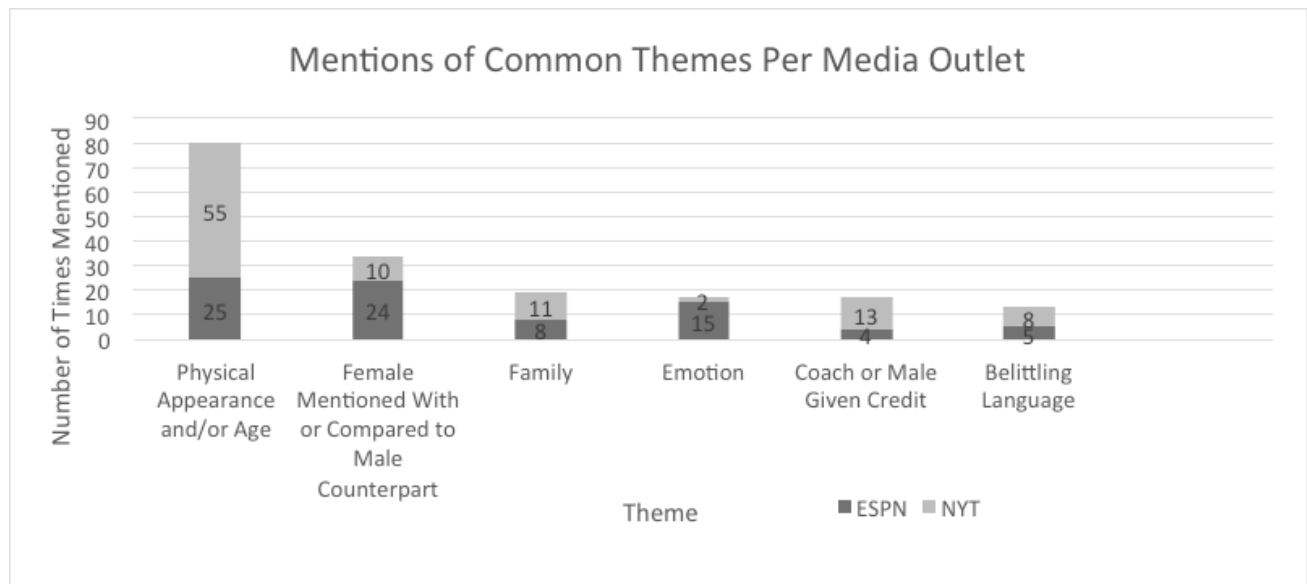


Figure 1. The number of times each theme was mentioned in the articles

The most common theme found throughout the articles taken from *The New York Times* and ESPN concerned the athlete's physical appearance and/or mention of her age (44.4% out of 180 mentions). For example, an article published in *The New York Times* titled "A 4-foot-9 Titan Stands Alone" described gymnast Simone Biles' small stature and "size 5 feet" when commentating on her athletic skills. Such information was not necessary when expressing the capability of Biles, and the article could accurately tout her abilities without. Further, a feature done on a gold medalist Kristin Armstrong was titled "Cycling; A Third Gold, at Age 42." Another article published by ESPN highlighting Olympic beach volleyball player Kerri Walsh Jennings was titled "How Kerri Walsh Jennings made it to a fifth Olympics at age 38." The article discussed the notable achievements of Jennings; however, it did so by referencing the fact that it was impressive for her age.

The second most common theme was female athletes being compared to their male counterparts (18.9%), as displayed in Figure 1. In multiple cases, a female athlete's success was unnecessarily accompanied by the feat of male athletes in the same field. An ESPN article covered Katie Ledecky's world record in the 400-meter freestyle, but not without mentioning that "Michael Phelps, the most decorated athlete in Olympic history, added a 19th gold medal to his staggering haul" shortly after discussing her accomplishment. Conner Jaeger, an Olympic silver medalist, told ESPN that Ledecky's stroke is "like a man's stroke . . . she swims like a man." In an article written about Simone Biles in *The New York Times*, Biles' male counterpart, Kohei Uchimura, was said to have a "resume [that] is even more impressive than Biles."

Mention of female athletes' families, the third trend, accounted for 10.6% of the total of 180 mentions. Several times female athlete's children and/or spouses were mentioned in a way that took away from their athletic performance, or put their athletic career second. An entire article published in ESPN about Olympic swimmer Dana Vollmer was titled "Game Changers: Can Olympian Dana Vollmer do what no other swimmer has done?" The article then explained how she still managed to win an Olympic medal even "after giving birth." The article is littered with phrases, such as "pushing her body to limits few would dream for a new mother" and "transforming her body from giving birth to a world-class swimmer." In addition, several articles published in both *The New York Times* and ESPN discussed female Olympians' current and or future plans for families, before or after noting their athletic accomplishments.

The fourth most common trend dealt with identification of female emotions (9.4%). These mentions pointed out and/or made assumptions about female athletes' emotions before, after, or during their respective events. One article in *The New York Times*, Olympic swimmer Missy Franklin "not only lost her smile, [but] she broke down in tears." Another instance was when Juliet Macur, a Times reporter, while describing a celebration of the American female Olympic gymnasts, painted a stereotypical image by writing that Aly Raisman "embraced her teammates in a happy, sparkly huddle." The language used in these descriptions is not only unnecessary, but it also takes away from female athlete performance.

Athletes' coaches and/or male companions, the category tied with the emotion category above, gained credit for a female Olympian's success in several instances. As displayed in *Figure 1*, multiple times a female athlete's success in an Olympic event was credited to her male coach. Most notably, much of swimmer Katinka Hosszu's success is attributed to her husband, Shane Tusup, who is also her coach.

The final theme was represented by phrases like "the only female to . . ." or "the first female to ever" being linked to the end or beginning of statements that were congratulatory of a female athlete's accomplishments (7.2%). These phrases, however, were not used when a male athlete broke an Olympic record or won a gold medal. For example, ESPN published that swimmer Debbie Meyer was "the only woman to sweep the three longer freestyle events." However, when noting Michael Phelps' success in the 4x100 relay, the author used the sentence, "As the most decorated athlete in Olympic history [...] he leaves Rio with five golds and a silver." No mention of 'the only male' or 'the most decorated male' was found during analysis of the articles.

V. Analysis

All 40 articles from *The New York Times* and ESPN contained at least one of six female stereotypes, taking away from female athlete performance and recognition. These findings confirm that the media coverage during the Rio Summer Olympics did in fact contain language that reinforced female gender stereotypes that took away from their athletic performance and ability.

The most common theme, commentary on physical appearance, was more prominent in *The New York Times* than in ESPN, as displayed in *Figure 1*. This is, perhaps, because *The New York Times* is a publication that covers more than just sports and caters to a wider audience than just sports fans. On the other hand, those seeking content that is strictly discussing sports statistical information or more in-depth look at sports will go to ESPN.

This research is in line with the prior research on female athlete stereotypes, which found that the media portrays female athletes in a way that takes away from their athleticism. The current study's findings support Pratt, Grappendorf, and LeBlanc's (2008) conclusion that print articles are more likely to focus on male athletes rather than female athletes. Pratt et al. noted that articles covering male athletes generally contain more quotes and language that focus on their athletic performance, while articles focusing on females featured more quotes from male athletes commenting on their family or appearance. This study also found that when females are mentioned in the media, the language surrounding their coverage generally takes away from their athletic performance.

VI. Conclusion

Overall, the research showed that ESPN and *The New York Times* both published articles containing language that ultimately reinforced gender stereotypes that took away from female athlete performance and recognition during the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio. The language in print media coverage surrounding female Olympians generally contained mentions of their family, emotions, and their male counterparts, while Olympian coverage of male athletes contributed more to their ability and performance.

The six most prominent themes that reinforced these gender stereotypes were the mention of physical appearance and/or age, mention of family, credit of female athlete success being given to a male coach and/or counterpart, mention and/or comparison of female athlete to their male counterpart, emotions, and the unnecessary use of a belittling phrase to describe "female" (for example, "an impressive time for a female"). Out of all 40 articles analyzed, all had one or more mentions of these themes.

Future studies may compare media in countries such as the United Kingdom, China, Canada, and others to American media to identify any differences in their coverage of female Olympians.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix

Analysis of Themes Found in Print Articles

Name of Article	Source	Sport	Themes/ Topics
The Rules of Olympic Attraction	New York Times	Swimming, Volleyball	1
The Crying Games	New York Times	Swimming	1, 2
The secret behind Olympic gymnastics? Their coaches	New York Times	Swimming, Gymnastics	3
The Couple Who Turns Heads at the Pool	New York Times	Swimming	1, 3, 4
Tearful Franklin laments finishing 'so far behind'	New York Times	Swimming	5
Sure, These Women Are Winning Olympic Medals, but Are They Single?	New York Times	Swimming, Volleyball	2, 3
Stumbling to Center Stage	New York Times	Gymnastics	6
Simone Biles Calms Her Mother, Then Sends Crowd Into Frenzy	New York Times	Gymnastics	1, 2, 5
Rio Olympics Roundup: Simone Biles, Usain Bolt, and Ryan Lochte	New York Times	Gymnastics, Track, Swimming	1, 4
Why Do Gay Men Love the Olympics?	New York Times	Swimming, Volleyball, Gymnastics	1
Olympic Tennis Player Madison Keys Knows How to Make Her Makeup Stay Put	New York Times	Tennis	1
Olympians in Hijab and Bikini	New York Times	Volleyball	1
Olympian Style Inspires Kids--and Some Adults	New York Times	Gymnastics	1
Michael Phelps Powers U.S. to Victory and Wins His 19th Gold Medal	New York Times	Swimming	1, 4
Inspiring Her Daughter, an Olympic Runner, Was No Sweat for a Fitness Guru	New York Times	Track	1, 2, 3
Gymnast's Specialty: Returning to the Olympics. (She's 41. It's her 7th Trip)	New York Times	Gymnastics	1
Cycling: A Third Gold, at Age 42	New York Times	Cycling	1, 6
Biles Has One Peer in Rio. Or Maybe Ever.	New York Times	Gymnastics	1, 4, 5, 6
At the Olympics, Everyone's Looking. Especially at the Men.	New York Times	Swimming, Gymnastics	1
A 4-Foot-9 Titan Stands Alone	New York Times	Gymnastics	1, 5
Why we should frame Katie Ledecky's dominance in terms of women's sports -- not men's	ESPN	Swimming	1, 4
Bolt targets Olympic triple-triple in bid to rival Ali, Jordan, and Pele	ESPN	Track	1, 4
On this night, appropriately, Katie Ledecky eclipses Michael Phelps	ESPN	Swimming	1, 4, 5, 6
Kerri Walsh Jennings' gold-medal streak snapped in semis	ESPN	Volleyball	1, 2
Aly Raisman finds her all-around silver lining in Rio	ESPN	Gymnastics	1, 5
Gymnast's Specialty: Returning to the Olympics. (She's 41. It's her 7th Trip)	ESPN	Gymnastics	1
Game Changers: Can Olympian Dana Vollmer do what no other swimmer has done?	ESPN	Swimming	1, 2
Michael Phelps helps U.S. to 4x100m relay win in final Rio race	ESPN	Swimming	1, 4
Katie Ledecky breaks 800-free mark, wins 4th gold of Rio Games	ESPN	Swimming	3, 5, 6
Katie Ledecky wins 400-meter freestyle in world-record 3:56.46	ESPN	Swimming	4
Lilly King wins 100 breaststroke gold, topping rival Yulia Efimova	ESPN	Swimming	3, 5
Katie Ledecky is the Present and the Future	ESPN	Swimming	1, 4, 6
How Kerri Walsh Jennings made it to a fifth Olympics at age 38	ESPN	Volleyball	1
Gabby Douglas calls social media critics 'hurtful' after ending Olympic career	ESPN	Gymnastics	1, 2, 5
Bronze, silver, braveharts and Bolt	ESPN	Track	4

Brazil ends Kerri Walsh Jennings' gold-medal run in straight sets in semis	ESPN	Volleyball	4
April Ross on body image and training for the Olympics	ESPN	Volleyball	1
Australian hurdler Michelle Jenneke jigs, but crashes out of hurdles heats	ESPN	Track	1
Australian coach queries 'half-baked' Jenneke	ESPN	Track	1, 3
U.S. women win medley relay, giving Team USA 1,000th all-time gold	ESPN	Swimming	4, 6

Key for themes/topics: 1 – Physical Appearance, 2 – Mention of Family, 3 – Coach or Male Given Credit, 4 – Female Compared to Male Counterpart, 5 – Emotion, 6 – Belittling Language

Crossing the Border: The Framing of Global Migration by National News Media

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements in
an undergraduate senior capstone course in communications

Abstract

Migration is a human experience that brought civilization to every corner of the globe. However, its modern manifestation threatens stability, human rights, resources, and security. For those outside migration's immediate reach, the news media is the source for public understanding of its flows and consequences. Through a cross-national comparison, this study investigated how different national news media frame migration to their audiences. Examining recent online news publications from the United States, Germany, and Spain, this study concluded that national news media construct multiple frames of migration, maintain a significantly international focus, and often emphasize their discontent with national governments' handling of migration issues.

I. Introduction

Human migration is one of the greatest issues facing today's society. Driven by violent conflict, social strife, poverty, and political turmoil, migration creates questions about the distribution of jobs, space, and resources, the cost of education and health care, and the security of national borders. It also challenges preconceived notions of nationality and belonging, as well as community traditions and culture. Migration, though, is only a symptom of many problems plaguing societies around the world, and because of its significant social impacts, it will continue to be a concern at the forefront of international discussion.

Today, not a single area of the world goes unaffected by human migration, nor has any nation gone untouched by flows of migration in the past. Once the hub of emigration, Europe is now facing one of the most dramatic episodes of immigration in modern history as millions of immigrants flee conflicts in the Middle East or search for economic opportunities outside of Africa. Across the Atlantic, the United States struggles with its own immigration issues, as it tries to secure its southern border against illegal migration from Latin America.

The migration crisis is a worldwide phenomenon and a megatrend of the 21st century, evidenced by the 244 million migrants who were accounted for in 2015 (United Nations, 2016). Unsurprisingly, global news media have focused heavily on the rapidly emerging flows of migration over the past decade, simultaneously chronicling global human migration and its wide-reaching consequences. The coverage of news media has driven migration to the forefront of regional, national, and international news on a daily basis.

Keywords: News Media, Framing Theory, Migration, Cross-national Comparison
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As a cornerstone to free and democratic societies around the world, journalism strives to educate citizens on current public affairs and issues in order to create informed participants and voters in public discussion (Aalberg, Aelst, & Curran, 2010). Journalism empowers communal dialogue by shaping out perception of events, as suggested by agenda setting and framing theories. The news media, and the journalists who construct it, are critical components to the public's understanding of the issues facing international leaders, policymakers, and their own communities. The global migration crisis has dominated headlines as more and more journalists bear witness to the experiences of millions of migrants and of the hundreds of communities they are arriving in. For those living outside of destination countries, the media's construction of immigration issues is crucial to the public's understanding of these topics because the public's lack of firsthand experience. This paper examined how national news media in the United States, Germany, and Spain framed these narratives for their audiences.

II. Literature Review

Research into the media is increasingly popular today, particularly cross-national comparisons of news media and news cultures, as technology has facilitated faster, wider reaching communication to broader publics. Advances in technology have also enabled the creation of new media formats and new avenues for citizens and non-journalists to communicate their opinions online. These novel territories in the field of communications have sparked plentiful research into the study of journalism ethics in light of new channels for reaching publics, into studies of comparing the validity of online and print journalism, and into cross-national comparisons of competing models of journalism.

A recurring theme throughout this field of research is framing theory, which suggests that how journalists frame an issue, event, topic influences the choices that people make about how to process that information (Davie, 2014). Framing theory examines how journalists and the media focus attention on certain events and then place them within a field of meaning. Although closely tied to agenda-setting theory, which describes the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media, framing theory goes beyond it by claiming that the way in which news is presented creates a "frame" for perceiving that information (Davie, 2014). Journalists and broadcasters place "frames" on the information they convey to the public, not only telling their audiences *what to think about* (agenda setting), but also *how to think about it* (framing) (Davie, 2014).

Framing theory is crucial to the study of communications, especially in a cross-national setting, because the frames which journalists create reflect what they believe is most valuable to their audience and what narrative their audience is most likely to identify with and internalize. According to Goffman (1986), frames are abstractions that people use to organize and structure message meaning in their everyday lives, and the frames that they internalize greatly influence how data is interpreted, processed, and communicated (Davie, 2014). With an issue like human migration, which affects the lives of billions of people, the frames that the media presents to the public have the potential to influence how citizens vote on immigration policy, how citizens welcome and treat immigrants, and how citizens understand the problems that migrant trends stem from.

Recent research into cross-national studies of communication has revolved around the comparison of content between the United States and the nations of Europe, as both are similar in terms of development, economics, and politics. Deuze (2002) stressed the importance of choosing "more or less similar countries" when conducting a cross-national comparison of journalists because if not, "the societal and corresponding media cultural influences" would better explain differences of journalists than journalists themselves do (p. 135). The research comparing and contrasting the two regions has tended to focus on a particular topic, such as political elections or the commercialization of online media. The cross-national comparisons of individual news media in different countries will help people understand how each country's media covered immigration differently because domestic media share "enduring, deeply embedded practices and beliefs established at the formation of [each nation's] journalistic field," (Benson, Blach-Ørsten, Powers, Willig, and Zambrano, 2012, p. 23).

Benson et al. (2012) also explained "medium theory" within communications, which describes how each medium will tend to encourage or "afford" particular types of "meaning making" and will discourage others. Medium theory reflects cross-national comparisons of media systems because it can be used to

hypothesize why there are competing tendencies toward an emphasis on commercialization and information in the news, or a greater emphasis on opinion and deliberation in the news. For example, in a recent study coding the front pages of both print and online versions of general interest national newspapers, they concluded that the prevalence of news decreased when moving from print to online both in the United States and France, alluding to the trend of journalism becoming more entertainment-based online.

Other scholars also investigated the role of media systems in cross-national comparison as they relate to levels of democracies, (Esser, 2008; Hanitzsch, 2007; Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2006).

The discussion of media coverage on human migration has yielded little published research so far, particularly in regard to recent migration in Europe, despite the significance it holds for the global community. Thus, this paper tried to compare national framing of human migration in some countries. For this study, the author raised two research questions.

RQ1: How do national news media frame migration or immigration within their borders?

RQ2: How do national news media frame migration internationally?

III. Methods

The author conducted a qualitative content analysis to identify and examine the coverage frames that news media employed to inform readers of news about migration, primarily on issues in their own nations, but also in the global community. This study relied on framing analysis, which, as described by Robert Entman, is a method:

To select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (Entman, 1993)

He also described framing as “essentially involving *selection* and *salience*,” meaning journalists select the information they believe to be most salient for their audiences, and thus, the selection pattern of content delivered to the public reflects journalists’ judgment within a media organization. Entman further states:

Frames . . . *define problems*—determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits; *diagnose causes*—identify the forces creating the problem; *make moral judgments*—evaluate causal agents and their effects; and *suggest remedies*—offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects. (Entman, 1993)

Through a qualitative approach using framing analysis, this paper sought to discover what information journalists choose to share with the public about migration trends and how journalists make sense of these trends. Although this approach cannot explain why journalists create these frames, it can reveal insight into the “what” is covered and the “how” it is covered.

Sample

The countries selected for this study include the United States, Germany, and Spain, based on their recent and past experiences with influxes of immigrants, many of whom through unregulated immigration measures. Within these nations immigration still exists as a key policy concern, and its leaders actively seek solutions to the conflicts that immigration trends create. The United States and Spain have dealt with steady waves of immigration over the past decade. Germany has a history of absorbing Turkish immigrants, but more recently is dealing with the strains of a rapid and widespread wave of immigration, which originated as a symptom of conflict in the Middle East.

To determine how countries receiving great waves of immigration craft narratives of this phenomenon, the author examined three national news outlets from each of the three nations: CNN, *The New York Times*, and *Voice of America for the United States*; *Deutsche Welle*, *Die Zeit*, and *Spiegel Online* in Germany, *ABE*, *El Mundo*, and *El País* in Spain. These publications were selected based on their national popularity and

prominence, as well as on their reputations as credible sources. For convenience, online articles published on these organizations' websites were used. The author selected articles by reading their headlines and assessing their relation to immigration or migration. All these articles were published from between May 1, 2016, and October 31, 2016.

This study collected 87 articles, with 22 from Germany, 33 from the United States, and 32 from Spain, in order to obtain enough material to garner legitimate findings and answers to the research questions outlined.

Procedure

Each article was coded based on a) the overall sentiment of the article and topic, b) the theme or narrative, c) the credibility and richness of the article, d) the scope, perspective or focus of the article, and e) the language used to describe migration or immigrants.

To determine overall sentiment, each article was coded for having a narrative with positive, negative, or neutral sentiments toward migration and its related topics. To determine the article's theme and narrative, the author wrote a short summary of each article, its purpose, and its position on immigration/migration, refugees/asylum, aid to migrants, and human rights. To bring additional insight into the analysis of the theme or narrative, the author checked if the article includes a call to action for the audience or for other interest groups. The credibility was based on the degree of verification of its arguments by citing additional sources—whether the article considered the perspectives of exterior sources, such as those of immigrants, citizens, government officials, or other authorities on the topic and included their views. To determine richness of each article, the study counted additional elements to the text, such as statistics, quotations, multimedia images, or videos. To determine the scope or perspective of each article, the study examined the inclusion or mention of national and international interests and mention of the perspectives from any government concerned.

Finally, the articles were coded for specific language included throughout and how often those specific words were used in the text, excluding image captions and advertisements. The analysis of language is important since biased language could influence the audience's perception of the article's narrative. The results of this coding are written on a coding sheet in Appendix A.

IV. Findings & Analysis

This section describes the four frames found through this study and the analysis of these frames.

Frame 1: General discontent with current handling of international migration by national governments

A dominating theme throughout the articles collected was dissatisfaction with the current state and handling of international migration and its many consequences—such as high death tolls, smuggling and exploitation, national insecurity, overcrowding, and violations to international human rights. News media in all three countries framed this dissatisfaction by pointing out the absence of strong and collaborative policies that were put forth by national governments and international organizations to address these concerns. Headlines, including “A mounting challenge for solving the current asylum crisis” (Gagnon, 2016) and “Disaster in the Making: The Many Failures of the EU-Turkey Deal” (*Spiegel Online*, 2016a), highlighted the overall disappointment expressed toward leaders and policy makers. A strong majority of the articles included a call to action on behalf of those administrators to bring viable solutions to this crisis. One such example was written by *El País*:

The international community must create a system to regulate large human displacement, to consider geopolitical circumstances, and to cover migration efforts from search and rescue to local integration It is essential that governments understand that the incentive structure should lead to effective shared responsibility, transforming migration into an opportunity for investment and growth. (Martelli & Zárate, 2016)

Other articles included calls to action to commit more efforts to put national interests first in terms

of accepting migrations, to increase investment in migration-departure communities in Africa, to provide greater aid to refugees within Europe's borders, and to propose better-informed policies to handle the flows of migration in the future. The inclusion of a call to action in the news media, at the journalist's discretion, illustrates that national news cultures view their role as critics of society and of government, and as informants to publics who have a responsibility to influence in how those societies and governments are run.

This framing by the news media is likely a reaction to the global events and initiatives that occurred during the sample time period (May-October 2016). The EU-Turkey deal and the rising death tolls of migrants in the Mediterranean heavily shaped public discussion of migration and both topics were viewed repeatedly in the examined articles as failures on the part of government leaders and policy makers to address these problems decisively. Much criticism, from both Germany and the other nations, fell upon Angela Merkel and her advocacy for the EU-Turkey deal; one article, "Merkel's refugee party: When values and interests collide," condemned Merkel for not putting Germany's interests first and for presenting Germany as unpredictable when handling world affairs, with the author stating that "the admission of unlimited numbers of people from different cultures, many of whom are poorly educated, cannot be in the best interest of a highly developed state" (Hasselbach, 2016).

The European Union experienced similar backlash from all sources in respect to its failed attempts to collaborate on issues like saving lives along migration routes and addressing the causes of migration in surrounding regions. One article titled "Boat carrying hundreds of migrants capsizes off Egyptian coast" blames the European Union for tragedies during the migration crisis as the "closure of the Balkan route and a migrant deal with Turkey" has pushed "asylum seekers trying to reach Europe to look to other paths" through illegal migration and the smuggling trade (Deutsche Welle, 2016). Few articles were congratulatory toward any national government in the handling of current migration issues, and many articles included dissenting opinions from not only citizens, but also from refugees or migrants who expressed disappointment in bureaucratic systems and national governments.

Frame 2: United States critical of the state of international migration, yet reflects very little on migration issues internally

The publications from the United States maintained a heavy focus on the international sphere, presenting stories on external migration issues more often than not. Of the few articles that did discuss the American relationship with migration and immigration issues, the majority were published by CNN and discussed trends of immigration from Latin America into the United States, with an emphasis on illegal or irregular migration. These frames cast the United States in a particularly negative light and often narrated the illegal immigrant experience in the country, such as one article covering a valedictorian's speech that revealed her status as an undocumented immigrant at her graduation (Richmond, 2016).

The New York Times and *Voice of America* demonstrated a more global perspective in the framing of their stories, with reports frequently covering the refugee crisis in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Journalists painted a negative frame of these events and the principles involved in them, frequently posing questions of how Europe would manage and accommodate the mass of migrants entering the region legally and illegally. An article by *Voice of America* denounced the conditions of the Calais migrant camp and France's inaction to improve its quality stating, "The Jungle is not fit for humans, its for animals . . . the filthy ramshackle camp has become a searing symbol of Europe's struggle to respond to an influx of migrants fleeing war and poverty" (Reuters, 2016). In another *Voice of America* article on rising xenophobia in European Union the author wrote:

The arrival of large numbers of refugees and migrants has created panic and political instability in the global north fueled by irresponsible politicians The right to asylum is being undermined by xenophobia as well as nationalistic and political rhetoric intent on linking refugees with security concerns and terrorism. (Schlein, 2016)

The framing of American journalism as internationally focused is further supported by the presence of international interests and the mention of other countries in almost all of the articles published by *The New York Times* and *Voice of America*, while there was no mention of national U.S. interests in over 90% of the articles posted by those publications. These publications rarely have articles covering migration-related interests in the U.S., with the exception of one article in *The New York Times* titled "Neighbors Question Cuba

Migration Policy.” This piece reported on a collective statement from nine Latin American countries that “called on the United States to end its preferential immigration policy for Cubans, calling it ‘discriminatory’ and a boon to human smuggling networks . . . creating trafficking, sexual exploitation, and violence” (The Editorial Board, 2016). While internationally focused, this frame negatively positioned the United States government as creating preferential treatment for some in migration process and included a call to action for the United States to treat all potential immigrants as equal.

Frame 3: Germany offers self-reflective media frame of migration, often illustrating mixed opinions on the subject

At the center of the refugee crisis in Europe, Germany publications offered a wealth of articles discussing migration and the German response to this phenomenon. German frames were particularly self-reflective, presenting both criticism of the national government and praise for its contributions to the refugee crisis affecting the region. Neither negative nor positive frames were dominant in German national media, but rather journalists presented a holistic view of the migration crisis, delivering arguments and narratives to support both sides. Almost all frames, however, presented German interests to the public.

In the past two years Germany has accepted more than a million migrants into its borders, yet German journalists do not seem to agree on whether to embrace these new additions or not. More recent frames highlighted Germany’s efforts to accommodate and aid migrant populations, such as one title proclaims, “German Catholic Church raises 80 million euros in migrant aid in the first half of 2016” (*Deutsche Welle*, 2016.) The publication of a complimentary piece like this one illustrates a frame of pride in the national news culture. This frame was supported by other articles like “Did We Do It? Taking Stock One Year After Refugees’ Arrival” (Wittrock, 2016) in which refugees thanked Chancellor Angela Merkel for her open-door policy implemented a year earlier. This frame is reinforced by rhetoric that positions Germany as a proponent for immigration and asylum—“Germany is a country of immigration, even if some people refuse to believe it. Some rhetoric on migrants has become ‘alarmingly radicalized’ and we call on society and political circles to rediscover a more rational discourse” (*Deutsche Welle*, 2016). Another article praised the inclusion of immigrants in German society saying, “The migration of skilled foreigners . . . would help stabilize the decline in the number of people and offset the effect of an increasingly ageing population” (*Deutsche Welle*, 2016).

Conversely, many articles in *Deutsche Welle*, *Spiegel Online*, and *Zeit Online* also fostered a negative frame of migration and its potential detriment to European society. German journalists were not hesitant to criticize Chancellor Angela Merkel for her open-door policy and her support of the EU-Turkey deal; her leadership in these two policies, they state, neglected to consider German interests or resources, and weakened Germany on the international playing field (Hasselbach, 2016). A separate article reported on the German exterior minister’s retraction on the number of refugees admitted into Germany during 2015, contributing to the frame of confusion and uncertainty about how to address the migrant crisis in the national media (Brady, 2016). Additionally, German articles also included criticism from the perspectives of migrants trying to enter Europe, as one migrant commented to *Spiegel Online*, “The Germans have done nothing. They don’t seem particularly interested either . . . Are the Germans arrogant or naïve?” (Bühler, Koelbl, Mattioli, & Mayr, 2016). The inclusion of outsider views of Germany’s efforts to aid the migration crisis illustrates how journalists in Germany are trying to create a holistic and unbiased narrative for their audiences.

Frame 4: Spain’s national media leans toward more positive accounts of migration—speaks of investment, integration, and success

Unlike the other two countries’ media, Spanish frames were skewed toward more positive accounts and perspectives of migration, in respect to its experience with immediate migration from Africa and its shared experience with the rest of Europe in the refugee crisis. Spain maintained these positive sentiments through the coverage of European investment in African communities as a method to abate motivations for migration north. Articles like “Niger: The New European Frontier” (Puig, 2016) and “Onions Against Irregular Emigration” (Lucas, 2016) both shared Spain’s value in investing in the departure communities of sub-Saharan Africa as a means for undermining economic motivations for migration. In “Onions Against Irregular Emigration,” the journalist applauds Spanish investment in Africa, describing that the program maintains the “aim of addressing irregular migration in Africa and the phenomenon of displaced persons” so that “immigration is by choice of aspiration, not by compulsion or despair” (Lucas, 2016). As a nation that attracts a strong majority of African

immigrants, Spanish journalists framed these accounts in a positive light, as the Spanish national interest is the deterrence of additional economic migration from Africa.

Taking on a more European focus, Spanish frames paid much attention to the ongoing refugee crisis in the Mediterranean and on Europe's eastern borders, where coincidentally negativity and pessimism became more prominent sentiments within the articles. Similarly to the U.S. and Germany, Spanish national news media highlighted European problems with the high death tolls of migrants and the lack of effective collaboration by national governments, and a majority of the articles called for solutions to these problems. However, Spanish journalists were still enthusiastic toward immigration, stating, "Immigration is positive in the medium and long term for public finances, economic growth, and the labor market" (Valderrama, 2016).

The framing of this crisis in Spain also focused frequently on Germany, which is likely due to Germany's active role in accepting refugees and in proposing initiative to stop the mass influx of migrants. Just as Germany offered conflicting frames about its involvement in the crisis, Spanish journalists framed Germany's involvement as positive in some cases and negative in others. In one instance a Spanish journalist framed Chancellor Merkel's leadership in the crisis as successful, covering Merkel's fulfilled promise to reduce refugee flow (Valero, 2016b). In another, journalists reported Merkel's statement on her belief that the success of the EU-Turkey deal could be replicated with other nations along the southern border of the Mediterranean (Doncel & Abellán, 2016). However, journalists also framed the German relationship with migration as resulting in more challenges than solutions—such as one article's report that Germany blamed refugee populations for the first rise in unemployment since 2013 (Valero, 2016b), while another shared a German poem that stated "Islam is not a part of Germany" (Valero, 2016a).

V. Conclusion

This research asked how selected news media construct narratives of migration domestically and internationally. The human experiences of migration is a salient issue that will not fade, but will likely grow in magnitude as the world continues to become more populous and interconnected. The movement of people, along with the transformations of communities that led to the migrations, has profound effects that journalists seek to explain in their daily reporting along with the sentiments and divisions of opinion on migration.

The findings of this research illustrates that the selected examples of national news coverage do not frame migration in one dominant manner, but rather depict migration in accordance with its current state within a local, regional, or international context. Journalists often offered multiple narratives within individual articles as they recognized the complexity of the migrant or refugee experience. One recurring theme throughout all the sampled articles was the involvement of national governments or international organizations in the migration process, both in positive and negative lights. As modern migration aligns with human rights to freedom of movement, but with the complications of security and nationality, governing bodies have taken on the responsibility for regulating and administering migration within the global community. Many journalists framed governing bodies as failing to meet this responsibility and repeatedly included demands to take larger steps to deter the need for mass migration by migrants and asylum-seekers, to more adequately accommodate migrants when they do arrive, and to introduce more informed, effective policy for handling migration in the future.

It is also worth noting how journalists did not frame their stories. They rarely built their stories around angles that tested whether authorities should have been restricting migrations or doing less for migrants and asylum-seekers. Overall, while the media reports were impatient with the works of governments and leaders in coping with immediate issues, the stories primarily adopted frames that echoed the concerns of international organizations and often looked upon the migration crisis with a mixture of national interests and humanitarian concerns.

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The Self-Presentation of Popular Fitspiration Experts on Instagram

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Abstract

"Fitspiration" is a popular buzzword used to describe the promotion of a healthy lifestyle through fitness and diet. This broad category has grown significantly in recent years, particularly on the social media platform Instagram, where fitspiration experts publish images of themselves to encourage or inspire others to attain their fitness goals. This study examined fitspiration experts on Instagram to determine how they present themselves through photographic content. The researcher selected six popular fitspiration users and utilized content analysis to obtain quantitative data. The results indicated that most posts did not relate to fitness but rather featured non-workout related content, which many times showcased the poster's bodies.

I. Introduction

At 25 years old, Kayla Itsines has 5.6 million Instagram followers and a group of about 150,000 women who claim allegiance to "Kayla's Army," proving their dedication to the social media and fitness mogul (Suddath, 2016). She has grown her popularity through posting on social media, creating a fitness program and app, and traveling the world inspiring men and women to live healthy lifestyles. She has achieved widespread popularity, and she isn't the only one. "Fitspiration," an enormous trend on Instagram, has grown significantly over the years. This encompasses the broad category of men and women posting images of themselves on social media platforms to inspire others to live a healthier lifestyle, and in turn have more fit bodies. Fitspiration is often described in hashtag form on Instagram. Hashtags enable users to locate content by words or phrases and allow photos to be grouped together when a user searches for a specific subject. The search of #fitspiration on Instagram results in over 9 million posts (Instagram). It has become a phenomenon with sponsorships, ads, and compensations. Additionally, when users hit a high level of fame through their accounts, it often becomes a career choice. Many fitspiration Instagram users utilize their social media accounts as a platform to further create fitness applications and workout programs that allow them to receive a large profit originating from their social media activity. Although the hashtag and general idea of fitspiration can be found on Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest, it is most relevant on Instagram and has grown most significantly on this platform.

Although both men and women lead fitspiration accounts, there are more well-known women than men; women who have received substantial fame for creating these accounts with millions of followers. Fitspiration Instagram account owners not only offer tips for exercise and healthy eating, but also enjoy the opportunity to brand themselves and gain fame and fortune through social media. However, more research is necessary to determine if the true purpose of these accounts is to further the general population's health and wellness, or rather to advance the branding and reputation of the account owner. How do these fitspiration women with Instagram accounts portray themselves through the images they post? By selecting six Instagram fitspiration

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account owners with over 1 million followers and analyzing five photos from each user, it can be determined whether these women are posting images that further their brand, looks, and fame, or if their sole purpose is to give meaningful tips that create a society of healthier people.

II. Literature Review

Since the creation of fitspiration on social media, it has become a prominent topic of discussion among scholars, media, and participants. As society becomes increasingly interested in health trends, the relevance of social media to health has increased steadily and gained recognition and attention. This review concentrated on three aspects that significantly pertain to fitspiration on Instagram: health trends on social media, the use of Instagram as a social media platform, and self-presentation on social media.

Health Trends on Social Media

Over the years, social media has become an integral part of today's society, with a wide number of platforms that have shown significant growth in both usage and range of reach. Recently there has been a push for healthier lifestyles, including increased exercise and natural food intake, which can be noticed in both advertising and on social media platforms. For women, specifically, social media has reflected the push for a "toned" type of body, dieting, losing weight, and now exercising to gain muscle (Yiannakis & Melnick, 2001). On a variety of social media platforms, including but not limited to Instagram, people have created accounts solely for the purpose of portraying themselves as fitness "gurus" or "experts" in order to show off their personal fitness progress while also inspiring others to become more physically fit. These accounts gain followers and prominence through giving tips, motivating, sharing their stories, and simply posting images of their bodies or regimens. Social media has allowed anyone with a mobile device or computer to access these motivational people who urge them to take control of their bodies through working out and eating healthier, and in recent years, it has become an unstoppable phenomenon (Reade, 2016).

Advertising in the United States has also taken note of this trend, and many companies have capitalized on the health craze when promoting their brands and products. Today, when deciding how to best frame themselves and their products, many companies create campaigns or advertisements that incorporate healthy or organic trends. Marketing products, specifically foods, as a way to better one's health and wellness is a popular movement that helps to increase success by appealing to a wide variety of audiences (Gilbert, 2000). For example, Chipotle focuses on the "natural ingredients" aspect of its brand in order to appeal to the health and wellness trend and the idea of putting only beneficial ingredients into your body. In recent years, fast food restaurants like McDonald's and Subway have focused on the healthier options they offer in commercials and print ads. This differs from how these food chains have marketed themselves in the past, which included focusing on the trends of indulgence and pleasure in order to appeal to what the popular ways of thinking were at that time. Past trends aligned more with the idea of treating yourself rather than treating your body in a healthy way (Divine & Lepisto, 2005).

Both fitspiration, standing for fitness inspiration, and thinspiration, standing for thin inspiration, are popular hashtags and trending topics on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest. The social media platforms themselves, including Instagram, Tumblr and Pinterest, have become aware of trends, such as fitspiration and thinspiration, and have created pop-up warnings to inform their users about the potential dangers of taking these health trends too far. Facebook has addressed this matter on its site, saying that they "prohibit content that promotes or encourages eating disorders." It is difficult to filter all of the content posted on these social media sites, but the different platforms are able to warn any user that searches for the specific terms of fitspiration or thinspiration that this content can lead to harmful psychological and physical issues (Carrotte, 2015). The term fitspiration was created after thinspiration, and is seen as a more inspiring and healthy version of the original thinspiration because it focuses more on tips to be healthy and fit rather than as thin. Although thinspiration can still be found on social media, it has become far less relevant. During the height of its popularity, it was linked to the triggering of eating disorders and unhealthy, self-harmful habits (Reade, 2016). This led to the creation of fitspiration, which has only become increasingly prominent since its inception years ago.

Scholars have recognized the appearance of a "fit body" as "one that engages in bodywork practices,

such as exercise and diet control, to attain a lean, tight, compact body” (Reade, 2016, p.1). On social media, it is easy to find a wide selection of fitness posts featuring women with what would be described as a fit body. Health and wellness accounts on social media are designed to inspire, and 76% of women surveyed in a study have reported that being exposed to fitspiration images would move them toward working or attempting to work to alter their fitness practices and lifestyle (Chasler, 2016). The images posted on fitness Instagram accounts are typically women with toned abs, arms, and legs, wearing the newest trends in workout attire, posing in a way that highlights the most toned parts of their bodies in order to push others to join them in the fitness journey. For most true “fitspiration” or health and wellness accounts, the main purpose of the posting is said to be this motivation.

The Use of Instagram as a Social Media Platform

Since its founding in 2010, Instagram has become increasingly popular and well known (Heffernan, 2013). With over 500 million active Instagram users, there is a tremendously wide range of audience and communities among the Instagram application (Statista, 2016). Instagram was the chosen platform for this specific study on fitspiration. The fitspiration account owners with the greatest recognition and highest follower count in this virtual community utilize Instagram as their number one source of releasing content. However, some of these users simultaneously utilize platforms like Facebook and Twitter to gain additional viewership and drive users back to their Instagram page. The overall phenomenon of fitspiration has an exceptionally large presence on Instagram because it is one of the primary virtual places that the health and fitness community both posts and views content. Today, the search of the term fitspiration on Instagram creates 9 million results.

On social media, users create a network of followers and contacts with an “imagined audience,” which creates different norms and sets of behavioral guidelines (Teodoro & Naaman, 2013). Communities have been formed on social media consisting of a wide variety of people that would not have met otherwise. People can have a passive approach in a health and fitness social media community through reading and observing posts or they can have a more active approach by posting, commenting, liking, and contacting other users (Teodoro & Naaman, 2013). This creates a setting where users don’t feel pressure to communicate with others or actively participate; they can even remain anonymous behind their username if they choose. However, on the contrary, they can also be extremely involved and create their own world that is separated from reality and features any aspect that they are inclined to post or share. Social networking sites have highly increased the ability to communicate instant feedback and created a constant channel of communication, which includes health discussion (Jong & Drummond, 2016). There are never any off hours for social media, which allows users to feel a constant connection and a community that they can always turn to, no matter where they are or what time of the day it is.

Instagram, like Twitter, uses hashtags to organize photos and allow for a content search to yield more accurate and quick responses (Heffernan, 2013). By creating hashtags, like fitspiration, communities are created and searches are narrowed, allowing people to find the exact content that they are looking for more quickly (Heffernan, 2013). It also allows picture and video publishers to pinpoint the audience that they wish to view their content (Heffernan, 2013). This enables the fitspiration account holders to direct their content to the audience that they deem most appropriate, while still infiltrating the homepages and search pages of users that may not follow them yet. Instagram allows for the posting of both pictures and videos, with the ability to give a response by either “liking” or commenting. Since Instagram has been created, people have cultivated large followings and gained both sponsorships and monetary compensation due to the popularity of their account.

Social media platforms, like Instagram, are viewed as both information and communication media as they are simultaneously “a form of cultural production and a form of public engagement and exchange” (Marshall, 2010, p. 6). Instagram account holders are not only able to engage in their own content creation, but can also communicate with a number of other users with both similar and dissimilar content, thus creating an exchange of information and the showcasing of photos and video (Marshall, 2010). Since its creation, Instagram has grown into a virtual community. Through user communication, people feel as if they are truly friends with the account owners they follow, and through constant posting, liking, and commenting, users are able to stay up to date with people they may have never even met.

As a whole, the category of health and fitness posts on Instagram is almost unavoidable. Instagram users often view fitspiration-related content even when they were not searching for it. Users will simply

stumble upon one or two posts and then, if they wish to see other similar photos, will become introduced to the entire community. On Instagram, users' newsfeeds will often show posts that their friends have liked, allowing them to see content uploaded by people they didn't originally follow or know of, but may gain interest once the users see the various images (Carrotte, 2015). There is so much content that has infiltrated the Instagram community that it is nearly impossible to only view the content that users view as their "preference," which can lead to many people stumbling upon posts that sparks their interest and creates a new follower of the trend. There are pages on Instagram that recommend users view a variety of posts they may like as well as the posts that the people they follow like, both of which lead to ample opportunity for someone to stumble upon the fitspiration trend and become interested and hooked.

Self-Presentation and the Motivation of Showcasing Oneself on Social Media

Social media is not only a way to connect with others, but also a way to connect to people that you may not have met previously. Many times these individuals will never meet face to face. This means that the user can choose how they wish to show themselves, and the depicted image may or may not be the same as who they are in real life. Some individuals see social media as a form of self-presentation, a form where they can hide certain aspects of themselves while emphasizing others (Seidman, 2013). The choices that users make when showcasing themselves or their bodies may deceive the viewer of the post. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) allows individuals to present themselves in a distorted way for there is less immediate accountability for deceptions (Teodoro & Naaman, 2013). There is a sense of freedom the owners of social media accounts feel in terms of self-presentation and their choice in revealing information about themselves, their identity, their looks, and their lives. Due to the selective self-presentation nature of Instagram and other platforms, computer-mediated communication users feel less pressure because they can create the self that they wish to be through selective presentation (Teodoro & Naaman, 2013). When Instagram account users view photos and videos of another user they follow or have stumbled upon, it is nearly impossible to decipher if this is selective self-presentation, or a more accurate portrayal of the user. In many cases, especially in the fitspiration community, it is likely that when someone follows a popular account they will never actually see the account owner in person but rather always on a digital screen. This can produce misleading self-presentation, or the viewer seeing an image in a manner that the original post publisher did not intend. To many, this is both an appeal and a drawback to computer-mediated communication.

This current study aimed to investigate how users with a significant number of followers on the platform of Instagram have achieved their social media fame and success by analyzing the posts that they have published. Analyzing the posts published by fitspiration users on Instagram who have a large number of both followers and posts allowed for a deeper look into what qualities and features are common among users that have gained success through fitspiration. By utilizing past literature regarding fitspiration on social media, this study expanded upon the previous research and dove deeper into the idea of self-presentation on Instagram, specifically looking at the way that people frame themselves in photographic posts. Past literature allowed the researcher of this study to analyze posts based on original coding categories that are relevant to the fitspiration community. The coding categories created by the researcher reflected the different aspects of fitspiration as a whole by utilizing the stereotypes that have been created in terms of a "perfect" body as well as the types of posts that are common among fitspiration users. The current researcher utilized past literature that has indicated the most relevant and prominent qualities of the fitspiration community. For this study, the researcher asked one overarching research question: What types of photographic content do these well-known fitspiration users post on their accounts?

III. Methods

This study used quantitative analysis to code data into eight categories. Instagram was the chosen platform because fitspiration is most prominent on the medium. The study targeted Instagram accounts that were solely made to share their fitspiration rather than occasionally "hashtagging" or posting a fitness image. The researcher chose to focus only on women because there are a high number of women fitspiration Instagram users and many of the most well-known accounts belong to women. Also, much of the prior literature on this topic has focused on the effects on women.

Instagram Accounts Analyzed

Next, the specific Instagram fitspiration user accounts were selected. Kayla Itsines, Anna Victoria, Jen Selter, Katy Hearn, Lyzabeth Lopez, and Emily Skye were picked based on a set of criteria. First, they all have over 1 million Instagram followers, which both proved their popularity and success and put them on a relatively equal playing field when comparing the number of likes per post. Also, all of the chosen experts can be found on different lists on the internet that describe the best fitspiration accounts to follow on Instagram. All six of these experts appear in one or more articles that label them as having accounts that deserve recognition, including “Inspiring Fitness Girls on Instagram,” “Fit Couple Accounts on Instagram We’re Obsessed With,” or “Instagram Girls to Follow for Fitness Motivation” (Fisher, 2016; Rose, 2016; Top.Me, n.d.). Also, all have used their Instagram account to further their success by creating fitness workout apps and programs. Not only does this serve as a commonality among all six users, but it also shows the way that the fitspiration account owners have grown from social media and transitioned to other means of fitness success, including fitness world tours, fitness books, iPhone applications, programs, and more.

Based on these criteria, the five most liked posts published by these six Instagram accounts between October 15 and October 31, 2016, were selected. This time period was chosen because it provides the researcher with the most recent data at the time of the study. Additionally, responses on Instagram are mostly completed within about two weeks of the photo being published, making the number of likes on these chosen photos stagnant at their maximum height of popularity and engagement. The researcher considered the highest number of likes when choosing posts for analysis because it reflects the popularity of posts among the viewers of the image. On Instagram, users “like” a post if they enjoy or agree with the content being published; therefore, if a post gets a large number of likes, it is deemed successful. Because the pictures chosen for this study were the most liked images during the given time period, the researcher was able to assume these were the most popular among the viewers. Table 1 displays the number of followers that each account had on the last day of the selected publication period.

Table 1. Number of Followers by User

Account Owner	Follower Count
Kayla Itsines	5.9 million
Anna Victoria	1.1 million
Jen Selter	10.3 million
Katy Hearn	1.5 million
Lyzabeth Lopez	2.1 million
Emily Skye	1.8 million

Kayla Itsines – The 25-year-old has been a personal trainer since 2008. She joined social media in order to share healthier lifestyle tips and has since created an app, a book, and completes world tours to spread her message (Itsines, n.d.).

Anna Victoria - She started her Instagram account when she began her own fitness journey in 2012 to post the content that helped to motivate her. Since then, she has become a certified personal trainer and created her current 12-week guides (Gilbert, 2015).

Jen Selter - The 23-years-old started posting images of herself in relation to fitness on Instagram and noticed the growing popularity. Her social media presence grew sufficiently, which led to the expansion of her fitness challenge (Short-Biography).

Katy Hearn - Hearn created an Instagram account in January 2013 to showcase the transformation she had experienced since beginning her lifestyle change. After giving out tips on her account from her own knowledge, she decided to become a certified personal trainer, and now offers all of her training strictly online (Auerbach, 2015).

Lyzabeth Lopez - Lopez experienced body dysmorphia and anorexia, which led to her interest in nutrition and fitness. She has earned many fitness and nutrition certifications and has created a training

method called the Hourglass Workout. Since beginning her fitness journey, her social media presence has grown (Narins, 2014).

Emily Skye - Skye endured depression, bullying, and anxiety which had led her social media accounts to focus heavily on the inspiration aspect of fitness. She earned her followers through posting fitness workouts and nutrition tips, and since then has created an entire fitness and nutrition program that can be purchased online (Saul, 2016).

Eight Categories for Analysis

After choosing the posts to be analyzed, the author created eight coding categories to see what qualities were portrayed through the photographic content based on fitspiration literature and the common themes among fitspiration users. When each image has the following element, it was assigned 1 point. Otherwise, it scored 0 points. Only the photographic content was analyzed, not the caption.

1) *Presence of before and after comparison.* For this category, each image was coded as “1” if there was an image displaying a comparison of the same body before and after a fitness journey, and “0” otherwise.

2) *A workout image.* If an image displayed someone in the photo actively engaging in any type of working out, the image was coded with a “1”.

3) *Workout with equipment.*

4) *More than one person in the image.*

5) *A body with no relation to exercise.* If the image showed the account owner who posted the content showing their body in no relation to exercise (i.e. working out or engaging in physical activity) the image was coded with a “1”. These non-exercise related images were further divided into two categories: whole body or specific body part.

6) *Sponsored posts.* Each photo received a “1” if it was sponsored.

7) *Inspiring quote or words.* Although the written caption correlating to the post was not analyzed in this study, inspirational quotes or words were included if they were part of the photographic post displayed in the image format rather than the caption.

8) *Wearing workout clothes.* Photos received a “1” in this category if the person in the photo was wearing clothing made for exercise, and a “0” if they were wearing regular, everyday clothing.

IV. Results

Content analysis showed no sponsored posts, so all images are the result of genuine self-presentation, as shown in Table 2. Among these 30 self-presentation images, only one image was related to working out, while the others displayed a variety of non-workout content. For example, body images that are not related to workout, images about user’s personal life (significant others, landscape images, etc.), and things popular in today’s pop culture or news.

Table 2. Number of Posts for Each Category

Category	Number of Posts	Percentage
1) Workout Image	1	3%
2) Before/After Image	2	7%
3) More than 1 Person in Image	3	10%
4) Quote/Inspiring Words	1	3%
5) Body Shown with No Relation to Exercise	18	60%
6) Sponsored Post	0	0%
7) Wearing Workout Clothes	10	33%
8) Working Out with Equipment	1	3%

The majority of the non-workout images were pictures of the user's body posing. Most of these poses included the whole body; however, a few focused on a specific body part. Table 3 shows the breakdown of images under the category of "Body shown with no relation to exercise."

Table 3. Number of Posts by Body Section

Whole Body	15	83%
Back/Buttocks	2	11%
Upper Body Emphasis	1	6%

These users model their whole bodies or zoom in on specific body parts to evoke the impression of being "fit" by showing off large amounts of skin and a slender body with defined abdominals, a muscular back, buttocks, and thin but defined legs.

Figure 1 displays an example of one of the images posted by a fitspiration user, Emily Skye, that displays her whole body with no relation to exercise, but wearing workout clothing (Skye, 2016). Throughout all of the whole body images the body shape was similar. The entire body was slim but also featured prominent muscular definition.

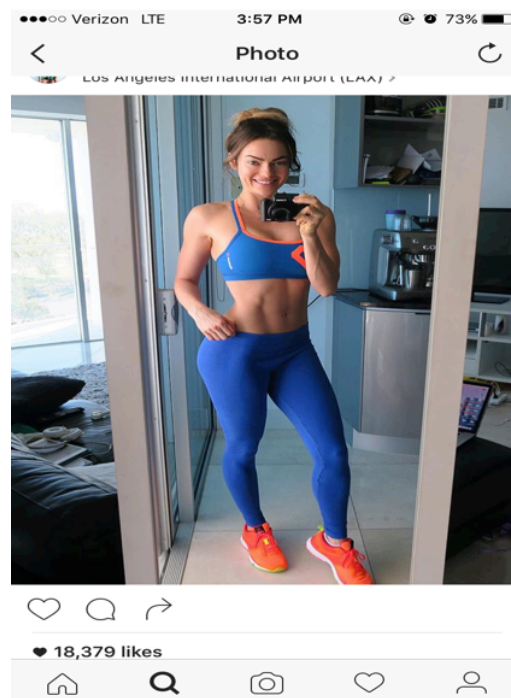


Figure 1. An example of whole body image unrelated to exercise

In addition, this study used Reade's (2016) body type scale to assess the body presented by these Instagram account owners, if there was any. Based on this scale (*Figure 2*) the body types of the users examined in this study most closely resemble the thin body types of images 1-4. The posted photos that displayed their bodies, either relating or not relating to fitness, portrayed them only as toned and slim. They did not publish any photos that showed body types 5-10. Their chosen photographic content portrays only fit, toned, skinny bodies, which symbolizes the common body type of the fitspiration community. Although there is some slight variation among the fitspiration users, all are slender and toned. Some have more muscular legs or buttocks than others; however, all resemble the same slender body type.

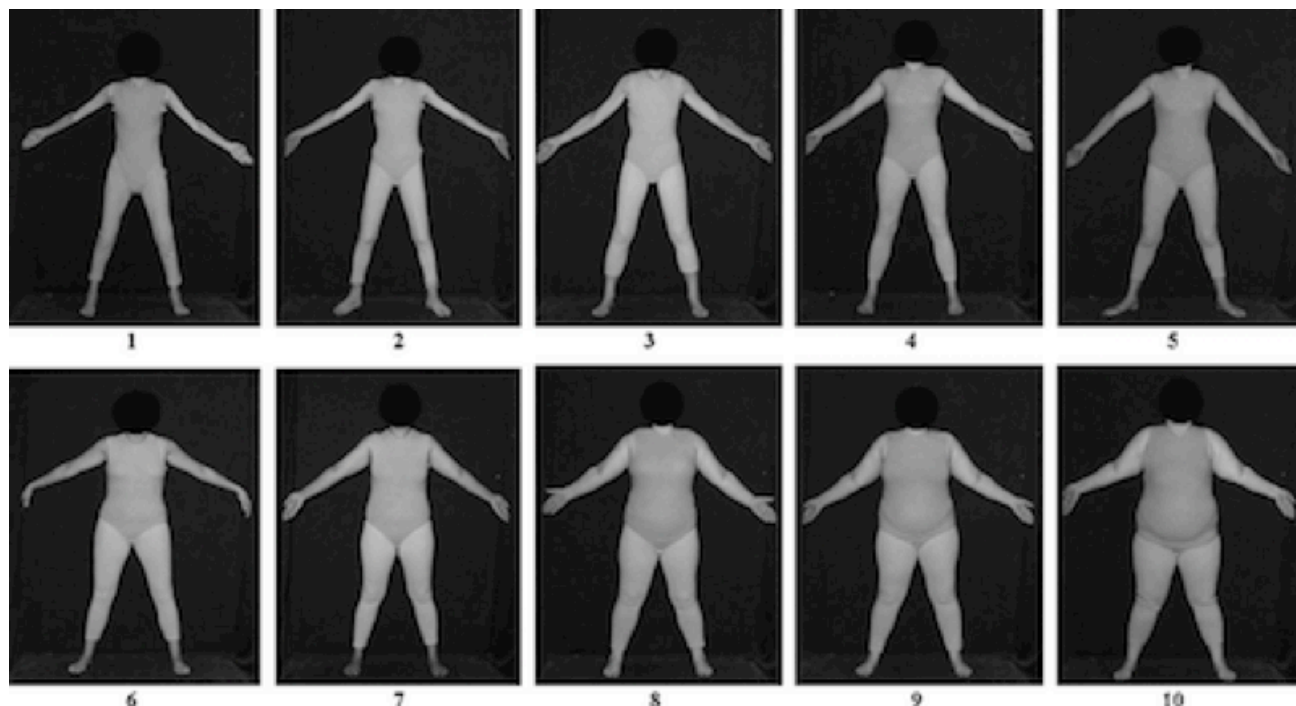


Figure 2. Body type scale (Reade, 2016)

When these fitspiration Instagram account owners posted photos of their whole body, only 33% of these posts showed them wearing what would be described as workout clothes. The other photos of themselves showed off their entire body wearing normal clothes or minimal attire, such as a bathing suit. Additionally, the majority of these photos displayed only one person, usually the account owner. Only three of the photos featured two people, one of which was a male.

Sometimes, the images have no relation at all to human bodies. *Figure 3* shows an example of a non-workout image. This post has no relation with fitspiration, yet still was one of Anna Victoria's most liked images from the time period examined in this study.



Figure 3. An example of non-workout image.

Both before and after images and quotations were parts of the coding set, as they are commonly looked at as forms of inspiration among the fitspiration community. Many times fitspiration users will create an image post that displays a popular quote rather than writing this content in the description or caption. In the photo posts chosen for this study there were two before and after images, and one inspirational quotation post that read, “So many years of education yet nobody ever taught us how to love ourselves and why it’s so important.”

V. Discussion

After reviewing all of the image posts chosen from the selected fitspiration users, it was found that most of the users post pictures of their body, either whole or part, rather than showing themselves actually performing workout moves.

The presence of women displaying their bodies in order to gain followers and likes was significantly more noticeable than the presentation of tips about working out and eating healthy. Previously, popular forms of inspiration for these accounts included quotations, tips, and testimonials. However, the photos looked at in this study indicated that fitspiration accounts post more photos of their bodies, which can be looked at as the end goal rather than the work that was completed along the way.

Nowadays, the images of women posing with skinny, fit, toned bodies may be the new form of inspiration. Seeing images of the perfect body that fitspiration followers want to obtain may be what inspires people, more than transformations, testimonials, quotations, or tips. Although the previous forms of inspiration are still present on the current fitspiration accounts, they are found noticeably less than the images of posing, fit bodies.

When deciding which Instagram fitspiration users to study, the author chose account owners who all had over 1 million followers and had created some type of workout program, including but not limited to a phone application, website, meal plan guide, and workout guide. These fitspiration Instagram account owners have achieved such a high level of popularity from their account that they now have the ability to utilize their followers as a platform to grow their brand. Because of this, these accounts have transformed from solely fitspiration (fitness and nutrition) to more of a lifestyle account. The accounts originally created as fitness inspiration pages now post pictures of pets, significant others, landscape, home life, or anything the user wishes to publish. These users still frame themselves as fitspiration experts because they still post fitness-

related photos, although not as frequently. However, their fame now allows them to post any picture that they want and still receive the same number of likes and an increase of followers. Additionally, because these users have worked over the years to become known as fitspiration women, even when they post pictures of their body in a modeling pose, it is still viewed as fitspiration because the connotation of their account as well as the slim and toned nature of their bodies.

The general idea of fitspiration has transformed over the years and has grown in recognition and popularity. Although it is a healthier alternative to its predecessor thinspiration, it still can convey the wrong idea and has been criticized for causing eating disorders and unhealthy obsessions with working out. Although the specific Instagram fitspiration accounts chosen for this study do not attempt to promote unhealthy habits or any type of obsession, they may do so unknowingly. Many of their posts are unrelated to fitness as a whole; however, the ones that display their whole body or parts of their body may be setting unrealistic standards for people. The bodies shown in the photos are all slender and toned as displayed in *Figure 2*.

Although this can be seen as their form of inspiration, it can also be seen as an unreachable body type for the common person, which may be viewed as unethical. The type of bodies portrayed is that of a model seen in a magazine or on TV, not that of the average person who owns an Instagram account for the enjoyment of looking at and posting pictures. Through their increased fame and followers, and their creation of workout programs outside of Instagram, these women have transformed from normal Instagram users to actual brands. Although their success has proven to steadily increase, this may simultaneously make them less relatable to other Instagram users searching for fitness inspiration. Because they have already achieved what are perceived as perfect bodies and now post an abundance of images that showcase their physiques, they no longer demonstrate the same journey and struggle as they may have at first. They are now more like celebrities than regular people.

VI. Conclusion

This study aimed to pick Instagram users and photos that allowed a fair comparison and an accurate depiction of the well-known fitspiration account owners. However, there were various limitations to the study that, if corrected, could have produced even more accurate results. First, the researcher was unable to use video posts, only choosing from still-photo posts. In order to maintain equality in the choosing of photos with the most likes, it was impossible to choose videos for they are ranked by view count rather than likes, creating a different measure for comparison. However, many of the videos on fitspiration accounts display the user performing various types of workouts, which could have added valuable data to the research. Potentially, these videos could have shown the users posting more true fitness-related material. Future studies may focus more on the video content rather than the photographic content, as this aspect of Instagram is relatively new.

Additionally, the selected Instagram users all had over 1 million followers proving they are well known not only in the fitspiration community but on the entire Instagram platform. This creates two limitations. First, the posts examined in this study were recent, meaning they had over a million followers when they posted it. The posts that these users published at the beginning of their fitspiration careers when they had fewer followers and were attempting to achieve fame may have been different, including the way the account owners presented themselves. Also, since these account owners are now “famous,” the images they post may not be an accurate depiction of the entire fitspiration community. Finally, the lesser-known fitspiration account owners with fewer than 1 million followers may post more fitness-related images because they are not yet an established brand and may be more focused on the fitness aspect of their account rather than lifestyle.

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The Fight for Equality: The Role of Latino Stereotypes in *Jane the Virgin*

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Abstract

After premiering on The CW in 2014, Jane the Virgin has gained significant media attention as the network's first show to feature a predominantly Latino cast. This paper investigated to what extent Latino stereotypes were present in the series, and in what functions the program producers used them while weaving in cultural issues and concepts, such as immigration, religion, and class differences. Based on a qualitative content analysis of 10 episodes from a two-year period, stereotypes were present at times, but they were minimal in comparison to the progressive ideas and positive representations illustrated, and were predominantly presented to be questioned and challenged.

I. Introduction

Of the characters on primetime television, only 3-4% are Latino; however, Latinos make up about 16% of the population of the United States, the largest minority in the country (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015). Of the minute percentage of Latino characters that are depicted on television, only 11% are shown having high-status jobs (Mastro, 2008). When Latino characters are present, they have historically been in stereotypical roles, such as the Latin lover, buffoon or comic, or criminal (Mastro, 2007). The depictions shown on television are not accurate and can provide viewers a false impression or understanding of Latinos and Latino culture. Since the United States is home to a variety of peoples and cultures, it is crucial that the media accurately portrays this diversity.

One show, in particular, is aiming to expand the view of Latinos on television. *Jane the Virgin* follows the story of Jane Villanueva, a hyper-organized, plan-oriented, extremely motivated graduate student, who happened to get accidentally artificially inseminated with her boss' baby at a routine checkup. The show was adapted from a Venezuelan *telenovela*, soap opera, *Juana la Virgen*; however, it has proven to appeal to a wide audience. The show, which draws in about one million viewers per week according to CW Television Network ratings, uses over-the-top telenovela-esque storylines and love triangles to create an innovative show. These often outlandish issues and complications are presented to add to the richness of the show. After premiering on The CW in 2014, the show has gained significant media attention as the first CW series to feature a predominantly Latino cast, as well as being the first CW show to be nominated for and win a Golden Globe Award (Ryan, 2015). This paper chronicled the Latino issues in *Jane the Virgin* and analyzed the show's characters to see if they were actually breaking stereotypes and, if so, in what way.

This topic is relevant today because it showcases "a larger cultural process where Latinos and non-Latinos intersect" (Avila- Saavedra, 2010, p. 146). There has been much discussion of Latinos in the media

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recently in regard to the 2016 presidential election. Media often portrays Latinos as one people, a people of non-English speaking, undocumented immigrants. It is a crucial time to portray immigrants, and Latinos in general, as a people who have various skills, economic statuses, and immigrant statuses. By portraying Latinos positively, the minority group is able to have a more positive self-identity, while giving non-Latinos, “a newfound source of information about U.S. Latinos at a time when immigration from Latin America is a prominent and complex social issue” (Avila-Saavedra, 2010, pg. 146).

II. Literature Review

As a background for this study, the author researched two relevant theories, television shows with Latino casts, and traditional Latino stereotypes; the results are described in the following literature review.

Cultivation theory

Cultivation theory postulates that “long-term exposure to television’s stable set of selective messages ultimately shifts a viewers’ (sic) social perceptions toward the television version of reality, regardless of its accuracy (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005, p.111). This is significant when looking at how people of different races are portrayed because the way a certain group of people is depicted can affect how others think about that group. With regard to Latinos specifically, viewers might take negative characteristics shown on television and apply them in real-life situations whether or not they are true (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005). Furthermore, “viewing the limited and often stereotypical characterizations of race and ethnicity offered in the media influences the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of audience members, Whites in particular, as well as the self-concept of ethnic minority group viewers” (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015, p. 18). The power of cultivation theory can also be employed to change attitudes or viewpoints in a positive way. If portrayals begin to shed light in a new and positive way, the audience may begin to question traditional stereotypes, which could lead to the cultivation of new viewpoints. Positive portrayals of minority groups on television shows may change people’s perceptions of them if they are more frequently exposed to positive portrayals (Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Ortiz, 2007, p. 352).

Latinidad and Social Identity Theory

Latinidad, the concept of Latino cultural identity (Rojas, 2004), encompasses Latinos’ desire for a collective identification (Avila-Saavedra, 2010). When shown on Hispanic television shows or networks, Latinidad often has ties to Latinos’ roots as well as their class within U.S. society (Rojas, 2004). Latinidad is essential when showing Latinos on television because it allows for Latinos to be portrayed accurately, and not as an Americanized version of themselves. There are two interpretations of U.S. Latino identity currently being shown—Latino identity that focuses on otherness and another that promotes cultural integration (Avila-Saavedra, 2010).

Social identity theory, as applied in this research, encompasses “the processes through which exposure to both the quantity and quality of television messages impact real-world interracial interactions” (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005, p. 112). The theory helps to explain the role media can play in the development of how individuals see themselves and how they view others, based on such practices as group affiliations. Groups can be based on gender, age, and ethnicity. According to social identity theory, a person’s group provides “characteristics that define a member’s self-concept by furnishing the normative attitudes and behaviors associated with membership . . . crucial to the maintenance of self-concept and self-esteem (Mastro, 2003, p. 99).

In a *Huffington Post* interview, Gina Rodriguez, the actress who portrays the main character on *Jane the Virgin*, stated, “I didn’t often see Latinos portrayed in a positive light, but I saw them in my household. I knew it was possible, and I knew how I was affected by not seeing positive role models with my skin color. So, I thought I would use my art to change that and play positive roles that would let people see themselves differently” (Duca, 2015). Entertainment programming can influence interpersonal interactions, and social identity theory underscores the importance and the need for healthy and positive images of Latinos.

Telenovelas and Latino Stereotypes in Primetime Television

Considered a form originated in Latino popular culture, a telenovela is “a serialized form of television melodrama, usually centered on the romantic misfortunes of a heterosexual couple, which always comes to a narrative conclusion” (Avila-Saavedra, 2010, p. 134). There are two categories of the telenovela: *rosa*, which

focuses on romance and problems of a heterosexual couple, and *de ruptura*, which generally explores social issues that are perceived as problematic (Avila-Saavedra, 2010). Telenovelas allow Latinos to reconnect to their cultures as well as gain inspiration and self-affirmation from the characters on the shows, many of whom overcome obstacles and achieve successes (Rios, 2003). Latino-themed programming can be viewed on three different types of networks: Spanish language networks, Latino-themed English language and/or bilingual networks, and Latino-themed programming distributed by English language networks (Moran, 2015).

Television viewing is a prominent source of popular entertainment in most of today's society, and therefore the portrayals of dramatic characters can have important effects (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015). Previous content analyses have formed that when Latinos are shown on television, they are generally pigeonholed into a small set of negative depictions (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005). Racial stereotypes typically include Latinos as comics/comedians, criminals, lovers/sex symbols, lower class, very religious, or unintelligent (Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Kopacz, 2008; Markert, 2007). As previously mentioned, Latinos are the largest ethnic minority in the United States (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015). Not all Latinos fall into the usually narrow and derogatory set of depictions, and thus scholars have argued that the continuance of unjustified assumptions about an entire group of people is unfair and incorrect. By continuing to show Latinos in this hegemonic light, producers lead viewers to assume these stereotypes are true, rather than to question their validity (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005).

In a 2004 study by Rojas in which Latinas were interviewed about how Latinos were portrayed on television, participants voiced concerns about the absence of U.S.-born, college-educated Hispanics. The researcher found that TV characters do not reflect the population of smart, wealthy, competent Latinos in the United States (Rojas, 2004).

Previous shows with predominantly Latino casts

Many shows paved the way for Latinos to have roles on television. One of the first shows to feature a predominantly Latino cast was *The George Lopez Show*, which premiered in 2002 on ABC. The fictional show featured real-life comedian, George Lopez, and his fictional family. In true Lopez fashion, humor is a huge component of the series. A content analysis of the show revealed that while the show challenged stereotypes, it also perpetuated them (Markert, 2007), even though stereotypes presented were often shown in humorous ways. For example, George lived with his immigrant mother, Benny, and his family and provided raunchy, sarcastic humor. Many mentions of stereotypes and Latino identity within the show used irony, which helped to diffuse the stereotypes.

In one striking scenario, Lopez was shown at work as manager of an aviation factory. He typically wore a collared shirt and tie, but in this scene he was not in his usual attire. When a new, white female co-manager started work at the factory, she mistook him for a lowly worker and talked down to him. While this type of situation is not acceptable, showing it brought to light issues with inferences based on race (Markert, 2007).

Ugly Betty also brought Latino issues and stereotypes to the surface. The show's protagonist, Betty, a working-class Latina girl who lacked physical attractiveness and was driven to work diligently for a fashion magazine, was depicted as a fish out of water (Avila-Saavedra, 2010). The fashionistas at the office were open in their disgust of her. A relevant point to consider about *Ugly Betty* was that it was based on a Colombian telenovela, *Yo Soy Betty la Fea* (Avila-Saavedra, 2010). U.S. networks have often adapted European shows; however, they rarely adapt Latin American television series, especially telenovelas (Avila-Saavedra, 2010). This adaptation of *Ugly Betty* allowed for the possibility of intercultural content. Betty was a young woman living in New York with her family. This type of portrayal of Latinos in the United States functioned as "a source of identity cues for U.S.-Latinos and as a source of information for the Anglo majority—the show relies on common cultural and ethnic stereotypes" (Avila-Saavedra, 2010, p. 138). The show was not without stereotypical assumptions. Similar to Lopez in *The George Lopez Show*, Betty's co-worker, Daniel, a White man, first mistook her for a maid (Avila-Saavedra, 2010).

Betty was depicted as being outside ethnic social norms because "her Latino background makes her an outsider in mainstream Anglo society, and because she is too "Americanized" to function properly in her traditional world" (Avila-Saavedra, 2010, p. 143). Betty was Latina, but she neither spoke nor understood Spanish. She was romantically interested in her co-worker, a white accountant. Betty was thus a different and more complex Latina character because she portrayed a more culturally assimilated character when it came to her U.S. Latino identity (Avila-Saavedra, 2010).

Both *Ugly Betty* and *The George Lopez Show* introduce Latino portrayals outside of the negative

stereotypic norm; however, there is neither a real challenge to stereotypic portrayals, nor mention of social issues or challenges facing Latinos.

Based on the literature review, the author came up with two research questions:

RQ1: To what extent are stereotypes present in *Jane the Virgin*?

RQ2: What are the identified functions of the stereotypes?

III. Method

This paper used content analysis, which is “a research technique for objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009, p. 42). Content analysis allowed the author to categorize messages based on a set of established criteria. This research specifically used a qualitative content analysis, relying on “descriptions of situations, behaviors, or texts” and sought “detailed knowledge of those specific cases, focused on how and why things happen” (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009, p. 54-55). The benefit of a content analysis is its data reduction capacity.

Sample

This qualitative content analysis was used to identify and explore instances that reveal Latino themes in 10 episodes of *Jane the Virgin*. This included five episodes from season one and another five from season two. These ten episodes equal almost one-fourth of each season between 2014 and 2016. This purposive sampling yielded the ability to choose episodes in a deliberate way for specific reasons (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009).

This study was modeled after what Avila-Saavedra (2010) utilized in “A fish out of water: New articulations of U.S.-Latino identity on *Ugly Betty*.” That study shed light on the social construction and meaning of both the dialogue and text by analyzing all 23 episodes of the first season of the show (Avila-Saavedra, 2010).

Procedure

For this content analysis, the author used a coding sheet for each episode, which also served as a unit of observation. This coding protocol allowed for a consistent vehicle by which to examine each episode individually. This then allowed the episodes to be analyzed comparatively and as a whole. The 10 episodes were chosen specifically because of the richness of the content discussed, as well as mentions of a Latino theme. The author also intentionally chose episodes so that they were well spaced between season one and season two.

A coding sheet was created with an objective to retain both reliability and validity. The author coded the episodes for the following themes: (1) class differences/money, (2) family, (3) religion, (4) cultural references, (5) immigrant status, (6) crime, and (7) overly sexualized women/Latin lover. These themes were chosen because of racial stereotypes that typically include Latinos being portrayed as comics/comedians, criminals, lovers/sex symbols, lower class, immigrants, very religious, or being shown as unintelligent (Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Kopacz, 2008; Markert, 2007).

Analysis

Content analysis of these 10 episodes allowed the researcher to weigh the extent that this show’s portrayal of Latinos was different from previously established stereotypical images. She sought to qualitatively analyze the dramatic treatment of selected scenes to identify the uses and manipulations of stereotypical situations. This was carried out to understand the need to entertain the audience while perhaps including social messages via Latino stereotypes. Ultimately, the author set out to examine the extent that Latino stereotypes were present and to identify how program producers used those stereotypical scenes to serve a function.

IV. Findings

This section begins with a summary of the program, which helps provide sufficient context for readers to understand the following analyses.

Summary of Jane the Virgin

Jane the Virgin follows the life of Jane Villanueva, who gets accidentally artificially inseminated with Rafael Solano's baby, Mateo. Her mother, Xiomara, and her grandmother, Alba, support Jane through this incident. She also leans on her best friend, Lina. Jane grew up not knowing her father, but finds out in the first season that her father is telenovela star, Rogelio de la Vega. Jane's on-again-off-again boyfriend turned fiancé, Michael Cordero, is a police officer; his partner's name is Nadine. Rafael's half-sister, Luisa, is responsible for inadvertently artificially inseminating Jane. After realizing what she's done, Luisa turns to Rose, also known as Sin Rostro, a famous crime lord. Rose also happens to be Luisa's lover-turned-stepmother; Rose is married to Luisa and Rafael's father, Emilio. Emilio was previously married to Mia, Luisa's mom, as well as to Elena, Rafael's mother, who disappeared when he was a child. Elena is revealed to be the crime lord, Mutter.

Class Differences/Money

Within the first minute of the *Jane the Virgin* pilot, viewers are introduced to Jane, a working-class college graduate who takes nothing for granted. This is juxtaposed with an introduction to Rafael Solano, a wealthy Latino hotel owner and former playboy. Jane works as a waitress at the hotel Rafael owns, and the difference in class between them is extreme. In addition to waitress roles, other Latinos are depicted in the show as wealthy hotel owners, singers, healthcare workers, professors, scientists, attorneys, telenovela stars, or doctors; this helps break the illusion that Latinos are only capable of obtaining low status jobs.

Since Jane and her mother don't own a car, they are frequently shown riding the bus. Unlike Rafael, who drives a sports car, the Villanueva women spend their hard-earned money on other items. After Jane becomes pregnant with Rafael's baby by his sister, Luisa, Rafael suggests that Jane come up with an amount of money she wants to present to his lawyer. She's taken aback and asks why he thinks she wants money. Rafael explains, "I just assumed because . . .," to which Jane responds, "Because I'm a waitress?" Rafael defends himself, saying, "I know you're not just a waitress." Irrate, Jane quips, "Just a waitress." Rafael responds, "That's not what I meant. Look you're in college." Jane snaps, "So if I wasn't in college, I'd be just a waitress."

This situation explores the stereotype of Latinas as working-class waitresses; however, this scenario is unusual because it also depicts Latinos, such as Rafael, as a wealthy hotel owner. Jane describes Rafael as "a rich playboy with an entitled attitude missing a basic sensitivity chip." While Jane is portrayed as having a stereotypically Latino job, she is also finishing college, and then goes on to graduate school, while simultaneously writing a novel and raising a baby. By presenting both Jane and Rafael, among other Latino characters with varying jobs, the program allows viewers to form their own opinions about positions Latinos might hold, consciously or subconsciously using cultivation theory.

After Jane finds out about her wealthy telenovela star father, Rogelio, he buys her a car because he's uncomfortable with her riding the bus during her pregnancy. This frustrates Jane's mother, Xiomara. She raised Jane in a household with three strong women and doesn't want Rogelio's gifts. Jane later helps put her father on a limited budget after his telenovela is cancelled.

Additionally, as Jane progresses in her pregnancy, Rafael insinuates that he's going to take care of all of the baby's costs. Xiomara says, "I don't like the idea that he thinks you'll take hand outs. We work hard, all of us." Xiomara then approaches Rafael about this concern and meets him at his luxurious penthouse. She tells him, "You see the world differently." He snaps, "You have no idea how I see the world." Xiomara then responds, "Maybe not, but I know you see it from up here with this incredible view."

In the second season, Rafael hires an estate planner to talk about baby Mateo's future. Jane finds out that Mateo is set to inherit \$40 million from Rafael and becomes uncomfortable because she wants Mateo to stay grounded. She says, "I'm raising a rich kid and that's just not the way I grew up." She has never had that kind of money and argues with Rafael about the inheritance. They end up compromising and decide that for every dollar he gets, he must give a dollar to the charity of his choice. This incorporates Jane's values and

working-class background, as well as allowing Mateo to gather his hefty inheritance from his wealthy father and live comfortably. While the class differences here are obvious, they are still both Latinos. One person is not shown as superior due to race, but simply due to circumstance and luck.

Family Ties

It is common for Latinos to be depicted with strong family relations, and this proves true for the characters on *Jane the Virgin*. “Luisa is family and family is everything.” “Of course I’m here. We’re family and nothing is more important.” These are just two of the quotes regarding family that verbalize just how important family is on the show. Jane is protective of her family and will do anything for them. Similarly, Rafael is close to his father and sister; his mother left when he was a child, but later resurfaces. While Rafael’s family may be close, it is not without drama. Rafael commits Luisa to a mental institution after she says she’s been having an affair with Rose, her stepmother, which is actually true. After this incident, Rose kills Luisa’s father, who is Rose’s husband, by drowning him in cement. Needless to say, the Solano family is not your average family. Once Rafael realizes that Luisa was telling the truth, he immediately removes Luisa from the mental institution.

When Alba, Jane’s grandmother, is first described, Jane is listed as one of her “passions.” Alba has always tried to be a positive influence for Jane. Jane’s mom, Xiomara, while not similar to Jane, is always supportive. When Jane realizes she is pregnant with Mateo, the doctor gives her the option to terminate the pregnancy. Even though Jane doesn’t want to end the pregnancy, Xiomara tells her, “I want you to know that you have a choice, whatever you decide.” Xiomara became pregnant with Jane at 16, and she perhaps sees a cycle on the verge of reoccurring, so she wants Jane to feel in control and supported. Family support is the top priority for the Villanueva women. That is why after Jane delivers baby Mateo she decides to reject her acceptance to graduate school. Xiomara tells her not to let being a mom get in the way of her dreams and offers to help, allowing Jane to feel more secure and ultimately accept her graduate school offer. This resolution veers away from the family-only focus stereotype, but still allows Jane to be a caring and dedicated mother while simultaneously pursuing her academic dreams. Here there is a variation on the family stereotype.

Religion

Latinos are strongly associated with Roman Catholicism (Markert, 2007). Generally, if religion is shown, it is an important aspect of Latino life. That being said, religion is a divisive topic in the Villanueva household. Within the first minute of the pilot, God is named as one of both Alba’s and Jane’s passions. Xiomara, however, is not interested in the religious realm. Because of this, Alba is intent on sharing her beliefs with Jane, including abstaining from sex until marriage. Alba regularly attends church and is seen taking Jane, and occasionally Xiomara. In a flashback scene, pre-teen Jane asked Alba, “Can you teach me how to pray the right way. Like with the rosary?” Alba teaches her how to hold the rosary and afterward that Jane often used her rosary when she is especially in need of help.

In a flashback in a different episode, Xiomara is shown not taking religion seriously. She tells Alba she doesn’t know if she wants baby Jane to be baptized because she doesn’t know if she believes in God. Alba is strong in her faith, but that does not mean she does not sometimes go against her religion. It is revealed that back when Xiomara tells Alba about her pregnancy, Alba tells Xiomara to have an abortion. This demonstrates that Alba doesn’t follow her faith blindly. Additionally, Xiomara and Jane discover that Alba has been lying to them and was not a virgin at marriage, as she had previously said.

The aspect of religion is present in varying degrees among the three Villanueva women, but it is absent in Rafael. The wavering levels of commitment to religion support that not all Latinos are committed to Catholicism.

Cultural References/ Outsider or Foreigner

Alba understands English and can speak the language, but chooses to communicate only in Spanish. Xiomara and Jane speak only English to Alba. In addition to closeness to the language itself, the Villanueva women bond by watching telenovelas together. Jane says, “Of course I’m gonna watch. You guys got me hooked on these things.”

There are numerous references to Latino stars that occur within the show, including David Bisbal,

international singer, Charo, actress and guitarist, and Diego Boneta, a well-known singer who comically plays a computer help technician. The reference to, or appearance of, these stars allows the show to link to Latin roots, while also remaining relatable to a wider audience. Aside from class differences, Jane and Rafael have differences in terms of their closeness to Latino culture. Rafael lives in the plush and elegant Marbella Hotel filled with glossy white and turquoise decor. Jane lives in a cozy, darker-toned, ranch style house with her family. Their homes represent a lot about them as people, as well as their closeness to their culture.

In a flashback to Jane's childhood, she asks Alba to cook a Venezuelan dish for heritage day at her school because Xiomara is a terrible cook. After Xiomara finds out about Jane's request, she asks Alba to help her make a traditional Venezuelan dish for Jane. There is also a flashback to 11-year-old Jane, describing the moment when she fell in love with salsa dancing. Jane has always wanted to be close to her culture, even though she is Americanized.

Alba is depicted most stereotypically as the "outsider." She is a first-generation immigrant, who only speaks Spanish. Her daughter and granddaughter are both American-born and speak English. There's a progression between the generations of the Villanueva women and the "foreignness" of them. Alba is shown getting her green card and this shift in Alba is significant as she was an illegal immigrant for many years.

The depiction of "otherness" through language is culturally significant and relevant to many Latinos. By also presenting Spanish-speaking celebrities who are well known in the non-Spanish speaking community, aspects of culture and cultural ties are integrated without being overbearing. When Gina Rodriguez was asked about her family experience and closeness to her culture in comparison to Jane, she said, "I grew up very similar to Jane. My grandmother spoke Spanish to me. And I responded in English. I was very much the two identities of both cultures that were very much important in my life" (Miller, 2014).

Immigrant Status

One of the basic stereotypes held about Latinos is the "rural 'primitiveness' of immigrants" (Markert, 2007, p. 153). Immigrants are usually thought of as lazy, non-English speaking, and unproductive members of society. In fact, television networks often "contribute to the perpetuation of immigrants' status quo, keeping them from questioning their own situation" (Rojas, 2004, p. 133).

In a flashback, young Alba and Mateo have a conversation about Alba's job. She is a home healthcare worker and young Alba breaks down in tears saying that her boss asked, "What grade I got to in school" and that she "fell over when I said I was a nurse back in Venezuela." The prejudice is evident and Mateo tries to calm her down using the word "*calma*," getting her to think of some of her favorite things that begin with the letters c, a, l, m, and a. Alba later passes this trick on to Jane.

During a hurricane, Alba was hospitalized after falling down the stairs. A doctor uncomfortably explains to Xiomara that the hospital cannot afford to pay her costs since Alba is an illegal immigrant and has no insurance. Once the hurricane lifts, the hospital staff says they will have to notify Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, and Alba will be deported back to Venezuela. A note on the screen flashed, "Yes this really happens #immigrationreform" (Martinez, 2015). Rogelio sets out to make things right explaining, "If my fame and money can't keep your mother in this country, then what's it all for." He later says, "I left word with the UN ambassador and Gloria Estefan. One of them will stop the deportation." Once Alba wakes up, the doctor informs Xiomara that the deportation is no longer an issue. "You must have friends in high places," he says. Xiomara finds out that Michael, Jane's fiancé, stopped the deportation. In an episode during the next season, Alba finally gets her green card on Christmas day. She proudly places it in the hands of an angel sitting atop the Christmas tree.

The progression of Alba's immigrant status is symbolic and important. Because the stereotype of illegal immigrants is widely negative, Alba is shown in an especially positive light. Her determination and hard-working attitude also help dispel the stereotype. The references to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and immigration reform educate the audience and prompt them to feel a sense of urgency and anger regarding Alba's situation. This humanizes immigrants who are, or may be, deported, and shows them as hard-working, valuable members of U.S. society.

Crime

When Latinos are seen on screen, they are limited to a narrow set of roles, including that of criminal (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015; Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Kopacz, 2008). A common plotline

throughout the show is that of two competing crime lords nicknamed Sin Rostro and Mutter. Michael thinks Rafael is Sin Rostro because he has access to all parts of the hotel. "Something bad's happening here and it has to be connected to Rafael," he says. Rose, Rafael's stepmother, accuses Rafael's father, Emilio, of being involved in criminal activities after overhearing him say, "We have to get out of here before the storm hits. I need \$5 million for Alegria." Nadine, Michael's partner, also thinks Sin Rostro is Emilio because he owns the hotel. In a twist on what seems a reality, Sin Rostro is actually Rose. When Emilio becomes suspicious of her, she kills him by drowning him in cement.

In a further shift of events, Rafael's absent mother, Elena, returns after leaving when he was just a child. Rafael discovers that his father paid her \$10 million to leave and never come back. He also discovers that she is the infamous drug dealer, Mutter, and that she and Sin Rostro were rival crime lords. Yes, a lot of crime occurs, but it is not related to race. The worse of the two criminals, Rose, aka Sin Rostro, is a white woman who is married to Rafael's wealthy Latino father. Here, crime plays a role as a nod to the show's telenovela style and roots of dramatization, but another twist plays with a more standard expectation. The crime boss is not the Latino.

Latin Lover/ Overly Sexualized Women (or Men)

The overly sexualized Latin lover stereotype is one that has been prevalent among Latino roles for decades. Latinos are often shown in the Latin lover role, reinforcing this falsity to viewers (Markert, 2007). Throughout the show, a narrator's voice constantly chimes in as he works to make light of the Latin lover stereotype.

In *Jane the Virgin*, three characters have a tendency to fall into this category, Xiomara, Lina, and Rafael. The first time Xiomara is introduced, she is shown painting her nails and wearing a low-cut denim romper. She is always shown wearing something short, low cut, or tight, and uses that to her advantage. While riding the bus with Jane, Xiomara eyes an attractive man and tells him, "Come to my gig tonight, boo," and gives him a flyer. In a different scene, her advice to Jane is that "the best way to get over a man is to get under a new man." Jane and Alba do not agree with Xiomara's ideals, but love her for who she is. Xiomara and Alba are examples of two opposing versions of Latina femininity. "Latin American telenovelas often rely on problematic portrayals of women that fall into two types: sexy, fiery, and brazen, or cloyingly sweet, naïve, and submissive" (Martinez, 2015).

Additionally, Jane's friend and Mateo's godmother, Lina, is also portrayed in this stereotype. Jane worries that she will come inappropriately dressed to Mateo's baptism. "She promised she would wear something appropriate, but that probably means the black dress from Madonna's 'Like a Prayer' video," Jane says.

Rafael has quite the playboy past. When Jane learns she is pregnant with Rafael's baby, she "googles" him and finds articles with photos of him with countless women, dancing, drinking, as well as being arrested for indecent exposure. Rafael explains that he has changed since his partying past after battling cancer, but toward the end of the second season Rafael is shown parading women in and out of his room. He is also found hungover, but does not continue this behavior.

The characters are so multidimensional that the emergence of this stereotype is only one comedic aspect of the show; the stereotype is presented primarily for comedic effect, and as a way to present change within a character, for example, with Rafael.

V. Conclusions

This paper sought to identify to what extent Latino stereotypes were present in *Jane the Virgin*, and what the function of the stereotypes were. Results indicate that while some stereotypes do exist within the show, twists abound. Any negative stereotypes presented are predominantly presented to be questioned and challenged. They are framed in a thought-provoking light and are minimal in comparison to the progressive ideas and positive representations that are shown. "Jane is culturally significant since she is one of the few Latina protagonists we've seen on television," says Gina Rodriguez (Miller, 2014).

This show explores Latino issues and stereotypes in a straightforward manner, but focuses on directing the narrative away from stereotypes by providing relatable characters. *The George Lopez Show* and *Ugly Betty* present Latinos characters, but in these shows the Latinidad, or lack thereof, is a focus of

the show. Humor is used in *The George Lopez Show* to poke fun at the presented stereotypes, and Betty is depicted as an outsider from her own culture. “Her Latino background makes her an outsider in mainstream Anglo society but also because she is too ‘Americanized’ to function properly in her traditional world” (Avila-Saavedra, 2010, p. 143). In *The George Lopez Show*, nothing is done to push past these stereotypes.

Jane the Virgin weaves in cultural issues and concepts, such as immigration, religion, and class differences, without taking away or distracting from the other elements of the show. Ivonne Coll, the actress who portrays Alba Villanueva, explains, “We are not a Hispanic show, but it is a show about a Hispanic family” (Ryan, 2015). “Despite its *telenovela* heart, *Jane the Virgin* is an unmistakably modern show. It’s shot in HD, dialogue happens between characters via text bubble a la *House of Cards*, and there are plenty of pop culture references” (Yarchi, 2014).

These findings work well with the social identity theory and cultivation theory. The show questions and challenges stereotypes by presenting characters who are well-educated, of a high socio-economic status, and those who are not, informing Latinos that they are not limited to the narrow set of stereotypical jobs Latinos are typically shown as having on television. Additionally, on a smaller scale, the show works against the negative impact of cultivation theory here to allow the opposite effect to occur. By watching multiple episodes of *Jane the Virgin*, the viewer continues to see positive portrayals and becomes more accustomed to, and informed about, the culture and Latinos as a whole.

The program’s rather extreme storylines are seen to be playing with—rather than reinforcing—existing stereotypes. In a sense, the stories set up the possibilities of predictable expectations, which are not actually realized. The cases that do exist, such as Jane becoming pregnant as a single young woman, turn out to be almost comically not what they seem. Jane, in fact, is a woman with integrity and energy. This study showed that producers of popular media can build representations of Latinos that are not historically negative or stereotypical. *Jane the Virgin* is aiding in paving a new path for Latino characters on television.

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YouTube Communities and the Promotion of Natural Hair Acceptance Among Black Women

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Abstract

Black women are popularizing a second wave of the natural hair movement, rejecting the European beauty ideal and promoting acceptance of afro-textured hair, which has historically been viewed as unkempt and unprofessional. As part of this movement, many women are turning to social media platforms—particularly YouTube—to gain information, support, and acceptance. Through framing theory, this study analyzed YouTube content to identify the most salient themes. This analysis revealed that content creators are facilitating a positive discourse surrounding natural hair, and that content consumers tend to express gratitude and use the platform to deepen their understanding of hair care.

I. Introduction

Black hair is unique not only in its appearance, but also because of the historical, sociological, and psychological implications that are related to it. The kinky-coily texture that is a characteristic of the hair of the people of the African diaspora has been much more than a simple physical feature. Instead it is another tool used to differentiate this race from others, often to its disadvantage.

Since African slaves were brought to North America, they have been scrutinized by White supremacists, based on differences in culture, language, and especially appearance. Black women's hair was often used as one of the most significant differentiating factors. Throughout the centuries and various phases that African American people have endured, hair has transformed from just a physical attribute to a visual marker of one's identity, political beliefs, and self-perception. When many Black women wear one's hair natural, it signifies not a hairstyle but a lifestyle.

In the age of new media, anyone who has access to the internet is able to contribute ideas that shape the discourse about various topics. Black women no longer have to rely on traditional forms of media to seek their representation. Online influencers around the world are using digital platforms to spread information about caring for natural hair, but ultimately using their tools to shift perceptions of natural hair to a more positive light. This study analyzed the attributes that Black women associate with their experience of wearing natural hair as observed through the content creator-content consumer relationship on the social media platform YouTube.

Keywords: Natural Hair, Social Media, YouTube, Online Communities, Black Women
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II. Literature Review

In this literature review, the author looked at the following issues: American history of Black hair, the politicization of Black hair and the first natural hair movement, the second natural hair movement, and YouTube as a platform for discussing social issues.

American History of Black Hair

For Black women, styling one's hair, and particularly chemically straightening one's hair, has had a deep significance for generations (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). This practice has often shaped Black women's self-perception and their attitudes toward natural hair, which among African Americans has carried a negative connotation for most of American history (Patton, 2006). What was considered unkempt, dirty, and nappy was closely related to the hair of a slave (Bellinger, 2007). Women with straight, wavy, or even loosely curled hair were considered to be genetically closer to White, which carried the connotation of goodness and beauty (Bellinger, 2007). This fixation on hair texture not only contributed to a widening separation between Black and White women, but also fragmented the Black community, stirring up animosity between dark skin and light skin, "bad hair" and "good hair."

The act of chemically straightening, or relaxing, one's hair has historically allowed Black women to obtain an appearance that more closely resembled societal ideals of beauty, which emphasize European features (de Sá Dias, Baby, Kaneko, & Robles Velasco, 2007). Relaxing methods progressed throughout the 20th century. What was once a practice that solely used plant and fat-based products as well as heated tools turned into a chemical-based product that was made available in the 1940s. Relaxing formulas continually transformed and became a consumer product accessible by any household. By the 1960s, at-home relaxing kits could be found in most drug stores (de Sá Dias et al., 2007). Relaxing was a widespread practice among Black women that further contributed to the assimilation into American societal standards. Yet at the very same time that relaxers became widely accessible to consumers, Black people across the country began to embrace a different hair aesthetic.

There was a brief reclamation of the natural hair texture during the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s and Black Power movement in the 1970s. Many more people sported their Afros as a reflection of the "My Black is Beautiful" message (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). For the first time, one's hairstyle was not solely about style preferences but also about making a political statement. Many Black women cared less about taming their hair, and instead grew out large Afros as an effort to "free their minds" and to subtly challenge White supremacy (Bellinger, 2007; Byrd & Tharps, 2014). Not everyone in the Black community embraced this political forwardness, and many were harshly criticized by older, more conservative Blacks. However, the Afro became a symbol to the youth of expression and liberation.

The political natural hair movement turned out to be short-lived. America moved into a more conservative era in the 1980s, and more Black people entered the professional workforce. Afros faded into the background, and many Blacks felt that they had to adopt more uniform appearances (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). As less people proudly sported Afros, this hairstyle became an iconic symbol of past decades.

The Second Wave of the Natural Hair Movement

It was not until recent years that a second wave of the natural hair movement emerged (Antoine, 2013). More liberal and inclusive representations of women, partnered with the sharing power of social media has allowed for a natural hair community to form online. Many Black women recognize online influencers that have had an impact on their perception of natural hair or even on their decision to wear their hair in its natural state (Ellington, 2014). Before the development of social media, an entire generation of Black women had no idea how to properly take care of the hair they naturally grew (Bellinger, 2007). Now that there is a trend moving toward the rejection of chemical straightening as the norm, a large and powerful online community has formed around natural hair care (Antoine, 2013). Prominent online influencers have become like virtual friends or mentors for the followers who are hoping to learn and connect with others. This trend can especially be observed among Black women in college (Antoine, 2013), some of whom are taking care of their hair by themselves for the first time in their lives. These young women are experimenting with different methods than the ones their mothers have taught them, even if they face criticism from older generations for wearing their natural hair (Ellington, 2014).

This modern phenomenon mirrors the youth-driven movement of the 1970s, yet this time, fewer women cite political beliefs as their motivators. Now, many members of the millennial generation of Black women are working to reshape the conceptions that people, both in and out of the Black community, have formed about natural hair (Antoine, 2013). The movement does not have such a strong focus on overthrowing White beauty conventions, but instead focuses on widening the beauty ideal and instilling confidence in Black youths. This second wave of the natural-hair movement has attracted thousands of “naturalistas” from around the world who were dedicated to the uplift of Black women who wear their natural hair (Gill, 2015).

YouTube as a Community-Building Platform

The instant and easily accessible information as well as the formation of virtual communities makes social media a vehicle for change and a comforting space for those who seek support (Ellington, 2014). YouTube has taken a leading role among other social platforms as an online community-building space. YouTube promotes active participation and gives ordinary people the power to become content creators. As more people contribute content to the platform, they continually redefine cultural meaning on a wide range of topics (Burgess & Green, 2009). Agents on platforms, such as YouTube, gain social influence and guide the dissemination of information as well as the direction of commentary that occurs (Susarla, Oh, & Tan, 2012).

YouTube has played a large role in the dissemination of information about natural hair, helping to shape the discourse that currently surrounds this topic. Viewers who seek videos about natural hair partake in a shared, ritualistic experience that reinforces ideas about natural hair and provides information or motivation to take action (Antoine, 2013; Ellington, 2014). YouTube has the unique ability to do this because of its parasocial nature, which is defined as the perceived appearance of “face-to-face interaction” between content creator and audience (Antoine, 2013). This becomes a much more powerful community-building tool as opposed to an audience simply interacting with written word on blogs or still images on other platforms. This is of particular importance for those seeking information about the natural hair movement. The combination of visual aids and in-depth information allows Black women to find a human connection with whom they would like to watch and whatever they seek—information, support, or encouragement.

Framing Theory Applied to Social Media

A popularly referenced communication theory that helps individuals analyze content is Entman’s framing theory. It is a method used to identify the most salient information that is being communicated while organizing messages into frames. This allows researchers to analyze these frames and identify overarching themes that are prevalent in various forms of media—newspapers, television, and now even social media (Entman, 1993; Entman, 2004).

By applying framing theory to social media communication, researchers can further analyze the prevalent themes within information disseminated between content creator and audience, as well as from user to user on various platforms. Various facets of YouTube content can contribute to the framing of an issue—the video, the audio, the video title, and the commentary that takes place under the video (Farr, 2011). Tian studied all of these facets by creating a two-tiered frame analysis and applying it to content found in YouTube videos as well as the corresponding comment sections (Tian, 2010).

A framing analysis of YouTube content can be used for a study that can compare the frames that are being disseminated by the content creator with the frames that are found in the comments section. This analysis can provide insight into the impact of these agents as well as how they influence the discourse surrounding certain topics, especially the natural hair movement (Tian, 2010). As a guide for this study, the author asked one research question: What attributes do Black women associate with their experience of wearing natural hair, and how does this present itself through YouTube content?

III. Methods

In the first stage of research, a content analysis was completed by analyzing YouTube videos that disseminated information about natural hair acceptance, or “natural hair journeys,” and tips for caring for one’s natural hair.

YouTube videos were selected because of the democratic nature of their content and their ability to create social influence. YouTube, as a platform, is structured by organizing content into various categories, such as Music, Comedy, or News. This allows for people to create content about a topic or to form interactive communities to learn more about a topic (Susarla et al., 2012).

YouTube videos have been successful tools of communication for the natural hair community. While blogs, Facebook pages, and other social media platforms are also popular, YouTube offers an advantage to someone who is looking for information or searching for support, not only because of the visual appeal of the content but also because of the open access to the videos, which is not always the case with Facebook pages or other social media platforms. On YouTube, viewers can openly access the content, and they can see the content creators, observe their hairstyles, witness the before-and-after process if they went from treated to natural hair, listen to the person's voice, and leave comments in response to the video's content. All of this allows the viewers to feel as if they are participating in an interpersonal, "face-to-face" relationship with a content creator on YouTube, as opposed to just following an author of written word. Explanatory videos allow viewers to interact with content creators and one another in the comments sections, and these viewers typically express gratitude for the support they receive (Antoine, 2013). YouTube is even a preferred educational tool about natural hair over help from professional stylists, which can be pricey and difficult to find. Videos can go into demonstrative detail and guide women on their "natural hair journey" (Gill, 2015).

The selection of YouTube videos for this study is meant to provide a sample that conveys the democratic, interactive nature of the content that this platform provides. The hope is that YouTube videos that are specifically about Black natural hair will elicit comments from viewers that will show evidence of the social support and sense of community that this content can promote and generate. It is important to not only analyze the content within the videos but also the audience interaction associated with that content. This interaction can be analyzed by looking at the audience's comments because "audience frames can function as a dependent variable, affected by media frames" within the videos (Tian, 2010).

Sample Selection

For the sample selection of YouTube videos, the term "natural hair journey" was used as a search term. A preliminary search revealed that this term is typically associated with YouTube videos in which content creators provide personal anecdotes about natural hair. The term "journey" indicates that the content creators either transitioned from a physical state of having chemically straightened hair or a mental state in which they did not embrace their natural hair to having natural hair or appreciating it. This is not simply a cosmetic change, but it relates to psychological and social changes for the content creator, as they indicated in their video conversations with the audience. The final result in the journey was the creator's choice to decide to wear her fully natural hair or to simply embrace the physical appearance of their natural hair.

It was observed that these videos can elicit a more emotional, meaningful audience response than a video that is simply about how to achieve a certain hairstyle. While styling videos are important content that contributes to the dialogue of the online natural hair community, the current study sought to find content that touches on the emotional aspects of self-image and self-acceptance, the historical aspects of "good hair" and other hair typing practices, and the modern social networking processes that create support and even serve to inspire viewers. After searching videos using "natural hair journey," the author collected Top 10 video results. The search ranking is not necessarily based on "view count" because YouTube altered its search algorithm in March 2015 (D'Onfro, 2015) and considered both view count and average watch-time in calculating popularity ranking. In the past, a video could continue to top the list even though viewers might have only watched it for a few seconds, because it counted only the number of views for ranking (D'Onfro, 2015).

The author planned to select the 25 top comments from each of the Top10 videos, which are decided by votes for popular comments and the recency of comments. YouTube's algorithm displays these comments at the top, with the rest displayed most recent to least recent (Siersdorfer, Chelaru, Nejd, & Pedro, 2010). The author tried to select 25 comments from each selected video, but Video 7 had only 16 comments—likely because it was posted recently and did not have time to generate viewers' comments.

Analysis

After the Top 10 videos were selected, the transcripts of the videos and the top comments on these videos were analyzed based on Entman's (1993) framing theory, which identifies frames the content creator used consciously or not "to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendations" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). For this study, only the words from the transcripts were coded since the videos did not provide visual content that furthers the purpose of the study. Applying framing theory to YouTube videos and user comments allows for the identification of prominent themes and the sentiments, problems, and solutions associated with this content.

The coding procedure for this study was adapted from Tian (2010), which studied the framing of organ donation within YouTube video content and comments. Tian looked for meta-frames (or main frames) to identify major themes within the content and divided even videos' tone into positive, negative, or neutral categories.

Analysis of videos showed the following themes: 1) Inspiration, 2) Admiration/Gratitude, 3) Confidence/Identity, 4) Childhood/Family, 5) Societal Standards 6) Conflict, 7) Race/Ethnicity, 8) Hair growth/hair care, and 9) Others. The audience comments were coded using the same themes.

IV. Findings

YouTube Videos

The most prevalent video theme was 8) "Hair growth/hair care" in the code sheet (Refer to Appendix), which was defined as "information about hair growth tips, hair products, hairstyles, or details about one's hair care regimen." This is understandable since many videos about natural hair tend to focus on information about how to grow and maintain healthy hair. While describing their transition to wearing natural hair, video creators offered details about products that they used and the physical growth of their hair. While sharing their hair journeys as cautionary tales, they discussed what worked best for them to achieve a level of hair health or hair length with which they were pleased.

The second most prevalent theme was 4) "Childhood/Family," which was defined as "childhood experiences or familial influences on how one wears their hair" in the code sheet. This theme was closely related to the first focus, since the subjects would often outlined their hair care regimen dating back to childhood. For example, DiamondCandyTV from Video 1 recalled how her hair care regimen had changed:

"My mom permed me and my little sister's hair, probably when we were in the third grade. She always took care of our hair and it was very healthy, even though it was permed. However, when I started taking care of my own hair in high school, that's when things started to go downhill."

The third most prevalent theme was 3) "Confidence/Identity," which was defined as mention of confidence, or lack thereof, in wearing one's natural hair; or mention of the development of one's identity in relation to their natural hair. After deciding to go natural, women could experience a wide range of emotions, including a boost in confidence, or even a sharp decline. Often their hair formed a part of their identity, and when this aspect changed, these women described undergoing an adjustment period. Jaelah Majette from Video 3 described her emotions after she decided to go natural and shaved her head:

"You would have thought in that bag, that it was just hair. But to me it was my self-esteem, my confidence, my comfort, my security blanket. And now that all that was gone, I just felt like I wasn't tangible anymore. It's kind of like I lost myself."

It is important to note that this was one low point in Majette's overall positive experience with going natural. It shows that these emotions and confidence levels can fluctuate throughout one's journey.

Most of videos were toned “Positive” or “Neutral.” “Negative” tones were the least frequent out of the three. An example of a positive tone is when Finding Kim’s video used positive reinforcement to encourage women who are about to embark on a journey that may test their patience and comfort level. One “Negative” tone, also from the same video, was found when she said, “Sometimes I became discouraged because of failed styles or I didn’t notice my growth.” This comment also touched on the difficulties of going natural, and reveals the frustrations that come along with the process. Yet this let viewers know that it is normal to feel this way, and that they are not experiencing these emotions alone.

YouTube Comments

The most prevalent theme in the comments was 2) “Admiration/Gratitude,” which is defined as “compliments or expressions of gratitude.” An example of this theme was found in comment 10l from Dawn Michelle: “You are stunning, sister, and have really made some incredible progress with your hair growth! Love!!!” Many other comments of this nature would not only include compliments about the subject’s hair, but also about her commitment, her resiliency, or general statements about her contributions to the natural hair community.

The second most prevalent theme was 8) “Hair growth/hair care,” the same theme found from videos. Comment 1e by Kimberly Townsend exemplified this theme: “My 4c hair grew to almost the exact length in two years. But I wasn’t taking care of it as I should have and I had to cut it all off yesterday. Hopefully I can get it back to that length. Beautiful hair by the way.” Several comments under this theme were made in response to information that the content creator provided about their own hair regimens. Commenters often interacted with each other, answering questions about products that they have tried, sharing what styles they preferred, and sharing timelines of how long it took them to achieve a certain length of hair.

The third most prevalent focus within the comments was 9) “Others,” which include a wide range of comments, ranging from questions about what music was playing in the background to remarks about how the subject was wearing a cute outfit.

The fourth most prevalent theme was 1) “Inspiration,” which included mention of inspiration or motivation to embrace natural hair or continue on a natural hair journey. By providing guidance and sharing their personal experience, content creators were able to inspire viewers to also partake in a natural hair journey and to go against different forces that may inform them to do otherwise (societal pressure, family members, etc.). One example of inspiration was found in comment 3s from Hawa Eve:

“Wow, this is very inspiring. The front of my hair is very damaged from heat and I feel like my hair isn’t at it[']s full potential. So, I’ve been thinking of cutting it very very short. Seeing your hair grow so nice and healthy makes me less worried about growing my hair. Thank you!”

Although women like Eve may experience difficulties during their natural hair journeys, watching videos with advice and personal anecdotes reminds them to keep going.

The most prevalent tone within the comments was “Neutral,” with “Positive” being the second, and “Negative,” the third. In the code sheet, questions and general statements without a positive or negative emotion were defined as neutral statements.

V. Analysis

This paper tried to explore how Black women are articulating their perceptions of natural hair and shaping the perceptions of others on YouTube. The analysis of video content and comments revealed how women are using this digital platform to shape the cultural discourse around this topic. First, the content creators set the tone for the discourse surrounding natural hair by emphasizing theme 8) Hair growth/ hair care, which colored their journeys positively. This reflects the intention of many content creators, which is to inform or encourage other women who are having an experience that they can identify with. Sariya Jade, who posted Video 10, reflected on her decision to create a slideshow that shows embarrassing pictures from her past:

“Let me just tell you guys, these pictures are hideous . . . they’re atrocious. I am actually mortified at the fact that I’m showing you guys these, but hey . . . it’s going to help you guys hopefully. Even if one of you guys is inspired to go natural or to transform your hair and make it healthy again, I will be happy.”

Jade desired to share her progression through her natural hair journey in order to provide a helpful tool for her viewers. This is a sentiment shared by most content creators, which, if not explicitly expressed, is conveyed through their willingness to be vulnerable, as well as their providing detailed descriptions of their journeys. When the content creators used positive language and reinforcement, the comments also set a positive tone. This illustrates the effect of spreading positive beliefs and representations of women with natural hair. The fact that 2) “Admiration/Gratitude” was the most prevalent comment category reflects a positive tone that is consistent throughout this discourse.

In all but one of the videos, the content creators used chronological storytelling to illustrate their progression through various hairstyles, lifestyles, and even levels of acceptance of natural hair. Chronological storytelling is important because it allows viewers to connect with the beginning stages of the content creator’s journey and witness the growth that they have experienced. Although most videos had an overall positive tone, the content creators provided viewers with stories about how they started with a negative view of their natural hair, or struggled at first with understanding how to care for their hair. This created a more realistic and relatable journey by revealing the negative aspects, which ultimately led to a positive outcome.

In these stories, content creators either focused on the physical growth of their hair, their emotional growth and confidence, or both to explain their hair journeys. While videos portrayed simply the physical changes, the women on the video provided details about how their hair texture and hair health changed, what products they used, and what hairstyles worked best for them. For example, Chrissy Cousin from Video 5 explained why she decided to cut all of her hair off, despite judgment from her peers:

“So that’s my goal, that’s why I’m doing this and I want to show you all on camera how this process is going to go. Hopefully we can have a journey in the future of me showing you the progress and growth of my hair health.”

Majette who posted Video 3 used an approach with more of an emotional explanation in sharing her natural hair journey:

“So, it’s been a real life journey for me just to get to my natural hair texture and to see how it reacts to different products. I’m really just learning to be comfortable with the way I was made naturally.”

There were a few unexpected findings. First, it was expected that the information provided in the videos would cause an obvious positive impact on viewers, which would generate many comments in 1) the “Inspiration” theme. Instead, “Inspiration” was not a major theme, indicating that viewers were not emotionally connected to the content.

The author originally expected that all of the videos would include personal anecdotes that included emotional stories about how the women may have struggled, succeeded, and come to terms with their identity and level of confidence. Yet, Tatyana Ali in Video 2 used sarcastic and self-deprecating humor to connect with her audience. This lack of emotional appeals is reflected in the comments with the “Neutral” tone and the “Other” theme being most prevalent.

A couple of women posted videos that stuck to the facts of their story by clearly and simply describing how their hair changed appearance and became healthier during their journey. This shows that a content creator does not always have to share a story that touches viewers on a deep, emotional level in order to provide them with information that resonates with them.

Finally, an underlying discussion revealed divisions within Blacks about hair. Hair is still a central topic within Black culture because people of the African diaspora are still coming to terms with their appearance and battling societal standards that do not tend to favor them. This issue of division, although not one of the most prevalent themes, showed more in comments than on videos.

Historically, it has been a cultural belief within the Black community that people with silkier, looser curls had “good hair.” Comment 3a from Tee Jay illustrated her frustration with people who hold on to this dated point of view. She wrote: “Waiting for the day as Black people [where] we would stop seeing ‘Are you fully Black?’ as a compl[e]ment.” Comment 2e from biracialgirly even reinforced the misconception that only biracial or women of other races can have long, healthy hair. She commented: “You look Black with short hair and mixed with long hair.” This is the type of rhetoric that has often dissuaded Black women from going natural for so many years, because they believed that the societal standard for hair length will not be achievable. Majette was the only content creator who referenced this dynamic among Black women within her video. She shared with her audience how she used to use the misconceptions about hair texture to her advantage:

“People were always curious about what I was mixed with or why or how my hair got to look like that or how I grew it so long . . . And soon enough it became comfortable and normal for me. I actually found gratification in people asking me was I one hundred percent black?”

Although 7) “Race/Ethnicity” theme was not a top theme, it is important to analyze its subtle presence as a reflection of why this movement holds a deeper significance to many women than simply choosing a new hairstyle. The sampled videos rarely promoted many messages that map onto the literature surrounding the promotion of natural hair acceptance. But these efforts to create a positive movement were perfectly illustrated by a comment from Ali in Video 2:

“And my last tip . . . girl you gotta love yourself. If you don’t love yourself, then you won’t be able to really grow out healthy hair. You’re going to start comparing your hair to other people. This journey is about focusing on yourself.”

This study has some limitations. Generalization of the findings to an entire population is not possible due to a small sample size of videos and comments. Samples of social media comments can often reveal extreme opinions, thus the attitudes in the videos and comments cannot represent the sentiments of an entire population (Moe & Schweidel, 2014). Typically social media users, when they have extreme opinions, choose to leave comments in response to online media. So, the sample does not represent thousands of viewers who may take something away from the video, but simply do not choose to leave a comment.

VI. Conclusions

The second wave of the natural hair movement was invigorated by the sharing power provided by social media platforms. YouTube, especially, is a platform that allows Black women to disseminate information about natural hair and cause a shift in the cultural understanding of natural hair, which has been overwhelmingly negative in the past. The author’s content analysis of 10 YouTube videos and the corresponding comments revealed that content creators are sharing a positive narrative about natural hair. The majority of content creators who are posting videos used personal stories and emotional appeals to connect with viewers. This is reflected in the comments section as discussions surrounding confidence, identity, and appreciation for the content took place. This content also revealed an underlying discussion surrounding race/ethnicity and how hair is still a marker of Black women’s lived experience.

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Appendix: Code sheet for videos and comments

Variable Name	Value label
Coder name	Name of person coding: 1=Cameron 2=Vanessa 3=Other
Source number	Video identified as one of 10 numbers between 1 and 10. Comment identified as one of alphabets between a and p. A comment on a specific video is identified by a mix of video and comment identification, such as 1a.
Date	Date when each video was published: mm/dd/yy
Length	Time for videos: 00:00- 1:00:00 Word count for comments: 0000-9998
Focused theme	Each video/comment can focus on more than one theme. 1) Inspiration: inspiration or motivation to embrace natural hair or continue on a natural hair journey 2) Admiration/Gratitude: compliments or expressions of gratitude 3) Confidence/Identity: confidence, or lack thereof, in wearing one's natural hair or the development of one's identity in relation to one's natural hair 4) Childhood/Family: childhood experiences or familial influences on how one wears one's hair 5) Societal Standards: societal pressures or beauty ideals 6) Conflict: conflicts that a black woman has experienced when wearing natural hair 7) Race/Ethnicity: natural hair within the Black community/how this issue affects Black women 8) Hair growth/hair care: information about hair growth tips, hair products, hair styles, or details about one's hair care regimen 9) Others: all content that does not fit any of the themes above
Generic frame	The most prevalent or salient frame in the information subsidy. This was not included in the coding process, but referenced in the analysis section to better organize and interpret findings.
Important quote	A quote that explains a specific issue or supports a theme/frame

An Analysis of Corporate Responses to the Black Lives Matter Movement

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an undergraduate senior capstone course in communications

Abstract

The Black Lives Matter movement, founded in 2012 to address the perceived anti-Black racism present in American society, has received support from several large U.S. corporations. This paper examined U.S. corporate responses to the social movement, exploring the corporate values and public responses of five companies within three different industries (including social networking, music-streaming, and sports brands). This paper also discussed the key role that company values, social responsibility initiatives, and mission statements play when a company responds to social justice issues. The study concluded that companies must take their main stakeholders into account before responding to polarizing social movements.

I. Introduction

Social movements in the United States have existed as a means of conveying stances on political and socially focused issues for two centuries, with the earliest records of social movements dating back to the mid-18th century (Tilly, 2005). As social movements have progressed and evolved over time, both large corporations and small businesses have taken stances on these actions and spoken out for or against certain issues. In contrast to less-polarizing movements, such as those focused on raising money for cancer research or bringing attention to the rights of children, some movements that address social injustices and systemic prejudices prove to be riskier for well-known companies and brands (Weinzimmer & Esken, 2016).

The Black Lives Matter movement, founded in 2012 to address the perceived anti-Black racism present in American society, has garnered support from some large U.S. corporations. This research examined which U.S. companies responded to the Black Lives Matter movement and how these stances might relate to company values.

II. History

In order to provide context for the issues discussed in this paper, brief histories of social movements in the United States and the Black Lives Matter movement in particular are described below. Social movements have existed for at least two centuries within the United States, and many early social movements were characterized by the mobilizations of certain groups to gain power (Plotke, 1995). Some early U.S. social

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movements include those focusing on rights for factory workers, immigrants, child laborers, and former slaves. The mid-nineteenth century brought about the beginnings of organized feminism, a social movement that has fought for equal rights for women, including the right to vote. The Great Depression, a worldwide economic depression that affected the financial stability of the U.S. and left many Americans unemployed and impoverished, sparked an interest in the socialist and Marxist ideals of the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Thirty years later, the Civil Rights movement defined the United States. Plotke (1995) argued that many radical reform movements began to appear after the 1970s and described these mobilizations as “new social movements” (p. 115). He grouped environmental movements, LGBT+ movements, and movements by racial minorities into this category.

Occupy Wall Street, a defining social movement that began in 2011, questioned the concentration of wealth within a small percentage of the American population and utilized social media platforms to spread its message across the U.S. and across the world (Sanchez, 2016). In his analysis of modern social movements, including the Occupy movement, Gerbaudo (2012) examined the role of social media in modern activism and argued that activists have begun to use the internet as a public space to spread messages and rally support, much in the same way traditional activists use physical spaces to organize movements. Gerbaudo argued that new media will continue to be used by activists and will provide new creative opportunities to rally support for social movements.

Black Lives Matter was created in response to perceived racial injustice and police violence against Black citizens. It was founded in 2012 after an unarmed Black 17-year-old man, Trayvon Martin, was killed by White neighborhood watchman George Zimmerman (Black Lives Matter, n.d.). While Zimmerman was not a police officer, Black Lives Matter has brought attention to a multitude of violence and fatalities in interactions between American police officers and Black citizens. After the fatal shooting of Black 18-year-old Michael Brown by White police officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri,¹ in 2014, the movement gained significant attention, and the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter began to appear in social media posts addressing racial inequality and injustice (Cobb, 2016). According to the movement’s website, Black Lives Matter aims to work for a “world where Black lives are no longer systematically and intentionally targeted for demise” (Black Lives Matter, n.d., para. 5).

After conducting research on Americans’ responses to the Black Lives Matter, the Pew Research Center found that about 22 percent of Americans opposed the movement while about 40 percent supported it (Horowitz & Livingston, 2016). Proponents of the movement tend to identify as Democrats, while the majority of Republicans surveyed seem to be somewhat or strongly opposed to the movement. Aside from this polarization of ordinary people across political party lines, some police organizations, such as New York’s Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association labor union, also blame the Black Lives Matter movement for the perceived “war on cops” taking place in the United States² (Lockhart, 2016, para. 2).

III. Literature Review

Corporate Social Responsibility and Risk

Many businesses engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices to give back to communities and demonstrate a mission of greater social good. In the broadest sense, CSR is seen as “the relationship between business and the larger society” (Snider, Hill, & Martin, 2003, p. 175), but a standardized definition of CSR is widely debated. Carroll (1999) was one of the first researchers to analyze the evolution of CSR, focusing on the growing popularity of CSR initiatives throughout the 1970s and divergence into different areas of concern in the 1990s. Today, CSR initiatives are often clearly communicated via company websites and other online platforms, but some companies choose to be more ambiguous in their CSR communications to appeal to larger stakeholder groups (Scandellus & Cohen, 2016).

Romani, Grappi, and Bagozzi (2012) illuminated one purpose of CSR: fostering strong company reputations and encouraging positive perceptions among stakeholders. Bolton and Mattila (2015) argued that

¹ Wilson stopped Brown after Brown stole several packages of cigarillos from a local convenience store. An altercation between the two ensued after unarmed Brown tried to flee, which resulted in Wilson fatally shooting Brown.

² This “war on cops” statement is referencing the death of five Dallas police officers who were shot and killed by Micah Xavier Johnson, a Black Afghan War veteran angry over police shootings of Black men, in July 2016. These shootings occurred after a peaceful protest against police killings of Alton Sterling (shot in Baton Rouge, Louisiana two days previously) and Philando Castile (see Footnote 3).

CSR may prove beneficial in times of company failure, as they found that consumers are still likely to support a company with strong CSR policies even after that company has failed to follow through with delivering a promised service. Overall, taking stances on socially focused issues through CSR initiatives is a way that corporations engage with different stakeholder groups and garner positive public attention.

Within a historical context, Luders (2006) examined how businesses analyze risk regarding social issues and protests during the United States' Civil Rights movement. This social movement, which took place in the 1950s and 1960s, involved fighting to end segregation and discrimination against African-Americans in the United States. Luders argued that corporations should conduct a cost-benefit analysis when weighing whether or not they should respond to a polarizing social movement. He illustrated his point by examining business responses of companies in North Carolina, Louisiana, Georgia, and Alabama during the Civil Rights movement and discussed how some corporate responses to ending segregation, such as desegregating lunch counters in Greensboro, North Carolina, could have more to do with avoiding the risk of losing business from protests and other disruptive events than concern for equal rights. Segerfund (2010) also addressed this issue in terms of modern-day anti-slavery movements, in which corporations advocate for international labor rights groups and just labor laws that are both morally-focused and related to the corporate economic climate.

Company Values and Mission Statements

Companies often use both public-facing and internal mission statements to communicate corporate values to public audiences, shareholders, and employees (Bartkus & Glassman, 2008). In her research on organizational moral values, Scott (2002) established that companies tend to express morals and values integral to their corporate cultures in mission statements. She went on to explain that mission statements and corporate moral codes are appropriate to examine when attempting to analyze a company's values. Both Scott (2002) and Leipzinger (2016) content analyzed corporate codes of particular companies. While Scott focused on broader ethical and moral categories, Leipzinger investigated the corporate codes of particular companies like Royal Dutch Shell and Johnson & Johnson to understand how each corporation expressed its social corporate responsibility goals.

Social Movements and Social Media

In addition to Gerbaudo's (2012) aforementioned research, other scholars have examined the growing role of social media in social movements. Youmans and York (2012) discussed how social media have allowed for uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia to be organized and successfully carried out. They addressed the role of governmental restrictions on the use of media to spread activist messages and examined the role of social media and social movements in a larger global context.

On the other hand, Bonilla and Rosa (2015) examined the use of hashtags and social media as a means of activism within the context of the Ferguson demonstrations that took place after the shooting of Michael Brown. Through an ethnographic approach to studying activist movements online, they showcased how hashtags provide social media users with the ability to connect with other like-minded activists and forge common political goals. They also discussed the increasing use of online outlets to gain support for racially focused social justice movements.

The current research addressed the increasing trend of using social media to further social justice movements and focused on the particular case of Black Lives Matter, a racial social justice movement. This examined cases of how American corporations took public stances on a polarizing social justice issue and how those stances might relate to corporate values.

To understand corporate public stances on the Black Lives Matter movement, the study set up two research questions:

RQ1: Which companies chose to respond to the Black Lives Matter movement, and how did they respond?

RQ2: For the companies that did respond to the Black Lives Matter movement, how do company social responsibility values relate to company stances on the polarizing social movement?

IV. Methods

A qualitative content analysis was used to examine the presence of corporate responses to the Black Lives Matter movement and the content of corporate responses from American companies within three different industries. In order to examine corporate responses across a wide range of industries, the top three most popular social networking websites, sports brands, and music-streaming services were selected based on 2016 studies published by Statista. Three companies from each of the three industries were selected based on the following criterion:

- Facebook, YouTube, and Reddit for social networking websites, based on market share of website visits (Statista, 2016a)
- Nike, Adidas, and Under Armour for sports brands, based on percentage of consumers who purchased (Statista, 2014)
- Spotify, Apple Music, and Pandora for music-streaming services, based on number of paying subscribers (Richter, 2016)

Following the selection of these corporations, each company's social media accounts and website were analyzed to determine if the company had publicly responded to the Black Lives Matter movement. Within the context of this research, company statements that include direct references to the Black Lives Matter movement, such as using the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter or mentioning the movement's name in any way, were considered responses to the movement (see Appendix A for coding protocol outline). Each corporate response to the Black Lives Matter movement was analyzed, and its form and language were examined. These responses were examined through open coding, a content analysis process that allows for themes to emerge throughout the coding process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Only five corporations that responded to the Black Lives Matter movement were examined in this paper's discussion section.

In order to examine how corporate responses to the Black Lives Matter movement may relate to corporate values or mission statements, the author analyzed the content of mission statements and self-proclaimed values of each company that responded to the movement. CSR theory outlines how corporations may choose to issue responses to public issues to appeal to certain stakeholder groups (Scandellus & Cohen, 2016), so this research also examined how they dealt with their perceived main stakeholder groups in relation to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Finally, this research briefly addressed potential financial repercussions from taking stances on the Black Lives Matter movement. Luders (2006) argued that businesses take cost-benefit analyses into account when deciding to issue responses to social movements, so this research included financial information in the form of stock prices and revenue statements of the corporations that issued responses in the time periods following the release of the responses.

V. Findings and Discussion

Social Networking Websites (Facebook)

Facebook, one of the original social networking sites, has supported Black Lives Matter through multiple public responses. On July 7, 2016, Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg published a post on Facebook expressing sympathy for the Castile family after Philando Castile was shot and killed by police in Minnesota³ (Wong, 2016). His post also addressed the need to continue to create a more connected and open world. The death of Castile was linked directly to Facebook as Diamond Reynolds, Castile's fiancée, had created a Facebook Live video stream to record the shooting aftermath, which showcased her confronting police officer Jeronimo Yanez after Castile was shot.

Following Zuckerberg's post, Facebook hung a sign on July 8 at its California headquarters reading "Black Lives Matter," in which the letters of the movement's name were made up of the names of victims of

3 In July 2016, Philando Castile was pulled over outside St. Paul, Minnesota, as part of a traffic stop. After informing police officer Jeronimo Yanez that he was licensed to carry a weapon and had one in his pocket, Castile reached for his identification and was fatally shot by Yanez. His fiancée, Diamond Reynolds, and her young daughter were also passengers in the car.

recent violence between police and civilians (Brown, 2016). Additionally, earlier in February 2016, Zuckerberg posted a message on Facebook's company announcement page asking employees to stop replacing the words "Black Lives Matter" with "All Lives Matter" on the company's signature office chalkboard Facebook wall (Selyukh, 2016). He noted that while Facebook had never created rules regarding what employees can write on the wall, crossing out another person's message is considered to silence that person's speech and is disrespectful.

According to Statista, the majority of Facebook users (about 33%) are ages 25 to 34, while the second largest group users (about 26%) are ages 18 to 24 (2016b). The social networking site has about 1.4 billion monthly active users. With the rise of 360 degree video capabilities and Facebook Live, the site also reaches audiences particularly interested in up-and-coming media trends and is viewed as a tool for activists who want to broadcast live video as an event occurs.

According to Facebook's "About" page (2016), the social networking site's mission is "to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected " (para. 1). The site promotes itself as a place that allows users to stay connected to family and friends and provides a platform to express issues that users find important. The company also has five core values it imparts to employees: (1) Be bold, (2) Focus on impact, (3) Move fast, (4) Be open, (5) Build social value (Facebook Careers, 2015). The company values individualism, creativity, and innovation in employees.

There seem to be no major changes in Facebook's stock prices or revenue during the time period following Zuckerberg's message to employees in February 2016, or after Zuckerberg's public response to Castile's death in July 2016 (YCharts, 2016a). However, Facebook did receive some backlash after NPR released a report on the lack of diversity in technology company employees (Selyukh, 2016). While Facebook claimed to revere diversity, 55% of its employees are White (while 32% of its employees are Asian, 4% are Hispanic, and only 2% are Black). Leslie Miley, a Silicon Valley diversity advocate, called for Facebook and other tech companies to cease using referrals from prestigious universities when hiring, particularly because these universities are primarily accessible to White, privileged students (Beres, 2016). In addition, Facebook was accused of censorship after the Facebook Live video posted by Reynolds was temporarily inaccessible due to a technological glitch after Castile's shooting (Sumagaysay, 2016).

Ultimately, Zuckerberg's posts and Facebook's Black Lives Matter banner supported the company's mission statement regarding openness, value of individuality, and expression of feelings. However, the breakdown of the company's employees by race did not align with Zuckerberg's focus on inclusivity and allowing oppressed voices to be heard. Facebook taking a stance on this particular social issue is not reflective of its behavior of possibly censoring graphic material posted via Facebook Live, which is frequently used to record shootings, protests, and other violence surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement.

Sports Brands (Nike)

Out of the three most popular sports brands within the United States, Nike was the only company to issue a public response to the Black Lives Matter movement in the form of a letter from its chairman and CEO, Mark Parker (McGirt, 2016). The letter, which was shared on July 15, 2016, with Nike's 32,000 employees and in Fortune's online newsletter on diversity in corporate America, was focused mainly on addressing the Nike employee team and their potential concerns about diversity in the workplace.

Parker employed the word "we" frequently in his letter and noted that Nike is attempting to battle bigotry and "stand for racial justice" within the workplace. He specifically mentioned a number of notable Nike-sponsored athletes who have spoken up for racial justice and referenced Nike's "long history" of fighting for equality (para. 2). He concluded the letter by mentioning that Nike is working on ways to improve the diversity of its staff, and details regarding these improvements are outlined in the company's sustainability report. Parker noted that company leadership will facilitate meetings to discuss concerns at major North American Nike offices. Under his signature, Parker included the popular movement hashtags, "#stoptheviolence" and "blacklivesmatter," which connect the letter directly back to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Nike's mission statement and core values revolve around inspiring and creating innovation for every athlete in the world (Nike, n.d.). Nike's definition of an athlete is summed up in a quote from company co-founder Bill Bowerman: "If you have a body, you are an athlete" (Nike, n.d., para. 2). Additionally, Nike has 11 maxims, including "be a sponge" and "do the right thing," which employees are required to know and follow at

all times (Nisen, 2013). These inclusive and all-encompassing mission statement and action-focused maxims showcase Nike's brand as both consistent and inclusive.

As a company that sells innovative sportswear, including exclusive products designed by famous company-sponsored athletes, Nike's main consumer audience is both focused on athleticism and brand recognition. Nike appeals to both sports fan and serious athletes. Additionally, Nike must also recognize that it must appeal to a major stakeholder group of professional athletes, many of which are involved in or supportive of social movements like Black Lives Matter.

In terms of financial response to Parker's letter, Nike's stock prices remained relatively steady after the letter was released and the company's quarterly revenue has increased from May 2016 to August 2016 (YCharts, 2016b).

It is important to note that this response may have been motivated by a previous incident in which Nike received criticism for its celebration of Law Enforcement Appreciation Day (Tuttle, 2015). In May 2015, Nike offered a 30% discount on any Nike purchases for law enforcement employees. This offer evoked a number of criticisms on social media, as Twitter users accused Nike of not recognizing its stake in Black consumers and started the hashtag #BoycottNike. Nike later issued a statement explaining that it had celebrated Law Enforcement Appreciation Day since the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, and did not intend to be insensitive toward issues between law enforcement and black communities. Though the incident occurred a year prior to Parker's statement, Nike may have been attempting to belatedly address this issue with consumer audiences through a letter from the CEO.

Overall, Parker's letter was interesting in that it was targeted to Nike employees but also strategically released via Fortune's diversity-focused online newsletter, thereby successfully reaching a wider online audience. Parker's focus on diversity in the workplace related not only to Nike's current business sustainability practice, but also to its core inclusive mission statement. In addition, according to Kell (2016), approximately 52% of Nike's employees identified as racial minorities as of May 2016. As the leader in sports brand sales within the United States, Nike issued a response from its chairman and CEO that successfully references its current practices, core values, and future focus on diversity in a sensitive manner, which was likely strategic in helping the company maintain its captive consumer and sponsored athlete audiences, particularly after being criticized for a perceived anti-Black Lives Matter action in the past.

Music-Streaming Services (Spotify, Pandora, and Apple)

Interestingly, out of the industries examined in this research, music-streaming services seemed to be the most active in responding to the Black Lives Matter movement. Spotify, currently the most popular music-streaming service, released a Black Lives Matter playlist in July 2016, which was made up of 46 songs about revolution, struggle, and identity from Black artists (Bates, 2016). The description of the playlist read "Songs to support the message of the #blacklivesmatter movement" (para. 1). This playlist provoked backlash from some Spotify users on Spotify's community boards, particularly those who stated that they have family members involved in law enforcement. One community board user stated that Black Lives Matter is a hate group and that Spotify "might as well have just made a playlist for ISIS" (Spotify Community, 2016, para. 2). A number of users wrote that they were canceling their Spotify subscriptions because they did not agree with a music-streaming service taking a stance on a social issue. On the other hand, other users responded with statements of support on Spotify's community boards, oftentimes challenging the angry comments from frustrated Spotify subscribers and explaining the overall peaceful and social justice-focused purpose of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Pandora, another music-streaming service, also came out in support of Black Lives Matter by posting a photo with a pro-Black Lives Matter message on its social media platforms in early July 2016 (Nolan, 2016). The message read, "Our hearts ache for all those who unfairly lost their lives. We stand with marginalized communities. We stand for racial justice. We stand for equity. And we stand together to make this world a better place. #BlackLivesMatter #LoveAboveAll." Much in the same way that Spotify received criticism for addressing social views as a subscription site, Pandora had to face some users who wrote social media posts with negative comments, such as "shut up and play music . . . no one is paying for your political views." A number of users also stated they would cancel their subscriptions to the service. Despite these statements of criticism, Pandora's posts on Twitter and Instagram also received thousands of retweets and likes. Many

social media users were pleased with Pandora's message of support and left comments thanking the music-streaming service for supporting the movement.

In comparison to Spotify and Pandora, Apple, owner of the Apple Music streaming service, has addressed both police and Black civilian deaths, but not Black Lives Matter specifically (Sumagaysay, 2016). Tim Cook, Apple's CEO, tweeted out multiple times in early July 2016 about "senseless killings" and how they "remind us that justice is still out of reach for many," and expressed sympathy for the "families of the fallen officers" in Dallas, Texas⁴. This response from Apple was more tempered than those of both Pandora and Spotify, and there were no major critical responses from Apple Music users or Apple consumers in general.

In regard to the mission statements and values of the analyzed music-subscription services, Spotify's mission is to provide unlimited music to people in a legal and accessible way (Spotify, 2016). Pandora's mission is "to play only music you'll love," while Apple's mission focuses more broadly on its products and its commitment to providing the best personal computing experience possible (Pandora, 2016; Blodgett, 2013). Each of these music-subscription services have users from ages 18 to approximately 50, though Pandora has seen a major decrease in its number of active users in recent years due to the rise in popularity of competitor streaming services (Statista, 2016c).

In terms of financial responses, Pandora saw a drop in its stock prices after its social media posts in support of Black Lives Matter, but the company has been experiencing some financial troubles over the past few years due to the rise of new music-subscription services and a decreasing number of subscribers (YCharts, 2016c). Neither Apple nor Spotify saw particularly significant drops in stock after releasing their statements (YCharts, 2016d; YCharts 2016e).

In the case of these music-subscription services, the variety of responses and subsequent criticism provided an interesting comparison in reactions from different user communities. Spotify and Pandora received backlash from subscribers opposed to seeing social or political views from subscription services, and neither of these services' mission statements address much beyond a commitment to providing music for subscribers. On the other hand, Apple, a much larger corporation, released a statement on issues generally related to the Black Lives Matter Movement and expressed sympathy for both Black individuals and law enforcement officers who were killed. Though it is important to acknowledge that Apple Music is part of a much larger and well known corporation with well-regarded products, Apple's tempered response did seem to be much more well-received than the other two music-streaming services.

Overall, companies that chose to respond to the Black Lives Matter movement did so via letters from top leaders, such as CEOs, or through posts on company social media accounts. Some companies, like Spotify, chose to support Black Lives Matter through creating content that aligns with the service the company provides. Online responses tended to involve hashtags relating to Black Lives Matter, which align with Bonilla and Rosa's (2015) ideas about social movements taking advantage of hashtags to connect with supporters and consumers interested in social movements. In addition, many responses contained emotive language expressing grief, empathy, and concern regarding not just the Black Lives Matter movement, but also the greater state of social and racial inequalities in American society.

In terms of comparing responses to the Black Lives Matter movement across industries, it is notable that companies with mission statements that communicated values of inclusivity, diversity, and individuality chose to issue a response to Black Lives Matter, and tended to use emotive language to express distress and sympathy for those involved in the movement. On the other hand, Spotify and Pandora, companies with mission statements revolving mainly around the services they provide, faced criticism from a number of subscribers after attempting to express company stances on issues concerning racial justice.

Companies that took stances on Black Lives Matter were also deeply knowledgeable about their consumer audiences. Companies like Nike not only target its products to young, socially minded consumers, but also establish sponsorships and brand partnerships with talented athletes tied to the Black Lives Matter movement. It must take these audiences into account when choosing to issue a statement on a polarizing issue. Other companies, like Facebook, appeal to consumer and employee stakeholder groups by publicly supporting the Black Lives Matter movement and encouraging Black Lives Matter proponents to express themselves in the workplace. Despite this public support, however, Facebook faced criticism from those who advocate diversity in Silicon Valley as the company could be contributing to racial inequality for African

⁴ See Footnote 2.

Americans with only 2% of its employee base identifying as Black.

The current research also raised the question of risk when corporations take stances on polarizing social movements. While companies would be unlikely to receive negative responses from stakeholder groups when supporting a less polarizing movement like cancer research, those issuing public stances on Black Lives Matter have faced hateful social media comments and threats from consumers who want to stop buying company products or services. Ultimately, though, the majority of these companies did not suffer major financial repercussions after publicly supporting Black Lives Matter. In fact, many of them received some appreciation from their target markets: young consumer audiences. A growing consumer base of socially minded, activist millennial consumers are looking to companies and brands that commit themselves to enacting social change and taking stances on issues that matter to them (Schawbel, 2015). In order to appeal to the generation that is becoming their main consumer target, companies that value diversity and inclusivity may continue to take stances on polarizing issues and appeal to younger target audiences that value socially responsible corporations.

VI. Conclusion

As the Black Lives Matter movement addresses perceived racial injustices within the United States, many companies chose to take public stances on this social movement. When they took stances favoring the Black Lives Matter movement, company values and mission statements seemed to play a role in people's responses to these stances. Companies that publicly value diversity were more likely to receive positive responses from their clients. Companies also responded to the Black Lives Matter movement in different forms; while some issued letters from company leadership, others addressed the movement on social media or through company services.

Ultimately, each company was likely evaluating its stakeholders, particularly its consumer audiences, when choosing to issue a stance on Black Lives Matter. Moving forward, companies must take into account the growing population of millennial consumers, who will be a major force in making purchasing decisions and favor companies that share their socially minded and generally progressive values.

This research cannot be generalized due to a small sample of corporations and industries analyzed. While only five companies within three industries were analyzed, a number of other corporations and industries have issued responses to the Black Lives Matter social movement. In addition, many of the source documents analyzed were only months old, so the study could not include multiple company responses that were generated following a number of deaths of Black Americans in July 2016. The Black Lives Matter movement is constantly growing and shifting, and these companies may change their stances or issue additional company responses to the movement as it progresses. For these reasons, this research only serves as a brief look at company responses to the Black Lives Matter movement at this moment in time.

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Appendix: Coding Protocol: Corporate Responses

Each corporate response was coded to answer the following six questions. For questions A, B, C, and D, one answer was assigned, while E and F could have multiple answers.

- A. Presence of Response
 - Yes
 - No
 - B. (If answered yes to A) Industry Type & Specific Company
 - Music-Streaming Service (Pandora, Spotify, or Apple Music)
 - Sportswear Brand (Nike, Adidas, or Under Armour)
 - Social Networking Website (Facebook, YouTube, or Reddit)
 - C. Medium of Response
 - Social Media
 - Company Website
 - Digital news source
 - Print news source
 - Branded content
 - D. Responder
 - Company as a whole
 - Company leader
 - Public relations representative
 - E. Language vs. Action (Type of Response)
 - Language used (e.g., response expressing support for Black Lives Matter)
 - Action taken (e.g., donation to Black Lives Matter)
 - F. References to Black Lives Matter Movement
 - Use of BLM-related hashtag
 - Inclusion of BLM movement name
 - Tagging of BLM social media accounts
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Reputation Management: A Case Study of Abercrombie & Fitch

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Abstract

In 2013, clothing company Abercrombie & Fitch received considerable public attention for exclusionary remarks attributed to CEO Mike Jeffries. The company was accused of discriminating against overweight women based on its refusal to sell sizes larger than 10. This incident of perceived discrimination became widely circulated due to media coverage of the story and the role of the company's CEO. Instead of following the successful Redressive Actions Framework, Abercrombie & Fitch utilized a more submissive approach that was widely seen as ineffective. This case study found Abercrombie & Fitch failed to address its consumers appropriately and suffered reputation loss, contributing to a decline in stock prices.

I. Introduction

Reputation management is a subject that has existed within the field of public relations since the mid-1980s. Corporate reputation has become an increasingly important aspect in a company's strategic plan. As a result, companies, as well as individual employees, need to act ethically to preserve their positive brand image. "It is the job of every employee to protect and enhance their company's reputation. Organizations are therefore increasingly regarding their employees as vital corporate assets in forming and sustaining a favorable corporate reputation" (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001, p. 99-104). This puts a great deal of pressure on employees, especially high-ranking professionals, such as the chief executive officer (CEO). Organizations need to be prepared for how to respond if a crisis occurs, so they can quickly handle the issue and ensure that its reputation is not tarnished, especially in the long term.

This case study compared the reputation management plans of the clothing company Abercrombie & Fitch against a known reputation framework created by Ronald Sims (2009). The study examined how Abercrombie & Fitch responded to a crisis by focusing on redressive actions, otherwise known as reparation strategies. These are, in essence, the measures a company takes to ensure that its reputation is not permanently damaged. This study assessed whether the approaches utilized by Abercrombie & Fitch were effective or not.

II. Literature Review

Organizations have different strategies to communicate with their audiences, depending on the situation. Public relations (PR) is one occupation that "not only tries to interpret an organization to its publics but

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also the public mind to the organization concerned" (Kaul, 1968, p. M-61). This two-way communication allows for direct engagement between the company and the public, which benefits the company in a variety of ways. After receiving feedback, organizations are able to address concerns that the public may have, as well as use that input to make necessary improvements. To adequately tackle these responsibilities, PR divides its broad domain into multiple categories, one of which is reputation management, which includes crisis communications. This field focuses on the "issue of rebuilding an organization's reputation following an ethical scandal" (Sims, 2009, p. 453).

A strong reputation is vital in business, especially when it can lead to greater successes in the form of more revenue, respect, and attention. Brown (2010) stated, "It is a form of social capital that now appears on balance sheets as a tangible asset, on CVs and resumes as references, and on websites and sales brochures as customer testimonials" (p.56-64). Nonetheless, companies frequently make mistakes that can significantly damage the way they are perceived, leading to long-term consequences, such as negative public opinion and financial loss. To avoid this pitfall, companies hire experts and form teams whose purpose is to respond to scandals and begin the recovery process.

According to a study conducted by Davies and Miles (1998), "Reputation was presented to respondents as having three facets: personality (what the organization really is), identity (what it says it is) and image (what people see it as)" (p.18). Image can be used interchangeably with reputation itself when Sims (2009) stated, "Reputation is formed by the beliefs that people hold about an organization based upon their experience with it, their relationship to it, and their knowledge gained through word of mouth or mass media" (p. 454). Therefore, an organization must protect its reputation by remaining ethical in the eyes of its audience. This proves to be a challenge for companies as stakeholders' concerns can change drastically over time "as do the norms and values of society" (Holden, Adnan, Browne, & Wilhelmij, 2001, p. 20). What's considered acceptable at one point can be seen as outrageous after a few years. Unfortunately, entire companies are unable to modify their mission as quickly as people transform their views. Although organizations may initially experience backlash due to a damaged reputation, they can return to the public's good graces by creating an effective response. In fact, "how corporations and their leaders respond after a scandal occurs is particularly important in determining how long-lasting and pervasive the impact of a scandal will be on a firm's reputation" (Sims, 2009, p. 455).

Over the years scholars have created numerous frameworks for management professionals to follow after a crisis, one of which is known as "Redressive Actions." Scholar Victor Turner defined this term as an "action that is intended to limit the breach and its impact of the crisis with 'certain adjustive and redressive mechanisms'" (Sims, 2009, p. 456).

In order to make a lasting repair on a company's reputation, there are a few general steps to follow. Organizations need to carefully choose the language in which they communicate and ensure that rebuilding plans are in place before the damage is permanent. These strategies can vary; however, more recently, organizations have decided to use social media as a platform for reparation and communication. This is a deliberate move by the institutions, which consider that a large percentage of the audience is involved in some form of social channel. "It is no longer a matter of whether a company should utilize social media to communicate with audiences, but rather how and with what platforms" (Walaski, 2013, p. 40). There are three core principles to consider when maintaining a successful social media presence during a time of crisis: the message, the channel, and the frequency. When discussing the message, it is important to remember that it is not just the words that matter, but also that the content is conveyed to the targeted audiences. This requires organizations to be aware of what channels their audience use most. In order to be informed, the management team should conduct research prior to their predicament, and they should already have a social media platform in place. In other words, "effective use requires advance planning, a targeted approach and a bit of legwork" (Walaski, 2013, p.44). Further proof of this can be illustrated when looking at an organization's credibility. A company should regularly cultivate communication with its audiences to earn trust before any ethical concerns are raised. "Trust and credibility can be established through pre-crisis audience identification, identifying the platforms they are using and engaging in those platforms to build relationships and rapport" (Walaski, 2013, p. 45). The longer an organization networks with its publics, the better it understands whom it is reaching. The channels a company uses to send the message through can also play a large role in fixing a calamity. Brands often have a sizable following of loyal customers that frequent different channels. Since organizations often have extensive knowledge of their audiences, it will be easy for them to determine what messages should be sent to which channels. "Different audiences have different expectations in terms of content and frequency. If

an organization understands these expectations in advance and is prepared to meet them, it will be better able to reinforce a positive reputation” (Walaski, 2013, p. 45). Facebook is a common networking site that will be discussed further in regards to how Abercrombie & Fitch utilized this medium.

Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter consistently serve as the three most popular social media platforms; each medium engages the audience in differing ways. While most media utilize visual and written forms of communication, Facebook is unique in that it also uses sharing and interactive communication. This distinctive quality ensures that Facebook dominates other platforms. The original purpose of these channels altered as their followers increased. In the past, these forums were used to sell products; however, currently, consumers look to such sites for the majority of their information. Therefore, any negative comment or photo posted on these channels about a product or service can reach millions of people and affect their opinions, thus social media can clearly play a large role in a company’s reputation.

The specific focus on reputation framework in this study includes leadership and redressive action. This is important for the purpose of this paper because leadership played a role in the negative public opinion of Abercrombie & Fitch. The first step involves how a leader reacts to a crisis internally. This can often mean eliminating members of the team who do not align with the company’s core values. When a company’s ethical behavior is brought into question, leaders have the opportunity to clarify the organization’s internally and externally values. The second step to tackle a reputation crisis is to directly engage and address the issue. This can be accomplished by crafting new policies, thus preventing the same problem from reoccurring. Thirdly, organizations should look toward role modeling as a way to improve reputation. Employees and the public alike look at how managers deal with unethical behavior. If they simply talk about fixing the problem, but never act on the issue, workers are likely to follow this lead, and the organization will continue to be portrayed in a negative light. The next step in mending an institutions character is the allocation of rewards. Sims (2009) explained, “To ensure that new or specific values are accepted post-ethical scandals an organization’s redressive actions must reward behavior that is consistent with these values” (p. 461). Essentially, a company needs to habitually reward good behavior and penalize poor behavior. Finally, a powerful way to rebuild a reputation is by selecting new members to lead the organization in a positive direction. These five criteria are long-term solutions proposed to appease the public and reinstate a positive image of the company. Analysis of Abercrombie & Fitch showed whether it utilized this model, and if not, how it went about fixing its image.

Background

Abercrombie & Fitch has been a well-known retail-clothing store for more than a century. However, since its inception in 1892, the brand image has changed drastically. Under the direction of David T. Abercrombie, the company was widely recognized as a store for hunting and fishing equipment. Through the 1960s, the company was largely successful. Unfortunately, its success did not last and the company was forced to file for bankruptcy, leaving it open for new management. In 1988, Limited Brands Inc. took over and hired new CEO Mike Jeffries. Under his leadership, the merchandise became preppy and the brand finally found a niche. Jeffries ensured that the company remained on-trend, constantly updating its merchandise to fit customers wants. According to a survey, “In the early 2000’s Abercrombie & Fitch was voted the sixth most popular brand by teenagers” (Lepore, 2011). Now Abercrombie & Fitch is considered to be a high quality All-American clothing store that targets teenagers. Over the past several years, customers’ perception of the company has changed. What was once viewed as a popular clothing chain is now stale and notorious for multiple scandals; the most significant being its refusal to sell clothing for large women.

As Abercrombie & Fitch’s publicity grew, the company began to experience more lawsuits. In 2004, negative attention was drawn to the company for its discriminatory hiring practices. The store was accused of employing sorority and fraternity type men and women, even if other applicants of various backgrounds were just as, if not more, qualified. This subject was broached again when a Muslim woman, Hani Khan, accused Abercrombie & Fitch of firing her based on physical appearance. Khan allegedly “had been allowed to wear a hijab that matched the company’s colors until a district manager visited the store in February 2010 and saw her for the first time in a hijab. Khan was fired soon after” (“Abercrombie & Fitch pays,” 2013). This case was resolved with compensatory charges as well as a policy change that allowed employees to wear religious garments.

The example above is only one of the many that portrays the company’s obsession with superficial factors, such as what employees are wearing. As the pressure to maintain their popular status amongst

customers increased, so did the company's desire to stay "cool." As a result, the company practiced many exclusionary policies, apparently believing that hiring only attractive workers would draw attractive clientele. Jeffries stated, "That's why we hire good-looking people in our stores. Because good-looking people attract other good-looking people, and we want to market to cool, good-looking people. We don't market to anyone other than that" (Schlossberg, 2016). This strategy may have worked at one point; however, people's opinions have changed. Thus in 2013, when a previous interview with Jeffries hosted by SALON.com was leaked, the brand's customers were not as forgiving. The details of this meeting were brought to the public eye after ABC published a story stating that the company did not make large sizes for women. Jeffries' comments infuriated the public and led to a large crisis where the company's reputation was brought into question.

The study asked one research question: Was Abercrombie & Fitch effective in reputation management based on Sims' Redressive Actions framework?

III. Methods

This study examined a timeline that illustrates how Abercrombie & Fitch responded to a crisis that negatively affected its reputation.

The timeline, as shown in *Figure 1*, portrays all the key events that occurred within the period of a year. The top portion indicates how the press reacted to the scandal, while the bottom one reveals how the company replied to the audience, and in turn the crisis. This juxtaposition demonstrates the direct relationship between press coverage and company responses. An organization's reputation is extremely important to ensure financial success. Media sources can greatly affect the public opinion; therefore, if coverage continues to be negative, it may make recovery harder. With this in mind, it might be expected that Abercrombie & Fitch should react in a way that will produce positive feedback and satisfy the public.

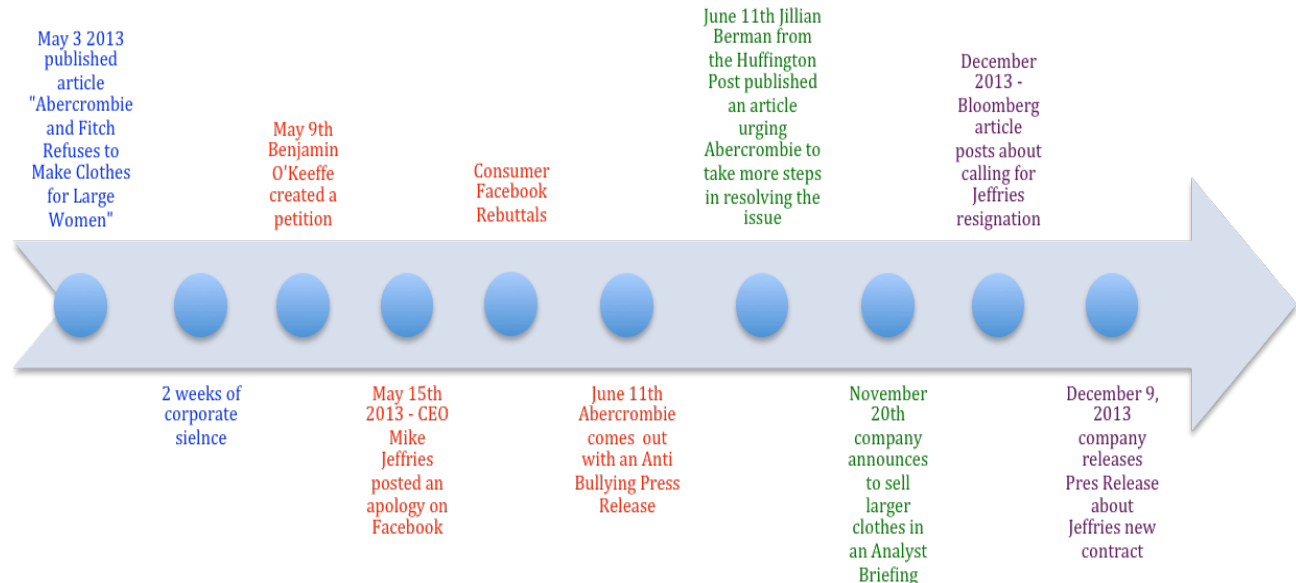


Figure 1. Timeline illustrating how Abercrombie & Fitch responded to a crisis

This paper examined whether Abercrombie & Fitch utilized an effective reputation management plan by comparing it with the Redressive Actions framework outlined by Sims (2009). The five concepts within this framework include the company and leader reacting to the crisis, engaging in the crisis, setting a tone for the crisis, rewarding affirmative behavior demonstrated after the crisis, and replacing key players involved in the crisis. Throughout history various companies have followed these criteria and consequently mended their reputation. *This study operationalized these concepts as follows:*

- *Leadership reaction:* eliminate members for value differences
- *Engagement:* address issues with action
- *Setting a tone:* maintain model teams that act exemplary
- *Reward allocations:* reward model behavior and punish bad behavior
- *Replacement of key players:* select newcomers to influence the organization

This paper is a qualitative discussion of an organizational crisis through the lens of reputation management.

IV. Findings

In *Figure 1*, the events of this crisis are grouped and divided into four separate stages: introduction, consumer response, company action, and resolution. The various colors in *Figure 1* displays the association between the events and the stages.

Introduction to crisis

The first point in the timeline describes how the scandal was initially exposed to the public by press coverage. On May 3, 2013, Business Insider reporter Ashley Lutz published a story that shed light on the fact that the company does not sell women's clothes in sizes XL or XXL because "they don't want overweight women wearing their brand" (Lutz, 2013). Lutz also uncovered details from a 2006 interview where Jeffries made similar remarks about exclusionary practices.

In every school there are the cool and popular kids, and then there are the not-so-cool kids . . . candidly, we go after the cool kids. We go after the attractive all-American kid with a great attitude and a lot of friends. A lot of people don't belong [in our clothes], and they can't belong. Are we exclusionary? Absolutely. (Lutz, 2013)

These comments from Jeffries and the lack of large sizes caused an outrage among the public and marked the beginning of the crisis. Originally, Abercrombie & Fitch chose to respond to these verbal assaults by using the corporate silence approach. This entails that the company "aimed at avoiding organizational 'ownership' of the reputational threats" by not making any comments (Heugens, van Riel, & van den Bosch, 2004, p.1373). Although, to outsiders, this tactic may be construed as avoidance, it is actually a well thought-out plan that attempts to prevent association between a crisis and an organization. Other organizations, such as Chipotle, have successfully implemented corporate silence, claiming that it did not want to comment on a well-publicized health scandal until every detail was confirmed. Because Abercrombie & Fitch is a clothing company, its silence cannot be explained away as easily; the published comments do not need further verification.

Consumer Response

The public largely perceived Abercrombie & Fitch's silence as lack of caring and persisted in protesting. The second grouping, consumer response, gives two examples of how the public reacted to the scandal, and in turn, how the company replied to the public. Some accused Abercrombie & Fitch of intentionally leaving out certain segments of the population. This incident blew up into a widely known

scandal. Some observers began putting together protests and petitions to illustrate how this brand was affecting teens. On May 9, 2013, 18-year-old Benjamin O'Keefe created a petition on change.org that called for a boycott of the company until Jeffries apologized and sold larger sizes. His petition obtained almost 80,000 signatures, by strategically using emotion to induce action. On May 19, 2013, Jeffries responded and posted an apology on Facebook.



Figure 2. Mike Jeffries' response to a crisis

This apology was one attempt at reputation management. To further spread the word, the company put a link to this comment on Twitter. With a perceived lack of sincerity behind the words, some did not take Jeffries' excuse to heart, and continued to lash out on Facebook. Multiple followers acted in disbelief; Vicky Ashton and Alexander G. Souther were only two of the many to post comebacks. Throughout this time nearly a million people posted on Facebook and Twitter noting their concerns, not including the many articles published in *Business Insider*, *The Huffington Post*, and *Forbes*. The scandal took on a life of its own and caused Abercrombie & Fitch's stock price to decline. According to its website, the stock share dropped from \$58 to \$26 after the six-month crisis period.



Figure 3. Consumers' Facebook rebuttals

Less than a month later, the company published an anti-bullying press release that mirrored their previous sentiments and demonstrated the direction they planned to take moving forward (Abercrombie & Fitch, 2013b). Despite these explanations, no action was taken to reprimand the company or Jeffries.

Company Action

The third classification, company action, illustrates the dissatisfaction in press reports with Abercrombie & Fitch's "actions," and calls for actual steps to be taken in order to resolve the issue. The frustration with Abercrombie culminates into various articles, including Jillian Berman's from *The Huffington Post* titled "Abercrombie Anti-Bullying Campaign Met with Surprise, Criticism from Protestors." In response to the press release, Berman (2013) issued the following:

"It will take more than just an anti-bullying campaign to change his [Benjamin O'Keefe] mind about the company; he'd like to see a public commitment from Abercrombie to stock larger sizes for women as well as to include plus-sized models in its advertising."

It wasn't until about a half year later that Abercrombie & Fitch finally mobilized, releasing recommendations that they would sell larger sizes.

Resolution

The fourth category, resolution, shows press coverage that urges Jeffries to resign, and the final efforts from the company to rectify the situation. Bloomberg published an article containing information from Engaged Capital, a hedge fund that owns a share in Abercrombie & Fitch, pressing Jeffries to leave the company. There may be multiple reasons behind this action; however, the decline in stock prices caused by Jeffries' comments certainly factored into this decision. Abercrombie & Fitch responded to this demand by first issuing a press release on about Jeffries' new contract where he was not only paid less, but also stripped his title as chairman (Abercrombie & Fitch, 2013a). His departure did not come until a year later on December 9, 2014, when he retired. These enactments happened months after the scandal leaked, and therefore played no part in calming the public backlash.

V. Discussion

Through the analysis of the four stages of introduction, consumer response, company action, and resolution above, it seems that the company responded only when necessary to stem the heated coverage. When looking at this in comparison with the redressive framework, the initial company actions were not nearly substantial enough to lessen the public furor, therefore putting the brand's reputation on the line. The redressive framework suggests actions that came later could have been more timely. The first framework criterion, leadership reaction, emphasizes ridding the organization of team members whose values do not line up with those of the company. Abercrombie failed to take this step, and kept Jeffries and his team on board, illustrating a lack of awareness for the comments he made and the resulting negative publicity.

The second criterion, engagement, explains how a company should address the issue head on and create new policies that will tackle whatever problem occurred. According to the framework, Abercrombie chose the wrong course of action by withholding a response for a period of two weeks and failing to implement any tangible plan. Initially, the company refused to respond to any negative comments by using corporate silence. Eventually, when Abercrombie finally did counter, the two press releases posted were not effective. The first notice came in the form of a Facebook post. Despite the company's knowledge of both its target audience and most frequented channel, the apology lacked emotion, appearing to be formal and rehearsed. Forbes contributor Davia Temin said, "(Abercrombie) takes no responsibility for the action that prompted the apology. It has no sense of mea culpa, or remorse, but rather seems to transfer the blame to you" (Temin, 2013). In fact, Abercrombie may have exacerbated the situation by publishing on a popular forum where anyone has the opportunity to comment. The second type of communication was in the form of a press release. This anti-bullying statement was not as widely circulated because it was advertised on Abercrombie's website. Moreover, it indirectly confronted the situation. In order to truly help their reputation,

Abercrombie needed to take direct action by adding new plus-sized merchandise, instead of simply publishing what was perceived by some as disingenuous messages. Temin (2013) emphasizes, “The company could have put a wooden stake into the heart of the crisis – by not only issuing a resonant, authentic, heartfelt apology, but by taking some serious remedial actions, as well.” Although they ultimately did instate larger sizes, it did not occur until November, when the situation was not at the forefront of consumers’ minds.

The third criterion, setting a tone for the crisis, has to do with role models. Employees within a company often act as exemplary figures to the public as well as mentors to new employees. This redressive action can then be described as showing how such employees should act as moral compasses to their audiences. If they are seen as corrupt, the new workers will follow their lead and the public will continue to label the brand negatively. In the case of Abercrombie & Fitch, the employees and leadership barely reacted to the scandal, therefore inadvertently downplaying the crisis, passively agreeing with the merchandise as well as the previously stated comments. Had Abercrombie punished certain employees and made necessary employment adjustments, the public would have looked at the company in a better light.

The fourth criterion, reward allocations, states that after an ethical scandal, organizations should reward moral behavior and punish immoral behavior. This not only demonstrates that the company knows the difference between right and wrong, but also proves that they want to uphold certain standards. This research suggests that Abercrombie & Fitch may not have conformed to this criterion even after all the negative brand attention. As a result, Abercrombie’s total return to shareholders was far behind its peers (Berfield & Rupp, 2015). If the company had immediately addressed this criterion, the public would potentially taken this action as an indication of responsibility and the public may have been more accepting toward the clothing brand.

The fifth and final criterion, replacement of key players, clarifies that selecting newcomers to an organization is a powerful way for a leader to rebuild a company’s reputation. Abercrombie did not search for new employees right after the crisis escalated, and instead waited for almost a year to oust Jeffries as chairman and CEO. New appointees significantly strengthened the senior leadership team and planned to steer the focus of the company toward its relationship with its customers. When looking at each of these criteria, it appears that Abercrombie & Fitch did not follow these guidelines.

VI. Conclusion

An examination of the timeline demonstrates that the reputation management plans of Abercrombie & Fitch could have been more successful. The company’s meager reactions within the first several weeks of the crisis barely mentioned the real issue of providing larger sizes for its plus-sized market. The messages they published came in two forms: a Facebook post and press release. Neither evoked emotion from readers, but may have fueled their resentment against a company and leader who refused to take responsibility. Instead of attempting to appease the press and public via these forms of communication, Abercrombie & Fitch could have taken a more drastic step, and actually made policy changes. By the time the company realized this fact, it was way too late and the public had already established their opinions about the brand. When comparing Abercrombie’s methods with the Redressive Action framework, it may be concluded that the short-term solutions the company used were not as effective as they may have been. Had they applied the five redressive criteria, the actual company culture may have changed, potentially attracting old and new customers.

The impact on Abercrombie & Fitch can be seen in its financial records in 2013. Months after the *Business Insider* article was published, which gained a considerable amount of negative attention, the stock portfolio showed an increase in sales but a decrease in stock price. Essentially, one of the company’s main source of financial support, the investors, decided to withdraw and withhold donations. Overall this caused a loss of income (“Morning Document Research,” 2009). Although the decline is most likely a direct result of the statements by the company, there could also be some other factors, including trouble with staying on the fashion trend of the time. Although this framework provides strategies that are proven to be successful at this point, other structures may become more relevant as our corporate environments continue to change with time. Even since 2013, the Internet has grown drastically, lending to new forms of interaction. Currently, people can research anything on the web and have unlimited access to information. As a result, company and individual reputations can be known worldwide. To maintain a positive status, organizations need to constantly

engage with their customers. Of course, mistakes will be made, but it is how the mistakes are handled that matters more. The direction of reputation management is evolving with the advent of new technology, and frameworks need to follow suit. (Tennie, Frith, & Frith, 2010, p. 484-485).

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How Regional Fast Food Restaurants Build Brand Identity to Reach Local Consumers

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Abstract

Loyalty can run deep, especially when it involves burger joints. This study used content analysis to understand the brand identities of three regional fast food restaurants: Culver's, In-N-Out Burger, and Whataburger. The author reviewed company websites, product packaging, and social media accounts to examine the portrayed identity of these popular chains. These brand identities incorporate regional culture and values in order to develop personal connections with local consumers, resulting in strong brand loyalty. In a fast food industry dominated by national and international competitors, these burger joints provide a lesson on how strong branding and catering to the specific tastes can lead to success.

I. Introduction

Loyalty can run deep, especially when it comes to burger joints. In Southern California, In-N-Out Burger has a cult-like following while Texas high school students head to the closest Whataburger for its signature spicy ketchup and fries after the Friday night football game. In the Midwest, one sings the praises of Culver's and its ButterBurgers and frozen custard. Culver's, In-N-Out Burger, and Whataburger are all regional, family-owned and -operated fast food restaurants that began in distinctly different regions in the United States. They incorporate the culture, language, and values of their home states or areas into their brand identity as a means to best connect with consumers and build loyalty. This study used content analysis of various communication materials utilized by Culver's, In-N-Out Burger, and Whataburger to determine how they built their brand to cater to regional customers.

II. Literature Review

In order to analyze how these fast food chains target their regional audience, it is important to understand the concepts of brand identity and consumer loyalty. There has been significant research conducted to determine what contributes to brand identity and consumer loyalty to a brand, examining the chain's regional industry marketing efforts. These established insights can be applied to this research.

Keywords: Regional Marketing, Brand Identity, Fast Food, Regional Restaurants, Consumer Loyalty
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Brand Identity

A company's brand identity refers to the brand's personality that shapes how consumers view the brand. Components of a brand identity include the stylized company name, logo, tone, or the brand spokesperson, all of which should be reflective of the company's values and leave a memorable impression with consumers (Crystal & Herkowitz, 2010). The purpose of a brand identity is to communicate the company's experiences and activities, build perceptions with target audiences, and brand the company internally for its employees (Alhaddad, 2015). A common misconception is that having a strong brand identity directly results in consumer loyalty, but in actuality, the brand identity gives the employees a stronger understanding of the company and its values. This internal understanding thus leads to a better corporate environment, and consumers are attracted to companies with a strong, positive corporate identity (Singh, 2014).

Consumer Loyalty

Consumer loyalty refers to the tendency to favor a brand over all others. There has been extensive research done to figure out what factors into consumer loyalty (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995). Brands build trust with consumers by caring about more than just their company and profits, by providing special care to their consumers, charity work, or societal issues. Companies also build trust through consistency of pricing, performance, and corporate values and by providing entertainment value to audiences through creative, engaging content (Alhaddad, 2015).

Further research has focused on how consumer's view loyalty, by examining how consumers believe that their loyalty is earned, rather than bought through marketing efforts. Additionally, consumers expect loyalty to be reciprocal, whether it is through consistent products or pricing, customer loyalty programs, or other reward programs for discounts or special deals (Rundle-Thiele, 2006).

One study found that customer loyalty was reinforced by customer satisfaction and customer relationship inertia, or by consumers habitually purchasing the same product or from the same brand because they feel comfortable not having to make new choices (Cheng, Chiu, Hu, & Chang, 2011).

Additionally, although a brand identity is important in making lasting connections with its target audiences, customer satisfaction has been proven to first begin with the product, then the brand as a way to generate loyalty (Torres-Moraga, Vásquez-Parraga, & Zamora-González, 2008). A company can only build a faithful consumer base if it is able to deliver quality products or services.

Relationship theory helps to explain emotional connections built between consumer and a brand. When a relationship is formed early in life or introduced by significant others, these relationships are shown to hold the greatest emotional significance with an individual. Because of those two factors, there is significance in the nostalgia consumers associate with brands introduced in their childhood (Braun-Latour & Latour, 2007).

In terms of customer loyalty to fast food restaurants in particular, one study showed that the most influential factors are cleanliness of the restaurants, product taste, and employee competence (Meyers & Wallace, 2003). Culver's, one of the restaurants included in this study, was part of the Meyers and Wallace study and ranked highly across all factors with the Midwest audience. The results of this study should be kept in mind when examining how this burger restaurant has developed a loyal consumer base.

Regional Marketing

Before delving into marketing for regional brands, it is important to understand the idea of a regional community and the pride an individual typically associates with the place they call home. The word community is defined as "a safe haven where everyone looks after each other, where everyone feels at home" (Kozeny, 2000). Regional brands refer to brands or products marketed in a restricted geographical area, and when it comes to their marketing efforts, regional brands often "appeal to the idiosyncratic tastes of the region" (Braun-Latour & Latour, 2007). They evoke nostalgia or regional pride, and consumers often prefer the quality of a regional product compared to national competitors (Braun-Latour & Latour, 2007).

An industry where the regional identity is especially important to the product is the wine industry. In research conducted on the California wine industry, regional information on product labels positively shaped consumers' perception of the product's quality. It is believed that this is due to consumers' motivation to buy

locally due to ethnocentrism, or judging another culture based on the values of one's own culture (Bruwer & Johnson, 2010).

This study will explore how regional fast food restaurants target their local audiences and build consumer loyalty through their communications strategies. The research questions include:

RQ1. In what ways do these restaurants use regional cues to build their brand identities?

RQ2. What about the restaurants' brand appeals to the regional audiences?

III. Methods

This study used qualitative content analysis to determine the brand identities developed by three regional fast-food restaurants: Culver's, In-N-Out Burger, and Whataburger. These restaurants were chosen for their popularity and represent three distinct regional areas: Culver's from Wisconsin and the Midwest, In-N-Out from California and the West Coast, and Whataburger from Texas and the South.

To understand brand identity, the author looked at the website, product packaging, and social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) for each of these restaurants over a one-month period, October 2016. The author analyzed the written and visual elements of the communication strategies to understand each brand's identity and what specifically caters to the tastes and values of the regional target audience. The author considered each company's slogans, corporate mission, history, menu, community or charity involvement, and any additional content that mentioned the restaurant's location. Visually, logo, signature color, and website design contributed to the brand identity.

On each website, the author restricted the content included in the study to the website's main page and webpages accessed from the main page with one mouse click. For coding purposes, the author went through these pages tracking frequently used language reflecting the restaurant's location, menu items, company values, and key words that the author determined best described the restaurant's portrayed identity. The product packaging was deconstructed for visual elements including colors, images, and any included text to understand how the packaging contributes to the brand identity. Finally, the author utilized the visual and textual elements of the social media accounts to build an understanding of brand identity, particularly elements that were consistent across the three strategies included in the content analysis.

IV. Findings

Culver's

The Midwestern fast food favorite, Culver's, has origins that go further back than its own opening. Wisconsin natives, George and Ruth Culver, with a family background in dairy farming bought an A&W, an already existing fast food chain, in 1961 in Sauk City, Wisconsin. Their three kids grew up in the restaurant environment, and with George and Ruth's guidance, their son Craig and his wife Lea opened the first Culver's in Sauk City in 1984. Craig Culver opened the chain as a way to feature his mother's homemade burgers and his favorite treat, custard. These items are now Culver's signature combination, ButterBurgers¹ and Fresh Frozen Custard. Today, Culver's remains owned and operated by the Culver family, with Craig Culver still serving as CEO, and its corporate mission is that "Our guest who chooses Culver's leaves happy" (www.culvers.com). The restaurant now has more than 500 locations, 136 of which are in the family's native Wisconsin.

Table 1 notes observations made during the content analysis of Culver's website, product packaging, and social media.

¹ ButterBurgers are made of a lightly buttered and toasted bun – where it gets its namesake – and three cuts of beef: sirloin, chuck, and plate.

Table 1. Messages to Build Culver's Brand Identity

Website	Product Packaging	Social Media
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imaging includes an outline of Wisconsin, star on Sauk City's location • Emphasis on Wisconsin and Midwest values • Emphasis on fresh, local food • Thank You Farmers – Culver's support of National Future Farmers of America and local Wisconsin farms • Extensive information on menu items and custard flavors • "Delicious Perks" – customer loyalty programs, tie into the "Welcome to Delicious" slogan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses signature blue color, logo, and "Welcome to Delicious" slogan • Cups showing farm landscape, Thank You Farmers message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizes content across Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram • National Cheese Curd Day promotion – multimedia content • "Curd Nerds" in-store contest promoted online • Involvement in Future Farmers of America Convention • Use of #ThankYouFarmers • Promoting the launch of their Snapchat account • Twitter – participating in relevant trending topics (ex. National Chocolate Day)

While investigating Culver's website, social media channels, and product packaging, the key messages include an emphasis on Wisconsin values and commitment to supporting local farms and the Future Farmers of America. Culver's discusses how much it values hospitality, starting with Ruth Culver and her "spirit of genuine hospitality," the mission of the chain to have every Culver guest leave happy, and the taste of its food and the overall dining experience (www.culvers.com). In addition to Culver's Wisconsin hospitality, it brands its products as uniquely Midwestern, like its "fresh Midwest beef" and "genuine Wisconsin Cheese Curds" (www.culvers.com). Not only are these menu items explicitly tied to Wisconsin and the Midwest, but an item like cheese curds is not typically found at a fast food restaurant. The regional menu item helps differentiate Culver's from other restaurants.

Culver's credits the Wisconsin farming community for providing fresh food and for giving back through the "Thank You Farmers" initiative. This includes producing informational content on local eating, transparency about where the food is from, and involvement in the National Future Farmers of America Foundation, all of which are incorporated in the communication strategies analyzed. Outside of the farming community, Culver's shares stories of its involvement in local schools, police departments, and additional fundraising events (www.culvers.com).

Another part of this study involved coding for specific key words used throughout Culver's website (Refer to Table 2). These frequently used words reflect Culver's values, products, and ultimately its brand identity. Particularly notable is the usage of the word "fresh," which directly reflects its partnership with local Wisconsin farms, and the word "Wisconsin," the birthplace that Culver's ties itself closely to.

Table 2. Key Words Used by Culver's Website

Key Word	# of Mentions
ButterBurger	6
Custard	8
Cheese curd	5
Wisconsin	7
Family	5
Farm/farmer	6
Fresh	12

In-N-Out Burger

In 1948, husband-and-wife team Harry and Esther Snyder opened their first drive-through hamburger stand in Baldwin Park, California. The drive-through stand and the introduction of the two-way speaker for ordering were particularly innovative for the time. Since its opening, In-N-Out has maintained that it will “serve only the highest quality product, prepare it in a clean and sparkling environment, and serve it in a warm and friendly manner.” These are core values reflected in the slogan, “Quality you can taste” (www.in-n-out.com). Today, Lynsi Snyder, the Snyder's granddaughter, is In-N-Out's president, and the company's headquarters are in Irvine, California. With more than 300 stores, the chain is predominately in California, Nevada, Arizona, and Oregon, and there are a number of locations throughout the state of Texas (www.in-n-out.com).

Table 3 notes observations made during the content analysis of In-N-Out Burger's website, product packaging, and social media platforms.

Table 3. Messages to Build In-N-Out Burger's Brand Identity

Website	Product Packaging ²	Social Media
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of red, yellow, and white • Usage of palm trees in content and outside of every physical restaurant • Charitable work with Child Abuse Foundation • Minimal written content – only information on company history and charitable causes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency of red and white colors • Palm tree pattern • Usage of Bible quotes on the bottom of cups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inactive social media presence • Facebook – last posted in May 2016 • Twitter – last posted in June 2011 • Instagram – last posted in August 2016

In-N-Out represents “a romanticized version of Southern California: palm trees and hot rods and harmless fun on a Friday night at the drive-in” (Wilkins, 2004). In-N-Out largely creates this idea through its iconic imaging – palm trees both in design and physically planted outside of stores, signature bright colors, and its history as the first drive-thru burger joint of California – and its website and product packaging largely align with this imagery.

That being said, In-N-Out had the least amount of written content across its website and nonexistent or inactive social media channels. This could be due to the established popularity In-N-Out already had by the time companies began developing online sites and utilizing social media marketing, so the company may not see it as a means to gain business.

Table 4 indicates key words and the number of mentions counted in coding In-N-Out Burger's website. The words “California” and “quality” were by far the most commonly used terms. The language

² In-N-Out includes Bible verse notations on the bottom of cups and on burger wrappers. Richard Snyder, the son of the founders, decided to start including them in 1987, because “it was something [he] wanted to do” (Grossman, 2005). Though this could be seen as a religious statement from the company, In-N-Out is not known as a Christian company, and most customers never notice the verses.

reinforces how ingrained California residents are in In-N-Out's identity and its focus on quality. Its slogan is focused on "quality you can taste" and that idea is prevalent throughout the site.

Table 4. Key Words Used by In-N-Out Burger's Website

Key Word	# of Mentions
California	18
Hamburger, burger	8
Animal style burger	3
Double double	2
Palm tree	2
Quality	24

Whataburger

Whataburger opened in August 1950 by entrepreneur Harmon Dobson as a burger stand in Corpus Christi, Texas. Dobson wanted to serve a burger so large that it required two hands to hold and cause customers to say after a single bite, "What a burger!" Burgers are made-to-order or as the slogan suggests, "Just like you like it" (www.whataburger.com). Whataburger remains family-owned and operated. The chain was run by Harmon Dobson's wife, Grace, after his death in 1967. Their son, Tom, took over in 1993. Since Dobson's first stand, Whataburger aims to "serve the highest quality products, treat others with respect, invest in the community and be fiscally responsible" (www.whataburger.com). Today, the Texas-based restaurant has almost 800 locations in every state from Arizona to Texas, where its headquarters are now in San Antonio (www.whataburger.com).

Table 5 notes observations made during the content analysis of Whataburger's website, product packaging, and social media platforms.

Table 5. Messages to Whataburger's Brand Identity

Website	Product Packaging	Social Media
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image focused on orange and white stripes, A-frame style building • Page dedicated to press releases about Whataburger's involvement in the community and events they will be attending • Showcases social media posts from customers on every page • Emphasis on joining the "Whataburger family" through information on careers • Includes menu information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orange and white stripes • Use of Texas state outline on paper bags • Humorous sayings on the bags (ex. "Rarely do the fries make it all the way home") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook – image-based content • Twitter – active engagement with followers, trendy language (ex. bae, GOAT) targeted towards Millennials and Gen Z • Instagram – reposting customer generated content • Using content across social media platforms • Focus on Texas and Texas lifestyle/culture • Humorous tone, pop culture references

A reoccurring theme in Whataburger's content is family or community, which are reflected in the company website and social media content. An entire page of Whataburger's website is dedicated to the company's charitable involvement in the towns in which its stores are located as well as a calendar of local events supported by Whataburger. Additionally, in the information about jobs with Whataburger, employees are referred to as family members. Whataburger also builds a sense of community with its customers by utilizing consumer-generated content on its website and on social media, particularly Instagram. This makes customers feel more included and appreciated by the company.

Whataburger also ties itself closely to Texas. Although the chain has expanded, the company says, "we're born in Texas, and it will always be home" (www.twitter.com/Whataburger). The Texas culture and identity is reflected in the language used and product packaging. Even some menu items are marketed as being spicy or on Texas toast, which differentiates Whataburger's products from other fast food restaurants.

Table 6 tracks the number of mentions for key words. As previously noted, Whataburger largely emphasizes the idea of family, seen its frequent usage on its website. Texas was the second most used word, reiterating the importance Whataburger places on its home state even after its expansion across the Southeast.

Table 6. Key Words Used by Whataburger's Website

Key Word	# of Mentions
Texas	7
Community	4
Family	14
Hot, fresh or hot and fresh	3
Spicy	6

V. Discussion

Building a Brand Identity

While these regional restaurants have built a unique brand identity, they all have reoccurring themes: quality or freshness of product, involvement in charitable endeavors, and remaining family-owned.

The quality and freshness of the product is seen throughout the communication strategies. Culver's highly publicizes its products coming fresh from local farms. The idea of having fresh or genuine Wisconsin food strengthens consumer perception of quality products. In-N-Out Burger places importance on the quality of the food as well, which is seen in the frequency of the word "quality," as noted in *Figure 4*. Even the company's logo is "Quality you can taste" (www.in-n-out.com). This focus on product quality correlates with the study in *The Journal of Consumer Marketing* which found that "the process of loving a brand starts with a product" based on quality, consistency, and overall consumer satisfaction and then consumers develop a love for the brand (Torres-Moraga, Vásquez-Parraga, & Zamora-González, 2008).

When it comes to these restaurants' involvement in charitable activities, Culver's supports local farms and the National Future Farmers of America Organization, and is involved in various events and fundraising efforts for the organization. This relationship suggests to customers that Culver's cares about more than just making a profit, and is heavily involved in organizations important in the Wisconsin area (www.culvers.com). Instead of partnering with a specific charity or cause, Whataburger is involved in various service events, such as hosting a lunch for military personnel in Fort Hood and donating a percentage of a day's store sales to the local high school in Cedar Park, Texas (www.whataburger.com). This kind of involvement shows Whataburger's commitment to making a positive difference in the community, while the individual locations are able to be involved in events and fundraisers specific to the area's needs.

Culver's, In-N-Out-Burger, and Whataburger remain family owned. Ruth Culver's legacy helps to motivate Culver's employees aim to continue "Ruth's spirit of genuine hospitality across all our restaurants" (www.culvers.com). In-N-Out Burger, in particular, has refused to franchise and remains owned by the

Snyder family, and customers “feel like they are part of something with In-N-Out...It still feels like a mom-and-pop operation” (Klara, 2015). These company values encourage consumers to be a part of continuing the respective owners’ legacies, giving a more personal touch to the companies. Additionally, the physical size of each company contributes to the local feel. Culver’s has 585 stores, In-N-Out Burger has 313 stores, and Whataburger has 805 stores. In comparison, McDonald’s has over 36,000 restaurants in more than 100 countries (About us: McDonald’s facts and story, 2016). These restaurants feel local, because they are typically limited to certain parts of the country, making it more special or unique when a consumer comes across any location.

Appeal to Regional Audiences

As discussed by Braun-Latour and Latour (2007), regional brands “appeal to the idiosyncratic tastes of the region” through nostalgia or regional pride. This is applicable to the restaurants in this study because the communities are an integral part of brand identity.

Whataburger, for example, utilizes facets of Texas culture – Friday night football games, homecoming traditions – and incorporates these elements in its images and written content. Whataburger is so successful in tying its identity to Texas that the state Legislature declared the restaurant a “Texas Treasure” on its 50th anniversary for “capturing the hearts – and the taste buds – of millions of Texans” (Whataburger declared a Texas treasure, 2001). Although Whataburger has locations outside of Texas, its home state claims ownership and vice versa. This creates a deeper relationship with Texas consumers, because Whataburger capitalizes on state pride, setting it apart from other burger restaurants and making it feel like a more hometown experience for customers.

Culver’s provides an innately Midwestern and specifically Wisconsin feel. One Culver’s customer describes the hometown feeling of nostalgia best: “I feel most at home when I am in my regular corner booth at my neighborhood Culver’s in Shorewood, Wisconsin” (O’Neil, 2015). Nostalgia is a proven factor of consumer loyalty because it provides a deeper emotional connection to a specific time or place than simply an appreciation for the food.

It is important to note that, even though these restaurants cater to a regional audience, they do not alienate customers outside of that demographic. On Trip Advisor, a website of user-generated reviews and recommendations for hotels, restaurants, and things to do while travelling, In-N-Out Burger is one of the top ranked restaurants in California, consistently earning four or more stars out of five. One reviewer gave an L.A. location five out of five stars, saying, “First time visitor in L.A. had to see what the fuss was about,” while another said, “I always miss In-N-Out when we are not in California” (In-N-Out Burger, 2016). These comments reinforce that idea that *San Diego Union-Tribune* writer John Wilkens noted, “Anyone who has spent much time at an In-N-Out has probably seen tourists...The food items become a part of the travel experience” (2004).

Restaurants’ “Cult Followings”

Culver’s, In-N-Out Burger, and Whataburger have all built a niche for these businesses. More than just loyalty, however, these restaurants have been associated with a “cult following.” Wilkens describes cult foods as “culinary comforts that attract followings based almost as much on nostalgia or identity as flavor,” and the deeper connection can be attached to a person, place, or particular time (2004).

The cult followings these burger restaurants have garnered can be seen in a variety of ways. Culver’s ButterBurgers compete alongside international chains like McDonald’s and Wendy’s on *Business Insider*’s rankings of “fast food menu items with cult followings” (Bhasin, & McConnell, 2012). In-N-Out has been referred to as “a cult that just happens to serve burgers” (Chiao, 2013). One Texas couple gained media attention when they visited every Whataburger store, 729 locations at the time, across 10 states (Washeck, 2013). All of these individual incidents are reflective of numerous other similar instances and the passionate customer base all of these have built for themselves. It exemplifies the extent to which the restaurants have connected with its consumers.

VI. Conclusion

The study illustrates that regional fast food restaurants utilize their geographical location as an inherent part of their brand identity and are able to build brand loyalty through the local connection with consumers. In an industry dominated by international chains like McDonald's, the ability for regional companies to develop such a high level of consumer loyalty is a lesson for the fast food industry as well as communications professionals aiming to understand branding and consumer loyalty. These restaurants reflect their consumers' culture and values, building deeper relationships with the community. This kind of emotional connection with their target audience is what all brands hope to achieve. These restaurants succeed because they are more than just burger joints; they are part of the family.

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Ticket Scarcity and the Marketing of Broadway's Smash Hit *Hamilton*

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Abstract

Hamilton, a Broadway hit musical, has achieved astounding popularity leading to ticket scarcity and a wildly overpriced resale ticket market. Although most have never seen the show, fans continue to engage with the production both off and online. Through a survey of fans and an interview, this study explored how a show can be marketed when the main goal isn't necessarily to encourage people to buy tickets. Instead the marketing focuses on providing content for fans, creating a significant online presence, and keeping people engaged. By understanding how Hamilton's ticket scarcity was handled, other marketers may use these methods for future Broadway shows.

I. Introduction

In Broadway's smash hit, *Hamilton*, Aaron Burr declares, "I'm willing to wait for it." And it would appear that *Hamilton* fans are, indeed, willing to wait for it as the show's tickets are typically sold out or out of the price range of the average theater fan. Typically, a Broadway show's marketing, advertising, and social media will have the primary objective of selling tickets to that show. How can a show be marketed when the main goal is not to encourage people to buy tickets? Traditionally, the point of a marketing team is to sell a product, so this conundrum changes its entire purpose. The *Hamilton* team is tasked with something else: they are creating a community and selling *Hamilton* merchandise, cast albums, and books rather than the expensive and elusive tickets to the show. They are also attempting to create and maintain a fan base that will be want to buy tickets to the national tour when it reaches them in the next few years.

Hamilton has a large number of fans that reside outside of New York City, or even outside the United States. Many of these people have little hope of actually seeing the show within the next two years. So how do they engage with *Hamilton*'s social media and other promotional materials? It seems that the main answer is they turn online. *Hamilton* has a strong presence online: on social media, YouTube, and blogs. In a (2016) *Wired* magazine article, Issie Lapowsky said, "The *Hamilton* team has worked hard to cultivate a strong online presence to make up for the paucity of tickets. With so many shut out of the show, the internet has become a vital way to keep fans stoked."

As Broadway and other theater productions evolves, it is important to understand how marketing and promotion of those shows change, too. This topic, though little researched in an academic setting, is vital to the future of the Broadway marketing and advertising world. Analyzing the phenomenon of *Hamilton* will be important for the musical theater industry, particularly when trying to replicate its success. This model of

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promotion could be applied to smash hits in the future.

II. Literature Review

While there is little published about the marketing of *Hamilton*, there is much written about Broadway marketing and musicals in general. This section is divided into four parts: marketing Broadway, *Hamilton*'s selling point, marketing *Hamilton*, and *Hamilton* and marketers. Overall, these four sections provide a basis for the original research in the paper.

While *Hamilton* has been a popular subject in the press since its premiere, the marketing of the show has had surprisingly little written about it. However, there is a significant amount of scholarly research on the marketing of Broadway shows. One useful piece by Elizabeth Craft examines the marketing of creator Lin Manuel Miranda's previous hit, *In the Heights*. There is also a wealth of information in news articles on why and how the show has become a success, in addition to many blog posts on what marketers can learn from the show. Lapowsky (2016) interviewed Mike Karns, the man responsible for *Hamilton*'s social media accounts, for an article that proved the most useful for this study. By combining all of these different types of sources, it is possible to understand the typical marketing of a Broadway show and what makes *Hamilton* so unique.

Marketing Broadway

Existing literature on marketing Broadway shows suggests that knowing the audience is vital. Wachtel's (1981) case study on Broadway audiences provides a profile of four types of audience members. The first, the Traditionalists, is the older, well-educated, high-income, White people who come from Manhattan. The Enthusiasts, the next group, are younger, have a lower level of education and income, a higher percentage of Blacks and women, and have a strong interest in Broadway. These people are less critical, but have a better knowledge of Broadway shows. The other large group, the Entertainment Seekers, are largely tourists in search of light, happy entertainment. For these non-professionals, suburban, mostly women, theater is a social event (Wachtel). Craft (2011) confirms that the average Broadway attendee is "a female, middle-aged, highly-educated and affluent tourist" (52). Nancy Coyne, CEO of Serino-Coyne, stated that the typical theater fan is "a woman, usually between forty-five and fifty" (Vogel & Hodges, 313). The final group Wachtel describes is dispassionate theatregoers, whom he cites as the husbands of the Entertainment Seekers, and the smallest group. The other groups each account for approximately one-third of overall audiences.

A study by Simonoff and Ma (2003) discovered that there are several factors that influence a show's success, as measured by its longevity. They reported that the audience views seeing a Broadway show as more risky than a movie due to the higher cost, but like movies, "demand is unpredictable, since audience(s) do not know if they will like a product until they actually experience it" (136). After analyzing shows on Broadway from 1996 to 1999, the researchers discovered that musicals generally are more successful than plays. They also found that *New York Times* reviews seemed to be unrelated to success. Winning Tony Awards was linked to a show's success, but being nominated and then losing was related negatively to a show's longevity (Simonoff & Ma). It is interesting that Simonoff and Ma chose to base their criteria of a show's success on its longevity alone, particularly because Adrian Bryan-Brown, a partner of Boneau/Bryan-Brown, pointed out that the average life span of a show increased in the 2000s overall (Vogel & Hodges, 303).

Bryan-Brown (Vogel and Hodges, 2006) clarified that there are three areas of theater marketing: advertising, promotion (often called marketing), and publicity. He also discussed the importance of cast appearances on television shows and having star names attached to the cast. Bryan-Brown stated, "We know we can't give away a ticket to a bad show, yet if a production is hot, people will pay *premium* prices, especially for special limited shows or hot new shows in their first few months" (Vogel & Hodges, 306).

Craft (2011), in a unique article, analyzes the marketing of Miranda's previous hit, *In the Heights*. The show was highly successful, recouping its \$10 million investment in ten months, though nowhere near *Hamilton*'s success. Craft discusses how the show took audiences out of their comfort zones by dealing with the challenge of a musical so heavily influenced by hip-hop and Latino identities. Craft states that the use of "a pioneering campaign in its use of social networking, viral marketing and online advertising" helped bring *In the Heights* to success (50).

Craft explained that the marketing team of *In the Heights* used online media to build a community for the show. In a world where only one in every five Broadway shows makes a profit, creating a fan base is of the utmost importance. In addition to the usual direct mailings, newspaper ads, TV commercials, and Times Square billboards, advertising agency SpotCo and public relations agency Barlow-Hartman used innovative strategies like targeted Google ads and promoting the PBS documentary, *In the Heights: Chasing Broadway Dreams*, which was released in 2009 (Craft). The actors' and show's Twitter accounts were popular and the *In the Heights* group on Facebook was joined by thousands of fans. Online outreach helps to create "a coalition of fans who become ambassadors for the show" (Craft, 57).

Miranda's YouTube videos about the show proved especially beneficial in creating a community of fans. Craft attributes a major reason for the show's success to "the online charisma of the show's creator, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and his strong presence on the web, especially on YouTube" (57). Miranda posted twenty-three videos on YouTube about the show which helped reach fans outside New York City and allowed him to reflect upon this new and revolutionary Latino-centered show. While Miranda created the videos without help from the marketing team, he definitely helped their efforts. According to Craft, "Miranda's enthusiasm for the internet and his ubiquitous presence humanizes the show and its online promotional efforts." These videos spread awareness about the show, reached possible audiences that might have missed mainstream ads, and kept the fan base engaged by giving them frequent original content. Craft concluded, "online promotion helps reach new audiences who would be glad to learn about works like *In the Heights* but otherwise might not, creating communities around theatre that cut across divides" (64-65).

Hamilton's Selling Point

From *Hamilton's* conception, the media recognized that it was something unique amongst Broadway shows. *New York Times Magazine* reporter Michael Sokolove (2016), like many, considers *Hamilton* to be the "heir to 'RENT.'" In an article written the week before the show opened on Broadway, Janice Kaplan (2016) called it "the most talked-about, fawned-over and revered show in years." Many articles about the show are quick to point out the blending of typical Broadway melodies with rap-inspired music. However, the show had also enjoyed a successful run off-Broadway at the Public Theater where it "immediately became a cultural touchstone" (Kaplan).

Sokolove commented, "'Hamilton' is really two phenomena: an extraordinary piece of theater, created by the composer, rapper and actors Lin-Manuel Miranda, and a commercial behemoth powered in part by scarcity—the near impossibility of obtaining tickets, which sell out as quickly as new dates go on sale." "*Hamilton* reclaims America's story for America as it looks and feels now," Kaplan said. "The whole story unfolds through songs that have a modern rhythm and pulsing energy and seem to reinvent the musical for the YouTube generation." In his interview with Suzy Evans, Oskar Eustis—the artistic director of the Public Theater—compared Miranda to Shakespeare. Evans (2016) further commented, "The excitement of a child bubbles form beneath the surface of an eloquent genius." The media's fascination with Miranda demonstrates that his personal charisma and online presence has much to do with the show's success.

The show was a financial success from the very beginning. Producer Jeffery Seller told Sokolove (2016) he "straddles a divide between art and commerce." In fact, the show had earned \$30 million in advance sales by the time of its opening (Kaplan). Sokolove pointed out that successful Broadway shows can "dwarf the revenues of even the biggest Hollywood blockbusters," which *Hamilton* is projected to do certainly will with its Broadway production, upcoming London production, and multiple tour companies—there may be as many as seven separate *Hamilton* companies performing at the same time in the near future (Sokolove). This financial success is particularly impressive, as Kaplan points out, because *Hamilton* defies the typical Broadway formula for success as it is not a revival nor does it contain big name stars.

Marketing Hamilton

The challenges in marketing *Hamilton* have been addressed in numerous articles. These challenges range from the show's use of rap music to the somewhat unconventional topic of the country's first treasury secretary to the unavailability of tickets. Sokolove commented, "A runaway hit like 'Hamilton' poses different challenges, like how to advertise it without further agitating people who would like a ticket but have no reasonable expectation of getting one any time soon." According to Sokolove, Seller stated that ticket seekers

have to “own our unavailability.” According to Evans (2016), Miranda was against using the term “hip-hop musical” in marketing materials because he believes the show is so much more than that: it’s a musical that happens to use hip-hop style songs. *Hamilton*’s team has had to combat these challenges, which has led to more online marketing.

Choosing the correct key imagery was highly important, according to SpotCo founder, Drew Hodges, and others who worked on the show. Hodges (2016) commented, “To me, the key art for *Hamilton* needed to express Hamilton’s complex, heroic character and the profound emotional experience of this unique musical” (216). In an interview with Gordon Cox, Hodges explained that it is impossible to design an ad without understanding the message you want to convey across platforms: “You have to be clear from the start what the story you’re telling is so that all those pieces can line up” (Cox). Hodges was also adamant that marketing efforts avoid any rap imagery that might deter audiences (216). Cox reports that the design of a Broadway poster is highly important because, “You’re not telling people what’s going to happen in the show; you’re telling people how it will feel to go.” Hodges praised the final design for *Hamilton*, saying that the feel of it is very classic and universal to appeal to a wide demographic (Cox).

Many articles focus on the show’s impressive success online, from YouTube to Twitter. Miranda told Evans about his progress in writing the show on Twitter: “I feel like the people who followed me early on have been in on our process because I’m, within reason, pretty open about what I’m struggling with or what I’m working on” (Evans). Lapowsky (2016) described the “crucial, if unsung role” played by twenty-seven year-old Mike Karns, the founder of Marathon Live Entertainment and the man behind *Hamilton*’s social media. She commented, “Karns manages *Hamilton*’s digital footprint, which includes the dozens of viral videos that populate the musical’s YouTube channel; the hundreds of Instagram posts that have earned *Hamilton* more followers than any other Broadway show; and the *Hamilton* Twitter handle, which has 202,000 followers.” Because of the scarcity of tickets, she explained, Karns and his team have tried to create an online presence to keep fans engaged and attract new fans in the process. Lapowsky expanded, “Hamilton’s online audience has its own language, its own inside jokes, and occupies some alternate universe in which YouTube comments are actually totally delightful to read.” Karns told her that online, “we’ve been able to decrease the distance between the brand and the people who appreciate the brand.”

Evans, Lapowsky, and Kaplan have noted the popularity of the show’s ticket lottery and #Ham4Ham shows. Kaplan said that *Hamilton*’s director Tommy Kail stated that 12,000 people entered the first preview lottery. Due to the popularity of these in-person lotteries (which later moved online), Miranda began holding weekly #Ham4Ham shows, which were uploaded to YouTube. These shows included everything from cast members’ singing songs in voices to guest stars from other Broadway shows. According to Lapowsky, “Miranda brings the connections and Karns brings the camera.” These videos have been incredibly popular with fans and people waiting to find out about the next available performance. Kail said, “Most of [those who enter] will go home without a ticket, but each of them will have a story to tell and a sense of connection” (Kaplan). Journalists covering the play seem to agree that online practices like these #Ham4Ham videos are innovative, which helped *Hamilton* to flourish despite challenges.

Hamilton and Marketers

Since *Hamilton*’s debut off-Broadway, blog posts have abounded about how marketers and public relations professionals can learn from the show. Nearly all of these articles praise the show’s strong presence online and ability to build a community. Parker (2016) used the show to remind readers that “reframing is powerful,” “emotional connections are the ones that count,” and “there are no overnight successes.”

Meanwhile, Hadley (2015) focused on social media marketing in her post and praised the hype built online before the show ever opened on Broadway after its successful run off-Broadway at the Public Theater. She recounts how the show built anticipation through Miranda’s Twitter account, how they used their influencer network, and how they remained likable. She also praised Miranda’s continued willingness to interact with fans online and in person at the theater’s stage door after shows and *Hamilton*’s use of the ticket lottery and #Ham4Ham shows.

In a similar post, Bramhandkar (2016) praised the show’s marketing while lamenting that its marketing efforts have been somewhat overlooked by the mainstream media. She states that *Hamilton* “moved from simply advertising its show to truly building an identity and indeed a brand” (Bramhandkar). Like Hadley, she

praises the lottery, #Ham4Ham shows, and Miranda's connectedness on social media. She points out that Hamilton continued to stay relevant through content on YouTube and other platforms, much like *In the Heights* did. These blog posts about *Hamilton's* marketing showed that its efforts have not gone unnoticed by others, who feel they can learn something from the promotion of the show.

This study sought to fill a gap in the literature by examining the efforts of *Hamilton's* ad agency, SpotCo, and its social media agency, Marathon Live Entertainment, and how they have successfully created an online presence for fans to keep them engaged in the face of ticket scarcity. It's similar to Craft's study of *In the Heights*, which looked at the marketing materials and how fans have interacted with them. While scholars have discussed other Broadway shows and the media have explored *Hamilton's* success, the marketing efforts have been ignored.

This paper explored the question: How can social media and marketing be used to build an out-of-town experience of a Broadway show when selling tickets is not the goal? How have *Hamilton* fans responded to ticket scarcity and engaged with other content?

III. Methods

To understand this phenomenon, a survey and an interview were conducted. An interview was done with a member of the *Hamilton* advertising team at SpotCo, the ad agency that created the marketing materials. Scott Frost, a senior producer, responded to questions via email about the agency's approach to *Hamilton*. This interview provided an insider's perspective at how *Hamilton* has been marketed to the public.

The author also conducted a survey of *Hamilton* fans about their opinions on the musicals and their interactions with the marketing materials (Refer to Appendix for the questionnaire). The survey was distributed via the researcher's personal social media accounts, including Facebook and Twitter and completed by 127 self-identified fans of the musical. This survey was able to provide a fan perspective on the marketing materials of the show.

While most of the people completed the survey fit a certain type, there was some diversity: 56 (44%) of the people were 22 or 23 years old, with an overall age range of 16 to 31 years old. While 114 (90%) of the respondents were from the United States, there were also some from various European countries, Australia, and Japan. The country most represented other than the United States was the United Kingdom, with 8 respondents. A vast majority of the respondents, 127 (87.4%), identified as female.

IV. Findings and Discussion

This section explored the results of the survey and the interview with Frost, in addition to analyzing Hamilton's marketing materials. It examined ticket scarcity, social media use, ads, and the #Ham4Ham shows.

Many indicators confirm the success of *Hamilton: An American Musical*. From creator Lin Manuel Miranda's many appearances on talk shows to the casts' performances on award shows like the Grammys to the prices that resale tickets reach, this show has become a cultural icon in ways that no Broadway show has since *RENT*. In October 2016, the Broadway cast album went double platinum and the PBS documentary *Hamilton's America* aired to 3.6 million viewers (BroadwayWorld.com). However, most fans of the show—despite their love of it and online engagement with it—have never seen it in person. This study sought to answer how *Hamilton's* marketing team and social media professionals kept fans interested when they have little hopes of seeing the show.

An overwhelming 80.3% of the surveyed respondents had not seen the show on Broadway or on tour. However, 25 (20%) of respondents mentioned learning about *Hamilton* when it was in its conception or during its off-Broadway run. Others discovered the show when its cast album was released.

Many respondents reported they hope to see the show within the next year, with 74.8% in New York City, 32.3% on the U.S. tour, and 49.6% in the West End in London. However, 53.5% of people said that they

didn't expect to see it within the next year, as shown in Fig. 1. Still, the majority of surveyed respondents (54%) do not think that they will have a chance to experience the show live within the coming year either due to ticket prices, ticket scarcity, or location.

Do you expect that you will see *Hamilton* within the next year? (127 responses)

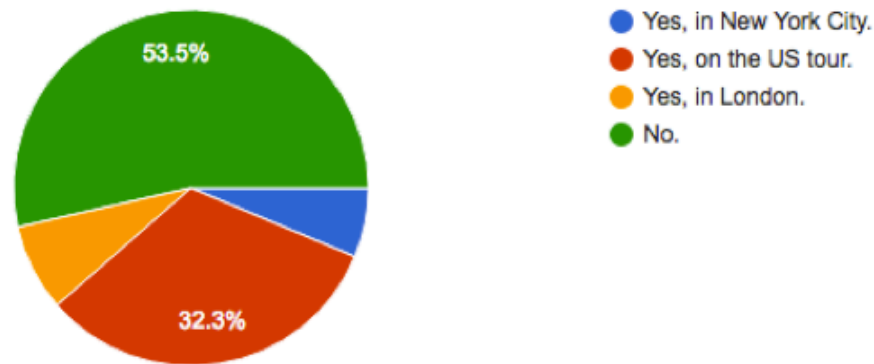


Figure 1. "Do you expect that you will see *Hamilton* within the next year?"

Only 30 (23.6%) of respondents reported that ticket scarcity has made their fan experience negative while 93 (72.4%) said that it hasn't influenced their experience at all. Fans of many Broadway shows learn to accept an inability to see a favorite show due to not being able to get to New York City or the expensive prices of Broadway musicals. Therefore, it's possible that for some individuals, *Hamilton* is no different than other shows in its inaccessibility.

Due to the word of mouth publicity for the show, the marketing and advertising teams' jobs have been in many ways minimal. Frost, senior producer at *Hamilton's* ad agency SpotCo, said, "To be honest, our advertising has been very limited in comparison to a typical big musical advertising campaign." He stated that the show came to Broadway after its famous birth at the White House and off-Broadway run, with a significant amount of awareness already. There was little advertising needed after the creation of the iconic gold background with star, the show's main mark. The show had garnered significant press with little digital or print advertising and no television spot. Frost said, "The brand has become much more mainstream than any other show in recent history and the biggest thing going for the show is the word of mouth."

One of the areas that has set *Hamilton* apart from other musicals is the opportunity for fans to engage through television appearances, the cast album, the book about its creation, and the other merchandise. In addition to the normal performance on the Tony Awards, the cast performed at the Grammy Awards, where its recording won the award for Best Musical Theatre Album. Creator and star Lin Manuel Miranda appeared on a variety of talk shows, including *The Ellen Show* and *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*. Fellow stars Leslie Odom Jr., Phillipa Soo, and Daveed Diggs have also been interviewed. Of the respondents in the survey, 86 (67.7%) said that they had watched at least some of the cast's appearances on award shows or talk shows, and 34 (26.0%) said that they had watched all their appearances.

Additionally, several people reported learning about *Hamilton* through the cast's performance on the Grammy Awards. Frost mentioned the popularity of the PBS documentary and Miranda's numerous interviews and TV appearances. He said, "It is insane just how popular this show has become" and helped the show break box office records despite its small theater. *Hamilton* has permeated popular culture in a multitude of ways, from TV appearances to the documentary to the book.

Hamilton has also had an impressive presence on the internet, particularly through the "#Ham4Ham" shows on YouTube. The shows started as a biweekly mini-concert, led by Miranda and featuring other cast members, for individuals waiting in line for lottery tickets. Over time, these mini-concerts evolved to include other Broadway stars and celebrities like JJ Abrams. In the winter months, when the outdoor shows stopped, Miranda and the cast filmed digital #Ham4Ham shows specifically for YouTube, with special appearances,

including at the White House.

In the survey, 97 (75.6%) of respondents said that they had watched some or all of the #Ham4Ham shows, as shown in *Figure 2*.

Have you watched any of the #Ham4Ham shows online? (127 responses)

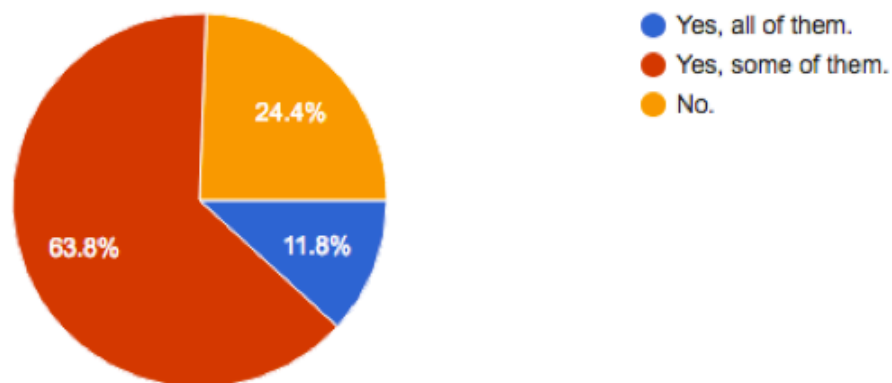


Figure 2. “Have you watched any of the #Ham4Ham shows online?”

When asked their favorite #Ham4Ham shows, multiple surveyed respondents mentioned Renee Elise Goldsberry’s “Congratulations,” the late Kyle Jean Baptiste’s “Confrontation,” and Patti LuPone’s “Give My Regards to Broadway.” However, 28 (22%) of respondents said that their favorite was when the three men who had played King George III (Jonathan Groff, Andrew Rannells, and Brian d’Arcy James) sang “The Schuyler Sisters.” The gender-swapped version called “The Schuyler Georges.” These videos provided a glimpse of the show for those unable to see it in person. Frost said, “We of course strive to provide as many behind-the-scenes materials and videos as possible for people to enjoy online and be a part of the movement, but there is not much more than that we can do unfortunately.” These videos provided fans with new content every week and another way to engage with the show outside of its cast album for those outside of New York City.

One of the main ways that *Hamilton* fans have engaged with the show has been through social media. Of the 126 people who responded to this question, 124 (98%) had Facebook accounts, 104 (83%) had Twitter accounts, 119 (94%) had Instagram accounts, and 112 (89%) had Snapchat accounts.

Of the 127 people, 83 (64.6%) reported that they liked the *Hamilton* Facebook page. Surprisingly, only 11 (8.7%) followed the *Hamilton* account on Instagram while 45 (35.4%) follow the *Hamilton* account and some of the cast members and 15 (11.8%) follow only some of the cast members and not the main *Hamilton* account. Similarly, 23 (18.1%) of respondents follow only cast members and not the *Hamilton* account on Twitter while 56 (41.1%) follow the *Hamilton* account and some of its cast members. Overall, the fans appear to be fairly engaged with both the main *Hamilton* accounts and the cast’s accounts on social media.

Hamilton fans’ experience on social media was not simply about following accounts; they were actively engaged with the *Hamilton* accounts and other fans through retweeting or liking. Nearly three-fourths (93) of respondents said that they had interacted with the *Hamilton* account on at least one social media platform. This demonstrates the level of engagement that the *Hamilton* social media team-run accounts had with the show’s fans. Interacting with the official *Hamilton* accounts was not the only way that *Hamilton* fans engaged on social media. Over a quarter of people reported that they followed one or more *Hamilton* fan account on Twitter. Additionally, 35 (27.6%) said that they engaged with other *Hamilton* fans online. Many respondents said that they had interacted with others on Twitter or Tumblr. Several respondents said that they had started long-term friendships because of the show.

Only 19 (14.2%) of the respondents said that they considered themselves a part of the online fan community for the show; while 71 (55.9%) said that they weren’t sure. This finding indicates that while many

people were actively engaged with *Hamilton* content online, supplementing their experience with the show, many are wary of declaring themselves a part of the fandom.

The survey results and interview with Frost helped explain how the marketing, advertising, and social media teams of *Hamilton* shaped the fans' experience with the show. While most of the fans had not seen the show, they were actively engaged with it on social media and through merchandise, the cast album, and television appearances. The #Ham4Ham shows were unique and particularly popular amongst fans. Social media, the *Hamilton* accounts run by Karns, also provided a significant supplement to the *Hamilton* experience.

This study had many limitations, mostly through reach and time. The group reached via social media was largely homogenous, being mostly American women in their early twenties. If this research were done on a larger scale, a more balanced group by gender, age, and nationality should be surveyed. Additionally, more questions could be asked in focus groups or in-depth interviews that would be unsuited to a survey format about why people were fans of the show, how ticket scarcity has affected them, or what kept them engaged with the show. If time and resources had allowed, more people on the *Hamilton* team could also be interviewed. Future research could overcome these limitations or explore how the marketing of *Hamilton* differed from the marketing of Miranda's first musical, *In the Heights*.

V. Conclusion

While ticket scarcity has kept most *Hamilton* fans from seeing the show, it has not stopped them from engaging with the show in other ways. *Hamilton*'s creative, marketing, social media, and advertising teams ensured that fans had access to original content, in the form of projects like the PBS documentary, book, and #Ham4Ham shows. Much of their marketing efforts promoted these products rather than tickets to the show itself; in fact, the advertising team had to do remarkably little because the show survived greatly on word of mouth. *Hamilton* fans continue to engage on social media with the official accounts, cast members, and other fans and have built a community, aided by Karns, *Hamilton*'s account runner. Thus, the *Hamilton* fans may be counted on to purchase Broadway, West End, and national tour tickets to see the show, despite the difficulty of obtaining tickets.

Hamilton's marketing efforts demonstrate a new approach for future Broadway shows: selling tickets, the typical goal, may not be the main concern. Furthermore, it proves that fans of musical theatre shows do not necessarily need to see the show themselves to be engaged both online and offline. While ticket scarcity was a challenge for the *Hamilton* team, it was dealt with by creating other original content for fans to consume and by being accessible on social media. This provides a new model for Broadway marketing that other popular shows may try to emulate in the future.

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Appendix: *Hamilton* Survey Questions

To survey participants,

Welcome to and thank you for taking this survey. You may leave this study at any point, with no potential consequences, as it is completely voluntary. This survey is a part of my communications capstone class research project on the marketing of the *Hamilton* musical. All people taking the survey should consider themselves fans of the show, though it is in no way necessary to have seen the show live. My paper and presentation will explore how the *Hamilton* marketing team has dealt with the issue of ticket scarcity and how fans have interacted with marketing materials and other online content related to *Hamilton*. You taking this survey implies your informed consent. If you have any questions, you may direct them to me via email (nackman@elon.edu).

Thank you,
Nicole Ackman

Survey Questions

1. How old are you? (Open answer)
 2. What country do you live in? (Open answer)
 3. What gender do you identify with? Male, Female, Other
 4. When did you discover *Hamilton*? (Open answer)
 5. Have you seen *Hamilton*? Yes, in New York; yes, in Chicago; no.
 6. Do you want to see *Hamilton* in the future? Yes, in New York; yes, on the US tour; yes, in the UK; no.
 7. Do you expect that you will see *Hamilton* within the next year? Yes, in New York; yes, on the US tour; no.
 8. Has the difficulty of obtaining tickets made your *Hamilton* fan experience more positive or negative? Positive, negative, no effect.
 9. Have you watched the *Hamilton* cast's appearances on award shows and/or talk shows? Yes, all of them; yes, some of them; no.
 10. Have you watched any of the #Ham4Ham shows online? Yes, all of them; yes, some of them; no.
 11. What is your favorite #Ham4Ham show? (Open answer)
 12. Which social media accounts do you have? (Check all that apply.) Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.
 13. Have you liked the *Hamilton* Facebook page? Yes, No.
 14. Do you follow the *Hamilton* account or any of its cast on Instagram? *Hamilton* and cast members; just *Hamilton*; no.
 15. Do you follow the *Hamilton* account or any of its cast on Twitter? *Hamilton* and cast members; just *Hamilton*; no.
 16. Have you ever interacted with one of the *Hamilton* accounts on social media? (This includes liking or retweeting a post or them liking or retweeting your post.) Yes, No.
 17. Do you follow any *Hamilton* fan accounts on Twitter? (Ex: @HamiltonsSquad, @Hamilton_Text, etc.) Yes, a few; yes, one or two; no.
 18. Have you ever interacted with other *Hamilton* fans online? Yes, no.
 19. If so, describe your interactions.
 20. Do you consider yourself a part of the online *Hamilton* community? Yes, no, maybe.
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Talent Representation and Promotion in Today's Music Industry

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an undergraduate senior capstone course in communications

Abstract

The music industry is a complex and ever-changing system, and understanding how to effectively represent an artist is essential for success in the field. This research focused on the evolution of the role of music management and promotion in today's music industry. The study used convenience sampling to conduct in-depth interviews with current industry professionals, focusing on industry consolidation, social media, and on-demand streaming services, and how they affect music and artist promotion. Ultimately, while promotions have become more focused on digital marketing and streaming sites, traditional methods of promotion are still relevant, and industry consolidation has not had a profound effect on the promotion of artists and their music.

I. Introduction

This study focused on the recent evolution of music management and promotion and sought to discover what methods and practices are most effective. The music industry is an immensely complex and ever-changing system, and understanding how to effectively represent an artist is essential for anyone entering the field. The consolidation of major record labels, emergence of digital marketing and social media platforms, and the growing trend of music streaming all have major implications for the way that managers and labels represented music and artists. Thus, this study tried to determine the extent of the industry's response to these changes. By conducting in-depth interviews with industry professionals, this study sought to find suitable industry strategies to promote new and established artists, and appropriate methods managers should embrace.

II. Literature Review

Becoming a rock star or a pop idol has fascinated the world's population since the advent of major music distribution. Yet the music industry is a consistently changing field, and the methods of promoting artists and their talents have not been immune to change. While there are still traditional record labels offering contracts to artists, there are many artists who have opted to use new technologies as a way to gain popularity. Social media has become an influential tool for artists and their management teams, but it is yet to be determined whether or not it can fully replace the traditional model of promotion.

Keywords: Music Promotion, Industry Consolidation, Social Media, Music Streaming, Managerial Role
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On Consolidation

The music industry, as defined in this paper, refers to all organizations that partake in the creation, production, distribution, and marketing of music. The industry operates as an oligopoly. Sony Music Entertainment, Universal Music Group, and Warner Music Group, known as the “majors,” control more than 40% of the industry's market share (An Overview of The Recorded Music Industry). Following almost a decade of shrinking, the industry is slowly starting to rebound and is slated for its second straight year of sales growth, with spending on recorded music growing by 8.1% in the first half of 2016 (Shaw).

One of the major shifts in the industry is the transition from a goods-based industry to a service-based industry. Whereas previously music was sold in hardcopy and paired with merchandise, much of music distribution has transitioned into streaming sites, such as Pandora, Amazon Prime Music, Apple Music, or Spotify. The shift to the internet as a main source of music delivery means that popular music taste is determined by digital providers, which results in an increased necessity for artists and managers alike to gain their attention. Many streaming services serve as major source of revenue for labels. This system is primarily due to lower production and distribution costs, while still allowing labels to maintain control over the terms of copyright and distribution (Burkart 497). Sony, Warner, and Universal all reported streaming as their largest source of revenue during the first quarter of 2016 (Raine 38).

Unfortunately, streaming services are not required to pay artists, but rather are responsible for paying those who hold the rights. In the case of Spotify, the major labels are keeping 73% of the after-tax profits, while the artists are only receiving 11% (Raine 40). These numbers reinforce the importance of the managerial role to successfully negotiate other contract areas for potential artist revenues. Equally daunting, in the face of declining revenues from music sales, labels are offering “ancillary revenue sharing” deals, which allows them to take a portion or all of an artist's proceeds from, for example, merchandise sales and tours. According to Peter Mensch, manager of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, these “360-deals” should be avoided: “We will do everything and anything in our power to stop the majors from grabbing any share of non-recorded income from our bands” (“Special Report”). Considering artists don't see a majority of the profits from their music, it is important that their other streams of income remain theirs, a responsibility that ultimately falls on the manager.

Another area that has been significantly impacted by consolidation is the concert booking aspect of the industry. Whereas concert booking used to be primarily handled between managers, artists, and promoters, the industry experienced a massive consolidation that altered this dynamic. Before consolidation, the artist and promoter would split the profits of ticket sales, usually 85/15 in favor of the artist. Promoter-artist relationships were vital and beneficial to both parties. Personal relationships built on trust ensured that the artists were getting a fair deal, and “buy-back” agreements could be reached, which gave the promoter proverbial “dibs” on the artist's next tour dates (White and Preston 15). Consolidation, however, caused a major power shift away from artists, and with increasingly fewer booking options, venues began to throw their weight around. Ticket prices rose, loopholes were found in the form of box seats, and secondary ticket brokers entered the picture, making huge profits by buying tickets and selling them at marked up prices, with none of the profits being shared by the artist. To combat the shift in power, managers should be extra diligent in preparing contracts and riders to ensure that the artist is receiving a portion of all ticket and merchandise sales, and is not being exploited for their popularity by venue sponsorships or signage (White and Preston 24). The most concerning aspect of consolidation in the concert industry is the decrease of independent promoters; It is increasingly difficult for upcoming artists to break through and book major venues with a fair deal. “The artist manager has become the artist's sole support system” (White and Preston 28). In the newly consolidated industry, managers must be careful to ensure that their artists are presented with the opportunities they deserve at a fair price.

On Social Media

There is no doubt that social media and digital marketing have become central to the music industry. The question becomes whether or not these methods of promotion are sufficient to acquire a substantial fan base. If operating under the assumption that reviews beget popularity and fans, the simple answer is yes: “artists who have more social media resources . . . have significantly higher chances to get reviewed than artists with fewer resources” (Verboor and Nord 67). It would appear, however, that a strong online presence is not enough to garner significant popularity on its own. While artists have the increasing ability to record

and share their own music online, “these opportunities are largely confined to niche or ‘peripheral’ market. . . . Moving beyond this still requires the intervention of the industry’s traditional ‘middlemen’” (Preston and Rogers 16). Gaining mass sales and popularity is still reliant on “the support of more traditional tastemakers, most especially radio” (Preston and Rogers 16). Traditional support or not, geographical location has also proven to be a reliable predictor of critical audience attention. “More central artists receive more institutional reviews, even when we take into consideration that they differ in terms of nationality, hit albums, album type, and social media resources” (Verboor and Nord 68). Therefore, one of the major considerations for gaining artist popularity is still the geographical location of the artist. While social media can have a positive effect on an artist’s popularity, it does not make up for the deficit in attention from physical location.

On Streaming

The power to stream any song via the internet to a plethora of devices has caused a revolution in the music industry. There are a few different methods for streaming: internet radio, such as Pandora; streaming on demand services, such as Spotify or Apple Music; video streaming, such as YouTube; and on demand services like Music Choice (“An Overview of The Recorded Music Industry”). For this study, the focus was on on-demand streaming services. The big players in this market are Spotify and Apple Music, although Amazon.com has also recently released its own platform, Amazon Prime Music. Initially, there was great concern with streaming services and the lack of revenue that they were producing. With the recent addition of paid subscription services, however, the tide has turned and the industry is beginning to see profit. The “Big Three” all reported gains this year, and the streaming revenue in the United States grew 57% to \$1.6 billion (Shaw). That being said, there are still significant numbers of people who are choosing to use the free, ad-supported versions of streaming sites, which is detrimental to the industry income from streaming.

On the Manager Role

With these developments of industry consolidation, social media and streaming, what are artist managers and representatives to do? First of all, “it is crucial to keep in mind that artistic creativity and managerial creativity are interdependent . . . Artistic creativity cannot flourish without managerial creativity” (Morrow 4). Managerial creativity can only do so much for an artist, so it is important for managers to know what to look for in emerging acts. Less than 5% of artists signed to a major company will break-even, let alone earn a profit (Seifert and Hadida 790). According to George Stein, there are several prerequisites to look for: Artists must have the ability to write good songs, sing, perform, and play an instrument. They must be a talented musician and be focused, smart, ambitious, good looking, and young (Morrow 6). There are also those who use artist “valuations” to determine whether or not an artist is worth signing. There are three different methods: performance-based (sales figures, awards, profits), theory-driven (quality of the voice, musical knowledge, intelligence), and intuition (gut feelings, more useful with experienced managers) (Seifert and Hadida 798). Choosing the right artist is essential to the success of music managers. Ideally, an artist and a manager should complement one another’s creative strengths and weaknesses.

Depending on the artist and manager, there are different options to pursue in distributing music.

An artist who possesses all of these attributes has the following options: sign directly with an . . . independent or major label; source a deal with a multinational out of a smaller market and have the product released . . . through an inter-company license agreement; or license or assign the right to exploit the copyright on a pre-existing record to a label” (Morrow 7).

Each avenue has its advantages and pitfalls, and managers and artists should discuss each in detail before making a decision.

The music, however, is only one focus of many for modern-day managers, who should be searching for revenue elsewhere to combat declining profits from music sales. “New forms of collaboration with brands are a central revenue source and require a broader business and digital savvy from the artist manager to envision and evaluate opportunities effectively” (Peckham). These sponsorships can become even more lucrative if the manager cultivates a secure relationship, which may help artists enter an equity-based partnership or even eventually help them launch their own companies (Peckham). Successful managers

have “intuition and capacity for improvisation” (Seifert and Hadida 800), or in other words, they must be able to think on their feet and trust their gut when making quick decisions. The modern-day manager role is “one part venture capitalist, one part entrepreneur” (Peckham), monitoring the industry and always finding new and creative ways to connect their artists.

III. Methods

For this study, in-depth interviews were conducted over the phone with four music industry professionals. The interviewees were selected via convenience sampling.

Questions focused around the role and involvement of the interviewees in the music industry. There were also specific questions about industry consolidation, social media and online music streaming (see Appendix for full questionnaire). The goal of the interviews was to gain firsthand insight into how artists are being promoted in today's industry, and how managers are working to adapt to the increasingly digital and consolidated landscape.

The first interview was with Tom Mullen, senior director for creative and marketing partnerships at Sony Music Entertainment. Mullen is responsible for global creative marketing for an artist's released material, and works as the conduit between marketing, artists and repertoire (A&R), and digital and public relations, and has worked with major artists, such as Bob Dylan, Michael Jackson, and Paul Simon. The second interview was conducted with Mariah Czap, a project manager at Yep Roc Records, a small independent music label in Hillsborough, N.C. Czap works as the primary contact for artists during release campaigns, overseeing and managing the marketing plans for the campaigns, in addition to monitoring the sales to determine the effectiveness of marketing and promotions.

Additional interviews were also conducted with Alex Rolecek and Andrew Bennett. Rolecek is an integrated producer and film director for Townhouse, a company under Grey Advertising, and directs and produces commercials with CoverGirl, Pantene, and Koleston. Rolecek has experience working with high-profile pop stars on commercial sets, and was able to provide insights into his relationships with their managers. Bennett, CEO and co-founder of KnowledgePost, shared his knowledge of the changing music industry landscape and how artists are rebranding themselves and shifting to alternate sources of income.

IV. Findings and Discussion

On Consolidation

Despite the consolidation of major record labels into what are known as “the Big Three” (Sony Music Entertainment, Universal Music Group, and Warner Music Group), the methods of promoting artists and their music remain relatively unchanged. Mullen explained that there are no real positive or negative connotations for consolidation, and that the playing field is level. “It's all about the music and how you're marketing it. An independent [label] can come out with the same thing as a major.” Despite the bigger pockets of the major labels, the emergence of streaming sites has helped to reduce radio's stranglehold on the market. “Everybody is on the same playing field because so much discovery is done via playlisting” (Czap). Whereas radio used to determine what people listened to, the increase in channels has proved beneficial for artists with less mainstream styles.

When dealing with labels, carefully reading and negotiating contracts is crucial, Mullen said. Bringing an entertainment lawyer to the table is essential to ensure that the artist and manager are both fully aware of the extent of the contract, and be able to secure a fair deal. There are advantages and disadvantages to signing with a major or independent label, and the decision should reflect the overall goal of the band.

“Overall, people sign to labels because you have a team of people working with you. If you want to go it alone, the music might suffer. Focus on the music, trust people with you on your team to help and be knowledgeable and make those decisions” (Mullen).

Czap agreed, saying that while some artists can “go it alone,” getting a deal with a label is certainly beneficial: “I do think, with a label you get a lot of support, connections and knowledge about the industry” (Czap). Regardless of consolidation, there are opportunities everywhere for new and emerging artists.

“It’s not like what’s on the radio and what’s happening on YouTube is what’s really happening. Now with the internet and so many places for people to consume music, there’s (sic) these niches of audiences, and that’s where I talk about level playing field. You can have an artist, have a big thing that you and I never would have heard about, and that can happen for an independent label or a major” (Mullen).

While there are those that might argue that these niche audiences could be bigger if major labels and radio distributed more independent artists, most artists do not feel shortchanged. “When you work with an independent label, I think there’s an understanding. I don’t think anybody thinks they’re missing out” (Czap).

On Social Media

The emergence of social media and digital marketing has had major implications on the way that labels and artists promote their music. When asked what are the best platforms for promotion, Mullen and Czap had different responses. Mullen said that there is no one-size-fits-all model for digital: “The music industry is not math, and it’s not paint-by-numbers. Every artist is different, every platform is different, and every fan base is different, and it goes back to your goal” (Mullen). He explained that the only way to know what works is a combination of trial and error and data analytics. “The amount of data that I go through and look at determines what I’m doing, it’s not just gut” (Mullen). Conversely, Czap didn’t seem to have such a data-driven approach. At Yep Roc, they focus mainly on Facebook and Twitter for sales-based posts: “We’ll tout highlights . . . anything worth bragging about or highlighting” (Czap).

Facebook posts that get the most organic attention these days include a visual element. It is especially effective when users can watch embedded videos directly from their newsfeed. Paid reach is also extremely effective: “We do a lot of Facebook advertising. A post that we put money behind will obviously get way more interaction” (Czap). Sharing artist content is also beneficial: “An easy way to supplement a post is to find an artist tweet that says what you want to say and just retweet it” (Czap). It is worth noting that while content with a visual element will boost organic reach, there does not seem to be much difference when it comes to audio. “Studies show that shareability is not very connected to the audio or the presence of music” (Rolecek). Contrary to Facebook and Twitter, where many posts are focused on driving sales or advertising, Instagram is primarily used when people attend concerts or festivals.

Despite the increasing presence of digital and social media, labels are still reaching out and promoting via traditional print methods for different audiences: “That has not gone away at all. They’re still being pitched and they still make an impact” (Mullen). Newspapers, magazines, and other traditional media are not as obsolete as some people think, and are still effective in reaching certain target audiences.

On Streaming

Streaming sites like Spotify, Apple Music, and Amazon Prime Music are becoming increasingly more popular among listeners, and have found their way into the managerial and promotional aspects of the industry. “I’d say in the past year and a half or two years, streaming has become the number one focus, and I would say that that’s probably true for everyone” (Czap). Bennett also weighed in on the influence of streaming services: “These other channels have broadened the industry and the ability for artists to get out there and get known. It certainly helps from an exposure standpoint.” Yet there are concerns about artists being fairly compensated by these streaming services, and some major artists like Taylor Swift have removed their music from Spotify in protest. “The places that you make money now are out on the road, that’s why you see so many people doing concerts these days” (Bennett). Mullen, while not able to comment on specific numbers, did say that music sales are rarely a sole source of income for artists: “You need to have varied sources of income . . . if you’re just relying on streaming for a source of income, you don’t understand the music industry” (Mullen). Instead of relying exclusively on music sales, managers should be looking at their artists “holistically, like a brand” (Bennett). Sponsorships, merchandise, and touring are all other lucrative areas for managers to explore. While streaming is popular, CDs and vinyl sales are not dying off as drastically

as some people suspect. The biggest challenge currently facing streaming is education: "The idea is to help people to come onto the premium services. You want people to understand that this is something that they can pay for every month and it's worth it" (Mullen).

In terms of artists garnering more attention on streaming services, the approach has changed. Previously, labels would deliver entire albums to streaming sites. Nowadays, the focus is on distributing singles before the album: "Our streaming strategy is we pick three tracks that we will focus on before the record comes out. Each one of those singles has a street date, and we formulate a campaign around each of those singles" (Czap). Relationships with streaming services are also essential to getting artists featured, and abiding by their "best practices." Yep Roc Records ensures that artists are active on streaming platforms, tagging, and interacting on social media, using contesting, and other methods that are "constantly showing that we are an equally good partner to them" (Czap). While many major artists hold many of the playlist spots, independent labels and artists still have plenty of opportunity to be featured. "[Independent labels] have people at all of these places and there's (sic) spots for them. There's (sic) places in playlists, there's pitching, all of those things happen for everybody" (Mullen). Establishing and maintaining relationships with the streaming services is essential to getting featured on key playlists, regardless of label affiliation.

On the Manager Role

The reality is that being a music manager is a complicated business, and there is no single "right" way to do the responsibilities. Above and beyond all else, however, a manager must have a strong network within the music industry to be effective. "You have to understand the industry, and have relationships and know friends so you can help your band out" (Mullen). Having established relationships in various places makes all the difference in the industry. "A lot of artists that we work with have ties to other artists. We might work with a band and their manager also works with someone trying to get a record deal" (Czap).

Relationships are important, and both internal and external communications serve as vital tools to maintain key relationships and ensure that they are beneficial to all parties. First and foremost, managers must be able to communicate with their artists. A successful manager is "someone who has the band's best interest in mind but can also be straight with them. You are the band's champion but there is also something to said about managers who can be honest" (Czap). This can be especially helpful when dealing with sponsors or brand deals. A potential pitfall with these deals is that the artist may not understand the interdependence of the relationship, which may end up costing them the deal. These arrangements work best when "there is an appreciation and a sense of reciprocity of what the talent is bringing to the project, and what the project is bringing to the talent" (Rolecek). Good managers will work to find solutions that appeal to all parties, as these relationships are privileges for both the talent and the brand, and should be treated as such.

One of the biggest challenges for a manager is finding artists that are worth representing. A majority of artists will never make it big or even break even, so it is important to know what to look for: "If you bat 1 for 10 on a band, you're doing OK" (Mullen). As previously mentioned, having connections with other bands and being able to network are positives when looking at artists. Bands that have already found a way to establish themselves and relate to their audience are standout candidates. "It's touring and understanding digital, and having each person in that band be able to take something on. In today's band, you have to know all those things and where your audience is, and what you need to be writing and posting" (Mullen). Every band member must be able to contribute something to the success and marketability of the band.

Overall, what is essential for anyone going into representation is a comprehensive understanding of the industry. Knowing how to reach audiences, having connections in the right places, being able to think creatively and actively, and having knowledge of the industry are the traits that set great managers apart.

V. Conclusion

The music industry has had to deal with some major changes in recent history, including the consolidation of major record labels, development of widespread social media and digital marketing platforms, and the emergence of music streaming technologies. This study tried to determine how these industry changes have affected the methods of promotion of artists and their music.

Overall, the artist manager's role and the industry itself have not seen as much of a shift in recent years as assumed. Managers are still primarily responsible for having thorough knowledge of the music industry, being able to speak openly and honestly with their artist, and making connections that help their clients. While significant consolidation has occurred among the major labels that produce pop music, the work of independent artists and labels still reaches the appropriate audiences. Social media and digital marketing have taken a more primary role in today's promotions, but the traditional methods of advertising in print are still used to reach various target audiences. While these tools can be used for self-promotion, industry professionals are in agreement that support of labels' personnel and budgets are invaluable for artists. The trend of streaming music continues to grow in popularity, but it has not eliminated the demand for hardcopy CD or vinyl sales.

Future studies looking to expand on this topic should include a wider breadth of interviews with music industry professionals. Having a variety of input across different genres, label size, and position within a label will help to provide more comprehensive understanding of the industry as a whole. Specifically focusing on people in A&R departments will help form an understanding of what professionals are looking for in artists, and interviewing managers will provide direct insight into day-to-day promotions.

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Appendix: Base Questionnaire

General

1. How long have you worked in the music industry?
2. What is your current position?
3. What career path has led to where you are now?
4. Who are the major artists that you work with?
5. What are criteria you look for when selecting which artists to represent?
6. Are there certain artists that serve as the model for promotion?
7. Which managers have been most successful in recent years? What do you think their success is owed to?

Consolidation

1. In your experience, has there been significant consolidation among the industry?
 - a. Record labels, concert venues, music outlets?

If Yes:

2. How has consolidation affected your role as a talent representative?
3. Do you see consolidation as a positive or negative trend for the industry? Why?

Social Media

1. What are some methods you use to promote artists?
 - a. Has interactive and social media begun to replace traditional methods?
 - b. Are certain social media sites more effective than others?
2. When promoting artists via social media, what forms of media are the most effective (music videos, pictures, status updates, etc.)
3. Would you say that record labels are threatened by social media and self-promotion?
4. As the representative, are you mostly responsible for creating content for promotion, or are there other teams that work on this? The artists themselves?
5. As the manager, do you have any influence on creative content? Do you typically try to arrange for certain musicians to collaborate?

Streaming

1. Have music streaming sites changed the approach to promoting music? If so, how so?
 2. With actual proceeds from music sales decreasing, where are the major revenues to be had?
 3. Are there ways to use streaming sites to your advantage?
 - a. Pay for a feature?
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Examining Ethnic Minority Representation in Higher Education Website Imagery

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Abstract

Websites play a critical role in the marketing of colleges and universities, providing pertinent information while allowing prospective students to picture themselves on campus. This study tried to contextualize how institutions of higher education use diversity as a marketing tool by looking at ethnic diversity in website imagery. Images from school websites in the University of North Carolina System and Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education were analyzed, and representation of non-White students in those images was compared to actual representation on campus. Of the 22 schools examined, 16 overrepresented non-White students in their website imagery, and webpages most accessible to prospective students often highlighted non-White individuals.

I. Introduction

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), from 1976 to 2013, the percentage of American college students who identify as White fell from 84% to 59%. Over that same time period, the percentage of Black students rose by 5% and the percentage of Hispanic students rose 12% (NCES, 2014). As the student base for higher education institutions becomes increasingly non-White, institutions will need to adjust marketing tactics to entice non-White students in order to stay competitive in enrollment. In order to win their share of the non-White demographic, universities will have to convince prospective students in this category that they will be valued and well-represented in the student body and campus life. An important marketing tool for this purpose is a campus website. University websites not only provide prospective students pertinent financial and academic information, but they are an important touchpoint to give students an idea of how they might fit on a certain campus. Thus, it would make sense that webmasters and marketing staff members include sufficient images of non-White students in imagery to ensure that non-White prospective students can envision themselves at a campus when looking for a higher education institution.

This study tried to contextualize how universities use diversity as a marketing tool by looking at ethnic diversity in website imagery. A comparison of non-White students in website imagery to true student body numbers may show how much colleges use concepts of diversity to market to ethnic minorities.

II. Literature Review

Before examining relationships between a university's ethnic diversity and images of diversity on their websites, it is important to understand how diversity topics are used in the marketing of universities, how websites are used as marketing tools, how imagery on websites affects prospective students' perceptions of an institution, and how websites reflect the real campus situation.

Diversity as a Recruitment Priority

Diversity has become such an important selling point for colleges that most have made a concerted effort to showcase diversity in marketing efforts (Ming, 2007). It is first important to consider that the term "diversity" is not solely related to ethnicity. Diversity in geography, language, and cultural background of students are other areas of interest for schools (Espinosa et al., 2015). Rubin (2011) examined how Amherst College made a targeted effort to tailor marketing tactics toward attracting more socioeconomically diverse students, which led to higher enrollment figures from this group. However, ethnic diversity is the top segment for targeted marketing in higher education. A report by the American Council on Education cited that 78% of schools surveyed use specific recruitment strategies aimed at getting ethnic minorities to apply, and that improving ethnic diversity was the second highest enrollment goal for most schools, only behind improving the institution's academic profile (Espinosa et al., 2015).

Specific ways minority populations are recruited for colleges include articulation agreements, targeted application recruitment, additional recruitment, and consideration from college transfers (Espinosa, Gaertner, & Orfield, 2015). Other significant factors that will help recruit diverse student bodies include broadening the traditional definition of "merit" as examined by enrollment officials and having a president who actively and vocally supports attracting diversity (Rubin 2011).

Diversity is considered an important asset for higher education institutions and enhances their institutional offerings. Maruyama and Moreno (2000) surveyed several hundred university professors and found faculty felt more diverse classes, and classes focused on diversity improved students' ability and willingness to think critically. Umbach and Kuh's study (2006) of students' experiences with diversity revealed that students felt their interpersonal skills improved more in diverse environments, and diverse environments encouraged more engagement from students than those not in diverse environments.

Websites and Imagery as Marketing Tools

Websites present a unique opportunity to marketers, as they combine interactivity, creative flexibility, and a dynamic design. They are especially important for the marketing of universities; as many students interested in a school may not have the funds or schedule flexibility for a campus visit, a website may be the first or only point of contact between the school and the prospective student (Wang, 2008). Saichaie and Morphew (2014) studied 12 college websites and found 6 common informational themes: academics, campus aesthetics, fine arts, intercollegiate athletics, student life, and values.

Research by Ford (2011) revealed that functionality is the top priority for high school students when examining a college website, just ahead of readability and distinctiveness from other schools' websites. What students specifically looked for on websites is content that provides an idea of student life (Ford, 2011). Another important functional piece of college websites is the ability to form two-way conversations between the school and site visitors. After examining 215 community college websites, Shadinger (2013) found that 89% provided six or more opportunities to communicate directly to the school from the website. Pippert, Essenburg, and Matchett (2013) explained that prospective students attempt to visualize themselves on a campus through marketing materials, and Saichaie and Morphew (2014) found that student life sections most often incorporate themes of tradition, shared experiences, and building an "institutional family" to communicate campus personality.

While functionality allows users to access the most relevant information on a website, imagery on a site contributes to their overall satisfaction (Cyr, Head, Larios, & Pan, 2009). In particular, "human images," or pictures with a human or humanoid figure, most influence how a user experiences a website. Research conducted by Cyr et al. (2009) found that human images in website imagery evoke a greater feeling of social presence, and users focus on images with human images longer than those without.

Higher Education Marketing and Ethnic Diversity

As colleges push a recruitment agenda of encouraging diversity, some students feel that there is a discrepancy between what is being depicted in institutional marketing efforts and actual minority representation on campus. Through extensive focus group interviews, Brunner (2006) found students at one Southeastern school opined, “Diversity efforts can be seen but not felt.” Students also felt that there was a notable difference between diversity statistics reported in marketing materials and what was actually the case on campus, and African American students in particular, felt that using the word diversity in general was a “smokescreen” (Brunner, 2006).

Ming (2007) showed that imagery is important to marketing diversity, finding that more than half of all websites with a section for international students feature ethnically diverse students in a picture on the section’s homepage. This use of imagery, however, may contribute to negative perceptions of diversity recruitment. Pippert et al. (2013) examined physical viewbooks from over a hundred colleges and compared the presence of ethnic minorities in viewbooks with ethnic diversity on campus. They found that 81% of schools over-represented African Americans in viewbook imagery, and that the more non-White a college campus is, the more likely it is to overrepresent minorities (Black and Asian students in particular). The researchers concluded, “The consistency at which institutions of higher education presented misleading depictions of racial diversity leads us to the understanding that it is intentional and near universal.”

Another point of controversy, along with alleged misrepresentations, is how ethnic minorities are portrayed in college marketing. While examining viewbooks from colleges recruiting for STEM fields, Osei-Kofi and Torres (2015) found that racial minorities are most often portrayed in passive positions, either taking orders from White figures or not being the focus of pictures. They concluded that the whole of the images they examined “suggests that the appropriate and most skilled current and future scientists are White males.” Wang (2008) also found that Asians were rarely the visual focus in website imagery as compared to non-Asians, and that Asian women in particular seemed to be only put in focus to provide a sort of “exotic” quality.

For this study, the author asked two research questions:

RQ1: Do universities provide accurate student-body representations of ethnic diversity in their website imagery?

RQ2: On which webpages are ethnic minorities most likely to be shown?

III. Methods

This paper examined the efforts of higher education institutions targeting diverse populations through the use of imagery on campus websites, and compare institutional sites with actual numbers of diverse populations on campuses. To accomplish these purposes, the author examined websites of schools in the University of North Carolina System (UNCS) and the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PSSHE). These schools were selected as they are in a clear, organized university system, range in size, are all public, and have clear non-discrimination policies. Of the 31 schools in these systems, six (Elizabeth City State, Fayetteville State, North Carolina A&T State, North Carolina Central, Winston-Salem State, and Cheyney University) were excluded since they are historically Black colleges, and UNC Pembroke was not included because it is a historically Native American university. These schools were excluded as they would have a higher than average non-White population. Additionally, two schools (NC School of Science and Mathematics and UNC School of Arts) were excluded as they include high school students while this study sought to examine only college students. In the end, 22 university websites were included in this study.

For each website, only the full-desktop view of each website was examined.¹ While most schools use responsive website design, and high school students are increasingly accessing websites on mobile devices when students look for the most in-depth information and best sense of campus personality, desktop computers are the most important access point (Howard, 2013). On each site, six common high-level college webpages were studied: pages for “the home,” “admissions,” “about,” “academics,” “campus life,” and “visitors.” All

¹ Modern responsive websites may offer different versions of web content, depending on the type of device that accesses the websites.

pages could be accessed through one click-in from the home page. Pages that did not exist on a university's site, or were not one click-in from the home page, were excluded from this study. Images in slideshows that automatically rotate images were all included, as were slideshows that needed a manual click to rotate, since one does not leave the specified page while performing this action, one click-in rule.

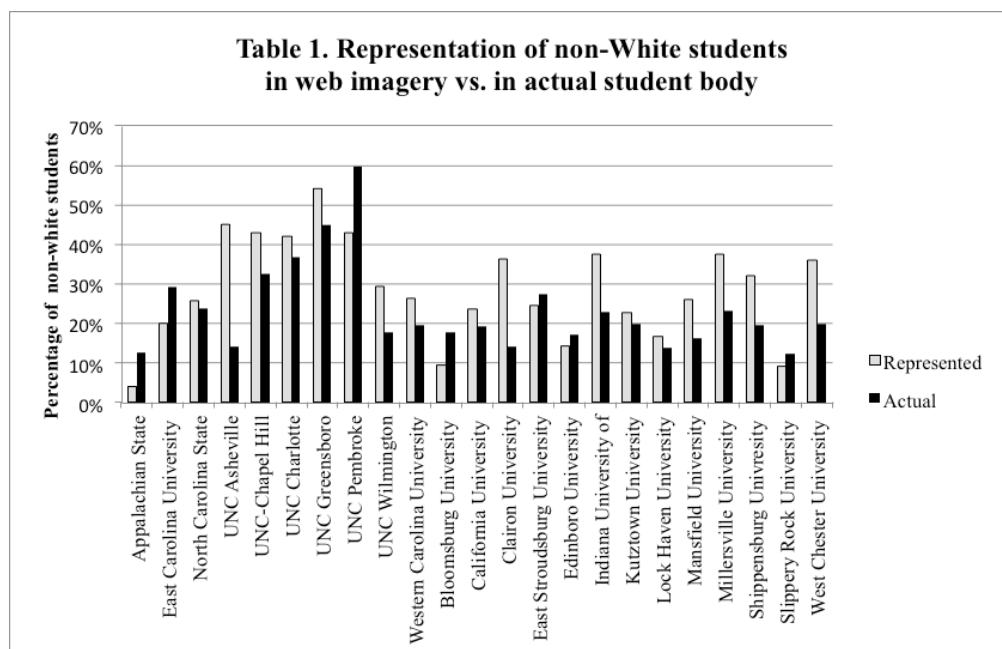
Images counted in the study included any full-size images or thumbnails on the specified pages. Background images and video screenshots were disregarded. Within individual images, a subject was counted only if he/she appeared to be a student and had at least one-half of his/her face visible. Subjects at a significant distance, such as distant shots of crowds or subjects in the background of an image were disregarded. Each eligible subject in an image was coded as either White or non-White, with a ratio of non-White-to-total-subjects count being recorded for each page and each university as a whole. This total ratio was compared to the actual ratio of non-White students on a campus as reported by College Factual (collegefactual.com), an independent aggregator of college statistics and information. The non-White students on these campuses means all except for White students as well as students classified as "ethnicity unknown."

Due to the nature of attempting to classify a person's race and position on campus based on visual cues alone, researcher bias may be present in this study. In fact, the use of racially ambiguous figures is a strategy used in visual marketing, and such figures are seen differently by different people, depending on their own predispositions about race (MacLin & Malpass, 2001). However, there is no concrete way for anyone to accurately assess a subject's race based on a photograph, so one uses the mindset of an average website viewer. When conducting similar research on minorities in college viewbook imagery, Pippert et al. (2013) wrote:

"We are acutely aware that classifications based on visual cues are problematic, but our goal was not to say with complete confidence that we could perfectly classify all subjects into a single racial or ethnic category. Through this research we were attempting to say: 'When viewing this photograph, would the average casual observer place the subject into a racial classification?' . . . If we could not answer that question positively, with confidence, then the subject was not classified" (p. 269).

IV. Results

As shown in Table 1, non-White students are more often represented on the examined school websites than they actually are on campus. Out of the 22 schools examined, 16 (73%) overrepresented their minority representation in imagery. In the UNCS, 7 of 9 schools (78%) overrepresented non-White student populations in imagery, while 9 of 13 schools (69%) in the PSSHE did the same.



To examine which webpages are most likely to portray ethnic minorities, the author examined a total of 994 human images across 121 webpages. Of these student images examined, 247 (25%) were determined to be of non-White students. By page, 33% of student images on “about” pages were of non-White students, followed by 29% for home pages, 24% for “academics” pages, and 22% each for “campus life” pages, “admissions” pages, and “visit” pages.

V. Discussion

The percentage of college students identifying as non-White has grown significantly over the past four decades, a trend expected to continue into the future (NCES, 2014), and websites are often the first touchpoint for prospective students to interact with a university (Howard, 2013). The fact that 16 of 22 (73%) of schools overrepresented non-White students on their websites shows that marketing teams are, at the very least, cognizant of the trend and are taking steps to ensure that their websites are attracting attention of non-White students.

Marketers must be aware of potential negative consequences should they choose to intentionally overrepresent ethnic minorities in imagery. Nielsen Norman Group research shows that users are good at deciphering between authentic photographs and stock photographs or photographs that were staged (Sherwin 2016). In the context of university websites, when users see stock imagery, they are instantly connected to ideas of blandness and effortlessness, while authentic photographs connect users to ideas of trust and genuineness (Sherwin, 2016). Thus, if website users feel a university has specifically chosen or even staged a photograph to show an idea of ethnic diversity, a website runs the risk of alienating prospective students of all ethnicities.

When broken down by page type, this study found that the percentage of non-White students was higher on the homepages and “about” pages than the other pages examined. Research from digital ad group Oho Interactive points out that college website homepages have an average bounce rate, or percentage of users who leave after visiting a certain landing page, of 47 percent, and that college website visitors view about three pages on average (Smith, 2015). This means that college homepages often struggle to keep attention and interest from viewers, and that colleges have only a few chances to make them continue further into the site. In addition, the “about” page is one of the most viewed webpages other than the homepage on college websites (Sherwin, 2016). Selecting the best images for these two pages is crucial for catching attention and making a good impression, and if college marketing teams desire to specifically attract non-White students, selecting images showcasing ethnic diversity will help them in this endeavor if the images appear authentic.

Of the schools studied, UNC-Asheville has the greatest disparity between minority representation in website imagery and representation on campus. On the pages examined, 45% of student images were of non-White students, while the school’s student body is 14% non-White. Visiting the “Diversity at UNC-Asheville” section of the school’s website, readers find information about how the school defines and addresses diversity. This section also displays information about the school’s “Diversity Action Council,” which was founded in 2008. Information about this council includes efforts to hire a more diverse faculty and to increase scholarships to diverse students, but makes no direct reference toward specific recruitment of students of color. It is, therefore, unclear whether specific, university-directed efforts could have anything to do with the selection of images on the school’s website; however, it is clear that the school’s executives are attempting to make the school’s student body appear more diverse.

As marketing colleges to ethnically diverse populations becomes more of a necessity than a strategy, college admissions and marketing teams find themselves in an ethical gray area. They must balance their desire to show ethnically diverse prospective students how they will fit on a campus and encourage them to apply with a clear and honest view of campus life for all students. The 2016 assembly of the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) emphasized that the primary role of admissions counselors is to treat students fairly and with honesty, always putting their best interests first (NACAC, 2016). Under their “Statement of Principles of Mandatory Practices” doctrine, the first point under the section on promotion and recruitment states that all members will “accurately represent and promote their schools, institutions, organizations and services” (NACAC 2016). In this regard, encouraging diversity recruitment

techniques that are not representative of a school as a whole is considered unprofessional and unethical.

Recruiting ethnically diverse populations, when done correctly, is not just a marketing campaign, but rather an all-encompassing institutional endeavor. Other forms of external communication can be equally important to perception of ethnic diversity on a campus. The Association of American Colleges & Universities (AACU) hosts a "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence" resource center for schools (AACU Home Page). Created by a panel of higher education executives, examples of resources include "Resources for Campus Leaders Crafting Messages in Response to issues of Racial Justice" and "Committing to Equity and Inclusive Excellence: A Campus Guide for Self-Study and Planning." The content of these works shows that while marketing efforts like campus websites may be the first touchpoint for prospective students, the entirety of a university's communications structure contributes to the total brand image of a higher education institution. This brand image, as perceived by prospective students, will determine whether an ethnically diverse student feels as though they would fit in with a certain school.

This study has some limitations. The coding of the human images in websites lends itself to researcher bias, incorrectly identifying a student as non-White when they are White or vice versa. This study examined only six top-level webpages because they were identified as the most likely pages to be visited by prospective students. Future studies may examine the totality of a website's imagery, which may give a more accurate representation of a school's ethnic diversity. Another interesting topic might be to determine whether non-White students visited the same pages as White students did.

VI. Conclusion

This paper explored the relationship between a school's ethnically diverse student population and their visual presentation on their websites. Diversity in all forms is more important than ever to higher education marketing teams, so they use websites as an important marketing tool, as they may be the only point of contact between the institution and prospective students. Websites need to both engage and inform effectively to hold viewers' attention.

The findings of this study show that a majority (73 percent) of universities in the UNCS and PSSHE systems overrepresented non-White students in their website imagery, probably to appeal to prospective students who are becoming increasingly ethnically diverse. However, negative perceptions of diversity marketing may occur when minority populations are overrepresented. Marketing departments at colleges need to balance their desire to appeal to a diverse audience with maintaining authenticity to earn viewers' trust and attention.

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Examining *The New York Times*' Compliance with Government-Issued Guidelines on Native Ads

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Abstract

Native advertisements—a form of paid media where the ad experience follows the natural form and function of the user experience in which it is placed—now dominate the world of online advertising. But publishers seem to have trouble interpreting exactly how the guidelines of the Federal Trade Commission define a proper native ad. now dominate the world of online advertising. But publishers seem to have trouble interpreting exactly how the guidelines of the Federal Trade Commission define a proper native ad. The author analyzed native ads published by The New York Times to understand if its ads are deceptive. A content analysis was conducted of 36 New York Times articles containing sponsored content. The findings showed that subjectivity plays a heavy role in the judgment of advertisements as they comply with government-issued guidelines. This case study will help to better understand the true nature of the native ad.

I. Introduction

The migration of news from print to online has left traditional news organizations with little choice but to introduce paid content to their sites (Herrman, July 2016). Native advertising, the integration of a brand message into the style and format of content posted by a publishing service, is a way for publishers to seamlessly include paid messages in their website's content. (Couldry & Turow, 2014). One news organization that has become no stranger to native advertising is *The New York Times* (Sebastian, 2014). When *The New York Times* posted an article sponsored by Netflix in June 2014, communications professionals began contemplating what native advertisements on news sites meant for the future of American journalism (Sebastian, 2014). Now, just two years later, native advertising has become a much more accepted approach to advertising.

Native ads are prevalent on the internet and most of the time unbeknownst to users (Wojdyski, 2016). Past advertisement techniques like pop-up ads used to be disruptive, which allowed viewers to easily recognize their paid nature and immediately remove them. But now there is a whole new quality to advertisements: native ads blend right in. If consumers do not recognize that the content they are consuming was paid for by an advertiser, are they being deceived? How do journalists, strategists, and advertisers create content that resonates with their audiences while ensuring the content is not misinforming them?

Keywords: Native Advertisements, *The New York Times*, Sponsored Content, Advertising, Journalism
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Previous research has shown that only one-third of publishers comply with government-issued regulations of native advertisements (Swant, 2016). But there has been little exploration of the usage of native ads by legacy news organizations like *The New York Times*. This research conducted a content analysis of native advertisements produced by *The New York Times* to analyze whether they comply with the regulations surrounding native ads. This research is a case study of the ways news organizations are creating sponsored content.

II. Literature Review

As users have become nearly immune to banner and display ads, advertisers have looked to alternative approaches that allow users to actively rather than passively engage with content (Conill, 2016). One method, native advertisements, has been used for many years but has just recently created concern as reputable news organizations, like *The New York Times*, have integrating them into their websites to promote more active user engagement (Couldry & Turow, 2014). Traditional online advertisements are purposely placed on a page to stand out from the site's native content, but native advertisements take the opposite approach by strategically blending a message into the stream of the feed with as little disruption as possible (Campbell & Marks, 2015). Not only are these paid messages being positioned around the content in articles, but they are now mimicking the articles themselves (Couldry & Turow, 2014).

The purpose of native ads is for advertisers to latch onto the credibility and readership of a publication in order for their messages to be more actively consumed by readers (Conill, 2016). This establishes an almost symbiotic relationship between advertisers and publishers. But if readers feel betrayal as they continue to discover native ads, this advertiser-publisher relationship could evolve into a parasitic one where the advertiser thrives at the expense of the publisher.

Sponsored Content vs. Branded Content vs. Paid Posts

The concept of native advertising has inspired the use of a few different terms that are important to define. The first, "sponsored content," is a "text based message typically embedded in the context of a website and related to the subject matter of the site" (Becker-Olsen, 2003, p. 17). Sponsored content is what makes up a native ad. Advertisers pay to ensure their message is communicated the way they want (Wojdyski, 2016). Publishing companies like *The New York Times* have established their own in-house content-creating studios dedicated solely to the crafting of messages paid for by advertisers. A journalistic approach is taken to the distribution of these paid messages, blurring the line between what is and is not sponsored content (About Us, 2016).

"Branded content," another type of content that makes up native ads, achieves its goal when its targeted audience gains some new element of knowledge or new feeling toward a brand (Gray, 2006). This knowledge just happens to be acquired through a message funded by an advertiser. Effective branded content is relevant to the reader, entertaining and in alignment with the publisher's values (Gray, 2006). News organizations using native ads are forced to build both engaging and relevant branded content if they want their readers to continue to find purpose in reading their content (Clark, 2008).

Another important term, in relation to this research analyzing *New York Times* articles, is "paid posts." The term paid post often appears in banners used frequently by *The New York Times* and placed at the top of a page above the article's title (Somaiya, 2013). Arthur Sulzberger Jr., CEO of *The New York Times*, sent a letter to his employees discussing the future of native ad usage at the company (Kelly, 2013). The letter promises that readers will be notified with a paid post statement explicitly displayed inside a colored banner and written in a font different from the font of the site's true content (Kelly, 2013). But is this banner clear enough for all readers to be informed about the source and purpose of the article that is posted?

Encountering a Native Ad

Now there are a variety of ways for readers to come in contact with sponsored ads; one of the most common ways is through Facebook. A study completed by Pew Research Center showed that 62% of U.S. adults get their news from social media, and 66% of Facebook users get news on the site, proving that Facebook continues to act as a crucial touch point for news organizations in their readers. ("News Use

Across", 2016) Facebook's newly developed system to help advertisers get their content posted on its site shifts the relationship between publishers and ad-vertisers (Herman, July 2016). Publishers like *The New York Times'* in-house branding agency T-Brand Studio now only create the content used for distribution, and leave it up to the advertisers to get the content placed on media sites. Because a publisher's focus is concentrated on the content itself, strategy is now more critical than ever.

Church vs. State

In the past, traditional newsrooms were empowered by their self-reliance and rejection of ad agencies and commercialization. But as these newsroom dynamics have evolved, the strong-hold of sponsors on journalists leaves writers with little room to maintain journalistic integrity (Conill, 2016). Writers used to feel in control of their work, and stood true to the values of the publishing companies they represented (Conill, 2016). Readers responded to the journalists' atti-tudes by showing their trust and loyalty to the publication (Conill, 2016). Now that profits are no longer driven by sales alone, legacy news organizations must rely on the digital ads placed on their sites (Conill, 2016). The "Iron Curtain" or 'Great Wall' between publishers and advertisers has continued to thin, and journalists struggle to find a compromise with advertisers (Conill, 2016). Readers' trust is fading as they lose the ability to recognize the purpose and source of the content posted by their favorite news providers (Conill, 2016).

To sustain their reputations, publishers must stay true to their values by upholding their promises and ensuring readers that their articles do not contain too much sponsored content (Conill, 2016). Readers expect that editorial content is reported objectively (Kane, 2015). But the difference between sponsored and non-sponsored content is not always obvious to the average editorial-reader. One Netflix-sponsored article written by *The New York Times* brand studio stirred up a dialogue about the wall between "church and state." Sebastian Tomich, vice presi-dent of advertising and branded content for *The New York Times*, was interviewed about the use of branded content in this particular article (Kane, 2015). He explained, "We are not portraying native ads as journalism, and we are not creating journalism. We fall squarely in the infotainment space. With what we did with the Netflix native, it wasn't investigative reporting, which is real journalism" (Kane, 2015, p. 53).

Compliance with Federal Trade Commission Guidelines

Because native ads can be crafted in so many ways and interpreted differently by differ-ent readers, the United States government stepped in to define exactly what an appropriate native ad looks like. The U.S. has implemented a set of guidelines enforced by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) that demands transparency from advertisers and ensures that customers have enough information about a product to make informed purchasing decisions. These guidelines, though, are used only to supplement the understanding that the government believes advertisers already have of the dos and don'ts of constructing ads (Pike, 2014). The FTC has hoped that ad-vertisers will regulate their own posts according to the guidelines, but simply crossing its fingers and hoping for the best has proved to be an ineffective way to guarantee that publishers will abide by the rules (Pike, 2014).

A study conducted in 2016 by advertising insights company MediaRadar showed that on-ly one-third of publishers comply with government-issued regulations of native advertisements (Swant, 2016). Highly reputable sources have been questioned about their usage of native ads (Swant, 2016). Lord & Taylor, for example, was recently accused of neglecting to provide any disclosures on both an editorial published by Nylon magazine, and Instagram photos posted by 50 fashion influencers it sponsored in early 2015 (Tadena, 2016). The Lord & Taylor case is now posted on the FTC's website for publishers to reference when analyzing their own ads for com-pliance with the guidelines.

Although the content in native ads is "inherently commercial," it is consumed in a way that readers cannot always recognize its intentions (Wojdynski, 2016). If readers struggle to de-termine the source or the purpose of content they are viewing, that article may be considered de-ceptive (Wojdynski, 2016).

Deceptive Advertising

What is deceptive advertising? An article published in the *Journal of Business Ethics* by Carson, Wokutch, and Cox (1985) explained it well: "Since the early 1900s the American Advertising Federation has waged a truth-in-advertising campaign to set guidelines for the industry. In its *Advertising Code of American*

Business it declares that ‘advertising shall tell the truth, reveal significant facts, the concealment of which would mislead the public’” (p. 94). Advertisers must be careful not to mislead their audiences in order to avoid compromising the morals of the companies they represent.

This raises the question: Is deceptive advertising immoral? Carson et al. (1985) believed that deceptive advertising is wrong because it hurts consumers by relaying false information that influences their purchasing decisions. They also believe that if deception was acceptable, companies would be operating on a foundation of lies and deception, and if deception was permitted, trust would no longer be as valued.

In conjunction with Carson’s research, Attas (1999) proposed that deceptive advertisements themselves are not the issue, but that it is the allowance of deceptive advertising that has consequences. However, Attas argued that deceptive advertising only becomes immoral if the ad produces a negative behavioral response from the consumer. Unless an unwanted action has taken place, a deceptive ad is not considered to be harmful. He also argued that misleading advertising should be differentiated from deception and lying. Deception and lying both intend to mislead the consumer, whereas misleading ads can accidentally cause the consumer to misinterpret the information.

Legally and in the context of the FTC, the idea of deception is centered on the consumer’s understanding of the ad rather than the advertiser’s intentions (Attas, 1999). The FTC states that deceptive advertising occurs when “consumers acting reasonably under the circumstances are misled about its nature or source, and such misleading impression is likely to affect their decisions or conduct regarding the advertised product or the advertising” (“Enforcement Policy,” n.d.).

Publishers, therefore, are expected to consider all of the potential interpretations of an ad when integrating it into their site in order to uphold their reputations. What happens when users recognize that content is sponsored, but no disclosures are in place? The consumer often assumes the publisher is purposefully deceiving readers, and loses trust in the organization (Campbell & Marks, 2015).

Ethical Advertising Principles

If publishers are intentionally deceiving their readers, are native advertisements unethical? The Institute for Advertising Ethics (IAE), an organization administered by the American Advertising Foundation (AAF), has deployed a set of principles that specify what ethical advertising entails. The principles relevant to native advertising include 1) There must be a clear separation between sponsored content and native content, and 2) It must be clear when an advertiser is paying to promote an idea or product. If consumers believe that a promoted product is being endorsed based on the personal opinion of the publisher, they may make different purchasing decisions than if they knew the product was promoted by an advertiser (Snyder, 2011).

If advertisers fail to follow the principles laid out by the IAE, their native ads may be considered unethically. To ensure that all advertisements are published ethically, the FTC suggests that publishers are transparent and provide clear and conspicuous disclosures to all of their content containing native advertisements (“Native advertising,” 2015).

Clear & Prominent Disclosures

Because of the nature of native ads, the FTC looks at the full effect of an ad rather than specific elements of it when analyzing whether the ad is deceiving. Not only is the content itself analyzed, but the placement and formatting of the ad is examined as well. The FTC looks at the ad’s “overall appearance; the similarity of its written, spoken, or visual style or subject matter to non-advertising content on the publisher site on which it appears; and the degree to which it is distinguishable from other content on the publisher site. The closer the native ad is to the style and content of non-advertising items on the publisher’s site, the more imperative it becomes for readers to be informed that the post is sponsored (“Native advertising,” 2015).

With proper disclosures, consumers can interpret the content with scrutiny and make informed purchasing decisions (Wojdyski, 2016). Placement, prominence, and clarity are the three elements that the FTC uses to determine whether a disclosure is appropriately placed in a native ad. If the disclosure does not follow these guidelines, the FTC considers it not clear (“Native advertising,” 2015).

In the study about native ad usage conducted by Media Radar, two-thirds of the publishers it analyzed did not use disclosures that complied with FTC guidelines. Even if publishers did attempt to inform their audiences about their ad’s sponsored nature, the posted labels were either incorrectly positioned or

worded (Swant, 2016). With the exposure of so many FTC-guideline offenders, it is natural to question the deceptiveness of native ads published by highly reputable news organizations. Readers should be informed about the ways their favorite news sources are integrating paid content into the articles the readers are consuming so they can act accordingly.

Consumers have faith that the information output by the media is accurate and true. But as the public becomes more aware of the use and deceptiveness of native advertisements in news organizations, the future of American media could be at serious risk. This study analyzed if *The New York Times*, an early adopter of native advertisements, complies with government-issued guidelines to examine whether the information output is deceiving its readers. To guide the analysis, the following research questions were posed:

RQ1: Are *New York Times* native advertisements using proper disclosures?

RQ2: Are *New York Times* articles with native advertisements distinguishable from *New York Times* articles with non-sponsored content?

RQ3: Do *New York Times* native advertisements comply with FTC guidelines?

III. Research Methods

A quantitative content analysis was conducted to analyze all elements of 36 *New York Times* sponsored articles that relate to compliance with FTC guidelines and decide if the articles are ultimately deceptive or published ethically. Quantitative research was completed in order to measure whether each article complied with the specific elements laid out by the FTC. This approach allowed the researcher to note specifically which guidelines were and were not complied with, and to quantify whether *New York Times* articles containing native ads are providing appropriate disclosures.

Sample

The author selected 36 of the 38 articles posted on the website of T-Brand Studio, the in-house brand making unit of *The New York Times*. T-Brand Studio creates the sponsored articles and publishes them on its site, specifically on its “Our Work” page. The 38 articles on the T-Brand Studio’s “Our Work” page are a compilation of works selected by the studio to showcase some of its best work. The 36 articles on this page were examined because this study was interested in looking at a large group of the pieces that the studio felt were exemplary works and represented what its typical pieces looked like. The two remaining articles were not used because they were duplicates of articles already posted on the site.

Coding Procedures

Due to the ambiguous nature of native advertisements, publishers have to walk a fine line when crafting effective sponsored content based on the regulations protecting the rights of the consumer. Native ads purposely mimic the style, function, design, and language of the non-sponsored content on the site they are published (Couldry & Turow, 2014). To be sure the reader recognizes when content is sponsored, the FTC focuses on two main factors that determine whether native advertisements are published properly: clear and prominent disclosures and distinguishability from non-ad content. With proper disclosures and distinct sponsored content consumers can interpret content with scrutiny and make informed decisions about the information they consume (Wojdyski, 2016)

According to the FTC, any article containing sponsored content must include a disclosure that is visibly prominent and use wording that allows a reader to understand that the content is sponsored. If the disclosure does not satisfy these requirements, the FTC considers the disclosure not clear or prominent. Proper disclosures makes up the first of two main elements the FTC uses to determine compliance. Additionally, publishers can ensure that readers are informed about the intention of the sponsored content by keeping the ad distinguishable from the non-sponsored content (“Native advertising,” 2015).

The unit of observation in this study was each article. The categories and subcategories used in the coding process were selected directly from the FTC’s description of properly made native advertisements.

The two main coding categories are “disclosures” and “distinguishability” (Refer to Appendix for a detailed coding sheet.)

The Disclosures category was further divided into five subcategories based on how the FTC determines if a disclosure is appropriate in a native ad: Placement, Amount of Disclosures, Prominence, Clarity of Meaning, and Wording (“Native advertising,” 2015). Each article was given a score in each of these subcategories based on how much it is reflective of the specific guidelines determined by the FTC. The scores of each subcategory were added up to equal the overall score of the Disclosures category for an individual article. Once each article’s score was determined, it was added up with the total scores of all 36 articles examined in this study.

1) The “Placement” subcategory can score up to 1 point. If the disclosure is placed on or near the focal point of the page, in front of or above the headline, or if it is individually labeled as paid content when the ad is mixed into native content, it scored 1 point. When the disclosure is far above, to the right of the headline or not near the headline, then it was assigned 0 points.

2) In the “Amount of Disclosures” subcategory, if there is a disclosure on both the top and the bottom of the article it was awarded 2 points, if it contains only one disclosure on either the top or bottom it was awarded 1 point and if it does not contain a disclosure at all it was awarded 0 points.

3) The “Prominence” subcategory can garner a maximum of 3 points. When a disclosure contained the following three elements, it scored all 3 points: a) text that strongly contrasts with the background (lighter font color with a darker background), b) a border that sets itself from surrounding content, c) and a sufficiently saturated background setting. If the disclosure contained two of these elements it received 2 points, if it contained one element it received 1 point, and if it did not contain any of the elements it received 0 points.

4) The “Clarity of Meaning” subcategory can receive a maximum of 1 point and relates to technical or industry jargon, terms that customarily have different meanings to consumers in other situations, unfamiliar icons or abbreviations, company logos or brand names accompanied by a clear text disclosure, and company logo or brand names unaccompanied by a clear text disclosure. If the article has any of the disclosure elements above, this subcategory received 1 point.

5) The “Wording” subcategory scored 1 point when the wording in the disclosure matched with the specific wording provided by the FTC: This subcategory stipulates that the disclosure should contain the words, “Ad,” “Advertisement,” “Paid Advertisement,” or “Sponsored Advertising Content.” If the disclosure did not contain these words, it received 0 points in this subcategory. The FTC’s website states, “Terms likely to be understood include ‘Ad,’ ‘Advertisement,’ ‘Paid Advertisement,’ ‘Sponsored Advertising Content,’ or some variation thereof” (“Native advertising,” 2015). Because the “some variation thereof” was ultimately subjective, the researcher chose to include the four terms specifically stated on the site.

As a result of the scoring of each subcategory, one article can score up to 8 points in total in the Disclosures category. Because there are a total of 36 articles analyzed in this study, all articles combined can score a maximum of 288 points.

The “Distinguishability” category is measured whether a native ad is distinguishable from a typical non-sponsored NYT article by looking at how similar the ad is to non-ads in style, subject matter, and placement. This category was divided into three subcategories:

1) The subcategory “Format” (Max 5 points) looked at the five elements of font, colors, spacing, image style and interactivity level of the sponsored content in the articles. If all of these elements are different from that of the non-ad content, the subcategory was given a score of 5 points. This subcategory was assigned 1 point for each element that differed from that of the non-ad content. The factors that determined Interactivity in the study’s coding process included image/graph/chart movement, or any type of media that required readers to scroll, click or move their cursor.

2) The “Subject” subcategory (Max 1 point) looked at whether the subject in the native ad was similar to the types of articles written by *The New York Times* in its four main article types: News, Opinion, Arts or Living. If the subjects of the native ads were different than these 4 *New York Times* article types, this subcategory garnered 1 point. This subcategory was made because according to the FTC, the topic of a native ad may be a contributing factor in the distinguishability between the ad and a traditional *New York Times* article. Additionally, because there are multiple ways for users to land on a sponsored article, it is important for certain elements, like the subject, to be distinctly different from a non-sponsored article (“Native advertising,” 2015). A typical viewer most likely comes across sponsored articles as they appear in a list of

five suggested articles in two main locations on *The New York Times* site. The first location is towards the bottom of the home screen, below a horizontal bar in a thin blue border with the title “From Our Advertisers.” The second is on the right side of the screen throughout the pages of the site, boxed off by a thin blue border with the same title “From Our Advertisers” (Bruni, 2016).

3) Lastly, the subcategory “Content Placement” (Max 1 point) looked at if the sponsor or product/service was mentioned within the article or as an ad placed around the article. If these are mentioned separate from the article or is the article itself, the subcategory was assigned 1 point. If placed within the native content it received zero points.

As a result of each of the three subcategories, an individual article could receive a maximum of 7 points in the Distinguishability category; the 36 articles, up to 252 points.

With the combination of the Disclosure and Distinguishability categories, a single article could receive a total possible maximum score of 15 points; the 36 articles combined up to 540 points.

IV. Results

When it comes to the entire Disclosure category, the 36 articles scored a total of 212 points out of the maximum 288 points (73.6%), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Compliance with FTC Disclosure Guidelines by *New York Times* articles

Disclosure	Score/Maximum	Percent (%)
Placement	36/36	100%
Amount of Disclosures	70/72	97.2%
Prominence	69/108	63.9%
Clarity of Meaning	36 /36	100%
Wording	1 / 36	2.8%
Total	212 /288	73.6%

Notes. The maximum subcategory score is calculated as (the maximum score an individual article can receive) x (the number of articles, 36).

Every article received perfect scores in the Placement, Amount of Disclosures, and Clarity of Meaning subcategories.

Three out of 36 articles (8.3%) scored 1 point in Disclosure Prominence category while the remaining 33 articles (91.7%) scored 2 points and none of the articles scored the full 3 points. Therefore, the FTC compliance level of disclosure prominence of these articles was 63.9% (69 out of the maximum 108 points).

Only one article used the wording deemed appropriate by the FTC: it used the word “Advertisement.” Of the other articles, 14 (38.9%) of them used “Paid post,” 15 (41.7%) used “Paid for and posted by” with the sponsor’s logo underneath, and 6 (16.7%) used “Paid for and posted by (brand name)” with the sponsor’s logo underneath.

When it comes to the entire Distinguishability category, the articles scored a total of 224 points out of the maximum 288 points (88.8%), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Compliance with FTC Distinguishability Guidelines by *New York Times* articles

Distinguishability		Score / Maximum	Percent (%)
Format:	Font	36 / 36	100%
	Colors	34 / 36	94.4%
	Spacing	33 / 36	91.7%
	Image Style	33 / 36	91.7%
	Interactivity	34 / 36	94.4%
Subject		18 / 36	50%
Content Placement		36 / 36	100%
Total		224 / 252	88.9%

Notes. The maximum subcategory score is calculated as (the maximum score an individual article can receive) x (the number of articles, 36).

Among the five components of Format, fonts in 36 native ads could be distinguished from the fonts used in classic *New York Times* non-sponsored articles; the other four components, colors, spacing, image and interactivity, each received scores 91.7% of compliance rate or above, as shown in Table 2. Regarding the Subject subcategory, only 18 of the 36 articles (50%) were written about subjects distinguishable from what *The New York Times* sections typically cover in its News, Opinion, Arts & Living sections. In the Content Placement subcategory, every article used content placement that allowed the native ad to be distinguishable from a classic, non-sponsored *New York Times* article.

All articles received individual scores between 9 and 13 with the highest possible score of 15—(a maximum Disclosure score of 8) + (a maximum Distinguishability score of 7). Eighteen articles (50%) scored 12 points out of the maximum 15 points (80.0% of compliance rate) and 13 (36%) scored 13 points (86.7% of compliance rate). As a result, 31 articles (86%) of the articles abided by the FTC guidelines by at least 80% of compliance rate. The total compliance rate stood at 81.3%, when the Disclosure and Distinguishability categories were averaged.

V. Discussion

This study was an examination of how *New York Times* articles containing native advertisements comply with government-issued rules and regulations. The research performed a case study on one of the journalism industry's top media outlets to get a deeper look into the evolution and intentions of traditional American journalism ("Mashable tops list," 2010).

When examining the results of the content analysis, a few major patterns were observed. Two main elements of the "Disclosures" category and one main element of "Distinguishability" category received significantly lower scores than all the other elements in the study.

Only one of the 36 articles used proper disclosure wording according to FTC standards. Disclosure wording is one of the most essential parts of an advertisement's transparency, as it informs readers that the content they follow is paid for ("IAB," 2015). This research found only the four specified wording examples provided on the FTC website in the coding process, but if all articles with the term "paid" were considered to comply with the Disclosure guideline, *The New York Times*' compliance rate goes up to 100% in the Wording subcategory, and from 73.6% to 85.8% in the overall Disclosure category.

Disclosure Prominence also proved to be an issue for many of these articles. None of the articles achieved all three requirements—text contrast, a separation border, and a saturated back-ground—needed for accurate disclosure prominence. For readers to discern native ads from genuine content, only one of three prominence criteria would be enough to prevent readers' misunderstanding. In this sense, all articles (100%) complied with the disclosure guideline.

Half of the articles contained content similar to the subject of a traditional *New York Times* ad,

which could be a factor contributing to the reader's confusion about the difference between a sponsored and a regular *New York Times* article. The four broad categories of topics written about by *The New York Times* (News, Opinion, Arts, and Living) cover a very wide range of topics that any ad or news article could address. Also 50% of articles were written similarly to what these four sections cover. However, it is unlikely that readers would misunderstand each article's purpose if the other guidelines are complied with. Because deceptive advertising occurs when consumers are misled about an ad, disclosures and native ad distinguishability must be produced accurately enough for a reader to understand the article's function ("Native advertising," 2015).

The IAE has determined that an ad is ethical when there is a clear separation between sponsored and native content, and when it is clear when an advertiser is being paid to promote an idea or product (Snyder, 2011). The FTC's demand for publishers' transparency through clear and conspicuous disclosures and distinguishability of elements like font, color and subject leads to automatic compliance with ethical guidelines deployed by the IAE. Therefore, if an ad follows the FTC's guidelines, it is probably published ethically.

Limitations

The average reader will initially encounter the articles directly on *The New York Times* website, rather than the website of its in-house T-Brand Studio, which compiled exemplary *New York Times* native-ads. The current study analyzed native ads on the T-Brand Studio website rather than those on *The New York Times* website. Where the reader encounters native ads in the context of other content, the result have been different if the author had analyzed native ads directly from *The New York Times* website.

Additionally, the 36 articles selected in this study were taken directly from the "Our Work" page of the T-Brand Studio's website. This selection of articles are not an accurate representation of the articles published on *The New York Times* website because they were chosen by T-Brand Studio as a small sample of its work.

Also publishers don't have to comply with the FTC guidelines at a 100 percent level as long as readers are able to "differentiate advertising from other non-sponsored content?" ("Native advertising," 2015) This is why the FTC guidelines repeatedly state the importance of looking at the full effect of an advertisement by analyzing the way all of the elements work in conjunction with one another rather than measuring the individual parts of each ad.

Lastly, it is difficult for publishers to effectively analyze articles based on FTC guidelines because many of these elements that contribute to the guidelines are subjective. For example, the rules "a saturated background shading" and "text that does not strongly contrast with the background" in the "Disclosure Prominence" category are not distinctly defined. With more time, additional coders could have been used to score the native ads.

VI. Conclusion

This analysis of *The New York Times*' use of sponsored content in its branded articles shows the complexities of defining a truly informative native advertisement. The findings show that the selection of *New York Times* native ads comply with the FTC's guidelines for Proper Disclosures by 73.6% and Distinguishability by 88.9%. Prominence and Wording under the Disclosure category, and Subject under the Distinguishability category have proved to comply less than other components did. Although these individual components scored lower than the other components analyzed, it is enough if readers are able to distinguish advertising from non-sponsored content as they look at an advertisement as a whole.

The grey areas in government-issued guidelines will continuously blur as the use of native advertising advances. What does the future look like in a world of progressing native advertisements? News sites like *The New York Times* will have no choice but to be alert to FTC guidelines and highly strategic in their production of branded content.

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Appendix: Content Analysis Coding Sheet

1. Disclosures: Placement, Prominence, Clarity, Wording

Placement: (Max 1)

Is the disclosure placed/ does the disclosure contain...

On or near the focal point,

In front of or above the headline,

Individually labeled paid content (if ad mixed into native content),

Far above or to the right of the headline- 1

Not near the headline 0

Amount of Disclosures (Max 2)

Is there a disclosure on both the top and bottom of article?

Yes 2

Only one 1

No disclosures 0

Prominence: (Max 3)

Does the disclosure contain...

Text strongly contrasts with the background (lighter font color, dark background) 1

Text that does not strongly contrast with the background 0

A border that sets native ad from surrounding content 1

A border that does not set native ad from surrounding content 0

A saturated background shading 1

An unsaturated background shading 0

Clarity of Meaning: (Max 1)

Does the disclosure use...

Technical or industry jargon 0

Terms that customarily have different meanings to consumers in other situations 0

Unfamiliar icons or abbreviations 0

Company logos or brand names unaccompanied by a clear text disclosure 0

Company logo or brand names accompanied by a clear text disclosure 1

Wording: (Max 1)

Does the disclosure use the words...

"Ad," "Advertisement," "Paid Advertisement," "Sponsored Advertising Content," 1

OR

Any other word or combination of words other than "Ad" "Advertisement," "Paid Advertisement,"

"Sponsored Advertising Content," such as "Promoted", "Promoted Stories," "Presented by [X]," "Brought to You by," "Promoted by," or "Sponsored by" 0

Category Max (Per Article): 8

Max Score for All Articles: 288

2. Distinguishability: Is the native ad distinguishable from the non-ad content? How similar is it in style and subject matter to the site it appears?

Format: (Max 5)

Font

similar 0

different 1

Colors

similar 0

different 1

Spacing

similar 0

different 1

Image style

similar 0

different 1

Interactivity

A traditional NYT article does not contain interactive elements

not interactive 0

interactive 1

Subject: (Max 1)

**New York Times* writes about the following broad subjects: News, Opinion, Arts, Living
similar 0
different 1

Content placement: (Max 1)

Is sponsor or product/service mentioned within the article or as an ad placed around the article?
Separate from the article or *is* the article itself 1
Placed within the native content 0

Category Max (Per Article): 7

Max Score for All Articles: 252

Max Total Score (Per Article): 15

Max Total Score for All Articles: 540

An Analysis of Hillary Clinton-Sponsored Advertisements during the 2016 Presidential Election

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an undergraduate senior capstone course in communications

Abstract

Despite media evolution, political advertising remains the primary means by which candidates directly reach voters. The 2016 presidential election between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump was no exception. Since the birth of political advertising in the 1960s, experts have investigated advertising strategies and trends in order to uncover patterns in voter behavior. Through content analysis, this study investigated the tone, topic, and content of Clinton-sponsored advertisements during the 2016 presidential election. The results illustrate an advocacy-heavy advertising strategy for Clinton, with a shift from policy-focused advocacy ads to character-focused attack ads as Election Day drew nearer. Advertisements featuring content about rights, leadership, and the economy were most common.

I. Introduction

The utilization of strategic advertising in presidential campaigns has been around since the 1960s. Arguably, the most notable political advertisement in memory is titled “Daisy Girl.” Lyndon Johnson sponsored the ad against Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential election (Shwartz, 1964). The ad opens with a young girl picking petals from a daisy, while a man’s voice counts down to zero. The frame zooms into the young girl’s fearful eyes, and cuts to an image of a nuclear explosion. The ad urged voters to participate in the political process by scaring them.

More than 50 years later, the 2016 presidential election featured similarly strategic advertisements. The presidential race between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump was unprecedented, and although the media has changed immensely since 1964, political advertisements are still a useful tool that both candidates utilized in their campaigns. Despite media evolution, advertising remains the primary means by which candidates, parties, and other ad sponsors directly reach voters (Brader, 2006). Moreover, these ads are not just showing up on people’s television screens anymore. They are abundantly available on YouTube and other online media platforms. Especially over the past decade, the volume of political advertising has increased (Ridout, Franz, & Fowler, 2014). By Election Day, Hillary Clinton’s team spent almost \$120 million on ads during her race for the White House (Miller, 2016).

As these numbers continue to rise, it is vital for voters to recognize and reflect on how advertising strategies affect them. In the age of unlimited access to information, it can be difficult for the average citizen

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to seek the truth. Franz, Freedman, Goldstein, and Ridout (2007) said, “Ultimately, if the political diet of most Americans is lacking in crucial information, campaign ads represent the multivitamins of American politics” (p. 725). Because of this undeniable reality and the sheer volume of advertisements during the 2016 election, this study attempted to analyze the tone, topic, and content of Hillary Clinton-sponsored advertisements during the 2016 presidential election. It is commonplace to hear that campaigns get nastier every year, and this analysis attempted to address this claim empirically. This in-depth analysis also examined whether the modern application of theories of emotion and voter engagement can be applied to specific types of political advertising.

II. Literature Review

Overview

Despite the extensive evolution of the media, political advertising remains the primary means by which candidates, parties, and other sponsors communicate directly with voters. The largest expense in a typical campaign for major office is political advertising (Brader, 2006). The overall tone of political advertising seems to be negative more often than not. While positive advertisements do exist, they are rarely remembered. Political advertisements stereotypically evoke terms like “mudslinging” or “attack advertising” because they focus on criticizing the character, record, or positions of the targeted candidate, thus creating doubt in voters’ minds about the ability of the target to govern successfully (Pinkleton, 2002). Some experts suggest that these strategies undermine democracy because they heighten cynicism and contribute to a general feeling of hopelessness among many voters. Other experts claim the opposite: Recent studies have even found that political advertising promotes political learning and participation (Cho, 2015). The following literature review classified political advertisements, defined and investigated the role emotion plays in political advertising, and discussed previous studies on political advertising.

Classification of Political Advertising

Advertising tone

Political advertisements are incredibly strategic and complex; therefore, it is necessary to classify them for in-depth examination. In this study, the first layer of analysis involves advertisement tone. Political campaigns most often run attack advertisements, which criticize an opponents’ political platform, usually by pointing out its faults. Geer (2006) defines “negativity” in the context of attack advertising. He wrote that negativity “is simple and straightforward: negativity is any criticism leveled by one candidate against another during a campaign. Under this definition there is no gray area” (p. 23).

Advocacy advertisements, although not memorable in this day and age of politics, are equally important to define. Geer’s definition of an advocacy ad is as simple as his definition for an attack ad. Advocacy ads state why a specific candidate is worthy of a vote (Geer, 2006). These ads usually utilize empowering statements, promises to the American people, and an overall uplifting message. Some of the most successful political advertisements find a balance between attack and advocacy and take the form of contrast advertisements. For example, an ad will begin with a criticism of an opponent’s plan for taxes and end with evidence as to why the sponsored candidate’s plan is better. Geer (2006) explained that there is no middle ground: “An appeal in a campaign either raises doubts about the opposition or states why the candidate is worthy of your vote. There is no middle category” (p. 23). But, there are some advertisements that both attack and advocate successfully, thus creating a tone of contrast.

Advertisement Topic

In addition to ad tone, research on political advertising often requires a second layer of analysis: ad topic. Previous research on political advertising has classified advertisement topics based on several kinds of appeals. The most common are character, policy, and achievement. Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991) named what they call “political character” as a common underlying message in political advertising. Based on their research, character deals with “three of the most critical elements of a candidate’s image: credibility, competency, and honesty” (p. 79). Political advertisements that feature the topic of personal character attack

the characteristics of an opponent, advocate for the characteristics of the sponsoring candidate, or contrast both of those messages.

Closely related to personal character is the topic of past achievements. In order to convince voters of their ability to succeed as the president of the United States, candidates will often feature their political résumés in their campaign advertisements (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991). By doing this, the sponsoring candidate is able to establish credibility. Advocacy ads that feature past achievements discuss qualifications, implying why the sponsoring candidate is worthy of votes. Attack ads featuring the topic of past achievements are less common. Still, candidates bring up the past achievements of their opponents and frame them as blunders in order to make themselves appear more credible than the target of the advertisement.

A recent complaint about modern political campaigns, specifically in the realm of advertising, is that they focus on character as opposed to policy issues. One study investigated this claim and discovered that there is little evidence to suggest its truth over the past 16 years (Ridout et al., 2014). Candidates are still using campaign advertisements to attack the proposed future policies of their opponents, as well as to advocate for their own plans once they win the election in question. Through the combination of different tones and topics, candidates can produce diverse advertising strategies that appeal to all kinds of voters.

Advertisement Content

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the ever-changing political conversation in the United States, research on campaign ads often catalogs the content featured in each advertisement. Content area of interest for each ad is usually analyzed separately from ad tone and topic to provide greater context. For example, Ridout et al. (2014) calculated the percentage of ad airings that concerned domestic versus foreign issues over the course of 16 years in an attempt to track changes in the political agenda. Hot issues became a popular choice for ad content, while outdated issues appeared less frequently. For example, in the 2000 presidential election, the discussion of foreign policy rarely appeared in advertisements. But, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, foreign policy made up 23% of issues mentioned in campaign ads during the 2004 presidential election (Ridout et al., 2014). Overall, analyzing the content of campaign ads allows researchers to gain insight into the usefulness of political advertising and trace changes in the political landscape.

The Psychology of Political Advertising

The functional theory of emotion says that emotions work as “an adaptive system to help humans deal with changes in the environment” (Cho, 2015, p. 2564). For example, when someone experiences a change in their environment, their first reaction is likely to be assessing how that change is significant to their lives. Once they have made this assessment, they enter what is known as the “action state,” which encompasses both approach and avoidance. Finally, whatever “action” (i.e. approach or avoidance) a person chooses results in a sense of awareness. This entire process is what makes up emotional experiences. Cho (2015) says, “In sum, the emotional system is expected to facilitate the interaction between an organism and an internal or environmental stimulus” (p. 2565). This process can easily be applied to voter exposure to political advertising.

In fact, the functional theory of emotion illuminates an important way of thinking about attack ads in political advertising. As an external stimulus, they provoke emotion from their audience. Attack ads often elicit negative emotions, which lead to cognitive and behavioral responses. Cho (2015) adds that the reason is twofold: voters feel threatened by ads that attack the candidate they support. Interestingly enough, voters also have similar feelings of threat when an advertisement attacks the candidate they oppose because the ad proves that a candidate’s policy and/or character is a threat itself. Still, it is important to note that negative attack ads may not always elicit negative emotions. Audience political affiliation and/or voting intention can create varied responses to the same negative advertisement.

Advocacy advertisements, on the other hand, are far less likely to elicit a strong emotional response from voters. Based on empirical evidence, several studies agree that in cases where voters oppose what is being advocated for in an ad they might feel threatened. But, that sense of threat is nowhere near as strong as the feelings provoked by advertisements that attack the candidate or policies that they support (Cho, 2015). Furthermore, scholars generally attribute the reason for the greater effectiveness of attack advertising over advocacy advertising to the fact that people are more motivated by stronger feelings of emotion (Pinkleton, 2002). In general, negative advertisements are psychologically more stimulating than positive ones and generate more action. Consistent with the functional theory of emotion, this research suggests that

negative emotions are more persistent and become a stronger motivating force than positive ones. For this reason, the majority of empirical research surrounding political advertising focuses on the impact of attack ads that elicit a negative emotional response from voters.

Previous Research on Political Advertisements

By looking to psychological theories for guidance, experts have expanded on theories of voter engagement by using data from past political advertising campaigns. Many researchers have examined the impact of exposure to advertising on voter choice (Huber & Arceneaux, 2009), political participation (Franz, Freedman, Goldstein, & Ridout, 2007), and attitudes toward the political system in general (Jackson, Mondak, & Huckfeldt, 2009). In analyses of past elections, they have asked questions like: Do attack ads make people less or more likely to vote? Do they motivate them to make a decision? Or do they just complicate things?

The Julian P. Kanter Political Commercial Archive at The University of Oklahoma, for example, has given researchers the opportunity to watch political advertisements and code them on a variety of factors. Geer (2006) did this with much success. He employed a measure of the number of negative election ads minus the number of positive ads to produce a proportional variable of advertising tone. In a 2014 study, coders classified each ad on several characteristics, including its tone and topic. Coders labeled an ad positive if it mentioned only a sponsor or favored candidate, negative if it mentioned only the opponent, and contrast if it mentioned both. They also marked whether each ad talked about policy issues, the characteristics of the candidates (i.e. fitness for office, background, etc.) or both (Ridout et al., 2014).

In recent decades, political campaign strategies have started to rely more on internet platforms and mobile communications than traditional television airtime. Researchers are beginning to examine political advertisements through more modern and tech-savvy lenses. As electoral politics has migrated to the internet, the study of political videos distributed online is becoming increasingly popular (Dowling & Wichowsky, 2014). Voters can now instantly share and offer their own commentary on political advertising on online platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. This phenomenon opens the door for endless research possibilities. This paper provides researchers with an analysis of data to investigate four research questions.

Research Questions

As a framework for analysis of Hillary Clinton-sponsored political advertisements in the 2016 presidential election, the author asked the following research questions:

RQ1. Is the tone of each advertisement attack, advocacy, or contrast?

RQ2. Is the topic of each advertisement personal character, future policy, or past achievement?

RQ3. What type of content was addressed in the advertisement (i.e. rights, economy, immigration, environment, healthcare, education, foreign policy, leadership and/or others)?

RQ4. Did Clinton's advertising strategy change over time?

III. Method

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research technique used for describing written, spoken, or visual communication. When done successfully, it provides a quantitative description of otherwise qualitative material (UC Davis, 2009). This kind of quantification allows researchers to characterize massive amounts of material in a way that is easy to digest. For this reason, many content analyses involve media like television, video, movies, and the internet. Any medium that can be recorded and reviewed can be analyzed for its content.

Many researchers have used content analysis to examine previous political advertising campaigns. For example, in a study by Ridout, Franz and Fowler (2014), coders used content analysis to classify ads in

the 2012 presidential election based on several characteristics. The data compiled by content analysis in the context of political advertising allows for researchers to get a more comprehensive look at current political advertising strategies and trends, without having to watch hundreds of advertisements.

This current study attempted to do the same topic as previous studies, but for a different time period, the 2016 presidential election. This study used content analysis to identify tone, topic and content in Hillary Clinton-sponsored ads during the 2016 presidential election. The unit of observation was each ad that was sponsored by Hillary Clinton herself, and clearly marked by having a statement at the end of an ad, "I'm Hillary Clinton and I approve this message." No advertisements sponsored by independent political groups or Clinton's opponents were analyzed.

Sampling Method and Procedure

An entire set of Hillary Clinton-sponsored advertisements was accessed from Stanford University's Political Communication Lab (PCL). The lab is a research group that includes faculty and graduate students from Stanford University's communication and political science departments in order to study public opinion and political behavior (Political Communication Lab, 2016). All Clinton-sponsored advertisements available as of November 8, 2016, were analyzed for this study, including ads from both the primary and general election periods.

The researcher content analyzed and coded Hillary Clinton-sponsored advertisements for the following categories: tone (i.e. attack, advocacy or contrast); topic (i.e. personal character, future policy or past achievement); and content mentioned (i.e. rights, economy, immigration, environment, healthcare, education, foreign policy, leadership and/or other). First, the author watched each ad once through in its entirety and made the corresponding notes on the code sheet based on her observations (Refer to Table 1 in Appendix). She then watched the same ad once more to ensure quality control throughout the coding process. The researcher watched 73 advertisements in total and tallied the frequency of each given category.

IV. Findings

A total of 73 Clinton-sponsored advertisements were coded to answer RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3. The researcher also compared advertisements in the primary and general presidential campaigns to answer RQ4 on changes in the advertising campaign over time. Of the 73 ads, 38 aired during the presidential primaries, while 35 aired during the general presidential election.

Advertisement Tone

To answer RQ1 on the tone of advertisements, 73 Clinton-sponsored advertisements were examined. The results revealed that advocacy tone was dominant, making up 58% of the total ads, followed by 22% for attack and 21% for contrast (refer to Table 1).

Table 1 – Clinton-sponsored advertisements according to tone

	Advocacy	Attack	Contrast	Total Ads
Primary	33	1	4	38
General	9	15	11	35
Total #	42	16	15	73
Total %	58%	22%	21%	100%

** Due to rounding, percentages appear to add up to more than 100%.*

Of the 42 advocacy ads, 33 aired during the primary election and 9 aired during the general election.

Of the 16 attack ads, only 1 aired during the primary election and the remaining 14 aired during the general election period. Of the 15 contrast ads, 4 aired during the primary election and 11 aired during the general election (refer to Table 1).

Advertisement Topic

Additionally, the researcher tallied the frequencies of three categories of topic in each advertisement in order to answer RQ2. As shown in Table 2, future policy-focused ads were the most common at 44%, followed closely by personal character ads (37%), and achievement ads (19%).

Table 2 – Clinton-sponsored advertisements according to topic

	Future Policy	Personal Character	Past Achievement	Total Ads
Primary	20	9	9	38
General	12	18	5	35
Total #	32	27	14	73
Total %	44%	37%	19%	100%

Of the 32 advertisements focused on the topic of future policy, 20 aired during the primary election and 12 aired during the general election. Of the 27 ads that mentioned personal character, 9 aired during the primary election and 18 aired during general election. Of the 14 advertisements focused on past achievement, 9 aired during the primary election and 5 aired during the general election (Refer to Table 2).

Based on this content analysis, each Clinton-sponsored advertisement was categorized by tone and then topic, as shown in *Figure 1*. Of the 16 attack ads, 10 (63%) mentioned personal character, 4 (25%) mentioned future policy, and 2 (13%) mentioned past achievements. Out of the 42 advocacy advertisements, 10 (24%) featured personal character, 9 (21%) featured future policy and 23 (55%) featured past achievements. Of the 15 contrast ads, 7 (47%) mentioned personal character, 5 (33%) mentioned future policy and 3 (20%) mentioned past achievements.

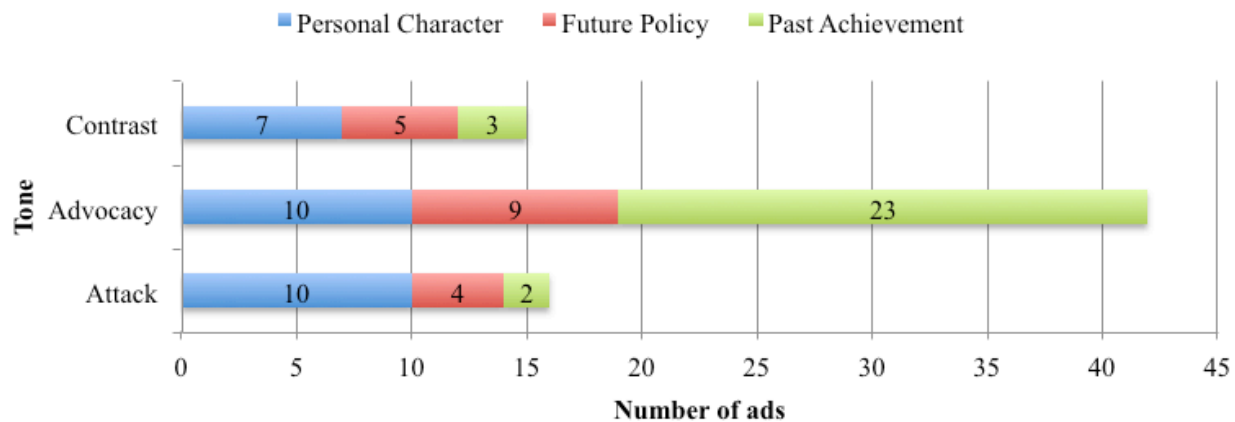


Figure 1. A breakdown of Clinton-sponsored ads by tone and topic

Advertisement Content

In order to answer RQ3, the following nine categories of content addressed were counted in each Clinton-sponsored ad: rights (23%), leadership (22%), economy (18%), healthcare (11%), education (10%), other (7%), foreign policy (5%), immigration (3%), and/or environment (1%). These findings are shown below in Table 3.

Table 3 – Clinton-sponsored advertisements according to content

	Rights	Leadership	Economy	Healthcare	Education	Foreign Policy	Immigration	Environment	Others	Total Count
Primary	16	3	9	6	6	1	1	1	2	45
General	4	17	7	4	3	3	2	0	4	44
Total #	20	20	16	10	9	4	3	1	6	89
Total %	22%	22%	18%	11%	10%	5%	3%	1%	7%	100%

*Notes: A single advertisement can feature more than one content category, hence the total count reached 89, more than the total number of ads. Due to rounding, percentages appear to add up to less than 100%.

The frequencies of content categories varied between ads aired during primary election in comparison to the general election: rights (16 vs. 4), leadership (3 vs. 17), economy (9 vs. 7), healthcare (6 vs. 4), education (6 vs. 3), foreign policy (1 vs. 3), immigration (1 vs. 2), environment (1 vs. 0), and other areas (2 vs. 4). These findings are shown in Table 4.

V. Discussion

Based on the results of this content analysis, Clinton's advertising strategy favored a more positive approach. The researcher found that a true majority of all Clinton-sponsored ads featured an advocacy tone (Table 1). The most popular topic was future policy (Table 2), and the most common content categories addressed were rights, leadership, and the economy (Table 3). Overall, Clinton's advertisement mostly often advocated for her past achievements in the arena of human rights. After taking a closer look, the researcher discovered noticeable shifts in Clinton's advertising strategy as her campaign progressed. Clinton's team aired mostly advocacy ads during the presidential primaries. During the general election period, ad tone shifted from advocacy to attack. A similar trend can be identified within the realm of advertising topic: again, during the general election, the number of policy-focused advertisements dwindled while ads that focused on personal character spiked. One can also infer that Clinton's campaign shifted the conversation from rights to leadership as Election Day drew nearer.

The functional theory of emotion asserts that attack advertising is often more effective than advocacy advertising because people are usually highly motivated by stronger feelings of emotion (Pinkleton, 2002). Negative advertisements are psychologically more stimulating than positive ones, and generate more action. The negative emotions elicited by attack advertising are more persistent and become a stronger motivating force than the positive emotions elicited by advocacy advertising. Clinton's campaign seemed to be leaning to more advocacy ads than attack ads since it aired double the amount of the former as the latter overall. Clinton's advertising strategy seemed to take the high road by dominantly running advocacy ads in the primary time, but as the general election drew to a close, her campaigns shifted to more negative attack ads.

Future studies can be expanded on the current research in many different ways. For example, future research could compare Trump's advertising strategies with this study. Perhaps the results of that analysis could uncover more clues about why Clinton's strategy was unsuccessful and if it was a leading cause in her loss of the election. The incorporation of additional variables, such as advertisement platform or voter reaction, could prove worthwhile. Perhaps weighting specific advertisements based on circulation rates or view counts could give a more comprehensive look at strategic political advertising in the 2016 presidential election as a whole.

Limitations

One limitation of this research is the bias that may have resulted from a one-person coding method. Ideally, multiple coders would be used for this kind of analysis in order to eliminate the likelihood of personal bias, but because of time and resource constraints, the coder analyzed all of the ads on her own. Additionally, three Clinton-sponsored ads were aired in Spanish, and the researcher could not analyze them because of the language barrier.

VI. Conclusion

This analysis of Clinton-sponsored advertisements in the 2016 presidential election uncovered several strategic trends. The majority of Clinton-sponsored ads featured an advocacy tone and/or future policy. The most common content categories addressed were rights, leadership, and the economy. Advertisement tone shifted from advocacy to attack while advertisement topic shifted from policy to character as Clinton's campaign progressed. Based on these trends, it can be argued that Clinton's advertising strategy attempted to motivate voters as close to Election Day as possible. However, because her campaign ran double the amount of advocacy ads as attack ads overall, her advertising strategy proved less motivational, at least in the primary season, for voters in a broader sense.

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Appendix

Table 1 – Coding Sheet for Analysis of Clinton Ads

#	TITLE	DATE AIRED	TONE 1A) Attack 1B) Advocacy 1C) Contrast	TOPIC 2A) Personal Character 2B) Future Policy Past Achievement 2C)	CONTENT 3A) Rights 3B) Economy 3C) Immigration 3D) Environment 3E) Healthcare 3F) Education 3G) Foreign Policy 3H) Leadership 3I) Other
1	Family Strong	8/3/2015	1B	2A	3A, 3F, 3E
2	Dorothy	8/3/2015	1B	2A	3H
3	Reshuffle the Deck	8/19/2015	1B	2A	3B
4	Stretched	9/22/2015	1B	2B	3B
5	Every Child	9/22/2015	1B	2B	3A
6	Admit	10/6/2015	1C	2B	3A
7	The Same	10/27/2015	1B	2B	3A
8	Sara	10/27/2015	1B	2B	3A
9	Mindy	10/27/2015	1B	2B	3B
10	Get Ahead	10/27/2015	1C	2B	3B
11	Cheryl	10/27/2015	1B	2B	3B
12	Alexis	10/27/2015	1B	2B	3F
13	Together	11/3/2015	1B	2B	3A
14	Compact	11/9/2015	1B	2B	3F
15	Keith	12/23/2015	1B	2B	3E
16	Olivia	1/4/2016	1B	2D	3A
17	I'm With Him	1/12/2016	1B	2B	3A
18	Children	1/21/2016	1B	2A	3A
19	Make a Difference	1/28/2016	1C	2B	3A, 3B, 3E, 3G
20	Broken	2/19/2016	1B	2B	3A
21	All The Good	2/19/2016	1B	2C	3A
22	Stand	2/21/2016	1B	2C	3A
23	This City Means Something	2/24/2016	1B	2C	3D
24	The Letter	2/25/2016	1B	2B	3A, 3F
25	Hands Down	2/25/2016	1B	2A	3H
26	Gabby	2/26/2016	1B	2B	3A
27	Real Life	3/10/2016	1B	2A	3I
28	Every Corner	4/7/2016	1B	2C	3B
29	Norma	4/7/2016	1B	2C	3B
30	Stronger Together	4/11/2016	1C	2B	3A, 3C
31	Decision	4/14/2016	1B	2B	3I
32	Came Through	4/15/2016	1B	2C	3F

33	My Mom	4/19/2016	1B	2B	3A
34	Love and Kindness	4/25/2016	1B	2A	3H
35	Always	6/15/2016	1B	2C	3F, 3E
36	Quiet Moments	6/15/2016	1B	2C	3E
37	Kayla	6/24/2016	1B	2C	3E
38	Tested	6/25/2016	1A	2A	3B
(GENERAL)					
39	Role Models	7/14/16	1A	2A	3H
40	For Those Who Depend on Us	8/16/16	1B	2B	3B, 3F, 3A
41	Just One	8/20/16	1A	2A	3H
42	Shirts	8/22/16	1A	2C	3B
43	Hat	8/23/16	1A	2C	3B
44	Everything	8/26/16	1A	2A	3I
45	Sacrifice	9/6/16	1A	2A	3I
46	Only Way	9/8/16	1C	2C	3E, 3G
47	Agree	9/8/16	1A	2A	3H
48	Low Opinion	9/12/16	1A	2A	3H
49	Families Together	9/17/16	1C	2C	3C, 3E
50	Sees	9/19/16	1C	2A	3H
51	Mirrors	9/23/16	1A	2A	3H
52	Investigation	9/24/16	1A	2A	3I
53	Watch	9/26/16	1B	2A	3H
54	Measure	10/6/16	1B	2B	3E, 3B
55	Silo	10/7/16	1A	2B	3G
56	The Right Thing	10/7/16	1C	2A	3H
57	Respected	10/7/16	1C	2A	3H
58	Values	10/8/16	1C	2A	3H
59	Doug	10/8/16	1C	2A	3H
60	American Bully	10/17/16	1C	2A	3H
61	A Place for Everyone	10/19/16	1B	2B	3B, 3F
62	General Allen	10/20/16	1C	2B	3A
63	Captain Khan	10/21/16	1A	2B	3A
64	Barbershop	10/24/16	1C	2C	3H
65	Example	10/24/16	1C	2A	3H
66	Families First	10/24/16	1B	2B	3F, 3B
67	On The Ballot	10/28/16	1B	2A	3A
68	Daisy	10/30/16	1A	2B	3G
69	What He Believes	11/1/16	1A	2B	3H
70	27 Million Strong	11/2/16	1B	2B	3C
71	Roar	11/2/16	1B	2B	3H
72	We Are America	11/2/16	1A	2A	3I
73	Tomorrow	11/6/16	1B	2B	3B, 3E, 3H

Table 2. Frequencies of ads by Tone, Topic and Content Area of Interest

CATEGORY	PRIMARY ELECTION	GENERAL ELECTION	TOTAL
Tone			
Attack	1	15	16
Advocacy	33	9	42
Contrast	4	11	15
Topic			
Personal Character	9	18	27
Future Policy	20	12	32
Past Achievement	9	5	14
Content			
Rights	16	4	20
Economy	9	7	16
Immigration	1	2	3
Environment	1	0	1
Healthcare	6	4	10
Education	6	3	9
Foreign Policy	1	3	4
Leadership	3	17	20
Other	2	4	6