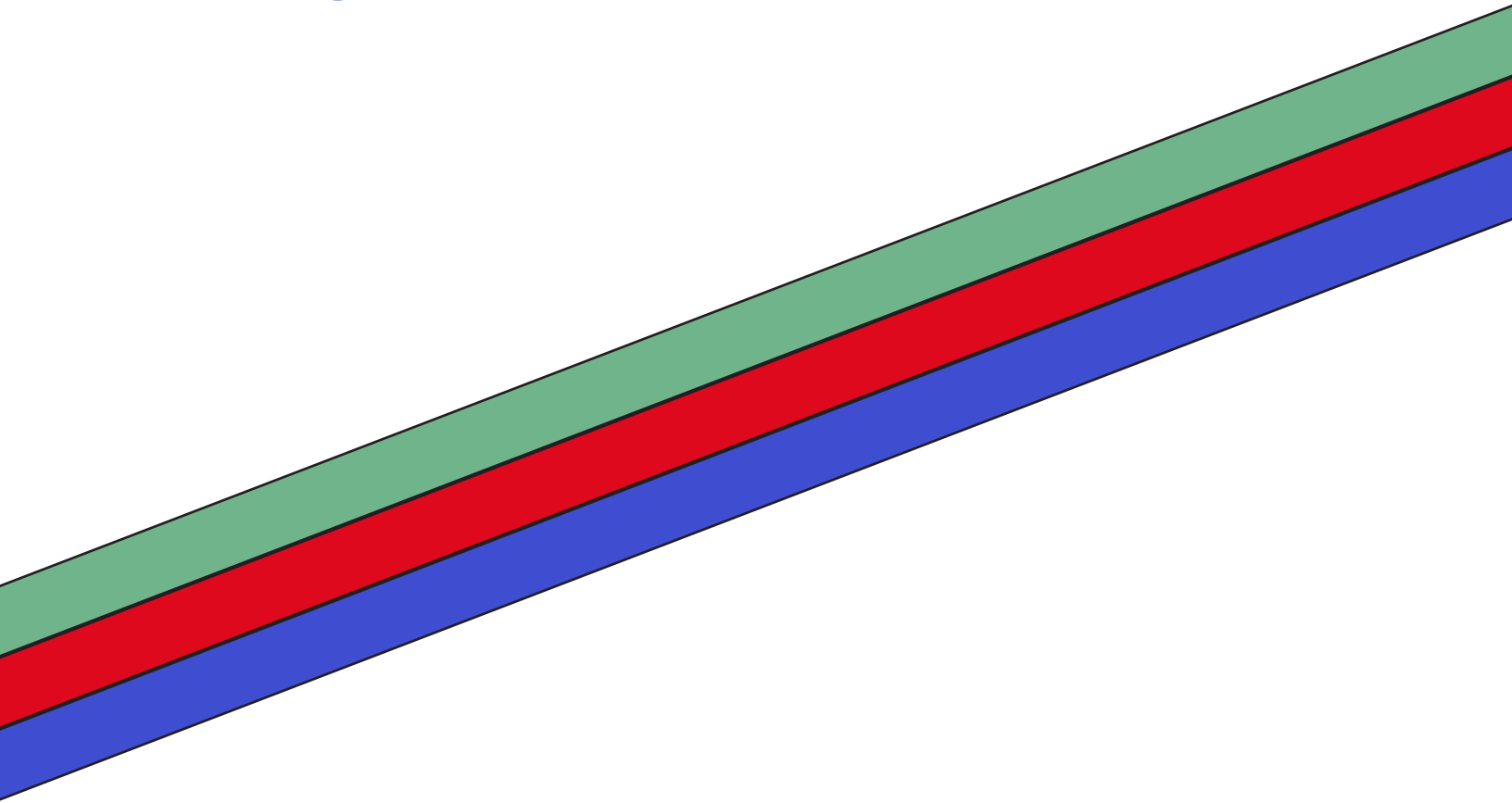




Elon Journal
of Undergraduate Research
in Communications



Spring 2011 Issue

Published by the School of Communications
Elon University

Joining the World of Journals

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While employing different methods and managing data, many students discover the complexity of working on a project where a straightforward blueprint simply does not exist. They notice that even though they may have come to one conclusion, a completely different outcome could have been possible with a different method or set of data.

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Although the topics of papers varied, the most popular topic related to social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs. Wayne Gretzky once said something like a great hockey player will skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it has been. I am glad that our students recognized the importance of emerging social network sites and tackled this pertinent related issue that is not fully understood even by academics today.

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Is Generation Y Addicted to Social Media?

Jaclyn Cabral

Strategic Communications
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Abstract

This study examined Generation Y's psychological addiction to social media with specific regard to Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and LinkedIn. The addiction was interpreted using Griffiths' six components that determine behavioral addiction: salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict and relapse. The purpose of this study was to determine if Generation Y was in fact addicted to social media because of their need to maintain relationships with their peers. The results indicated that this sample of Generation Y suffers from three components, tolerance, salience and relapse. They also suffers from intrapsychic conflict, but not interpersonal conflict.

I. Introduction

The Internet has an indescribable power to influence, connect, and mobilize the current population. Technological advances are no longer shocking but simply expected. Today's society has different expectations for all types of relationships. Relationships are now different because the tools used to maintain peer-to-peer connections have undergone a vast alteration. The primary focus is on the Internet and, with that, the development of social media. Social media is a web-based technology that transforms how people communicate by enhancing interactive conversations. Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content."¹ Social Media is a web-based product that is optimized solely by the use of its public. The only way social media can expand depends exclusively on the user and their wants.

Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of the world phenomenon Facebook, said, "More than 175 million people use Facebook. If it were a country, it would be the sixth most populated country in the world." Facebook has the ability to bring people together in a wide variety of relationships. A major factor contributing to the high usability of social media is that it connects people without any boundaries. Social media is basically a template for the user who can then personalize the source's uses and productivity. It is a highly dense and vast resource that is being used on a consistent basis to maintain relationships. People are now accessing social media from mobile devices and laptops making it a commonality in everyday life. Facebook's indescribable popularity is one aspect of this interactive world's power to alter the tangible world.

Social media is continuing to grow exponentially based on the wants of the user. The highest per-

* **Keywords:** social media, addiction, Generation Y, social networking sites, college students' use of social media

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¹ Andreas M. Kaplan, Michael Haenlein, Users of the world, unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media (Business Horizons, 2010), 59–68.

centage of social media users are Generation Y, also referred to as the 'net generation,' who have grown up understanding the power of the Internet. Generation Y is unconsciously addicted to social media and as a result they feel constant societal pressure to be connected with their peers through maintaining a continuous connection with technology. Their connectedness is creating new kinds of peer-to-peer relationships that are considerably different from previous generations.

II. Literature Review

The new digital age has brought about extraordinary developments in technology that has altered the way many people access and use information. The consistent technological developments that help connect the world can be seen as either beneficial or detrimental to human relationships. The World Wide Web is altering human social interaction and the way the brain processes information. Consequently, scholars dive into the potential of Internet addiction and the Internet's effect on other behavioral changes. Through reviewing basic demographics along with psychological and behavioral implications, scholars remain torn on whether Internet addiction exists but ultimately agree that the new digital age does influence the development of the human mind.

The first step to identifying Internet addiction is to see where the emotional and mental attachment lie. Researchers conclude that there are classic mass media motivations: surveillance; escape, companionship, and identity; and entertainment.² Gordon narrows down this information by concluding that there are five specific types of use: meeting people, information seeking, distraction, coping and e-mail.³ When these concepts are isolated to Generation Y, Subrahmanya proved that adolescents primarily use the Internet as a communication tool to reinforce relationships. The changes in relationships are exceptionally present in teens that use instant messaging as a substitute for face-to-face conversation with friends.⁴ Scholars explain this phenomenon by discovering that using computer networks for social interaction relieves many aspects of group anxiety.⁵ The infinite possibilities of the web help define alternative realities where anonymity is welcomed and potentially psychologically rewarding.⁶ Scholars agree that the rapid growth of these alternative realities is beneficial. The ambiguity of social network profiles allows adolescents to create an identity and find social acceptability without having to directly face scrutiny.⁷ College students are exposed to a higher risk of Internet addiction because of their vulnerability. College students, in particular, are adjusting to massive amounts of developmental and life changes.⁸ This susceptibility and exposure to an abundance of new things are aided by the use of technology and social networks that ease new connections and relieve societal pressures.

Researchers have a unanimous decision about the type of gender specific activities adolescents are using on the web. Gordon, Small, Griffiths, and Lam all agree that males have increased odds of acquiring an Internet addiction.⁹ Men tend to use the Internet more often per week and for longer sitting periods than females. As Gordon explains, men tend to be online in order to e-mail friends, listen to music, get help with schoolwork, IM, and talk with friends. In contrast, females use the web to e-mail friends, get help with

2 Robert Larose, Dana Mastro and Matthew Eastin, "Understanding Internet Usage: A Social-Cognitive Approach to Uses and Gratifications," *Social Science Computer Review* 19 (2001): 396; Lawrence Lam, "Factors Associated with Internet Addiction Among Adolescents," *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 12 (2009): 552.

3 Cherly Gordon, Linda Juang, and Moin Syed, "Internet Use and Well-being Among College Students: Beyond Frequency of Use," *Journal of College Student Development* 48 (2007).

4Kaveri Subrahmanya, and Patricia Greenfield, "Online Communication and Adolescent Relationships," *The Future of Children* 18, (2008): 125.

5 Subrahmanya, "Online Communication and Adolescent Relationships," 126; Mark Griffiths, "Does Internet and Computer 'addiction' exist? Some Case Study Evidence," *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 3 (2000): 216.

6 Griffiths, "Does Internet and Computer 'addiction' exist?" 217.

7 Jennifer Czincz, and Regina Hechanova, "Internet Addiction: Debating the Diagnosis." *Journal of Technology in Human Services* 27 (2009): 262.

8 Cherly Gordon, "Internet Use and Well-being Among College Students."

9 Cherly Gordon, "Internet Use and Well-being Among College Students"; Gary Small and Gigi Vorgan, *iBrain: Surviving the Technological Alteration of the Modern Mind* (Brattleboro: Harper Paperbacks, 2009, 92; Griffiths, "Does Internet and Computer 'addiction' exist?" 212; Lam, "Factors Associated with Internet Addiction Among Adolescents," 553.

schoolwork, talk with friends, e-mail family and IM.¹⁰ Overall females use the Internet for social networking and reinforcing pre-existing relationships whereas males use the social networking sites to flirt and make new friends.¹¹ Males appear more focused on discovering new things whereas females remain confident in what they already know. In contrast to these ideas, researcher Vorgan, through a Pew Internet & American Life Project, found that women have increased levels of Internet use over the past two decades. Men appear to be more tech savvy, seek confidence in search engines, and are more likely to try new software and gadgets. However, over the years these ideas have become customary for both genders.¹² Based on this research, one is able to distinguish the typical male Internet user. These males describe themselves as having little to no social life without any self-confidence. For these Internet-addicted males, the computer is used to counteract a lack of friends, unattractive physical appearance, or noticeable disability.¹³ Overall, men are using the Internet to compensate for insecurities whereas women are reinforcing their tangible relationships.

A majority of research focuses on the true aspects of addiction and assess whether Internet addiction actually exists. One theory is that web addicts have underlying depression, anxiety, or obsessive-compulsive disorder.¹⁴ Lam discovers that the experience of a recent high-stress event is related directly to Internet addiction. In this circumstance, the usage of Internet becomes a coping mechanism for stress. He also categorizes Internet addiction into the spectrum of impulse-control disorders.¹⁵ Many scholars agree on the concept that addiction is related to impulse-control disorders through variations of delayed rewards testing.¹⁶ Those scholars see a connection between impulse-control disorders and Internet addiction but there is still no tangible proof that Internet addiction exists. A similar argument, which has strong research behind it, is the connection of the new digital age and the growth of Attention Deficit Disorder.

Some behavioral consequences of the new digital brain are hyperactivity, inattention, depression and multitasking mania. Based upon research for brain development, there is a conclusion stating that daily exposure to high technology stimulates brain alternation and neurotransmitter release; ultimately strengthening new pathways in the brain. The human mind is now learning to access and process information more rapidly and shift attention quickly from one task to the next. All this access and vast selection is causing some entertainment seeker's brains to develop the constant need for instant gratification with a loss of patience. Technological developments directly affect those who cannot multitask or work with the demands of modern technology, resulting in symptoms of ADD or ADHD.¹⁷ To narrow down the connection between ADD and the Internet, Yen discovers that being easily bored rather than easily distracted is the core symptom of inattentive ADHD. Internet activities are based highly upon their interactivity levels and immediate response rates; these quick actions relieve the feeling of boredom and possibly create a physical addiction.¹⁸ The Internet becomes the cure for those who cannot hold focus. Once again, research concludes that male college students are more likely to be screened positively for adult ADHD; however, the overall association between Internet addiction and attention deficit is more significant in females.¹⁹ The fast-paced lifestyle created by the Internet affects the way the human brain processes and receives information. Humans are now more anxious and their attention span is weakened by the over stimulation from technology.

Researchers have made conclusions regarding Internet addiction, gender specific activities, and analyzed behavioral changes; however, large gaps of research remain. These studies are broad, vary upon method, and focus on the bigger picture. Research involving the vast space of the Internet needs to be

10 Cherly Gordon, "Internet Use and Well-being Among College Students."

11 Subrahmanya, "Online Communication and Adolescent Relationships," 125.

12 Gary Small iBrain, 92.

13 Griffiths, "Does Internet and Computer 'addiction' exist?" 216.

14 Small, iBrain, 64.

15 Lam, "Factors Associated with Internet Addiction Among Adolescents," 554.

16 Bryan Saville, Amanda Gisbert, Jason Kopp, and Carolyn Telesco, "Internet Addiction and Delay Discounting in College Students," *The Psychological Record* 60 (2010): 282; Jennifer Czincz, "Internet Addiction: Debating the Diagnosis." 263.

17 Small, iBrain, 90.

18 Ju-Yu Yen, "The Association Between Adult ADHD Symptoms and Internet Addiction Among College Students," *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 12, no. 2 (2009): 189.

19 Ju-Yu Yen, "The Association Between Adult ADHD Symptoms and Internet Addiction Among College Students," 188, 190.

conducted in a specified manner. The more narrow focus of my research will provide deeper insights into how technology alters generations. By specially looking at Generation Y and one aspect of online activity my research will fill in the gaps around the impact of the Internet. Lastly, based upon popularity, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and LinkedIn will be the specific sites utilized in this research study.

III. Background

In regards to this specific research question no studies have been published, yet various researchers and universities have tested social media addiction with a small sample. The main focus of these studies lay within the target audience of Generation Y. Generation Y is defined as those born between the mid-1970s and the early 2000s. This population has grown up with a majority of the technological advances, such as computers and the Internet. They have established relationships with technology and strongly understand its various uses. According to Jones, this generation is considerably more likely to use social networking sites and to create profiles than those of older generations.²⁰ Lenhart focused a study on the activities surrounding this generation and agreed with Jones by concluding that 70% of Generation Y uses social networking sites and about 65% has an online profile. To further this claim, Lenhart discovered that 63% goes online daily to send messages to friends and receive news.²¹

Independent research has been done concerning Generation Y's dependence on social media. A prime example is the International Center for Media & Public Agenda at the University of Maryland, which tested a "technology blackout." They used a sample of 200 students and initiated a media suspension for 24 hours. Following the event the students were asked to write about their experience. When asked to describe that day, students used the words "in withdrawal, craving, very anxious, extremely antsy, miserable, jittery and crazy." The main conclusion was that the students could function without technology but completely refuse to remove it from their lives.²² Nauert had a similar response when students expressed hatred for the loss of personal connections. The students felt that the strength of these relationships was based entirely on their use of social media. Ultimately, both studies arrived at similar conclusions where students felt that they were isolated from their friends and family in the absence of text messaging or Facebook.²³ The constant link to a flow of information is an aspect of life that this sample relies on to function normally.

IV. Methods

In order to answer if Generation Y is addicted to social media news articles and online sources were used to develop the background information. However, because social media is a large segment of Internet usage, this study focuses mainly on the top four social media sites: Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and LinkedIn. Addiction to these social media sites is a relatively untouched area; therefore, an explicit process had to be formulated. Based upon the analysis of Internet addiction studies and the foundation of addiction a descriptive survey was created and distributed through SurveyMonkey.com, a company that provides web-based survey solutions. On this website, researchers create their own survey and then get organized results. To enhance the results the survey was delivered through outlets that the group regularly uses and feels comfortable with, such as Facebook, Twitter and E-mail. Past research has shown that the target audience is highly active on social media sites and uses these outlets more often than other generations. These outlets maximized survey response rates and allowed for a large pool of respondents within a quick amount of time. The researcher posted the survey as a Facebook status and Twitter update and emailed the majority of her fall classes and organizations she belonged to. She relied on a snowball sample, asking her friends to please

20 Sydney Jones, and Susannah Fox, "Generations Online in 2009," Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, <http://www.pewinternet.org> (October 17, 2010).

21 Amanda Lenhart, "Teens and Social Media," Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, <http://www.pewinternet.org> (October 17, 2010).

22 Rick Nauert, "College Students 'Addicted' to Social Media, Study Finds," LiveScience, April 23, 2010, <http://www.livescience.com>, (October 17, 2010).

23 Sharalyn Hartwell, "Are you addicted to media?," The Examiner, June 4, 2010, <http://www.examiner.com>, (October 17, 2010).

share, retweet, or spread the study to their friends at various universities.

The survey consisted of 12 close-ended questions where participants were forced to select an answer from a list of responses. The questions were divided into various sections: demographics, general social media use, personal perception of use, and specific questions that connected to a component of behavioral addiction. The survey open from October 27 through November 7, 2010, allowed for 313 responses. The results were then interpreted through Griffiths' research of nonchemical addictions. Griffiths uses six components to help determine behavioral addiction. These six components are: salience, mood modification, tolerance, conflict, withdrawal and relapse. The last section of the survey had specific questions that connect to each component, with the exception of mood modification. Mood Modification was not tested because a survey consists of ample amounts of self-assessment and any question relating to personal perception of mood would be overpowered with individual biases. No one is truly able to be completely honest with himself or herself; therefore, mood would be better assessed from surrounding peers.

V. Results

The goal of the current study was to assess if Generation Y was psychologically addicted to social media, in particular Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and LinkedIn. Each section of the survey gathered specific information about the respondent and their relationship with those social media tools.

Demographic Information

Participants were generally social media users acquired from using a snowball technique to reach various universities and age groups. A total of 313 respondents participated in this study. Of the 313 respondents 73.8% were female and 26.2% were male. In addition, 79.2% were between the ages of 17 and 21, 16.6% were between 22-25 years, 2.6% were over 31 years, followed by 1% between 26-30 years, and lastly .6% were 16 and under. This survey successfully reached the target audience of Generation Y based on the majority of the participants.

General Social Media Use

When answering the question "What type of social media do you use or follow on a regular basis?" the majority of recipients (98.4%) used Facebook. Following the popularity of Facebook was the number three social media site,²⁴ Twitter (34.2%). LinkedIn received 18.5% of the respondents, and MySpace only received 1.3% of the sample.

To answer the question "How much time do you spend on social media sites daily?" the majority spent between 31-60 and 61-90 minutes: both responses received approximately 32% of the answers. Alternatively, 15% said they spent between 91-120 minutes, followed by 10.5% for more than 120 minutes, and 10.2% for under 30 minutes. These responses conclude that a vast majority of the participants in this study were already spending a great deal of time focusing on social media.

Self Perception

When answering the question "Do you feel that you are addicted to Social Media?" the majority, 59%, stated that they agreed, followed by the 22.4% who said they remained neutral on the topic. The answer to this question assessed the personal perception the participants had on their social media addiction. These responses help further the claim that because Generation Yers are using these sites so frequently they are aware of a possible addiction, while others feel that they could live with or without social media access. A large amount of respondents said neutral because the parameters of social media addiction are undetermined, as well as the word "addiction" has a variety of negative connotations.

Behavioral Addiction

A mixture of questions was asked that further described the respondents' relationship with social media and their personal usage. These questions assessed emotions, inner conflicts and personal habits. They used a Likert Scale that evaluated the respondent's attitude toward social media usage from a frequency

24 <http://www.ebizmba.com/articles/social-networking-websites>.

standpoint of “Very Often” to “Never,” while connecting to the six-core components of addiction.

a) Tolerance: The first question in this section asked, “How often do you find that you spend more time than intended on Social Media?” Responses show that 38.7% of respondents often find themselves in this predicament, along with 27.5% who said sometimes, and 27.2% that answered very often. This question directly connects with the behavioral piece of tolerance, stating that increasing amounts of a particular activity are required in order to achieve the same effect.²⁵ A majority of this population subconsciously spent more time on social media in order to feel satisfied with their usage. The inability to control the amount of time spent on these sites connects to the individual’s need to reinforce the virtual relationships on a more consistent basis. Social media moves so incredibly fast that tolerance needs to grow to maintain the relationship between the user and technology.

When answering the question “How often do you find yourself saying ‘just a few more minutes’ when using social media?” 24.3% said often and 23.6% said sometimes, followed by the 18.5% who said rarely. These responses show that this sample has a high level of tolerance with regards to social media and feel that they need to spend more time with social media in order to feel satisfied.

b) Salience: In order to assess the behavioral aspect of salience, which occurs when a particular activity becomes of high priority and dominates thinking, a question was asked: “How often do you check your social media sites before something else that you need to do?” A total of 79.5% of respondents answered very often or often and 14.1% stated sometimes. As a conclusion, this sample of Generation Yers showed that social media was taking priority over other activities. The need to check social media first ties into the necessity to stay connected to one’s peers without having a direct conversation with them. Social media sites provide the updates one would receive from a phone call or a face-to-face conversation, but by checking social media first, one is provided with these answers without any authentic dialogue.

c) Conflict: In connection with conflict, the question, “How often do you feel your productivity suffers because of social media?” was assessed. The majority of respondents, 32.3%, replied sometimes. Another 25.2% said often, and 21.7% stated very often. The conflict is derived from either an interpersonal or intrapsychic conflict connected with social media usage.²⁶ Ultimately, a majority of these users claim to sometimes be torn between their social media usage and the ability to stay on task. The reoccurring inner conflict among this generation’s ability to be productive or spend more time on social media has an effect on how each individual performs in school, work, and in their tangible relationships. This intrapsychic conflict removes social media away from solely the interactive world but forces it to have a strong effect on the physical world. Overall, this inner disagreement of productivity provides a deeper problem where social media has a large power over the individuals’ thought process.

The question, “How often do other people comment on your social media usage?” also correlates with the factor of conflict. This question assessed the interpersonal relationships one maintains in conjunction with social media. As a result, 26.5% of respondents said rarely, 21.3% said sometimes, 21.3% also said never, followed by 17.4% who said very rarely. It is apparent that from this population that interpersonal conflict is not necessarily an issue. External conflicts regarding social media usage between Generation Yers are not an issue because, as a whole, they are accustomed to using social media daily.

d) Withdrawal: This occurs when the respondent feels displeased with the discontinued use of social media. In response to the question “How often do you typically feel stressed out, disconnected or paranoid when you cannot access social media?” 27.4% stated rarely, 23.2% stated sometimes, while 22.9% said never. Though it seems that no withdrawal has truly taken place, there are specific conclusions that can be made as to why these answers are the majority. This generation has had a constant connection with social media and because this relationship has never been removed withdrawal is not necessarily an issue.

e) Relapse: This happens when repeated reversions of earlier social media patterns reoccur.²⁷ In answering, “How often do you try to cut down the amount of time you spend online and fail?” Of the respondents, 34.8% said sometimes, 23.6% said rarely and 17.3% said often. From this question, it is assumed that the majority of respondents recognize that their attempts at reducing social media usage are usually ineffective and described as a failure. By attempting to reduce, they’re recognizing that their social media use is a problem. By attempting to use social media less, they feel that their relationships are suffering, and that they need more time to keep them cohesive.

25 Griffiths, “Does Internet and Computer ‘addictions’ exist?” 211.

26 Griffiths, “Does Internet and Computer ‘addiction’ exist?” 212.

27 Griffiths, “Does Internet and Computer ‘addiction’ exist?” 212.

Table: Actual Percentages from Total Respondents

| | <u>Very often</u> | <u>Often</u> | <u>Sometimes</u> | <u>Rarely</u> | <u>Very Rarely</u> | <u>Never</u> |
|--|-------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------|
| <u>Tolerance</u> | <u>27.2%</u> | <u>38.7%</u> | <u>27.5%</u> | <u>4.8%</u> | <u>1.6%</u> | <u>0.3%</u> |
| | <u>15.7%</u> | <u>24.3%</u> | <u>23.6%</u> | <u>18.5%</u> | <u>8.0%</u> | <u>9.9%</u> |
| <u>Salience</u> | <u>46%</u> | <u>33.5%</u> | <u>14.1%</u> | <u>4.2%</u> | <u>1.6%</u> | <u>0.6%</u> |
| <u>Conflict</u> <u>(intrapsychic)</u> | <u>21.7%</u> | <u>25.2%</u> | <u>32.3%</u> | <u>13.7%</u> | <u>5.1%</u> | <u>1.9%</u> |
| <u>(interpersonal)</u> | <u>3.2%</u> | <u>10.3%</u> | <u>21.3%</u> | <u>26.5%</u> | <u>17.4%</u> | <u>21.3%</u> |
| <u>Withdrawal</u> | <u>3.5%</u> | <u>9.7%</u> | <u>23.2%</u> | <u>27.4%</u> | <u>13.2%</u> | <u>22.9%</u> |
| <u>Relapse</u> | <u>7.7%</u> | <u>17.3%</u> | <u>34.8%</u> | <u>23.6%</u> | <u>7.3%</u> | <u>9.3%</u> |

V. Discussion

From these findings displayed in the table one can evaluate the survey results, as a whole and assess how they aligned with each addiction component. As a result, the population supports three and a half of the five tested components of behavioral addiction. The two assessments that provided negative responses, or those that fell primarily within the sometimes to never end of the Likert Scale, were those involving interpersonal conflict and withdrawal. In order to assess these replies one must analyze the target audience and the other survey questions. Overall, the group suffered from intrapsychic conflict but disagreements among their peers were nonexistent. Based upon the population, the questions concerning the time spent on social media and its level of priority make it clear as to why these groups would not suffer from interpersonal conflict. There is nothing that would incline one member of the sample to question another if both are most likely using social media in the same way. The interpersonal relationships would never be questioned because of the need to belong and the fact that this problem is normal to the population. An intrapsychic conflict occurs because of the need to live and move forward in the tangible world, but an interpersonal one would not exist based upon the majorities' feelings toward social media. Generation Yers are all in this interactive world together where social media is not a problem; therefore, one would not question the other.

The component withdrawal had a similar negative response because of the environment in which this generation lives. The majority of the sample was between the ages of 17 and 21, living in a college environment. A college environment surrounds the sample with technological advances and various methods of obtaining social media. Withdrawal is an unpleasing feeling that arises when social media are terminated or severely reduced. The question that assessed withdrawal was based upon personal perception and how one assumes they would react in a particular situation. However, it is highly likely that this group has never experienced a forced absence of social media. They make the assumption that they would not feel "stressed out, disconnected or paranoid," but independent research has concluded that students feel the exact opposite when technology is forcefully removed. Ultimately, if access to social media was removed, then the answer to this particular question may have been different. Currently, the responses are based solely on theories and personal perceptions.

VI. Conclusion

This study took a critical look at Generation Y's addiction to social media, specifically Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and LinkedIn, and how it is impacting their relationships when compared to previous generations who communicate on a more face-to-face basis. The only conclusive finding that seemed apparent from the survey responses was that research participants are suffering from three and a half of the five tested components of addiction: salience, tolerance, the intrapsychic element of conflict and relapse. This generation has made social media their top priority and continues to need more usage in order to feel satisfied. This

group has also concluded that there is a need to decrease their usage but seem unable to make that a reality. These results closely tie into many of the aspects of Internet addiction as addressed in the literature review, as well as the findings of the independent studies described in the Background section earlier.

However, this study was limited because the sample consisted primarily of women (73.8%); a convenience sample was used instead of a random sample. This convenience sample allowed the researcher to access many of her student organizations and friends in a short amount of time. However, because the researcher herself is female, a majority of her outlets were predominately females as well. As a result, this study should be replicated with a more diverse sample. Tying into this limitation was the particular way that this survey was distributed: by using social media as a way to access this population, a majority of the respondents were highly active social media users. When replicating this study, one should use other methods to target this audience and gather a more inclusive study of social media users and non-users.

This study had a further limitation with regards to the gathering of research by relying heavily on self-report assessment; a method seen as potentially unreliable and biased. These results depend greatly on the respondent and their personal self-perception. This study's reliance on self-reported measures of attitudes, emotions and usage could have been skewed. In addition, the questions analyzed were close-ended. To gather more sufficient results and explanation, more open-ended questions should be used. The order of the questions may have also provided some skewing of results by asking "Do you feel you are addicted to social media" at the beginning, a question that may have altered the respondents' choices to further prove or disprove their own self-assessment of social media addiction. In further research, this self-perception question should be more towards the end of the study to allow for more honest responses throughout.

To study this topic further, more research should be done to investigate whether this group would suffer from withdrawal if the technology was forcefully removed. In addition, potentially interviewing and creating a case study following a group of Generation Yers should assess mood modification and interpersonal conflict. By assessing these two aspects in an alternative way, a study may provide insight on how this group interacts in their tangible and interactive worlds. Also, future research should review how Generation Y is using social media as compared to the generations preceding and following. These answers may be found by conducting a wide-aged focus group.

This study assisted not only the technological world but also the psychological world. The younger generations are changing how society communicates on a variety of levels. Assessing addictions that are not necessarily common knowledge develops a basis for the future. The brains of the younger generations are growing and developing differently from those above them, and because of this more research should be conducted on how specific aspects of the technological world will continue to alter human development. The researcher hopes that this study will lead more people to study and assess the power of social media and its ability to change the world in various ways.

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Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

Demographics

1. Age
 - I. 16 and Under
 - II. 17-21
 - III. 22-25
 - IV. 26-30
 - V. 31 and over
2. Gender
 - I. Male
 - II. Female

General Social Media Use

3. What type of Social Media do you use or follow on a regular basis? Check all that apply.
 - I. Facebook
 - II. Twitter
 - III. LinkedIn
 - IV. MySpace
 - V. Other
4. How much time do you spend on social media sites daily?
 - I. Less than 30 Minutes
 - II. 31-60 Minutes
 - III. 61-90 Minutes
 - IV. 91-120 Minutes
 - V. More than 120 Minutes

Self-Perception

5. Do you feel that you are addicted to Social Media?
 - I. Strongly Agree
 - II. Agree
 - III. Neutral
 - IV. Disagree
 - V. Strongly Disagree

Six Components of Social Media

6. How often do you find that you spend more time than intended on Social Media?
 - I. Very Often
 - II. Often
 - III. Sometimes
 - IV. Rarely
 - V. Very Rarely
 - VI. Never
-

7. How often do you check your social media sites before something else that you need to do?

- I. Very Often
- II. Often
- III. Sometimes
- IV. Rarely
- V. Very Rarely
- VI. Never

8. How often do you feel your productivity suffers because of social media?

- I. Very Often
- II. Often
- III. Sometimes
- IV. Rarely
- V. Very Rarely
- VI. Never

9. How often do you try to cut down the amount of time you spend online and fail?

- I. Very Often
- II. Often
- III. Sometimes
- IV. Rarely
- V. Very Rarely
- VI. Never

10. How often do you find yourself saying “just a few more minutes” when using social media?

- I. Very Often
- II. Often
- III. Sometimes
- IV. Rarely
- V. Very Rarely
- VI. Never

11. How often do other people comment on your social media usage?

- I. Very Often
- II. Often
- III. Sometimes
- IV. Rarely
- V. Very Rarely
- VI. Never

12. How often do you typically feel stressed out, disconnected, or paranoid when you cannot access social media sites?

- I. Very Often
 - II. Often
 - III. Sometimes
 - IV. Rarely
 - V. Very Rarely
 - VI. Never
-

Tweet Talking: How Modern Technology and Social Media Are Changing Sports Communication

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Abstract

This study examined the role that modern technology and social media play in sports journalism, and how those roles will continue to affect the profession in the future. The history of modern sports (1920 – present) was analyzed, with special attention paid to the important technological advancements that pertained to sports in different eras. The study found that the basic structure of sports communication stayed intact until recent years, while the styles changed significantly. The past decade and a half can be viewed in sharp contrast to the preceding 75 years, as sports communication has been rapidly changing and will continue to do so due to technical innovations and the resulting interconnectedness of today's society.

I. Introduction

The hour between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Tuesday, October 5, 2010, will go down as a watershed moment in the field of sports journalism. Just four weeks into the National Football League's 2010 season, fans of professional football around the country were buzzing over the possibility that the New England Patriots' Randy Moss would be traded. The Hall of Fame-destined wide receiver was rumored to be heading to the Minnesota Vikings, the team that had drafted him out of college and with whom he became a star. Even the most casual sports fan's mind was filled with questions: Is this for real? When is the trade going to happen? Why trade him? What would the deal look like? How will this affect my favorite team? Perhaps the most relevant question would have been: Where is this information coming from?

The story had not been reported in any newspapers or on television – even ESPN. Prominent sports websites like ESPN.com and FOXsports.com showed no stories on the subject either. Ordinarily, this story would have been major news. In the NFL, midseason trades are a rarity, not to mention those involving one of the most dynamic, productive, and polarizing players in league history. How did the general public catch wind of the news before the major outlets? As it turns out, a short phrase set off the frenzy: @sportsguy33: moss Vikings (Simmons 2).

Bill Simmons is a columnist for ESPN. The self-titled “Boston Sports Guy” gained notoriety for his passionate writing about his favorite teams: the New England Patriots, Boston Celtics, and Boston Red Sox. Simmons combines unparalleled knowledge of sports with unabashed fan bias and pop culture references to create a uniquely entertaining, widely read column that has gained him millions of fans. Aside from his column, he communicates with his readers via Twitter, a social networking website that allows users to “tweet” short messages, 140 characters or less including spaces, to their “followers” – users that essentially subscribe to receive another user's messages.

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The service has many uses, from making social connections to reporting news and promoting businesses. Site members go by any name they wish, preceded by the “@” symbol; each message a user posts is preceded by their username and a colon. Simmons goes by @sportsguy33; the phrase that set the Internet abuzz was one of his Twitter messages. While most users have a modest list of followers, Simmons boasts a flock of 1,277,316, all of whom received his message the instant he posted it (Simmons 2). Within moments the tweet spread, as Simmons’ followers shared his post with friends, speculated about the meaning behind it and most importantly, searched for more information on the subject. However, no other information was available; guesses and rumors remained just that, guesses and rumors. Then, an hour after Simmons’ original post, a story became available on most major sports networks confirming the possibility of a trade. The next afternoon the trade was finalized, sending Moss to the Vikings in exchange for a third round pick in the 2011 draft.

The event prompts several questions of importance for the future of sports journalism: How did millions of ordinary people know about interactions between two private organizations well before they were reported by mainstream news sources? What caused sports journalism to evolve to such a point? Was this an aberration, or can we expect more instances such as this? And if so, what does that mean for the further evolution of sports reporting? This paper will attempt to answer those questions by examining sports journalism both past and present, studying the technologies that have allowed the field to evolve to its current point, and projecting where it will be in the future.

II. History

Newspapers and Radio

The history of modern sports journalism mirrors that of sport itself. The beginning of sport’s ascension into the nation’s consciousness came during the 1920s, the so-called “Golden Age of Sport.” In the years following World War I and before the Great Depression, several developments fueled America’s hunger for sport. First, a booming post-war economy left Americans with money to spend; the rise of the automobile as a viable form of transportation to new ballparks and stadiums gave them methods of spending. However, sport’s popularity increased exponentially with the growing number of radio broadcasts. First introduced on April 11, 1921 with KDKA’s broadcast of a boxing match between Johnny Dundee and Johnny Ray, sports radio broadcasts gave people the opportunity to experience a live event without actually being there. Four months later, the first baseball game was broadcast live from Pittsburgh, with the first college football game following two months later (Patterson 12). As radio broadcasts became more popular, so did the sports they featured.

In particular, baseball flourished. The game became America’s national pastime in the 1920s thanks to three factors: radio broadcasts that increased its popularity, the emergence of Babe Ruth as a superstar and celebrity, and the end of the Dead Ball Era, which made the game more entertaining. Due to its popularity, baseball became the most-covered sport in the country.

Sportswriters in the 1920s wrote in a detailed, eloquent style that built athletes into folk heroes. Their stories often sought to tell a grander story than merely what had transpired on the field. Sports writing pioneers such as Grantland Rice excelled at capturing their readers’ attention and imagination with beautiful prose; Rice is perhaps best known for part of his poem “Alumnus Football,” which reads, “For when the One Great Scorer comes/ To write against your name/ He marks – not that you won or lost –/ But how you played the game” (Rice). Writers such as Rice were responsible for furthering the idea of sport as something more than competition; they instilled Americans with the idea that who won or lost was decided just as much by honor, courage, and sportsmanship than the score, which set the foundation for sports and athletes to grow to larger-than-life caricatures.

Magazines and Television

Through the 1930s, sports journalism remained relatively unchanged. Radio broadcasts continued to grow in popularity, and newspapers began hiring editors exclusively to handle the sports section. Throughout the Great Depression, radio broadcasts of sporting events provided cheap entertainment to Americans look-

ing for a distraction from their everyday lives.

However, at the end of the decade a new technology was introduced to the sporting world that would eventually change how sport and the stories that accompany it would be consumed. On May 17, 1939 the first television broadcast of an American sporting event aired, as a college baseball game between Columbia and Princeton was shown. While television would not become widespread until the 1950s, the introduction of the medium to sports gave the world a glimpse of what was in store for it in the future (Hocking 100).

Though technology was becoming more sophisticated and widespread as the years wore on, traditional print media was by no means dead. 1954 saw the birth of a publication that would help in the evolution of sports journalism as a unique, respected field: *Sports Illustrated*. Although the weekly magazine's parent company, Time-Life, was skeptical that the weekly periodical would succeed, within 20 years the company had accomplished its goal: "not to be a sports magazine, but to be *the* sports magazine" (MacCambridge 31). SI accomplished its goals by introducing several common elements of today's magazines, including in-depth reports, frequent color photographs, weekly illustrations, and sports card inserts, not to mention the annual Swimsuit Issue (Rushin 1). The magazine is generally credited as one of the major players in drawing American interest to the four main sports of football, baseball, basketball, and hockey; while it had originally featured a variety of sports including yachting, polo, and other more obscure sports, the magazine eventually restricted its focus to more mainstream sports, narrowing that of its readers with it.

By the late 1950s, television broadcasts of sporting events were commonplace. While radio broadcasts were still popular, television offered something that radio never could: visuals of what the announcer was describing. While most sports stories and scores were reported in newspapers and magazines, television was catching up quickly. One of the precursors to today's 24/7 sports channels was launched on April 29, 1961 – ABC's "Wide World of Sports," which was a weekly look at sports not often seen in America: surfing, badminton, rodeo and curling, among others. The show's introduction featured the now iconic line, "the thrill of victory, and the agony of defeat," accompanied by footage of ski jumper Vinko Bogataj's gruesomely botched jump. The show lasted 37 years, ending when longtime host Jim McKay declared it cancelled on January 3, 1998 (McKay 207). Part of the reason behind the show's cancellation was ABC's affiliation with a channel that had and would continue to change the world of sports journalism more than anything else: the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network, or ESPN.

Launched on September 7, 1979, ESPN featured its signature highlight and news show, *SportsCenter*, along with sports programs not usually picked up by network broadcasts. Early ESPN broadcasts consisted of boxing, wrestling, tennis, Canadian football and other sports. Beginning in 1982 with the National Basketball Association, ESPN began acquiring the rights to mainstream American professional sports. In the years since, the network has gained the rights to NFL games, college football, Major League Soccer, FIFA World Cup, MLB, college basketball, major tennis tournaments, golf and NASCAR, among others. When the network was first conceived, the thought of a 24-hour cable channel exclusively dedicated to sports was laughable. Today, it seems normal. In over 30 years of existence, ESPN broadcasts 65 sports over a variety of channels, 24 hours a day, in over 150 countries. In addition to its sports programming, the network breaks news on *SportsCenter* and ESPNNews, one of its sister channels. ESPN employs many of the top reporters for their respective sports. The network consistently breaks top stories more frequently than its competitors; with their unparalleled programming and top-notch reporting, there is no real argument when the network refers to itself as the "Worldwide Leader in Sports" (ESPN.com).

The Internet

While coverage of sports saw monumental changes throughout the 20th century, the biggest was to come during its last decade. The Internet became a viable source of information during the 1990s; ESPN launched its first website in 1995 as ESPNet.SportsZone.com, now simply ESPN.com. Websites run by sports networks featured the same information consumers could access through newspapers or television broadcasts; however, the World Wide Web created two important innovations for consumers: immediacy and content control.

Before the Internet, news broke on television first. An ESPN viewer interested in a particular story had to wait for *SportsCenter* to come on the air, then sit through portions of the broadcast unrelated to the news he perceived as interesting. The Internet eliminated the waiting game. Without the time restraints of television broadcasts, ESPN reporters could post their breaking news online as soon as the story was written. In addition to the timeliness factor, user control reached an all-time high. Instead of waiting through television

segments they were not interested in, users now had the ability to read only the stories they wanted. This was a first for sports news consumers: information on demand. Before the Internet, every other medium had been completely controlled by the media. Media members told the consumers what information they would receive, and when they would get it. The growth of the Internet as a news source helped to raise this me-first generation, which in turn has set the table for the media innovations we are experiencing today. For the first time, consumer demand is playing a prominent role in how news stories are broken as well as their content (Olney 1).

III. Implications

As media technology has evolved over the years, so has the way that information is gathered and published. In the past, newspapers and other print publications were the primary sources of news information; reporters had plenty of time to gather information and verify it through multiple sources before a story was published. Today that model of journalism is nearly obsolete. Now is the time of the rapid-fire news cycle; the rise of the Internet and round-the-clock cable news networks has in many cases channeled the energy of journalists toward pushing out news as fast as possible. With the demand for up-to-the-minute news and information increasing daily, reporters are under pressure to break news quickly or risk having their story published first by another media outlet. Often, this rush leaves reporters with an ethical dilemma: in the name of breaking news, should a story be published before it can be verified by multiple credible sources? Ethics is not a subject where people can take a wait-and-see approach; reporters have to know how they will act in these situations before they arise. “For choice implies a rational principle, and thought. The name, too, indicates that something is chosen *before* other things” (Aristotle 56).

Brian Formica is the sports anchor for WFMY News 2 in Greensboro, N.C. In January of this year, one of his sources informed him that David Cutcliffe, football coach at Duke University, was in Knoxville, T.N., interviewing for the University of Tennessee’s vacant head coaching position. Formica posted on his official blog, “Sources close to David Cutcliffe tell WFMY News 2 that the former Blue Devil coach is headed to Tennessee. WFMY News 2’s sister station WBIR in Knoxville, T.N., says sources close to the Tennessee side of negotiations say Cutcliffe has NOT taken the job” (Formica 2). Formica did not write anything beyond what he was told, nor did he say anything beyond the fact that Cutcliffe was in Tennessee, which he was. However, other media outlets began picking up Formica’s story and expanding on it. Within hours, major outlets like FOX Sports and ESPN were announcing that Cutcliffe was the new Tennessee football coach, citing Formica’s blog post. Said Formica, “Even though I had said nothing definite whatsoever, it ended up hurting my credibility because everyone else based their stories off of what I wrote” (Formica 1).

A similar issue arose from a March 15 article by ESPN the Magazine’s senior writer, Buster Olney. He reported that the Philadelphia Phillies had had internal discussions about trading Ryan Howard for the St. Louis Cardinals’ Albert Pujols. Wrote Olney, “It’s not fully clear whether the Phillies actually have approached the Cardinals with the idea, and even if St. Louis were to seriously consider such an offer, executives with the Cardinals would have to swallow very hard before dealing Pujols, a player widely regarded as the best in the sport” (Olney 2). The report brought contradictory claims from members of the Phillies. General Manager Ruben Amaro told Olney the rumors were “Lies. That’s a lie. I don’t know who you’re talking to, but that’s a lie” (Olney 2). Olney ultimately took a lot of heat for publishing his source’s information.

Unfortunately, stories like these will only become more prevalent as the demand for instant information becomes greater. Both cases feature stories published quickly, without multiple confirmations, and without identifying sources. While the stories themselves may have been permissible under those conditions, the fact remains that other organizations ran with those developing stories as fact, something the writers had a hand in. Formica and Olney were ultimately responsible for the information they published. Also, while they had the right to protect the identity of their sources except when subpoenaed by a judge (Pember & Calvert 363), the SPJ Code of Ethics urges journalists to identify sources whenever possible because “the public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources’ reliability” (Code of Ethics). Had the reporters revealed where their information came from, the stories might have been resolved quickly instead of growing into an ugly mess. Formica particularly failed to uphold another part of the Code: “Clarify and explain news coverage” (Code of Ethics). His initial report was oversimplified; this contributed to other media outlets’ willingness to report his story and expand on it. Still, this is what the world of journalism is turning into: The

demand for instant publication of news forces reporters to sometimes blur the line that divides what is ethical and what is not. In the past, reporters had time to analyze their stories and check sources. In *The Best American Sports Writing of the Century*, the writers speak of their subjects and sources as colleagues and friends, providing in-depth profiles that cannot be duplicated today (Halberstam xxi). The public constantly demands the next big story, forcing journalists to sometimes bend the rules to deliver.

Formica and Olney's approaches to this question have differed since their incidents. Formica has stated that he will never again post a news update without it first being confirmed by multiple sources – it just is not worth the risk, he says. "When the president of your company is on your doorstep yelling and dropping F-bombs because something you did started a media frenzy, that's when you stop" (Formica 1). Olney, on the other hand, will continue to publish stories he knows he can confirm if he absolutely must reveal his sources. "With the Philadelphia trade story, I never published anything that was not true. I later mentioned that to Ruben Amaro (GM for Philadelphia) and, off the record, he admitted to discussing the possibility of a trade" (Olney 1).

Just eleven months after the fact, Formica's statement and the logic behind it seem outdated. The sports media's integration of the latest technologies force it to evolve faster than ever before, and the process will only continue to accelerate. The latest medium to be embraced is the mobile web. Although it was once considered fantasy, millions of people today now have access to the Internet through their mobile phones wherever they go.

One of the biggest beneficiaries of mobile web service has been Twitter. With a mobile web connection, consumers as well as reporters can be plugged into the news machine constantly. The immediacy of Twitter was its greatest selling point; widespread mobile web access was the missing piece of the puzzle, allowing updates to truly occur in real time. Once dismissed as a simple toy for narcissists and attention whores to proclaim their current mood, location, thought or activity, the service has evolved into a forum filled with legitimate news sources.

Sports organizations and individual athletes now use Twitter to communicate directly with their fans. It allows consumers to receive up-to-the-second information – a reporter can tweet a short message about a story before it is even written, and follow up with the details later. Links can be posted to relevant articles, and pictures can be shared among followers as well. In this case, Twitter essentially gives its users the same information distributed by their favorite news sources, but in real time. While television and the Internet shrank the news cycle to 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Twitter has taken it to a new level. With news breaking almost as the events occur, the cycle has been reduced to 60/60: 60 seconds a minute, 60 minutes an hour.

While this is ideal for the ever-demanding consumer, news outlets are at odds with the same dilemma faced by Olney and Formica, only their problems are compounded by the intensity of the ever-shrinking news cycle. Reporters want to be the first to break a story, but the organizations they represent want all stories verified before they are published. The repercussions of losing a scoop or reporting false information are still the same; however, the decisions must be made faster than ever, putting an increasing amount of pressure on the journalists (Formica 1).

This can be illustrated more clearly with the case of Bill Simmons from the introduction. As it turns out, Simmons' tweet was an accident (Simmons 1). Having heard of the possibility of the Moss trade from a source, he attempted to find out more information before reporting the story, as per ESPN's breaking news policy.

According to Simmons, "We have a rule at ESPN that all breaking news must be filtered through our news desk (not tweeted)...Even if I wanted to tweet something like the Moss scoop, I couldn't do it without *flagrantly* violating company rules (Simmons 1)". He happened to be filming segments for an upcoming sports news show while receiving information on the trade via text message on his cell phone. Like Olney and Formica, he was under pressure to get his story out in a timely manner; except for Simmons in today's news environment, a "timely manner" meant "immediately," with no time to wait until his filming session was over. Simmons therefore attempted to send a private message to another source in order to confirm the story, became distracted while filming, and hit the wrong button on his phone: "send" instead of "cancel," accidentally tweeting "moss Vikings" to 1,277,315 more people than he had intended to. Luckily for Simmons the story turned out to be true, having been verified by other news sources nearly an hour after his original tweet (Simmons 1). Still, imagining similar scenarios occurring is not difficult. As the pressures of speed and accuracy increase and technology becomes more multifaceted, mistakes like Simmons' are inevitable, and some will face more serious consequences.

IV. Conclusions

The Twitter community went wild during the hour between Simmons' tweet and the story's confirmation from the rival news source. Simmons posted several tweets explaining his mistake, but offered no new information for his followers on the potential trade. Amid the speculation over the Moss-Minnesota trade, Simmons' mistake became just as big a story among his followers and fellow journalists, answering an important question: What happens in a rapid-fire news cycle when there is no news to report?

With such frequent access to their news sources, people will expect, even demand, a constant barrage of new information, whether it is newsworthy or not. This paves the way for stories based on gossip, speculation, and hearsay to receive as much time in the headlines, if not more, than deserving news items. At some point, filtering the real stories from the clutter might become as time-consuming for a consumer as waiting for *SportsCenter* to show the segment he's interested in viewing.

Another potential Twitter effect could be the mainstream media's sources scaling back their efforts to break news on the service. First might not necessarily be best; instead of racing to break a story, more traditional outlets could focus on being the first to post a thoughtful, detailed story that answers all of a potential reader's questions, rather than simply tweeting a variation of, "Event X occurred, details later." The communication industry is constantly changing and adaptation is key, but at some point enough will be enough.

Finally, in the world of sports, services like Twitter might be the beginning of the end for traditional journalism. At the core, a reporter is a voice that can be heard by a wide audience. In sports, he speaks for the players, coaches, owners and organizations; sports reporters tell us what those we can't communicate with think, feel, say and do. Twitter gives those players and other personnel direct channels to their audience; they can say what they want without fear of being misquoted or having their words taken out of context. Perhaps in the future, sports communication will be a direct, two-way street. After all, technology has to simplify things eventually. 140 characters sounds just right

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Social Media Sites of Politicians Influence Their Perception by Constituents

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Abstract

This research examined the impact social media outlets—Facebook and Twitter—have over the way constituents view politicians. This research examined how politicians can use their Facebook or Twitter pages in the most effective fashion and incorporate these new media outlets as essential campaign tools and tactics. A mixed-method approach using content analysis and a survey revealed that voters value personable content over trustworthiness and general electability. Voters received more positively politicians with personable content than those who relied on professional content when considering content provided on Twitter. Ultimately, a politician's social media use significantly influenced and enriched the experience an individual has with the public figure.

I. Introduction

After the 2008 presidential race, citizens watched the newly inaugurated President Barack Obama stand in front of a crowd of 7,000 and speak about the power of a mobilized youth. This youth was the same that propelled Obama to victory and utilized the social media sites that Obama frequented. "The Internet and an extraordinary social movement enabled him to come to power and youth were the engine of his victory" (Harfoush, 2009). While President Obama wasn't the first to explore social media as a campaign tactic (Howard Dean, 2004 Democratic primary), he was the first to use it as an essential aspect of his candidacy. This reliance on social media and use of "an array of new, incredibly speedy and cheap internet tools-- e-mail, social networks, Twitter, and the like-- to run a grassroots campaign that contacted individual voters in personalized encounters on a near daily basis" (Graber, 2010) was the first fully formed campaign whose success was partially attributed to social media use by researchers and news outlets alike.

This research discusses the impact politicians' social media use has over their overall electability and likability and explores the integration of social media as an essential campaign tactic on both the local and national level. Regardless of a politician's party affiliation or previous history "social media simplifies word of mouth and facilitates collaboration" (McConnell, 2007), a concept key to generating and maintaining interest in a campaign. In addition, social media has significantly altered the accessibility and availability of information on specific candidates. Instead of gathering basic knowledge from news stories and websites, users of social media gather information, and at times, opinions, using interactive sites where communication is continuous between voters and politicians and where information flows directly from politicians' mouths to voters' Facebook and Twitter pages. Social media use by politicians vary: Some sites focus highly on design and applications while others rely on content quality or even the informality of speech to draw in voters.

* **Keywords:** social media, political campaigning, candidate traits, Facebook, Twitter
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This research aimed at understanding the power social media has inside the political arena and out. Most politicians are now replicating Barack Obama's use of social media and in turn, consider Facebook and Twitter as essential campaign tactics. Researchers, politicians and the public are still attempting to understand the most effective and useful practices in managing social media sites. Facebook and Twitter offer a new outlet to mobilize groups to action and unlike most media, "the receiver cares about the sender" (Shirky, 184) enough to seek out additional information.

This study tried to define an "effective" social media site, examined current politicians' sites based on this definition and asked college students to evaluate candidates before and after they viewed the politicians' social media pages.

II. Literature Review

As social media outlets gain in popularity and scope, it is impossible to know the lasting impact these sites will have over voters' political and cultural perceptions and the way that they communicate.

Media Systems Dependency Theory

When considering the impact of social media, the public's relationship with the outlet becomes essential. Facebook and Twitter have become a part of the way we talk, socialize and spend our time; social media has begun to take precedent over other communication outlets in part because of its heightened accessibility and usability. In turn, dependence on these outlets to provide individuals with rewarding interactions has become greater. Baran and Davis explain the media systems dependency theory as "the more a person depends on having needs gratified by media use, the more important the media's role will be in the person's life, and therefore the more influence those media will have" (Baran & Davis, 2006, p. 127). Therefore, the more the public relies on Facebook and Twitter as not only necessary lines of communication, but as rewarding parts of the communicative process, the more value and influence Facebook and Twitter will have.

Twitter and Facebook have also created an audience that is aware of not only the elements in the message but of processing those elements. Twitter and Facebook have the unique ability to reach individuals who choose to seek a company, person or cause out (Comm, 2009, p. xvi). This makes social media a particularly effective marketing tool, enabling succinct communication with individuals who have already expressed an interest. More importantly it enables public figures "to build deeper relationships" (Comm, 2009, p. xvi) with clients, partners and individuals, creating an easy, far-reaching campaign tactic for modern day politicians.

Barack Obama's 2008 Presidential Campaign

"Like a lot of Web innovators, the Obama campaign did not invent anything completely new. Instead, by bolting together social networking applications under the banner of a movement, they created an unforeseen force to raise money, organize locally, fight smear campaigns and get out the vote that helped them topple the Clinton machine and then John McCain and the Republicans" (Carr, 2008). For this precise reason, Obama's 2008 presidential bid became an innovative and politically revolutionary one that used media in ways the public had never seen before. Researchers have examined Obama's campaign from start to finish, noting the impact social media had over his constituents. In part, Obama's success can be attributed to "an array of new, incredibly speedy and cheap internet tools-- e-mail, social networks, Twitter, and the like--[and enabled him] to run a grassroots campaign that contacted individual voters in personalized encounters on a near daily basis" (Graber, 2010, p. 194).

Obama was able to use the Internet to not only provide information but also encourage activism. During his campaign, Obama was given over \$55 million dollars in donations by linking from his social media sites and website to a site called MyBo. (Penenberg, 2009, p. 11) This call to action and utilization of Internet resources ultimately put Obama's fundraising and reach far beyond earlier uses of the Internet during a campaign.

Research from PEW Internet Research Center showed that in 2008, a record-breaking 46% of Americans used the internet, email or text messaging on their mobile devices to gain information about campaigns, share opinions and mobilize others (Rainie & Smith, 2008). Obama's supporters made up a substantial amount of this group. A notable 39% of voters are using the Internet to get unfiltered campaign materials,

including videos of debates, speeches, announcements, political position papers and transcripts.

In addition, the 2008 election integrated other media that was not previously used in the campaign process. During the months leading up to the election, 35% of Americans said they had watched political videos online, 6% of Americans had made a political contribution online and 10% said they had used social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter to gather information about candidates and become involved in their campaigns. Internet users under 30 include an important part of this group: Two-thirds of them have a social networking profile and of those, half use their sites to engage in the political process or obtain information.

Social Media to Mobilize the Masses

Beginning in 2004 with Howard Dean's campaign and four years later with Barack Obama's presidential campaign, the Internet gained popularity as a campaign tactic. Facebook, Twitter and blogs can serve as important tools to mobilize groups to action (Shirky, 2008, p. 184). Unlike most media, the "receiver cares about the sender" (Shirky, 2008, p. 184) and seeks out information about them, increasing the likelihood for activism. New social media outlets are essential to politicians and causes, enabling them to gain support, encourage participation and have an open and continuous dialogue. Most importantly, social media allows "the highly motivated people to create a context more easily in which the barely motivated people can be effective without having to become activists themselves," (Shirky, 2008, p. 190) creating an environment perfect for politicians to utilize.

The developing connection between emerging social media and its public and political influence has begun to transform the political process and campaign tactics. Politicians are now using social media and the Internet and, in turn are "permitting a new arena of grassroots politics" (Axford & Huggins, 2001, p. 90). Voters no longer make decisions solely based on information available through traditional media and instead seek out additional knowledge, and in some cases, additional means of activism, using their computers and mobile devices. Studies have also found that mass media use and social media use is positively correlated to an individual's voting behavior. Essentially, the more they look to mass media and social media for information, the more likely citizens are to vote. (Pinkleton, Austin and Fortman, 2010, p. 39) Ultimately, "social media simplifies word of mouth and facilitates collaboration" (McConnell & Huba, 2007, p. 27) in a cost-effective and impactful fashion and as research points out, is reaching individuals who are more likely to be motivated to actively participate in the political process.

Social Media and Disclosure

The "open and public nature" (Axford & Huggins, 2001, p. 90) of social media has begun to change the way that campaigns are developed and politicians relate to their constituents.

Politicians and voters alike use Facebook and Twitter as a means for disclosure—they post photographs, personal information and leave public messages to their friends in cyber space. The benefit of this is that social media "removes the barrier between professional and consumer, showing the latter how the former works and allowing the latter to actually contribute immediately to the work of the former." (Barlow, 2008, p. 93) This breaking down of previously existing barriers enables strengthened relationships between voters or advocates and politicians who utilize social media in an effort to reach their voter base. However, the emergence and popularity of social media does not come without a price. The repercussions of the digital explosion means that not only are people able to make personal information available to the public, but that they are encouraged to without considering the lasting effects of doing so (Abelson, 2008).

The purpose of this research is to explore the impact politician's social media sites (e.g. Twitter and Facebook) have over individuals who use them.

- RQ. 1: How do politicians' use of social media impact voter's impressions?
- RQ. 2: Does an appealing or personal use of social media increase a politician's likability and electability?

By exploring the impact of politician's social media use, this research hopes to identify what makes an effective social media site and the repercussions or benefits of utilizing these tools as campaign tactics.

III. Methods

In order to explore the relationship between politicians' use of social media sites and their electability and popularity, the researcher conducted a content analysis of three politicians' current social media sites and then surveyed 88 college students to understand social media's influence over their perception of the politicians.

The three politicians, Claire McCaskill, Kevin McCarthy and Thaddeus McCotter, were selected because they have all been previously noted or acknowledged by journalists for their candid and innovative use of their social media sites (Warren, 2010). In addition, these three individuals insisted on updating their sites themselves with entirely original content. The vested interest of these politicians in social media made them viable resources; each politician had a distinctly different feel to their sites.

Content Analysis

The author first examined the three politicians' social media sites. Past research did not rate or examine politicians' social media use in depth or below the presidential arena; consequently, a unique rating scale must be developed to give a rating to a site.

Sites were evaluated based on the initial page shown when a site address is first typed in. Since it is not possible to effectively monitor or regulate how individuals click through a site, it was imperative that they were evaluated for the information that is immediately available upon visiting the social media outlet. Content analysis is essential to creating a basis upon which we can methodically evaluate social media sites and their effectiveness; in turn, this allows for the comparison of viewers' perceptions of effectiveness.

The politicians' Facebook and Twitter have each been evaluated for five different attributes: content quality, informality of speech, design, frequency of posting, and the number of followers on each site. A politician can score a maximum of 5 points on each attribute.

Content Quality: This focuses on policy, political beliefs, upcoming events and important commentary pertaining to the campaign. High ranking social media sites avoid information and commentary that is not directly applicable to the politician's beliefs or campaign. High content quality (information related to candidate's campaign efforts etc.) will be rated a 5 and poor content quality will be rated a 1.

Informality of Speech: This covers use of colloquial phrases and a conversational tone associated with accessibility and approachability. Key content that indicates informality include information about a politician's personal life, daily happenings (unrelated to campaign appearances and events) and questions or prompts that elicit responsiveness among viewers. High informality will be assigned 5 points and rigidity in social media content will be assigned 1 point.

Design: This will serve as an important factor in the utilization of social media. Sites will be rated from 1 to 5 points on originality of design, effective use of color and aesthetic appeal.

Frequency of Posting: Politicians who post on their social media site daily will receive 5 points. Those who post 3-6 times a week will receive a "4." Politicians who post 1-2 times a week will receive 3 points. Those who post less than 4 times a month will receive a "2." Individuals who post less than the aforementioned numbers will receive a "1."

Number of Followers: Politician's sites who have over 1,000 followers will receive a "5." Those who have between 500-999 will receive a "4." Politicians with 250-499 followers will receive a "3" Those with 100-249 will receive a "2." Finally, those with less than 100 followers will be rated with a "1."

Within each category, the social media outlets were assigned between 1 point (ineffective) and 5 points (extremely effective). Once each of the politicians' social media outlets (Twitter, Facebook) were rated, their scores were averaged to produce a rating on the effectiveness of their use of social media.

Survey 1

Upon conducting a content analysis of politicians' social media sites, the author surveyed 88 college students.

In Survey I, participants viewed a brief paragraph taken from the politicians' sites describing who they are without their name and political affiliation. On a scale of 1-5, the participants were asked to rate how trustworthy the description made the politician seem, how personable they seemed from the description and how

likely it was that they would vote for him or her.

Survey 1 served as a control, allowing the author to have a basic understanding of respondents' opinions of a candidate without taking their social media sites into account.

Survey 2

Another survey was conducted with the same participants. In Part I of this survey, the participants were asked about demographic data.

In Part II, the participating students viewed the sites through a projector while the author navigated the sites to ensure each individual surveyed was seeing identical information and not clicking through a site or interacting independently. The participants responded to the same questions they did in Survey I. This survey focused on gathering information on how personable the politicians' social media content was, how trustworthy they seemed and ultimately, how electable their social media sites made them appear. They were also asked whether they would vote for the candidate.

In Part III, the participants were asked about which politician had the most effective Facebook site, Twitter site, and overall social media presence. They were then prompted to explain why they chose a specific social network site as being the most effective.

IV. Findings

Content Analysis

Claire McCaskill: a U.S. Senator for Missouri: Two salient observations emerged from evaluating Claire McCaskill's Twitter site and Facebook page and coding for five attributes: content quality, informality of speech, design, frequency of posts and followers.

McCaskill's Twitter site was notably informal when compared with her Facebook site.

McCaskill used Twitter most effectively of all politicians evaluated; however, used her Facebook page least effectively according to the aforementioned criteria.

McCaskill has been noted as one of the TIME's Top 10 Notable People on Twitter and has previously been recognized by journalists for her unique and unprecedented approach to her Twitter site (Warren, 2010). She has openly posted about "family problems" and personal challenges. In addition to this content, McCaskill intermixes posts about election coverage, sports, local and national issues concerning constituents and interesting news or media. Her twitter site, unlike her Facebook, makes use of various types of media, often linking to news stories, photos, videos and other sites of interest.

Analysis of her Twitter site produced Content Quality of 3; Informality of Speech of 5; Design of 5; Frequency of Posts of 5; Followers of 5; and Overall Twitter Score of 23/25, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Evaluation of politicians' Twitter and Facebook based on 5 attributes

| | Content quality | Informality of speech | Design | Frequency of posts | Followers | Overall score |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------|--------------------|-----------|---------------|
| McCaskill | | | | | | |
| (Twitter) | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 23/25 |
| (Facebook) | 5 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 20/25 |
| McCarthy | | | | | | |
| (Twitter) | 5 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 20/25 |
| (Facebook) | 3 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 21/25 |
| McCotter | | | | | | |
| (Twitter) | 2 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 18/25 |
| (Facebook) | 3 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 22/25 |

McCaskill's Twitter was used often and genuinely appears to be a personal outlet for expression, as opposed to a professional venue to reach voters. This use of Twitter significantly differed from the other politicians' mannerisms and demeanor on the site; not surprisingly, she had the greatest following with over 43,000 individuals marked as "followers", which could possibly be attributed to her position as Senator, as opposed to the other two politicians examined who were Congressmen.

On the other hand, McCaskill's Facebook page did not echo her colloquial phrases and approachable but impactful Twitter posts. She provided very professional, formal information and little of the rich media that was included on her Twitter site. Her Facebook included no photos other than her profile pictures and made little use of videos or links. Her scores were 5, 3, 3, 4, 5 each on the five attributes as shown in Table 1.

Kevin McCarthy: a U.S. Congressman for California: Kevin McCarthy's Twitter site and Facebook page were used in a similar fashion when viewed side by side. McCarthy generally used similar content, maintaining a fairly formal approach to his posts. In addition, he posted frequently on both sites and preferred to discuss political happenings and his professional life as opposed to providing insight into his personal life like Claire McCaskill was noted for. Her Twitter and Facebook ranked very similarly.

McCarthy's Twitter site used the most simple design and layout and provided the most predictable or politically based content of the three Twitter sites viewed. While the content was of high quality, McCarthy scored low on informality of speech because of the formal nature of his postings. McCarthy's scores for his Twitter site were 5, 3, 4, 4, 4 on the five attributes as shown in Table 1.

McCarthy's Facebook page has high quality content posts. Its content was rather formal and avoided using familiar phrases, abbreviations or other online discussion habits both McCaskill and McCotter used. In addition, McCarthy made use of various Facebook applications and frequently included links, news stories and videos on his site. He had a notable number of albums on his page and frequently added images of himself at events. His Facebook scores were 3, 4, 5, 4, 5 on the five attributes as shown in Table 1.

Thaddeus McCotter: a U.S. congressman from Michigan: Thaddeus McCotter's social media sites were considered the most unique and candid of the three. McCotter's Twitter site was colorful and original in design; it showcased an image of him tiled in the background and a profile photo of him playing the guitar in casual clothes. His text was red and blue and bold. It is also important to note that most of his posts were at (@) other users and often offered up interesting commentary. The process of tweeting at an individual means that your commentary is directed to them, their site is linked in the tweet and can be clicked on when individuals view your profile. His site was colorful, made use of images and often had snarky or opinionated commentary. McCotter's Twitter genuinely seemed to be an outlet for personal expression and disclosure. More than the other two politicians, McCotter was unafraid of using twitter to interact with others. The following were scores on his Twitter site: 2, 5, 2, 5, 4, on the five attributes, as shown on Table 1.

McCotter seemed to view his Facebook as a separate entity of his online presence. McCotter used Facebook in a more professional capacity and this was reflected in the rankings seen below. The following are McCotter's Facebook scores on the four attributes: 3, 5, 4, 5, 5, as shown in Table 1.

General Observations: Based on the content analysis, the following were found: Politicians in general were more informal with their speech on their Twitter pages; politicians had more solidified followings on Facebook than Twitter; and these findings affected how to interpret the results of the two surveys the author conducted.

Survey 1: Evaluation of Politicians Based on Excerpts from Their Social Media Sites

Respondents were least likely to say they would vote for McCotter (Or "Candidate 3"). McCarthy ("Candidate 1") was most likely to be voted for and McCaskill's ("Candidate 2") numbers were between the two. From the brief description provided, McCaskill was seen as the most personable, followed by McCarthy and finally, McCotter.

Survey 2, Part 1: Demographic Information

The first part of the survey asked respondents about basic demographic data including age, political party, voting behavior and Facebook and Twitter use. The average age of respondents was 20.38. Twenty-five respondents identified their political party as Democrats, 27 as Republicans, and 14 as Independents. The remaining 22 individuals did not indicate their political party affiliation. While only 46 of 88 people voted in the last election, social media use was strikingly high among respondents. Out of 88 respondents, 73 used

Facebook daily, 4 used it a few times a week, 5 used it weekly, 3 used it monthly and only 2 did not have Facebook pages. Twitter use for respondents was much more varied: 14 people used Twitter daily, 16 people used it a few times a week, 5 people used Twitter weekly, 9 people used the site monthly and the remaining 44 people did not have Twitter accounts or never used them if they did.

Survey 2, Part 2: Politician's Attributes Based on Social Media Viewing

Regarding attributes of politicians on their social media sites, there were positive relationships among trustworthiness, electability and personableness, except for McCotter's Facebook (see Table 2 below), which will be analyzed later.

Table 2: Social Media Ratings and Average

| | Trustworthiness | Electability | Personableness | Voting Intention |
|------------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|------------------|
| McCaskill | | | | |
| (Twitter) | 3.50 | 3.27 | 3.89 | |
| (Facebook) | 3.41 | 3.35 | 3.68 | |
| (Average) | 3.46 | 3.31 | 3.79 | 3.02 |
| McCarthy | | | | |
| (Twitter) | 3.59 | 3.39 | 4.13 | |
| (Facebook) | 3.51 | 3.67 | 3.74 | |
| (Average) | 3.55 | 3.53 | 3.94 | 3.22 |
| McCotter | | | | |
| (Twitter) | 2.93 | 2.97 | 3.29 | |
| (Facebook) | 3.12 | 3.07 | 4.06 | |
| (Average) | 3.03 | 3.02 | 3.67 | 2.63 |

Politicians were always rated as more personable after respondents viewed their social media sites, as shown in Table 3. The second row shows the average of the three politicians' Twitter and Facebook ratings before respondents viewed the politicians' social network sites while the third row shows the average after respondents viewed their sites.

Table 3: Personable Rating Pre vs. Post Viewing of Social Media

| | McCaskill | McCarthy | McCotter |
|---|-----------|----------|----------|
| Pre-Social Media Personable Score | 3.50 | 3.35 | 2.79 |
| Post-Social Media Personable Score | 3.79 | 3.94 | 3.67 |

Survey 2, Part III: Effectiveness of Social Network Sites

Kevin McCarthy had the most effective Facebook, Twitter and overall Social Media presence, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Site Effectiveness

| | Twitter | Facebook | Overall Social Media Presence |
|------------------|---------|----------|-------------------------------|
| McCaskill | 34.6% | 22.2% | 34.6% |
| McCarthy | 43.2% | 40.7% | 49.4% |
| McCotter | 22.2% | 37.1% | 16.0% |

When examining comments from Part III of Survey 2, why the respondents chose a specific social network site as the most effective one, the author found that respondents most commonly used the words "professional", "trustworthy", "personable" and "approachable."

V. Analysis

Relationship between Personable Content and Voting Intention

The first notable finding was the relationship between the personable content rating a respondent gave a candidate and the likelihood that the respondent will vote for them in the next election.

Figure 1 demonstrates the relationship between personable social media content and respondents' voting intention.

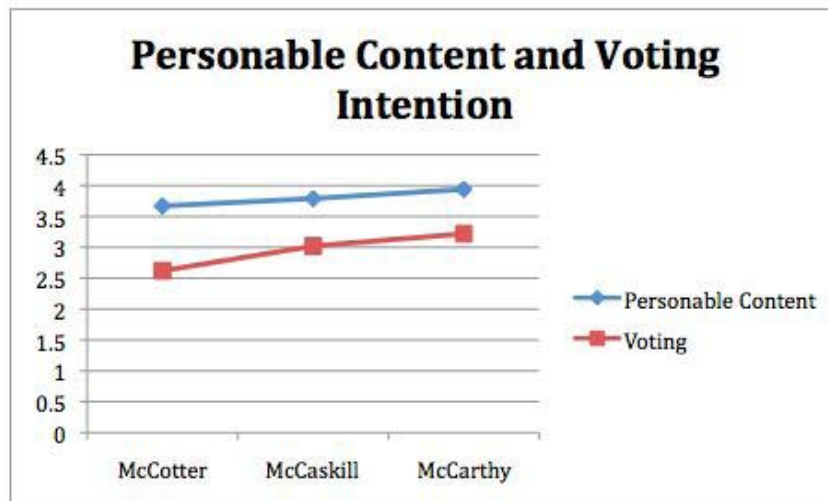


Figure 1: *Personable Social Media Content and Voting Intention*

As seen in Table 2 earlier, politicians' personableness was positively related with their trustworthiness and electability. When the rating of each social network site was analyzed individually, an exception appeared. McCotter's Facebook page scored notably high in the "personable content" category with 4.06, higher than the other two candidates, but scored markedly low in trustworthiness and electability on his Facebook site. This finding explains that sharing too much (as noted in the content analysis about McCotter) may detract from the professionalism that respondents expect from political figures. The initial content analysis explained the content on McCotter's Facebook is personable, but overly so. It is noted that his Facebook site was "an outlet for personal disclosure."

Personable Rating Pre and Post Social Media Viewing

Although social media's impact over a campaign as a whole is difficult to gauge, the author explored how viewing a candidate's social media site impacted the respondent's opinions regarding trustworthiness, electability and personableness of a candidate. Trustworthiness and Electability scores were not consistently higher for each candidate after respondents had viewed their social media sites; however, it was found that personable rankings went up substantially for each candidate after viewing their social media sites, as shown in Table 2 above.

Effectiveness of social network sites

The highest number of respondents ranked the social network sites of Kevin McCarthy as the most effective, followed by those of McCaskill and McCotter.

Asked to comment on why they chose the candidate they did as having the most effective social network sites, only 41 out of 88 answered. Regarding McCarthy's sites, one respondent noted that he "discussed family, political issues and news on his social media sites in an effective, easy to understand way." Another chose McCarthy because he was "personable yet was professional...the other two politicians had grammatical and spelling errors."

When analyzing all the respondents' comments, the author found that there were five words that were all mentioned more than 7 times each: "professionalism," "personable," "approachable," "candid" and "trustworthy." These attributes were valued by respondents and were qualities that they found attractive in the politician's social media sites that they ultimately chose as being most effective.

V. Discussion

Upon analyzing the content of selected politician's Facebook and Twitter sites and surveying respondents before and after they have seen a politician's social media pages, there were several relationships that require in-depth discussion.

Facebook and Twitter: Varying Expectations

Facebook and Twitter are often grouped together in discussions in order to cumulatively explore social media; however, the way in which they are used and the public's expectations of content coming from each site are distinctly different.

Simply because of the nature of Twitter, short posts no longer than 140 characters and an emphasis on mobile accessibility, the content should rightfully be different than that provided on a Facebook site. Content analysis in this study revealed that for all three politicians, their content scored higher in informality of speech on Twitter than it did on Facebook. In addition, Twitter sites for the three politicians were updated more frequently and with more personal information than Facebook. The content serves as a stream of consciousness directly from the politician's mind to the people. In turn, the respondents seem to anticipate more personable content from a Twitter site and in analysis, the author saw that Twitter communicates these desired candid opinions more so than its social media counterpart, Facebook.

Expectations of a Facebook page were entirely different. The individual who was rated highest in personable content on their Facebook page, Thaddeus McCotter, was not seen as most electable or trustworthy. This could be attributed to a few things including, but not limited to, a notion that respondents' low opinion of McCotter's Twitter site flowed over into their perception of his Facebook, the inconsistency of image presented on his Facebook site versus his Twitter site, and the need for professionalism in a social media site as expressed by many respondents.

It is also interesting to explore this in relation to respondent's expectations from politicians. The other two politicians' Facebook sites were more professional than their Twitter sites, and notably more professional than McCotter's. They included more political content and expressed fewer opinions that were not directly policy related. Contrary to this practice, McCotter's Facebook seemed to use the same approach as his Twitter, offering clear, personal information and unsolicited opinions. This technique could have negatively impacted his overall effectiveness when compared with the other two politicians' Facebook pages.

It can be inferred that the public is more accepting of personal disclosure on Twitter, in short, unfiltered sentences, than they are on Facebook. We can conclude that excessive personal content does not equal the most effective use of a social media outlet.

Shortcomings of Providing "Personable" Content

In the content analysis, McCotter's Twitter site was noted as having "personal information overload" and his "tweets directed at the media and other politicians do not bode well for his overall image." These comments provide some insight into how the personable content can perhaps work against a politician if not used with discretion. This was reflected in a low "personable content" score for his Twitter site, the lowest average personable content score and the lowest effectiveness score overall of all three politician.. The survey respondents also mentioned McCotter's "personal attacks" on other politicians and the "overwhelming busyness" of his Twitter site.

It would be valuable to further explore the importance of being personable when using social media and where the limitations lie. It appears that politicians who provide updates on their personal life interspersed with professional and pertinent content are seen as using social media most effectively. Respondents received McCotter's Twitter poorly and, as content analysis explained, it had an excessive amount of personal content and an unprecedented open and honest approach.

Political Party and Ideology

While it was noted that the most reoccurring attributes in the comment section explaining candidate's effectiveness with social media were words like "professionalism", "trustworthiness", "approachable" and "personable," there was an additional relationship between these attributes and the political party of respondents. There was a clear relationship between political party and attributes respondents desire from politicians' social media sites. Republicans and Independents are more likely to value "professionalism" and "trustworthiness" in a social media site, whereas Democrats are more likely to value "personable" content. Republicans and Independents overwhelmingly noted "professionalism" or "trustworthiness" as a reason they chose the politician they did as having the most effective site, whereas Democrats overwhelmingly stated a politician's site being "personal" or "candid" or "approachable" as most important.

This relationship identifies the possibility of different needs a politician's social media site has to satisfy depending on the political party of the audience a candidate is trying to reach. This could assist in tailoring a politician's image based on whom they wish to reach. These ideological differences between parties and their approach to various media outlets should be further examined.

VI. Conclusion

While social media's role continues to evolve within the political realm, there are definitive relationships to be explored between a politician's use of these sites and the public's opinion. Facebook and Twitter have enabled people to access public figures at an unprecedented level; campaigns no longer can rely only on traditional media to reach constituents without running the risk of overlooking a new population of voters who use social media as integral parts of their decision making process. This accessibility and tendency to post personal and candid content ultimately benefit the politician. Politicians like McCarthy and McCaskill, who make use of personal content intermixed with professional commentary and knowledge, are more likely to have a vote cast for them in the next election. While this seems like a simple relationship, McCotter provides a hook. Content that is overtly personal, snide or uncomfortably honest, does not read as personable to potential voters. While social media may indeed be breaking boundaries and providing extensive access to others' lives, people are not comfortable with candidates or political figures tweeting the same way ordinary people tweet. In the midst of Facebook and Twitter's revolutionary impact over political campaigns and elected officials, it should be noted that, like everything, there is a limit. Ultimately, constituents still want their politicians to be politicians; while snippets into their personal lives are beneficial, this cannot take precedent over career-driven content. When it does, politicians lose credibility and trust with their voters.

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Appendix I:

Survey 1: Evaluation of Politicians Based on Excerpts from Their Social Media Sites

Please read the following descriptions of politicians currently running for office in the United States. After reading, please answer the questions below each politician's biography and rate them accordingly.

Politician 1:

Politician 1 was born in Bakersfield, California and currently serves on the Financial Services Committee and on the House Administration Committee. He has been mentioned in Newsweek as one of the "most persuasive members" and has been dubbed a top politician and strategist by other publications. At the age of 21, owned and operated a small business and began his political career just 10 years ago. This past year, he has focused on reducing the state budget deficit, getting rid of the state worker's compensation system and enhancing the business climate.

1. Based on this description, how likely would you be to vote for Politician 1?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not Likely) (Not Sure) (Very Likely)
2. Based on this description, how personable does this candidate seem?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not at all) (Not Sure) (Very)
3. Based on this description, how trustworthy does this candidate seem?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not at all) (Not Sure) (Very)
4. Based on this description, do you think Politician 1 will be re-elected?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not Likely) (Not Sure) (Very Likely)

Politician 2:

Politician 2 was born in Rolla, Missouri and is chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Contracting Oversight and currently serves on the Permanent Subcommittee for Investigations, the Armed Services committee and Commerce committee. Politician 2 has her law degree and has worked as a prosecutor, legislator in her home state, state auditor, and was the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate from her state. This past year, she focused on economic concerns, benefits for veterans, reforms to the mortgage industry and earmark reform.

- Based on this description, how likely would you be to vote for Politician 2?
- 1 2 3 4 5
(Not Likely) (Not Sure) (Very Likely)
1. Based on this description, how personable does this candidate seem?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not at all) (Not Sure) (Very)
 2. Based on this description, how trustworthy does this candidate seem?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not at all) (Not Sure) (Very)
 3. Based on this description, do you think Politician 2 will be re-elected?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not Likely) (Not Sure) (Very Likely)

Politician 3:

Politician 3 is originally from southeast Michigan and is currently Chairman of the House Policy Committee and serves on the House Financial Services Committee and the Housing and Community Opportunity Committee. He graduated from law school and worked as an attorney for years before focusing his efforts on politics in 2002. Politician 3 has focused his efforts on preserving and promoting small businesses, has supported the war and an increase in homeland security and is a proponent for reducing the size and scope of government.

1. Based on this description, how likely would you be to vote for Politician 3?
-

- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|--------------|---|------------|---|---------------|
| | (Not Likely) | | (Not Sure) | | (Very Likely) |
| 2. Based on this description, how personable does this candidate seem? | | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | (Not at all) | | (Not Sure) | | (Very) |
| 3. Based on this description, how trustworthy does this candidate seem? | | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | (Not at all) | | (Not Sure) | | (Very) |
| 4. Based on this description, what do you think the likelihood will be that Politician 3 will be re-elected? | | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | (Not Likely) | | (Not Sure) | | (Very Likely) |

Appendix II: Survey 2

Part I : Demographic Data

1. Age:
2. Political Party Affiliation:
3. Did you vote in the last election?
4. Do you use Facebook?
Daily A few times a week Weekly Monthly Never
5. Do you use Twitter?
Daily A few times a week Weekly Monthly Never

Part II: Evaluation of Politicians' Attributes

Claire McCaskill

1. Based on her twitter site, how personable does Claire McCaskill seem?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not at all) (Not Sure) (Very)
2. Based on her twitter site, how likely is it that McCaskill will be elected in the next cycle?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not Likely) (Not Sure) (Very Likely)
3. Based on her twitter site, how trustworthy does Claire McCaskill seem?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not at all) (Not Sure) (Very)
4. Based on her Facebook page, how personable does Claire McCaskill seem?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not at all) (Not Sure) (Very)
5. Based on her Facebook page, how likely do you think is it that McCaskill will be elected in the next cycle?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not Likely) (Not Sure) (Very Likely)
6. Based on her Facebook page, how trustworthy does Claire McCaskill seem?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not at all) (Not Sure) (Very)
7. If the only information you were given was the candidate's social media sites, how likely would you be to vote for McCaskill based on what you have viewed?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not Likely) (Not Sure) (Very Likely)

Comments:

Kevin McCarthy

1. Based on his twitter site, how personable does Kevin McCarthy seem?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not at all) (Not Sure) (Very)
2. Based on his twitter site, how likely is it that McCarthy will be elected in the next cycle?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not Likely) (Not Sure) (Very Likely)
3. Based on his twitter site, how trustworthy does Kevin McCarthy seem?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not at all) (Not Sure) (Very)
4. Based on his Facebook page, how personable does Kevin McCarthy seem?
1 2 3 4 5
(Not at all) (Not Sure) (Very)
5. Based on his Facebook page, how likely do you think is it that McCarthy will be elected in the next cycle?
1 2 3 4 5

- | | | | | | |
|----|--|---|------------|---|---------------|
| | (Not Likely) | | (Not Sure) | | (Very Likely) |
| 6. | Based on his Facebook page, how trustworthy does Kevin McCarthy seem? | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | (Not at all) | | (Not Sure) | | (Very) |
| 7. | If the only information you were given was the candidate's social media sites, how likely would you be to vote for McCarthy based on what you have viewed? | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | (Not Likely) | | (Not Sure) | | (Very Likely) |

Comments:

Thaddeus McCotter

- | | | | | | |
|----|--|---|------------|---|---------------|
| 1. | Based on his twitter site, how personable does Thaddeus McCotter seem? | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | (Not at all) | | (Not Sure) | | (Very) |
| 2. | Based on his twitter site, how likely is it that McCotter will be elected in the next cycle? | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | (Not Likely) | | (Not Sure) | | (Very Likely) |
| 3. | Based on his twitter site, how trustworthy does Thaddeus McCotter seem? | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | (Not at all) | | (Not Sure) | | (Very) |
| 4. | Based on his Facebook page, how personable does Thaddeus McCotter seem? | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | (Not at all) | | (Not Sure) | | (Very) |
| 5. | Based on his Facebook page, how likely do you think is it that McCotter will be elected in the next cycle? | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | (Not Likely) | | (Not Sure) | | (Very Likely) |
| 6. | Based on his Facebook page, how trustworthy does Thaddeus McCotter seem? | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | (Not at all) | | (Not Sure) | | (Very) |
| 7. | If the only information you were given was the candidate's social media sites, how likely would you be to vote for McCotter based on what you have viewed? | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | (Not Likely) | | (Not Sure) | | (Very Likely) |

Comments:

Part III: Evaluation of Politicians' Social Network Sites

Of the three politicians, who had the most effective twitter site?

- Claire McCaskill
- Kevin McCarthy
- Thaddeus McCotter

Of the three politicians, who had the most effective Facebook page?

- Claire McCaskill
- Kevin McCarthy
- Thaddeus McCotter

Of the three politicians, who had the most effective general social media presence?

- Claire McCaskill
- Kevin McCarthy
- Thaddeus McCotter

What about their social media sites made them effective?

Online Word of Mouth: Characteristics of Yelp.com Reviews

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Abstract

This study used speech code theory to explain and evaluate how computer users communicate by posting reviews on the consumer-oriented website Yelp.com. A content analysis was completed of 763 reviews, and among them, 106 were more closely examined to discover how the characteristics of reviews related to ratings of those reviews. Drawing on literature, the researcher sought to study electronic word-of-mouth communications according to genre, consumer influences, and opinion-leader behavior, comparing all to traditional word-of-mouth interaction. The research revealed specific characteristics that were unique to each of the three categories. Overall, opinion leaders on Yelp, a group of regular users who have gained elite status in the community, did carry more authority with review readers than non-elite members of the Yelp community.

I. Introduction

Consumers will trust friends, friends of friends and even a stranger's recommendation before they trust anything that the glitzy marketing and advertising agencies shove at them. Word of mouth communication has always been relied upon by many generations of consumers and business owners. Marketing and advertising agencies have continuously lost trust with consumers since the days when the founding principles of the fields were created. On the other hand, fellow consumers' voices have continued to steadily increase in credibility. Given those dynamics, this study sought to explore what characteristics make these user-generated reviews credible to other consumers.

The author examined online consumers' word of mouth on the user generated web site Yelp to find the contextual commonalities the reviews have under each category of *useful*, *cool* or *funny* as classified by review readers. The purpose is to identify the trends that define the type of language and symbols used in each of the three categories that review readers used in their evaluations. Because such user interaction is sure to expand, this study helps researchers to better explore the ways that peer-driven communications work in a digital arena such as a consumer-driven website. The speech code theory will be used as a lens through which to analyze the type of language used in the reviews when describing an experience at particular business establishment. This research closely examined the specific approach the users employed in the Yelp speech community to communicate their message to other people seeking information from fellow consumers like themselves.

II. Literature Review

The majority of literature regarding the topic of electronic word of mouth platforms deals with the fol-

* **Keywords:** online reviews, Yelp, online community, online word of mouth, and elite status users

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lowing four areas: definitions of electronic word of mouth, influences on purchase decisions, characteristics of leaders among users, and comparisons to traditional word of mouth activities. Additional literature about the speech code theory's basic elements and characteristics is also included within this section.

Electronic Word of Mouth

Electronic word of mouth is defined as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau, 2004). According to Keller and Berry (2003), many of *the Influentials*, consumers 18 years or older, identified people as the best sources over advertising for recommendations when looking for some items. For example, their percentage reached 83% for new restaurants, 73% for new meals or dishes, and 71% for places to go visit at (2003, p. 5).

Consumers produce user-generated web sites' reviews, which serve as "informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage or characteristics of particular goods or their sellers" (Westbrook, 1987; Steffes et al., 2008). Researchers Steffes and Burgee (2008) found that electronic word of mouth from one virtual stranger to another was equally as valuable as receiving purchasing advice from a trustworthy friend, if not preferred.

Opinion Leaders

Opinion leaders who surface on electronic word of mouth web sites such as Yelp are typically more engaged in the environment and provide more explanatory information, in addition to using the Internet more frequently than others (Lyons et al., 2005; Steffes et al., 2008). Authority in Web 2.0 environments is bestowed on users in accordance with the quantity of ratings individuals gain and on their helpfulness as judged by their peers (Funk, 2009, p. 12). Researcher Funk notes that status and reputation are important attributes on sites powered by user-generated content, and "we wear our authority on our sleeves," (2009, p. 13).

Yelp's Foundation and Purposes

Yelp attempted to solve the problem with the traditional model of word of mouth. Word of mouth had not evolved to be more relevant and readily available in people's 21st century search for local establishments recommended by ordinary consumers. The director of communication, Stephanie Ichinose, mentioned in an interview that Yelpers are supplying information to the bloggers, supporting local businesses, helping share potentially useful information with others and being a fixture in a local community of people zealous about sharing experiences (as cited in Safko & Brake, 2009, p. 90).

In 2009, Yelp carried more than 3.5 million reviews on the site and had 14 million unique visits. These numbers are continuing to grow with each passing day (Safko & Brake, 2009, p. 90-91). The average Yelper, or web site visitor, comes to the site casually seeking to find information. Overall the types of establishments that Yelp has reviews on varied, with restaurants only accounting for 34% of businesses reviewed. This counters the popular notion that Yelp reviews are *mostly* on restaurants. The next largest area of reviews is the shopping category, which makes up 23% of the reviews (Safko & Brake, 2009, p. 93).

Yelp is a part of a group of web sites called participatory sites, or Web 2.0 sites, that allow users to submit reviews on businesses, with other consumers being the primary audience. User ratings are what consumers trust most, according to numerous studies that cite that recommendations from customers like themselves have the largest influence on their purchasing decisions. Web 2.0 web sites, such as Yelp, create an environment where consumers can communicate about their experience at a particular business in frank and practical language (Funk, 2009, p. 11).

Interests of Yelp Users

Tancer (2008) found that the majority of Yelp users could be categorized into two divisions, using Experian's MOSAIC segmentation of the "Young Contemporaries" and the "Affluent Suburbia." The "Young Contemporaries" are composed of Millennials between the ages of 18 to 24 whose interests lie in plays, movies, comics and bands. These young adults were raised in an era filled with rapid technology advancements; thus, "they are very Internet savvy, spending their leisure time online to chat, job search, send instant messages, bid in auctions and frequent internet dating web sites" (Tancer, 2008, p. 134).

The "Affluent Suburbia" are people who "tend to be households that are occupied by baby boomers

and their children. They generally hold managerial and executive positions, with primary interests that include money management, travel, and gourmet dining” (Tancer, 2008, pp. 134-135). Tancer (2008) also points out that with the most prominent groups on Yelp being from two different generations, they thus have different viewpoints, which could create contrary experiences and evaluations (p.135).

Speech Code Theory

Communication patterns of members of the Yelp discourse community, a group of people that share a unique way of communicating, were analyzed using the speech codes theory. The theory is primarily concerned with the changes that an individual's speech undergoes within a particular speech community as related to the content, style and tone in addition to the overall framework for delivering and interpreting information. (Philipsen et al., 2005, p. 57). Philipsen (1997) notes in one of his earlier works that speech code is a method of “socially-constructed symbols and meanings, premises, and rules, pertaining to communicative conduct” (p. 126).

There are two critical elements to understanding how code is used in the speech codes theory. The first involves observer-analysts who create speech codes for the specific task of interpreting and explaining communicative behavior within a distinct speech community (Philipsen et al., 2005, p. 57). The second involves located resources that are used to assign names, interpretations and judgments as related to communicative conduct. During the preliminary phase of purely observing random samples of reviews, commonalities in the way users communicate were sought to define various speech codes to be used for the content analysis. The identified codes are those that function best within the social community in accordance with the purpose of Yelp and are ultimately embedded in the social life of the participants. (Philipsen et al., 2005, p. 57).

In this research, the following three questions were examined.

RQ 1. What common stylistic characteristics in online business reviews on Yelp consistently gather review reader feedback as *useful*, *funny* and *cool*?

RQ 2. Are the Elite Yelp reviewers' evaluations receiving the most review reader feedback as *useful*, *funny*, or *cool*?

RQ 3. Is there an equal distribution of Non-Elite and Elite user reviews within each category?

III. Methodology

To execute this research, a systematic, quantitative and objective method of content analysis was used to answer the research questions.

To identify the characteristics that make online consumer reviews valuable, a content analysis was conducted. The coding themes were designed to capture the meaning or value that the reader gave the text, in accordance with the symbolic interaction theory. The following four categories were identified as the coding components:

- Elite Status – Elite or Non-Elite
- Star Ratings – One, Two, Three, Four or Five Stars
- Format – listed/number/bulleted items, words in all capital letters, short length(80 words or less), long length(350 words or more), repetition of letter, and repetition of words
- Statement – service quality, atmosphere, frequent visitor, 1st time visitor, prices, photo, and anticipated return

The District of Columbia's “*Hot on Yelp* in the last month” is a list compiled by Yelp that features the top 50 businesses in a particular metropolitan area, the population used for this study. The list focused on the top four establishments that all happened to be restaurants.

Each Yelp review completed by Elite Yelp reviewers and non-Elite Yelp reviewers was assessed against the previously mentioned criteria. Reviews that received three or more user votes for any of the three categories, *useful*, *funny* or *cool*, were included in the sample. Among a total of 763 reviews examined, 106 reviews (14%) were recorded because they met the selection criterion.

IV. Findings

Among the qualifying reviews 68 reviews (64.2%) were rated as useful, while the *cool* reviews accounted for 35 reviews (33.0%), and the *funny ones*, 21 reviews (19.8%), as shown in Table 1 below. Of all reviews that received votes, 95 reviews (89.6%) mentioned the atmosphere of the restaurant to some extent. The next common characteristic was the discussion of service quality in the review, which represented 80.2% of the data collected (85 reviews).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for three categories of reviews

| Category | Number | Percentage | Star Rating Average |
|----------|----------------|------------|---------------------|
| Useful | 68* out of 106 | 64.2% | 3.3 |
| Cool | 35* out of 106 | 33.0% | 4 |
| Funny | 21* out of 106 | 19.8% | 4 |

Note: *A total of 17 selected reviews were included in *multiple* categories.

Reviews Voted Useful

The largest group of the three categories was the *useful* category. In this area Yelp reviewers seemed to be the most critical by assigning an average star rating of 3.3 for the overall experience. This was also a group of reviews that was not tremendously skewed in favor of Yelp Elite reviewers. It turned out that the Elite only represented 56%, while Non-Elite reviews did the rest (see Table 2 below).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics by elite / non-elite ranking

| Elite Status | Useful | Cool | Funny |
|--------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Elite | 38 (56%) | 28 (80%) | 17 (81%) |
| Non-Elite | 30 (44%) | 7 (20%) | 4 (19%) |

Readers did not seem to mind reading a review that was longer. According to Table 3 below, 37% of all the *useful* reviews were at least 350 words or more. Short reviews, 80 words or less, were less likely to be *useful*, only accounting for 6% of all *useful* reviews. *Useful* reviews were also more likely than either the *cool* or *funny* categories to use all capital letters for some words to emphasize reviewers' point (41 %). Among useful reviews, 15% have bulleted list or numbered items.

People who were visiting an establishment for the first time were more likely to write a *useful* review, accounting for 44% of *useful* pieces. Among useful reviews, 76% mentioned service quality, more prevalent in the *useful* category than in the *funny* and *cool* categories. The price of items on the menu or other things in the restaurant facility showed up in their reviews at a frequency of 43%, which is the highest of all groups. *Useful* reviews were the least likely to include whether the writer intended to visit an establishment again in the future, making up a mere 34% of reviews.

Reviews Voted Cool and Funny

Reviews that were voted as *cool* was the second largest group, representing 28% of the data, while *funny* reviews constituted the smallest portion of all with 17%. Regarding both the *cool* and *funny* reviews, average star rating was 4 stars for the complete restaurant experience, thus these reviews tended to include more positive feedback than the *useful* reviews. Yelp Elite reviewers created much more *cool* (80%) and *funny* (81%) reviews than the non-Elite reviewers (see Table 2 above).

The formatting style of *funny* and *cool* reviews favored a more informal delivery and diction for expressing their opinions than the *useful* reviews. *Cool* and *funny* reviews' frequency of the repetition of letters (funny 14%) and words (cool 9%) was high considering the amount of reviews in comparison to the *useful*

reviews. Both the cool and funny reviews were most likely to be short, which accounted for 9% and 10% respectively for each area's reviews.

The *cool* and *funny* reviewers would more likely to return to the reviewed restaurant a second time than *useful* reviewers. The reviews voted as *cool* were also most inclined to include information about the general atmosphere of the restaurant of all three categories with 80 percent.

Table 3: Distribution of all reviews among each category

| | Useful (68 reviews) | Cool (35 reviews) | Funny (21 reviews) |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 300 or more words | 25(37%) | 7(20%) | 4(19%) |
| 80 or less words | 4(6%) | 3(9%) | 2(10%) |
| Photos | 3(4%) | 2(6%) | 0 |
| Word in all capitals | 28(41%) | 13(37%) | 7(33%) |
| Bulleted, numbered list | 10(15%) | 4(11%) | 2(10%) |
| Word Repetition | 7(10%) | 3(9%) | 1(5%) |
| First time client | 30(44%) | 13(37%) | 6(29%) |
| Service quality | 52(76%) | 22(63%) | 12(57%) |
| Price | 29(43%) | 11(31%) | 4(19%) |
| Atmosphere/Facilities | 54(76%) | 28(80%) | 16(76%) |
| Intention of Second visit | 23(34%) | 16(46%) | 8(38%) |
| Letter Repetition | 1(2%) | 2(6%) | 3(14%) |

V. Conclusions

Electronic word of mouth is a concept that has seemed to grow by leaps and bounds over the past decade. Yelp has expanded to reach markets beyond the first metropolitan area, San Francisco, and now has a presence in over 21 other U.S. markets, in addition to recently entering international markets in Europe.

The opinion leaders of Yelp, the Elite members, are in fact the more active members of the community who are participating in the site more by responding to other members or their readers/fans, filling out their entire profiles and earning compliment badges from peers, completing at least a double digital number of reviews among many other tasks. Lyons and Henderson's (2005) observations held true in evaluating Elite Yelp members; opinion leaders in this online environment are more active in the communities and provide more explanatory information. These Elite members are also creating more audience-engaging content, in which *funny* and *cool* reviews by Elite members dominate both categories with 81% for *funny* and 80% for *cool*.

As Funk (2009) noted, the authority of users in Web 2.0 communities is worn on their sleeves. This directly applies to Yelp, where key identifying information -- elite status, number of friends, number of reviews written to date and their location -- are included to the right of the review by each person. This information allows users to make more informed decisions about the character of a review writer.

Using the speech code theory, a few associations can be made between the type of language used and what it means in the Yelp speech community. First, a discussion of the atmosphere and service are typical characteristics of a review across any of the three groupings for reviews. Second, *cool* review writers were most likely to return to an establishment, mentioning: "I'd go back for drinks..." or "...will definitely be returning to try..." Third, first time patrons, 44%, and the inclusion of prices, 43%, were major staples in the *useful* category. *Useful* reviews also seemed to be the most critical of all reviews receiving ratings with an average star rating of 3.3, while the other areas' average star rating was 4.

In future research a more in-depth analysis of the Elite population's power and supposed psychographics could be assessed. Additional research could focus on evaluating the speech codes found in Yelp reviews in U.S. markets versus international markets, once the international sites grow to a size comparable to the U.S. markets.

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The Relationship of Online Sports Site Participation with Fan and Commentator Self-Identities

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Abstract

This research explored the process of how National Football League (NFL) fans who interact with and participate in sports-related news and information sites on the Internet negotiate their self-identities as fans and commentators. This research examined the interaction that 10 male participants have as fans and commentators with sports-related information. To determine whether a participant's identity as a fan or commentator will or will not change over the course of the study, the researcher used a baseline questionnaire, a log to track interactivity, and a second questionnaire. While there was not a significant change in fanship or commentatorship overall, participants felt their identity as a fan or a commentator decreased in some areas.

I. Introduction

As traditional media give way to digital media, particularly the Internet, consumers are beginning to live increasingly hybrid lives where the real world and the digital world interact. "In this world, online and offline identities may overlap and interdigitate, erasing prior boundaries in social, cultural, linguistic, political, and economic domains" (Jordan, 2009, p. 181). This world is also a place where identities are shaped by physical experiences and digital interaction, so one's existence is practically shared between the real world and the Internet (Jordan, 2009). This study will examine significant aspects of user interactivity: why and how Internet users participate in the flow of ideas about a topic, and how their participation relates to identification, both online and off. More specifically, this research will aim to explore the process of how National Football League (NFL) fans who interact with and participate in sports-related news and information sites on the Internet negotiate their self-identities as fans and commentators. In this research, a fan is an individual who achieves some level of satisfaction from and has some level of commitment to the NFL, specific teams, or specific players. A commentator is an individual who observes NFL football or learns sports-related information and then interacts with that information by creating or joining a conversation about it online. As a fan interacts with sports-related information, his or her identity change as a fan or a commentator will be measured by a numerical or observed increase or decrease.

Research was conducted by examining a set of 10 male NFL fans' interaction as both fans and commentators with sports-related information online from April to November 2010. The researcher used a baseline questionnaire, a log to track interactivity, and a second questionnaire to try and determine identity change over time. Results show that while there is not a significant change in fanship or commentatorship overall, there are specific areas in which participants experienced a change in identity as a fan or a commentator. Furthermore, the researcher was able to discover factors that can increase, decrease, or either increase or

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decrease a participant's level of interactivity, which can ultimately affect his identity change.

Since media are constantly evolving, the way people use media must change accordingly. Thus, it is important to understand how media interaction affects specific types of consumers. While this research could be applied to any type of niche consumer, this study focuses on NFL fans. People's views of the world are shaped by their highly mediated lifestyles, so researchers must discover how consumer changes will result in societal changes. Here, the researcher will better understand identity change in one consumer group. Change is what makes it important to become familiar with a world where people act as both producers and consumers of information, which can be difficult in a constantly shifting landscape (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007). Current research shows that there is a link missing between the concepts of media use and social identity. Therefore, the relationship between NFL fans' content creation and identity change is important for people to understand how highly mediated lifestyles change attitudes and alter self-perception. The first step to filling in that missing link, in terms of this research, is to understand existing literature on topics such as online interaction, sports fandom, and content creation.

II. Literature Review

While many researchers have studied the Internet in terms of interactivity over the past decade, it was not until 2002 when McMillan addressed the need to narrowly define and operationalize the concept. After examining website interaction, McMillan created a Measures of Perceived Interactivity scale to "enable researchers to examine relationships among perceptions of interactivity and other key new media variables" (McMillan, 2002, p. 39). Her scale measures likeness to real-time communication, interactivity speed, and controlled engagement. In practice, the scale is used to determine a consumer's level and reason for interactivity (McMillan, 2002).

One specific method of online interaction is to engage in user-generated media (UGM). While most people enjoy the ease and control of participating in UGM, there are a variety of reasons why they choose to do so. UGM is used to fulfill a variety of needs, such as information gathering, mood management, and entertainment. People also use UGM to interact with content and other people and to engage in self-expression by creating home pages and blogs. Each of these reasons for participating in UGM is substantial, yet they are interdependent (Shao, 2009).

Researchers Flanagin and Metzger (2001) agree that a consumer's ability to retrieve information, offer information, and engage in conversation on the Internet is significant. They claim, "Media once considered to be low in social presence and need gratification now appear to be considered rich multi-function channels...[The] Internet is the multidimensional communication technology used to fulfill well-understood needs in novel ways" (Flanagin & Metzger, 2001, p. 175). The

Internet has become a medium that caters to consumer's communicational and informational needs. As researchers have investigated the methods people use to meet their needs, they have often sought to apply a popular mass communications theory known as uses and gratifications.

Ko, an expert on the theory, writes, "Uses and gratifications theory is considered a psychological communication perspective that focuses on individual use and choice by asserting that different people can use the same mass medium for very different purposes" (Ko, 2005, p. 58). Through his investigation of the Internet, Ko also sees it as a medium that requires and delivers more interactivity than traditional media. People have various motivations for interactivity and demonstrate different behaviors through it, but it is certain the interaction will lead to a change in attitude (Ko, 2005). The kind of change depends on many factors, but to understand the change, it is first important to specify the type of consumer and interaction taking place.

Sports Fans as Internet Users

Sports fans are a type of consumer known for actively engaging in their favorite team and seeking gratification through the use of information. To define a sports fan, Hunt (1999) begins by stating three potential reasons for being a fan—basking in reflected glory, information processing, and/or attachment as it relates to the self. These reasons lead Hunt to the process of breaking sports fans into five categories. Temporary fans do not particularly identify with one team or sport. Local fans are bound by geographical constraints in the sense that they are a fan of a team because of their birthplace or current location. Devoted fans identify

with a specific team and are loyal to that team despite its performance. Fanatical fans show a high degree of fan-like behavior and go as far as using their favorite team as one method of self-identification. However, dysfunctional fans use their favorite teams as their strongest means of self-identification. Their identities depend on the success of their teams (Hunt, 1999). Fink (2002) furthers this argument by finding motives for being a sports fan that also affect identification, since motives lead to consumer behavior. Her study of collegiate fans shows that eight motives relate to fan identification: vicarious achievement, acquisition of knowledge, aesthetics, social interaction, drama/excitement, escape, family, and quality of physical skill (Fink, 2002).

Once people are labeled as sports fans and their motives are understood, their degrees of fanship must be established. To measure such a concept and understand it as a predictor of fan behavior, Shank (1998) created a scale to find the extent of one's fanship on a cognitive (psychological) and affective (emotional) level. He tested the scale on people ranging from a football coach to a respondent who claimed to have no interest in sports and found that both cognitive and affective involvement have an effect on one's level of fan behavior (Shank, 1998).

As previously stated, one type of behavior sports fans engage in at different levels is self-association with their favorite teams. Fans might use the Internet to publicly display that identity.

Mediation expert End wrote, "For individuals whose sport fan identity is an important aspect of their social identity, this use of the [Web] may be a technique for individuals to manage their sport fan identities" (End, 2001, p. 177). However, a fan's identity can change depending on a team's performance. For example, BIRGing, or "basking in reflected glory," refers to the idea that fans think others will see them as successful if they associate themselves with a successful team. Fans also engage in CORFing, or "cutting off the reflected failure," when they want to reduce association with a team that begins to fail (End, 2001).

Identity Change and Online Interaction

With interactivity comes the increased chance that a user's identity could be altered by experience. Kurniawan (2001) focuses on such identity changes in hopes of discovering the effects of developing an online identity. He specifically studies personal websites, which act as self-advertisements. Kurniawan stated, "Individual's interaction is seen as a 'performance' that is shaped by environment and audience...an individual develops [his or] her identity or persona as consequence of interacting with other people" (2001, p. 5).

Furthermore, Van Dijck (2004) explored how online interaction, such as blogging, can affect a user's social norms and cultural concepts, both of which have an impact on identity. He wrote, "Those...practices both reflect and construct new social norms and cultural concepts, such as individual and community, privacy and publicness, experience and memory. In a period of transition, these concepts fluctuate and will continue to fluctuate, but unraveling such complex transformation may help us sort out newly emerging cultural values" (2004, para. 34). While media use does cause these concepts to fluctuate, it is important to understand change.

As this literature reveals, sports fans are known to engage in online interaction to manage their self-identification with sports teams. Today's fans are actively involved in sports-related information by making the move from being passive consumers to being consumers who are also producers. Findings from previous studies, along with the expository overlay from the uses and gratifications theories, have led the researcher to explore the relationship between how sports fans influence their attitudes and self-identification through interaction with online media.

III. Research Questions

While the main goal of this study is to explore the process of how National Football League fans who interact with and participate in sports-related news and information sites on the Internet negotiate their self-identities as fans and commentators, the researcher plans to address the following research questions:

RQ 1. How does the quality and extent of the website participation influence the process of negotiating self-identity as a fan?

This question will help the researcher explore how interacting with and participating in sports websites change the way participants see themselves as fans. The quality of fan participation refers to how much time and effort are put into creating content on the web. It also takes into account techniques like whether or not

fans link to published news articles or information and if they include additional media, such as images and videos. The extent of fan participation refers to how often fans visit a website to create content and how long they spend creating that content.

The process of fans' negotiation of identities refers to the way they might be influenced by participation. To negotiate their identities, fans participate in sports-related news and information websites for an extended period of time and evaluate the way that participation changes them as fans. This process of negotiation may lead fans to change their attitudes and behaviors.

RQ 2. How does the quality and extent of the website participation influence the process of negotiating self-identity as a commentator?

This question will help the researcher explore how interacting with and participating in sports websites change the way participants see themselves as participants in the production of opinion and information. The terms *quality*, *extent*, *participation*, and *negotiation* are defined in the section above. The definitions are the same for this research question. However, the concept of being a commentator has not been defined. In this research, commentators are those who observe NFL football or learn sports-related information and then interact with that information by creating or joining a conversation about it online. To the extent that fans come to believe that their opinions are salient, they should view themselves as commentators. While they are not professional journalists, commentators think their level of participation has earned them a voice.

IV. Methodology

The research for this project was a three-part process that included a baseline questionnaire, an interactivity log, and a second questionnaire. The practice of using qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study, called a mixed-method evaluation design, has proved beneficial. According to Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989), the mixed-method approach allows the researcher to verify findings, refine research questions, and constantly consider new areas of research. The combination of methods used in this study, sometimes referred to as *triangulation*, helped to establish a participant's identity change as a fan and a commentator, based on online interaction with sports-related information (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Creswell, 2010).

To begin, the researcher recruited people involved in creating sports-related content online. A recruitment process yielded 10 male participants, all of whom were college students at a private university of 5,000 students in the southeastern part of the U.S. These participants acknowledged an ongoing involvement in fan sites and volunteered to take part in the study. While the researcher did not plan to use all male participants, it was difficult to find females who wanted to participate in a study about interacting with sports-related information. Because participants came from a convenience sample, the results from this study cannot be generalized to the entire population.

Stage One: Baseline Questionnaire

The first stage of the research was to submit a questionnaire to each participant to better understand his identity as a fan and as a commentator. McCracken, a leading U.S. scholar on interviewing methods, says that questionnaires work well with in-depth interviews because they "[establish] channels for the direction and scope of discourse" (1988, p. 24). The questionnaire, created with Survey Monkey (<http://www.SurveyMonkey.com>), consisted of two sets of seven point-scale questions, questions about the participants' interaction time with online information and demographic questions (see Appendix 1). The first set of seven questions is for a fanship scale, while the second set for a commentatorship scale.

Wann and Branscombe (1993) developed the fanship scale, called the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS). It is meant to measure "the degree to which spectators identify with sports teams" (Wann & Branscombe, 1993, p. 1). The scale is comprised of seven questions asking how a participant views his fanship, and how others view it (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). For the purpose of this study, the SSIS was used as the first set of seven questions without being almost unchanged.

While research into content creation is relatively new, no scale was found to measure the degree of a participant's identity as a commentator. To solve this problem, the researcher adapted the SSIS to create the second set of seven questions in Appendix 1 and captured self-reported scores on a respondent's level of

commentatorship. The scale mirrored questions for the SSIS but replaced references to fans by references to commentators.

All participants filled out the questionnaire on the same day during two time slots. It was important to choose a day for participants to fill out the questionnaire when they would not be strongly influenced by a recent sports-related event, such as a big game or news development. As each participant completed his questionnaire, Survey Monkey organized his responses as an individual and within the entire group. The data was analyzed by looking at percentages and frequencies. Surprising findings and emerging themes were also noted. This method allowed the researcher to better understand the fan and commentator identities of the participants at the start of the study, so she could measure identity change at the end of the study.

Stage Two: Interactivity Logs

The second stage of research was to have each participant keep a log of their interactivity for 10 weeks, notably on their experiences in adding their own comments to ongoing online discussions. Coughlan and Sklar (2003) stated, "Another useful preparatory activity is to encourage participants to keep a journal...to reflect on their everyday behaviors, and to formulate a point of view about a design issue by focusing on it as they went about their everyday lives" (p. 133). The logbooks were distributed to participants in August 2010, prior to the start of the NFL season (see Appendix 2).

The participants received logs to start filling out the week of August 30, 2010. Once per week for 10 weeks, they were to fill out one log to describe and comment on their experiences. These 10 weeks were chosen because they fell during the beginning and middle of the 2010-2011 NFL season. Participants submitted their logbooks by October 31. Once the logbooks were submitted, participant responses were coded for recurring themes, steady changes, and surprising elements.

Stage Three: Second Questionnaire

Finally, each participant was asked to complete another questionnaire, which used only questions 2-20 of the first questionnaire.

Again, once each participant submitted his questionnaire, Survey Monkey compiled responses by individual and within the group. After reviewing the responses from this questionnaire, the researcher compared each participant's response with the other participants' to the same initial questionnaire and also compared the group's aggregate responses to the initial questionnaire with those to the second one. Differences in responses, whether an increase or decrease, noted the extent of self-reported changes in identity.

V. Findings

By using a mixed-method evaluation design, the researcher tracked participants' change in self-identity as both a fan and a commentator in the most accurate way that was feasible for this study. The baseline and second questionnaire gave a snapshot of each participant's identity and habits at the beginning and end of the study, and the logs helped participants track their online interactivity for a period of time between questionnaires. By operationalizing the research questions using this methodology, it was ensured that all research objectives were met. The findings are presented in chronological order.

Stage One and Three: Baseline and Second Questionnaires

Participants completed the first questionnaire in April 2010. The data were immediately collected and available to the researcher using Survey Monkey. Findings from the baseline questionnaire are listed in the second column of Table 1 and Table 2 below. Participants completed the second questionnaire in November 2010, after submitting their interactivity logs. Findings from the second questionnaire are listed in the third column of Table 1 and Table 2 below.

After collecting data from both questionnaires, means of responses from corresponding questions were compared to find change in a participant's answers. The change in answers directly relates to a change in a participant's identity and habits, which is significant to the purpose of this study. The table below lists a question that appears on both questionnaires, the mean of answers from the baseline questionnaire, the mean of answers from the second questionnaire, and numerical changes between the two numbers.

Table 3 shows the amount of time the participants spent interacting with sports-related information online per day and per week.

Table 1. Fanship scale

| Question | Baseline | Second | Change |
|--|----------|--------|--------------|
| How important to YOU is it that your favorite team wins? | 6.70 | 6.30 | -0.40 |
| How strongly do YOU see YOURSELF as a fan of your favorite team? | 7.00 | 6.20 | -0.80 |
| How strongly do your FRIENDS see YOU as a fan of your favorite team? | 6.00 | 5.70 | -0.30 |
| During the season, how closely do you follow your favorite team via ANY of the following: a) in person or on television, b) on the radio, c) television news or a newspaper, or d) the Internet? | 6.90 | 6.30 | -0.60 |
| How important is being a fan of your favorite team to YOU? | 6.20 | 6.20 | 0 |
| How much do you dislike the greatest rivals of your favorite team? | 6.50 | 6.00 | -0.50 |
| How often do YOU display your favorite team's name or logo at your place of work, where you live, or on your clothing? | 4.70 | 4.40 | -0.30 |
| Fan Scale: average of 7 rows above | 6.29 | 5.87 | -0.42 |

Table 2. Commentatorship scale

| Question | Baseline | Second | Change |
|---|----------|--------|--------------|
| How important to YOU is it to share your opinion with others? | 6.40 | 5.80 | -0.60 |
| How strongly do YOU see YOURSELF as a producer or information? | 5.20 | 5.20 | 0 |
| How strongly do your FRIENDS see YOU as a producer of information? | 5.30 | 5.20 | -0.10 |
| How often do you consume sports-related information via ANY of the following: a) in person or on television, b) on the radio, c) television news or a newspaper, or d) the Internet?* | 8.00 | 8.00 | 0 |
| How important is being a producer of information to YOU? | 5.60 | 4.40 | -1.20 |
| How much do you like when your opinion creates disagreement among others? | 5.60 | 6.10 | +0.50 |
| How often do YOU talk about sports-related information one-on-one with others or in small groups? | 7.60 | 7.40 | -0.20 |
| Commentator Scale: average of 7 rows above | 6.24 | 6.01 | -0.23 |

Note: * This statement is under the Commentatorship scale rather than Fanship scale because the author thought the participants tend to view the media to comment on what is happening.

Table 3. Time spent

| Question | Baseline | Second | Change |
|--|-----------|-----------|----------|
| How many days per week do you interact with sports-related information online? | 7 days | 6.5 days | -0.5 day |
| How many hours per day do you interact with sports-related information online? | 3.5 hours | 3.5 hours | 0 |

When comparing the two sets of numbers, it is important to determine how much of a change is considered statistically significant in this study. In statistics, significance refers to the probability that a change in data is not the result of chance. Therefore, the higher a mean difference between the baseline questionnaire and the second questionnaire, the more likely it is for the answer to that question to be significant. In this study, the researcher used a confidence interval of 95%. A confidence interval is an estimate used to indicate whether data is reliable or not. In applied practice, confidence intervals are usually set at 95%. By performing a paired t-test, a test used to compare means on related subjects over time, the researcher determined the statistical significance. When looking at means from the baseline and second questionnaires, any change at, above 0.60, or below -0.60 is considered significant.

Change in Fanship

When combining all averages from questions about fanship in each questionnaire and comparing them to one another, the change in the scale for fanship was not found statistically significant, except for two areas, as shown in Table 1. Participants reported by a mean change of -0.8, seeing themselves less strongly as a fan of their favorite teams. Participants also reported by a mean change of -0.6, following their favorite teams less often using mediums such as television, radio, and the Internet.

Change in Commentatorship

There was no significant difference the group's overall level of commentatorship between the two questionnaires, except for two areas, as shown in Table 2 above. First, participants reported a mean change of -0.6, showing that it was important to them to share their opinions with others. Participants also reported a mean change of -1.2 on the question of whether producing information was important to them.

Stage Two: Interactivity Logs

Participants maintained their interactivity logs for the first half of the 2010 NFL season, from August to October 2010. Once each participant submitted his qualitative log, the researcher analyzed the entries for patterns of interaction and/or changes in identity. The researcher then created categories to capture participants' concerns and habits. These might help to explain why his level of interactivity increased or decreased, thus affecting possible changes in identity. The categories are listed and explained below.

Urge to Express Opinions

A participant increased his level of interactivity with sports-related information online when he had an opinion to express about a current event. In fact, this seemed to be the most common reason for a participant's online interaction. Expressing an opinion about a current event might be as simple as talking about an upcoming or past game. Participant 10 wrote, "On my blog, I did pregame write ups for each team and then wrote about my reactions when the games were over" (2010). A current event might also refer to a player. In October 2010, the NFL looked into allegations that Brett Favre, a married player, had sent inappropriate texts and voicemails to a New York Jets employee after the website Deadspin posted possible evidence. Later, Favre admitted to some of the allegations. Many participants wrote about this incident in their logs and commented on the fact that it rapidly spread across the Internet. Finally, a current event could refer to an NFL trend. In late October and early November, a few NFL players, including James Harrison and Dunta Robinson, were fined for controversial tackles that caused injuries. Harrison even considered retiring. A few participants wrote about this trend. Participant 9 said, "I discussed why the NFL unfortunately can't care for its players properly while keeping the same rough playing style they've had for so long" (2010).

Interact with Others

Another common reason that a participant increased his level of online interactivity was when he wanted to interact with other fans. That interaction with others could refer to bonding or bashing. Three participants mentioned their interaction with other fans through the creation and maintenance of Fantasy Football teams, which is a virtual competition where fans manage made-up football teams that are comprised of real NFL players. Interaction through Fantasy Football could include a participant arguing with another fan during the draft or taunting him when his team is losing a game. Two other participants referred to the fact that interaction with other fans can lead to bets, whether they are for money or bragging rights. Participant 4 wrote,

"This [New England] Patriots fan was telling me how good the Patriots are, and that they're just unstoppable. I bet him \$50 that the Patriots wouldn't make it to the Superbowl. He didn't want to take the bet. Any Boston fan is all talk" (2010).

Too Busy

However, a participant decreased his level of interactivity with sports-related information online when he was busy with other activities. This seemed to be the most common reason for a participant's decrease in online interaction. As shown in Table 3 above, the second questionnaire revealed that participants engage in online interaction 6.5 days per week, which was a 0.5-day decrease from the baseline questionnaire. While participants still engaging in online interaction very frequently, there are other activities that sometimes prevent them from interacting. Often times, those activities are related to school. Participants listed activities such as homework, extra curricular activities, and visiting friends as reasons for decreased interaction. Other times, participants were traveling and without access to computers. In some weeks, participants wrote about wanting to talk to other fans offline about sports-related information. Participant 8 wrote, "This week, I preferred interpersonal interaction instead of digital interaction" (2010).

Team's Level of Success

While other categories specifically explain the increase or decrease of a participant's online interactivity, some categories can cause a participant's interactivity to either increase or decrease. For example, a participant's level of interactivity might vary depending on the current success of his favorite team. Most often, when a participant's team is doing well, his interaction increases because he wants to talk about the team's success online with other fans. When a participant's team is doing poorly, it can have two very different effects. Participant 9 wrote, "This was the first week I started to complain about my favorite team ... because of their poor play. I felt like their struggles made my week online less enjoyable" (2010). In this case, when a participant's favorite team slumps, he loses interest in online interaction. Decreased interest could lead to decreased interaction. Nevertheless, Participant 10 wrote, "This week my favorite team lost 29-10 to the Tennessee Titans, so I kept posting my reactions to the game... It was a rough weekend to be a Giants fan, but I was still very active online" (2010). In this case, a participant's favorite team slumped, but he increased online interaction to share his frustration.

VI. Discussion

The following sections are broken down by the concepts of change in fanship and change in commentatorship.

Change in Fanship

The first research question for this study aims to discover how the quality and extent of website participation influences the process of negotiating self-identity as a fan. In conducting a t-test, the change in the scale for fanship was not found significant, except for two areas. "How strongly do YOU see YOURSELF as a fan of your favorite team?" saw a significant change. This change proves that, from April to October 2010, participants saw themselves less strongly as a fan of their favorite teams. In terms of negotiating self-identity, participants reported being a fan as less a part of their identities than it was at the beginning of the study. Regarding another question, "During the season, how closely do you follow your favorite team via ANY of the following: a) in person or on television, b) on the radio, c) television news or a newspaper, or d) the Internet?" respondents showed a change in their responses, participants following their favorite teams less closely via such mediums. In terms of negotiating self-identity, a participant's identity as a fan might decrease if his interaction with sports-related information decreases.

When coding the logs, the researcher found two categories related to decreased interaction. The first is related to a change in interaction depending on a team's level of success. While fans use the Internet to publicly display and manage their identity as a fan, End (2001) claims an identity can change depending on a team's performance. When a participant's favorite team is doing well, he might "bask in reflected glory," but when his team is in a slump, he might "cut off the reflected failure" (End, 2001). In their logs, many partici-

pants report being upset by their favorite team's performance this season. If a participant's favorite team frustrates him, he might engage in CORFing and decrease his interaction. Therefore, when his quality and extent of interaction are decreased, a participant's identity as a fan also decreases.

The second category is related to a change in interaction when a participant is too busy. Participant 5 says, "I don't have a lot of time to interact or watch football when I have guests staying with me. Oh, well ..." (2010). In this case, the participant does not seem upset by the fact that he does not have time to watch sports or interact with sports-related information online. If a participant's identity as a fan were unchanged, he would probably be upset by his decreased interaction. Throughout the course of the study, participants reported interacting with sports-related information for an average of 3.5 hours per day. That is a lot of time that a participant might need to spend doing homework or being with friends. In those cases, his identity as a student or a friend might increase, while his identity as a fan decreases. When a participant's interaction with sports-related information decreases, his identity as a fan decreases. This might also be related to Hunt's (1999) definition of different types of fans. Participants could be moving from being a fanatical to a devoted fan. Due to the passionate entries about football in the logs, this change in fanship is probably not due to a decreased interest in the sport itself.

Change in Commentatorship

The second research question for this study aims to discover how the quality and extent of website participation influences the process of negotiating self-identity as a commentator. The change in the scale scores for commentatorship was not found significant, except for two areas. "How important to YOU is it to share your opinion with others?" was the first question in which the answers show a significant change. This change proves that, from April to October 2010, participants saw it less important to share their opinions with others. Sharing an opinion is central to the concept of being a commentator. In terms of negotiating self-identity, participants claim that a central concept of being a commentator is becoming less important to them. Therefore, their self-identity as a commentator is decreased. The second question in which the answers show a significant change in commentatorship is, "How important is being a producer of information to YOU?" Their responses to this question changed more than any other questions, so participants felt most strongly about this change than any other. This proves that, during the course of the study, participants saw being a producer of information, or a commentator, as being much less important to them. In terms of negotiating self-identity, if being a commentator is of decreased importance to a participant, his existing identity as a commentator will weaken.

Again, the first category is related to a change in interaction depending on a team's level of success. If a participant's team is not doing well, he may be too frustrated or embarrassed to share his opinion with others. In that case, he would engage in CORFing and decrease his online interaction (End, 2001). Therefore, when his quality and extent of interaction are decreased due to a slump in his team's success, a participant's identity as a commentator also decreases. A participant might also be too busy to engage in interaction. Participant 8 writes, "Some weeks, I look for information and don't feel the need to voice my opinions" (2010). Here, a participant is busy reading information and does not feel compelled to comment on it. Kurniawan (2001) claims, "An individual develops [his or] her identity or persona as a consequence of interacting with other people" (2001, p. 5). If a participant does not interact with others because he chooses not to comment, he will not develop his identity as a commentator. When his interaction with sports-related information decreases, a participant's self-identity as a commentator also decreases. Finally, Participant 8 says, "This week I preferred interpersonal interaction instead of digital interaction" (2010). In this study, the researcher is looking at the effects that quality and extent of website participation can have on a consumer. If a participant chooses to talk with other fans in person about sports-related information, he is not engaging in website participation. Fans that prefer to engage in intrapersonal interaction, rather than online interaction, become less of a commentator in terms of this study. A participant might still be talking about sports-related information, but his lack of digital interaction leads to decreased self-identity as a commentator.

In terms of this study, a participant's identity as a fan or a commentator was decreased, rather than being strengthened, by interactivity. Though neither a participant's level of fanship nor commentatorship proved to have a significant change except for a few areas, there were ways that the quality and extent of interaction were proven to have an influence on the process of negotiating self-identity. Understanding that influence is important in a society where consumers of media are also becoming producers of information.

In terms of future research, the researcher recommends a larger representative sample that is not

limited to men. This type of sample makes it possible to get a better-rounded perspective of consumer habits. Another recommendation is to ask participants to keep their interactivity logs for a longer period of time and encourage them to be as in-depth as possible with their self-reporting. This would yield even richer findings. Finally, it would be beneficial to research other types of consumers in terms of their online interaction, so the link connecting media use and social identity can become stronger and advance existing research.

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Appendix 1: Baseline Questionnaire

1. Please list your favorite NFL team's city and name.

2. How important to YOU is it that the team listed above wins?

| | Not Important | | | | | | Very important |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Choose One | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

3. How strongly do YOU see YOURSELF as a fan of the team listed above?

| | Not at all a fan | | | | | | Very much a fan |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Choose One | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

4. How strongly do your FRIENDS see YOU as a fan of the team listed above?

| | Not at all a fan | | | | | | Very much a fan |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Choose One | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

5. During the season, how closely do you follow the team listed above via ANY of the following: 1) in person or on television, b) on the radio, c) television news or a newspaper, or d) the Internet?

| | Never | | | | | | Almost Everyday |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Choose One | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

6. How important is being a fan of the team listed above to YOU?

| | Not Important | | | | | | Very important |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Choose One | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

7. How much do you dislike the greatest rivals of the team listed above?

| | Do no dislike | | | | | | Hate |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Choose One | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

8. How often do YOU display the team's name or logo at your place of work, where you live, or on your clothing?

| | Never | | | | | | Always |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Choose One | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

9. How important to you is it to share your opinion with others?

Choose One Not Important ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ very important

10. How strongly do YOU see YOURSELF as a producer of information?

Choose One Not at all a producer of information ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very much a producer of information

11. How strongly do your FRIENDS see YOU as a producer of information?

Choose One Not at all a producer of information ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very much a producer of information

12. How often do you consume sports-related information via ANY of the following: 1) in person or on television, b) on the radio, c) television news or a newspaper, or d) the Internet?

Choose One Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Almost Everyday

13. How important is being a producer of information to YOU?

Choose One Not Important ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Important

14. How much do you like when your opinion creates disagreement among others?

Choose One Do no like ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Like very much

15. How often do YOU talk about sports-related information one-on-one with others or in small groups?

Choose One Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Almost Everyday

16. How many days per week do you interact with sports-related information online?

17. How many hours per day do you interact with sports-related information online?
18. How long (number of years) have you been interacting with sports-related information?
19. Which websites do you visit most often to interact with sports-related information?

- 1)
2)
3)

20. Do you do any of the following? (Choose all that apply.)

☐ Post comments on message boards.

☐ Post comments to news articles.

☐ Update a personal blog.

☐ Live chat with other fans.

Other

Demographic Information

1. Gender

☐ male ☐ female

2. Age ()

3. Year

☐ First-Year ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior

4. Major ()

5. Home State ()

Appendix 2: Weekly Interactivity Log

Date: _____

On how many days did you interact this week? _____ (days)

On average, how many hours a day did you interact? _____ (hours)

Websites Used:

Type of Interaction: (ex: Commenting on news articles, posting on a message board, updating a blog, live chatting with other fans, etc.)

Topics Mentioned in Interaction:

Did you experience any unusual or memorable situations during your interaction this week? Please provide details.

Finals Thoughts?

From Policies to Punishments: The Atlantic Coast Conference and Social Networking

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Abstract

This research paper examined the use of social networking sites by college athletes and how ACC schools are tackling this topic. Following the emergence of recent issues surrounding this subject, many schools had been compelled to form policies and educate athletes in a way that benefited the school, programs, coaches, teams and individuals. Through ten in-depth interviews, the author found that most ACC schools were dealing with social networking in similar ways. Athletic departments were beginning to inform and educate students on proper social networking use, the benefits and potential problems that could arise from using these sites.

I. Introduction

“To tweet or to play football???? That’s an easy decision.... Bye Bye twitter I am really gonna miss you guys....see you in about 3 months” (Walsh).

The aforementioned quote was a Twitter post by UNC quarterback T.J. Yates following the implementation of a new team policy that banned all players from using Twitter accounts during football season. While a Twitter ban may seem a bit extreme when dealing with college athletes, many athletic programs feel that drastic measures need to be taken in order to educate players on the importance of responsible social networking use. There have been a number of issues recently surrounding the topic of college athlete use of social networking sites, the two most popular being Facebook and Twitter. These issues have led to a number of athletic programs being scrutinized by the media and players being kicked off teams (Yanda). The Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) schools have stood out quite a bit recently in their attempts at dealing with issues surrounding this subject and efforts to regulate social networking among athletes.

This study looks at what many of the ACC athletic departments are doing in regards to athletes using social networking sites. Topics covered include individual school policies, opinions of these social networking sites and the future of these sites in the world of college athletics.

II. Literature Review

There is currently scarce scholarly research surrounding the topic of social networking use by college athletes. However, there is a wide variety of articles dealing with social media; some articles are broad and others are more specific as they focus on ideas such as how social media is impacting the world of sports. No matter how many articles are examined, there are four main topics that need to be discussed to prepare

readers on the subject of ACC athletes and social networking. These three topics include: social media; social networking, professional and college athlete use of social networking sites.

Social Media

Social media is “a term used to describe tools and platforms people use to produce, publish, and share online content and to interact with one another” (“Social Media Terms”). Social media tools include: blogs, wikis, videos, podcasts and more. While popular sites such as Twitter, Facebook and MySpace are part of the all encompassing social media world, they are also included in the narrower category of social networking sites.

Social Networking

Social networking sites are “web sites that host multiple communities comprising people with profiles who have similar interests. These sites offer a place where people can engage with one another online and share content” (“Social Media Terms”). Throughout this research, the term “social networking” will be used to refer to the various sites used by student-athletes, most commonly Facebook and Twitter. The term “social media” used by the interviewees throughout the findings section is referring to social networking sites.

“Social networking emerged with the rise of what is referred to as Web 2.0, free services that allow individuals to ‘connect’ with each other via the Internet” (Davies and Lee, 260). This new development of technology is different from Web 1.0 companies, such as Amazon, because they are “created and controlled by business entities, but the content is predominantly user driven” (260). Users have complete control over the content of Web 2.0 sites and that has had a huge impact on people of all ages.

“Social networking sites have become a preferred method of communication among many individuals in the last five years” (Marsico 967). This recent boom of social networking use has been guided by the three most widely used sites: MySpace, Facebook and Twitter. Even though these three sites have only been around since 2003, 2004 and 2006, respectively, social networking sites first entered the online community in 1996. However, they have only recently grown to an unprecedented level of popularity.

According to Kishner and Crescenti, “a recent study found that 73 percent of Americans regularly use social media, such as popular networking sites Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.” (Kishner and Crescenti, 24) Social networking appeals to a huge population because of all the features each site offers. “Friend networking sites allow users to communicate with others utilizing flexible and varying features such as posting information about themselves on their profiles, posting pictures, leaving messages, and providing hyperlinks to other sites” (Bonds-Raacke and Raacke, 27).

While all of these features are attractive, social networking sites have evolved into much more over the past few years. These sites have become a way for individuals to create a dialogue and virtual relationship with people they may never otherwise get a chance to encounter. From movie stars to athletes to politicians, it seems that anybody and everybody is becoming a user of social networks. In fact, some of the most active users of these sites are professional athletes.

Professional Athlete Use

In their 2010 article, Kishner and Crescenti provide an overview of the rise of social networking in professional sports. Social networking has become so prominent in the sporting world that three of the top 10 most-discussed individuals on Twitter in 2009 were professional athletes: Kobe Bryant, Tiger Woods and Alex Rodriguez (Kishner and Crescenti, 24). Players, teams, organizations and the like are all jumping on the bandwagon. Everybody from the New York Yankees to Shaquille O’Neal to The National Basketball Association (NBA) is taking part in the new social networking craze (24). However, the sporting industry is quickly learning that social networking not only has the ability to be incredibly useful in areas such as free marketing, but it can also be a problem when not used properly and intelligently.

Kassing and Sanderson discuss how “internet technologies now provide fans with unprecedented access to professional athletes” (Kassing and Sanderson, 113). This access has led to trouble when athletes go too far with their comments. This has been seen in multiple instances, including a Washington Redskins player criticizing the team’s fans for lack of support via-Twitter to multiple football players expressing anger towards their coaches (Kishner and Crescenti, 24). “Finding the balance of what should and should not be shared can be difficult” for professional athletes (Kassing and Sanderson, 116).

These athletes are used to being in the spotlight, but that usually comes with the help of a publicist or agent. Social networking sites have given athletes their own personal outlet to share their thoughts, feelings and opinions 24/7. Sites like Facebook and Twitter give the world an unfiltered, raw look into the life and mind of professional athletes. There are no publicists censoring what is said on social networking sites. This unfiltered nature of these sites has led to recent policies being implemented by both franchises and organizations.

College Athlete Use

While professional athletes are held to high standards and continuously monitored by the media, fans and the rest of the world, they are not the only athletes recently being taught a tough lesson about the repercussions of using social networking sites. There has been a recent influx of college athletes being criticized in the news for their uncensored and excessive sharing on social networking sites. These issues have also led to the creation and implementation of policies dictating what student athletes can and cannot do on these sites. Since “the NCAA has not taken a formal stand on how much a university can monitor or restrict,” it is up to the individual schools to create and implement its own policies regarding social networking sites (Butts). It appears the most common practice is to monitor the athlete’s individual sites.

While monitoring is a good starting point for many college athletic programs, a number of schools have taken policies a step further and added a “social networking” section to its student-athlete handbooks. Student-athletes need to be aware that what they post on sites like Facebook and Twitter can be seen by everybody. Any material posted online “may be retained by Google’s online cache, even after the material is deleted” (Read and Young). This cache allows material to be viewed by anybody via a simple Google search. Student athletes need to understand that even if they want to be treated similar to regular students, they are “much more visible in the public domain representing the university” (Butts). One unfortunate tweet could lead to a whole set of issues for the athlete and the university as a whole.

One recent issue that seems to have gained an inordinate amount of publicity deals with UNC defensive tackle Marvin Austin. Austin “wanted to show off lavish expenditures in recent months,” including pictures of “a watch for his younger sister, a bag from an upscale sunglass store in Miami and a \$143 bill from the Cheesecake Factory” (Yanda). All of these controversial photos were uploaded to his Twitter account before it was disabled in July (Yanda).

Not only were these pictures inappropriate and unnecessary, but they also brought up an issue with compliance. Where was Austin getting all of this money to buy designer items and expensive dinners? These pictures, along with other postings, led to an investigation by the NCAA into “possible improper benefits provided to players by sports agents” (Yanda). Austin was eventually suspended indefinitely from the team. Even though his Twitter postings may not have been the sole reason for this investigation and ultimate release from the team, they did serve as “a contributing factor” (Yanda).

While the issue with UNC’s Marvin Austin was an extreme circumstance, there are a variety of minor reasons surrounding other coach’s decisions to implement policies and rules. Some coaches are simply taking action because they see social networking sites as pointless and distracting. Others are implementing policies and rules in order to avoid any issues in the future.

Recently, the N.C. State men’s basketball coach, Sydney Lowe, banned the team from Twitter for the remainder of the basketball season. Lowe felt that players were sharing too much information. “‘Who needs to know that you ate at McDonald’s last night?’ said Lowe” (Pickeral and Tysiac). Following along with Coach Lowe’s decision, the coach of the Maryland men’s basketball team also decided his team will be “taking a sabbatical from Twitter this season, deciding to err on the side of caution” and avoid potential problems in the future (Clarke).

III. Research Questions

This research will look at all aspects surrounding college athletes’ use of social networking sites. From policies to punishments, this research will take an in-depth look at the issues, policies and future of social networking use by college athletes. More specifically, this research will answer the following three questions:

RQ1: What issues have surfaced surrounding ACC athletes and social networking sites? Does it take a serious issue to force a school to implement a policy?

RQ2: What policies or other efforts have the individual schools of the ACC implemented when it

comes to social networking sites and why?

RQ3: Will (and should) all conferences and schools have to find ways to monitor and control social networking sites at some point in the future?

While there is an abundance of literature surrounding the topic of social networking, there is currently little research dealing specifically with athletes at the college level. This research will fill this gap by looking at how universities, specifically ACC schools, are dealing with student-athletes use of social networking sites, what the overall tone is and if there are any underlying themes among the schools.

The uniqueness of this topic can be seen by the lack of research currently completed about social networking and college athletes. However, this research is incredibly timely and is dealing with a subject that is being talked about more and more in the media, locker rooms and athletic offices around the country. The ACC schools, in particular, have made a splash in the news with recent issues and policies that are taking the college athletic world by storm.

While the fact that these schools are creating policies to deal with social networking may be news to some people, many of these schools have had policies for about four to five years. However, nobody paid attention to these policies until the rules started to be broken by players. Now it seems as if every day a new school is coming up with an up-to-date way to monitor or educate players on the use of social networking sites.

IV. Method

The best way to gain in-depth knowledge of what ACC schools are doing in regards to social networking sites was to conduct phone and email interviews with ACC school employees.

According to Patrick Dilley, "gathering and analyzing information about interview topics and subjects is an important first step in interview preparation" (Dilley 131). In following with this advice, research was conducted on each ACC school to see what current policies are in place and if the schools are dealing with any specific issues in the news. Research was also done on each school's staff directory to find a contact that would be suitable for this specific topic. Directors and associate directors at all 12 ACC schools in the compliance, media relations or general athletic departments were contacted via email.

These emails allowed for initial introductions to be made and a general idea of the research to be given to the contacts. One of the five secrets to getting great interviews is to establish trust and that was especially true for this topic (Newman 28). By creating an email relationship, the contacts were able to get a feel for the overall tone of the research. This can be a sensitive subject for many schools that are currently dealing with issues and it is easy for the ACC employees to be protective and defensive when it comes to their teams and athletes. However, it was good to show them that this was, in fact, research for an academic paper and not the media. This reassurance made the contacts more willing and open to participating in an interview.

These initial emails also allowed the contacts to decide whether or not they were interested in taking part or passing the task on to someone better suited for the topic. A couple questions were also included in the emails to get an idea of what the school's overall stance and current policies are regarding social networking use by student-athletes. By including questions in the initial emails, the contacts were able to decide whether or not they were willing to discuss this topic with a student or if the school would pass on the opportunity.

After receiving a response from a majority of the schools, follow-up emails were sent out about the possibility of conducting phone interviews or an additional email interview. After some back-and-forth emailing and phone calling, three phone interviews and ten email interviews were successfully conducted. Questions for these interviews focused on why the policies were created, what the policy's are about and where the school sees social networking in the future of college athletics. The information obtained in these interviews was then compiled and analyzed. Throughout the duration of communication, all of the interviewees had an understanding that their statements would be used as reference quotations in this research. This is excluding the phone interviews, which were promised anonymity.

Interviews were useful in getting a more in-depth look at what ACC schools are doing to make sure student-athletes do not go overboard with social networking sites. Interviews allowed for the knowledge

gained to go beyond what was written in the student-athlete handbooks and in the news. They also gave a more personal account of how schools feel about the topic. These interviews followed the general “rule of thumb,” which means for “interviewers to talk 20 percent of the time and listen 80 percent” (Dilley 134). This was useful in giving the interviewees the opportunity to guide and determine the direction of the interview. They had the power to decide how much or how little they were going to share. This was especially seen in the email interviews. Conducting interviews via email gave the interviewees a complete blank slate and many of them took full advantage of this open-ended style by sharing a plethora of information.

Overall, these interviews were helpful in receiving feedback and information from inside sources. These sources were reliable and able to give a firsthand account of what the ACC schools are doing to handle student-athlete use of social networking sites.

V. Findings

Findings on RQ1: What issues have surfaced surrounding ACC athletes and social networking sites? Does it take a serious issue to force a school to implement a policy?

While most of the schools interviewed opted out of mentioning any specific issues they have dealt with regarding social networking sites, some interviewees were willing to share general ideas of the types of problems they have faced. One school recently formed a social networking policy last year after student-athletes posted inappropriate pictures and used language that the school “didn’t feel was good” on their sites (Personal Communication, October 1, 2010). Many schools have taken these minor problems and used them to finally create or enforce a stricter policy regarding social networking sites.

There has been quite a bit of issues surrounding this topic, some bigger and more intense than others, but it does not always take a problem to drive coaches to recognize and deal with social networking sites. Multiple schools discussed how no specific issues led to the creation of their policies (Personal Communication, September 20, 2010). These schools made policies to simply keep up with recent technological trends and avoid problems in the future. Even if a school does not face an issue head on, the schools are realizing that it is important to take the appropriate steps to avoid future problems that could occur.

Findings on RQ2: What policies or other efforts have the individual schools of the ACC implemented when it comes to social networking sites and why?

After seeing how much of an impact social networking sites have had on the sports industry, many ACC coaches and athletic departments have begun to pioneer ways to deal with potential or existing problems. With the conference as a whole leaving the policies and rules to each individual program, each school has the liberty of creating, implementing and dealing with social networking in any way they see fit for their situation (Hirschman). Based on the interviews, there is no “one size fits all” policy or way to deal with this subject. That is apparent when looking at the various approaches taken by each ACC school.

Out of the ten ACC schools interviewed for this research, only four have written guidelines or policies regarding student-athlete use of social networking sites. These four schools include: University of North Carolina, Clemson, Wake Forest and Florida State.

All of the policies formed by these four schools have taken more of an educational approach, rather than disciplinary. Even the schools that have yet to create a written policy are focusing on educational approaches. One school mentioned that they have had to do a lot of education because the “student-athletes think [social networking sites] are some black hole and what they say can’t come back to bite them” (Personal Communication, September 20, 2010). According to John Lata, Director of Student Services at Florida State University, in regards to their stance on social networking, “primarily it is about education, awareness and safety, but it is also about representing their team, the department, the institution, but ultimately, about representing themselves and their families in the appropriate way” (Lata).

While athletic departments have a vested interest in the reputation of their school and program, they are also interested in making sure their players practice safe and smart social networking use. Once the “post” button is hit on Facebook or Twitter, any and all information that is shared will be on the Internet forever. Due to this permanent nature, some schools are trying to link social networking and real world education by teaching student-athletes about self-regulation. This can be used as an educational tool and a way to prepare student-athletes for life after college. Jon Jaudon, Associate Athletic Director for Administration at Virginia

Tech, mentioned that “learning how to regulate one’s post and site is a valuable opportunity just as learning how to engage in social settings without abusing privileges as an emerging adult is also a valuable learning opportunity (Jaudon). Jaudon also shared this valuable piece of advice: “Technology can be your best friend and your worst enemy in a matter of seconds” (Jaudon).

By educating student-athletes on how they can adversely portray themselves and their schools, athletic departments are hoping that athletes will begin to think more rationally and intelligently before posting questionable material to their sites. It is important to remember that not only will an inappropriate post hurt reputations, but it can also come back to haunt you in the future. Chris Cameron, Associate Athletic Director for Media Relations at Boston College, discussed how it is important to make sure student-athletes understand that “this is a far bigger issue than one affecting their athletic careers—irresponsible postings can lead to trouble later on throughout their lives” (Cameron).

Although all ten schools interviewed see education as the primary way to approach social networking sites, the six schools that currently have no written code of conduct are taking different and unique routes when confronting this topic. Some of these include: simply giving student-athlete’s the right to freely use the sites, educating them during preseason meetings, monitoring their sites and implementing general rules (no written guidelines).

In regards to giving student’s the right to use social networking sites however they want, Virginia Tech’s Jon Jaudon had this statement to share: “We do not want to infringe upon the individual rights of our students and their personal use of social media” (Jaudon). When asked whether or not Georgia Tech had a current policy dealing with this topic, Assistant Athletic Director/Media Relations, Dean Buchan mentioned this: “We want our student-athletes to be normal, young people and social media is sometimes a part of that” (Buchan).

Some schools have not only created and implemented a social networking policy, but they have taken advantage of preseason meetings to educate and inform all athletes at once. John Lata from FSU pointed out that “for the past four years we have done hazing and social media education at our squad meetings at the beginning of the year—every student-athlete is in attendance and signs a form stating that they understand the policy” (Lata). Incorporating social networking education into preseason rituals is a good way to teach student-athletes that this subject should be taken seriously.

Regardless of whether or not each school has a written policy, a majority of the schools interviewed have appointed a faculty member to monitor the social networking pages of student-athletes. Just because a school has a policy does not mean that everybody is following that policy word-for-word. Monitoring the pages adds a “cushion” to the policies and rules in place. One school mentioned that “when we hear about a party that is going on; we start checking Facebook and Twitter more intensely” (Personal Communication, October 1, 2010). The University of North Carolina even included a section about monitoring in its policy, stating: “Each team must identify at least one coach or administrator who is responsible for having access to and regularly monitoring the content of team members’ social networking sites and postings” (UNC Student-Athlete Handbook).

As seen throughout these findings, all ten schools interviewed are dealing with social networking in some way. While these specific ways may vary based on school, the overall view that social networking sites need to be recognized in some manner is consistent across the board.

Findings on RQ3: Will (and should) all conferences and schools have to find ways to monitor and control social networking sites at some point in the future?

Based on the ten interviews conducted with ACC schools, the results are fairly split when it comes to whether or not social networking sites are an actual problem that needs to be dealt with by all schools. David Reed, Assistant Athletic Director of Compliance, at the University of Miami feels that social networking “already is a problem throughout the country and has been for 4-5 years. Twitter has taken it to a whole new level” (Reed). When other schools were asked whether or not social networking sites were a problem, the most common answer was “absolutely.” Regardless of individual opinions, a majority of the ACC schools interviewed believe that all schools are beginning to deal with social networking sites in some way.

One comment on a social networking site can lead to many problems for the athlete and school. This intensity and ability to magnify into problems at such a fast speed are leading more athletic departments to view social networking as a problem that must be confronted. Dean Buchan from Georgia Tech slightly defended social networking sites with this statement: “No one knows how social media will evolve in the coming

years, but we don't look at social media being a "problem" in any way. That doesn't mean that every now and then student-athletes need to be reminded that their postings are somewhat permanent and can be read by more than just their friends and followers" (Buchan).

VI. Discussion

Based on the ten interviews conducted, it is clear that ACC schools are recognizing social networking sites and are figuring out ways to deal with this topic. While there is no "right" way to approach this subject, it appears that most ACC schools have taken an educational route. Educating student-athletes on the potential damage social networking sites can cause is a much more efficient and effective way to deal with this topic. Simply creating policies and enforcing consequences is a short-term, after-the-fact fix that is not getting to the root of the problem. The ACC schools recognize this and have decided to focus on teaching student-athletes how to responsibly utilize these sites in a way that can benefit them now and in the future.

While education is a key step to avoid any issues in the future, many ACC schools have also found policies and handouts to be useful. These efforts show the student-athletes that the school is making a valiant attempt to help them. This is a serious subject and can do a lot of harm. It is important to treat social networking sites this way and try to minimize future issues.

As mentioned in the findings, some schools wish to treat student-athletes like typical students. This may be a valid goal, but student-athletes are not typical students. They are in the media and their actions are watched much closer than a regular student. So while allowing student-athletes to act and partake in regular things is perfectly fine, schools need to remember that what an athlete does on the Internet is seen by hundreds (maybe even thousands) of people and all of their postings ultimately reflect back on the school, as well as the individual. In relation to this, the idea of student-athletes actions reflecting back to the school is part of the reason why many schools decided to form policies in the first place.

Overall, it seems the schools are finding ways to deal with this subject on their own terms. This is not an area that the conference will address anytime soon; each school must find ways to address social networking in their own way. Nobody can say for sure what will happen in the future regarding student-athlete use of social networking sites, but it is safe to say that these sites are here to stay and will continue to have both positive and negative effects on the athletic world. It is helpful for the athletic departments to try their best to educate student-athletes and try to make them understand how powerful social networking sites can be.

All past issues aside, it can unquestionably be said that these policies and efforts have been successful. There has been a slight dip in the amount of news focused on this topic. While there is no evidence that this decrease in news coverage is directly correlated to the efforts taken by the ACC schools, the interviewees were adamant in stating that the outcomes of their individual efforts have all been positive thus far.

VII. Conclusion

This study took an in-depth look at student-athlete use of social networking sites, specifically ACC athletes. As of now, there are no overarching policies that all student-athletes must follow. However, there are themes and commonalities arising among the ACC schools.

This study was limited because not all ACC schools were successfully contacted. The interviews conducted were not in-person and the information shared may have been censored or limited. It is also important to remember that some of the findings may be based on personal opinion and not a general consensus of the school's attitude toward this subject. While these findings cannot be generalized to the entire ACC, they do give a general idea and look at how ten of the ACC schools have chosen to confront social networking sites.

In order to further understand all of the details surrounding student-athlete use of social networking sites among ACC schools, more research should be conducted. It would be beneficial to follow-up with these schools as time progresses and social networking changes. This additional research would show how policies change over time, whether or not more schools begin to create and implement policies and if these policies are successful in the long run.

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Elementary Education, There's an App for That: Communication Technology in the Elementary School Classroom

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Abstract

This research examined how various forms of communications technologies are being used as learning tools in elementary school classrooms. This study specifically focused on rural elementary schools near the Research Triangle Park in North Carolina, a state known for being a technology powerhouse. Using in-depth interviews with local elementary school teachers, the research revealed a positive correlation between technology in the classroom and an increased student motivation and participation. Findings also showed that technology is an integral part of learning in the classroom and students have begun to expect a seamless integration of technology into the learning process.

I. Introduction

In some elementary schools, a paper and pencil is no longer needed to teach a math lesson. Now thanks to Apple's new iPad, there's an app for that. Students can be more engaged than ever before and create their own math equations using the *Alien Equation* app on the iPad ("Apple"). The same holds true for learning grammar as well. Sentence structure diagrams on a chalkboard are a thing of the past now that grammar apps can be downloaded for the iPad through "TapToLearn" software. In many ways, these new forms of communications technologies have drastically changed the environment in classrooms and the overall student attitude towards learning ("Technology and Education Reform"). With technology available at a child's fingertips, they become the ones to manipulate the activity and can actively make decisions regarding the lesson.

The iPad is just one example of the many recent improvements in technology that have contributed to advancements in elementary education over the past decade. With a global boom in terms of communications technology, educational achievements have been fostered, and these improvements have made it possible to expand and expedite learning for children in the classroom. While there are numerous technologies available to teachers, one of the biggest technologies in terms of communication has been the increased use of the Internet for academic purposes. According to a 2002 Pew Research Study on student use of the Internet for school, with the exception of very low-income school districts, "it is now the case that the Internet is as common a school fixture as lockers and library books" ("Digital Disconnect"). Furthermore, this study also concluded that "One of the most common activities that youth perform online is schoolwork" ("Digital Discon-

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nect”). Although this study and many others like it are helpful for understanding the many academic uses of technology, the current research fails to address very specific regional areas.

While the state of education is an issue at the forefront of our country, it is also one that has been greatly affected by technology in the 21st century. This rapid increase in technology has revolutionized development in elementary education and has changed the typical dynamic between teacher and student. Teachers are now more actively engaging their students and captivating their attention through various forms of communications technologies. With the implementation of technology in the classroom becoming more commonplace for many schools across the country, administrators and educators alike are discovering the benefits these tools can have for students’ success.

This study will fill the gap in the existing research by focusing on communications technology in elementary school classrooms in the rural area of central North Carolina. It will serve to define exactly which types of technologies are being implemented in elementary school classrooms and identify what the possible disadvantages are as well. In addition, this study will highlight the newest technologies for communication and seek to predict the future of technology in the classroom. While technology has become critical in education, the use is different across states and this research focuses on a specific state in a specific location by talking to teachers who use technology in the classroom every day.

II. Literature Review

The state of education remains one of the most highly debated topics in the country, yet there is surprisingly little research on the current relationship that exists between communications technologies and education. Gradually, over the past few decades, various forms of communications technologies have been integrated into classrooms. This approach has been taken as a means of improving education and catering to different learning styles as well. The following review of the existing scholarship covers a key learning theory as well as the research to date on communications within the realm of education.

One of the most prominent education theories driving this specific research is Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Gardner proposed that cognitive abilities are displayed in more ways than can possibly be measured by a simple IQ test. In one of his books, he proposes a radical vision, one that is “a pluralistic view of mind, recognizing many different and discrete cognitive strengths and contrasting cognitive styles” and he goes on to introduce the concept of “an individual centered school that takes this multifaceted view of intelligence seriously” (“Multiple Intelligences” 6). With technology now as a major part of classroom activities, teachers are able to use this theory and assess their students’ intelligences in more ways than ever before.

Gardner’s theory then becomes critical for creating Internet-based lessons for students. Since students can learn in so many different ways, it is important to keep in mind the range of brain compatibility and multiple intelligences. As Gardner argued, “there is the faith that central to any understanding of the human mind is the electronic computer. Not only are computers indispensable for carrying out studies of various sorts, but, more crucially, the computer also serves as the most viable model of how the human mind functions” (“Mind’s New Science” 6). In addition, “numerous books and articles are available to educators that relate directly to brain-compatible learning. Yet, educators are still searching for how to relate these ideas to specific curriculum domains” (Nelson 20). In this way, communications technologies are being used outside of the classroom to help educators better understand their students and how they learn best, especially through the technology of PET scans, MRIs and even EEG tests.

Furthermore, this same resource also discusses how there are very key points for learning how to search on the Internet, and how teachers should provide their students with this type of instruction for their benefit. Specific instruction to students is key, especially regarding “(1) the significance of word choice, (2) the power of spelling, and (3) the value of quality over quantity” (Nelson 61). Clearly, the Internet as a communications technology in the classroom can prove to be very powerful, but there must also be some critical basic skills in place for this to be effective.

The existing research shows that when technology was first introduced into classrooms, teachers were uncertain about how it should be incorporated. One study specifically looked at the factors affecting early technology use and determined that “there are conflicting ideas about the value of technology and

hence conflicting advice to teachers about how technology should be used in schools” (Zhou and Frank 809). Some of the contributing factors to this cause include the constant changing nature of technology as well as the unreliability and lack of reliable support. In related research, it was also determined that while technology is a valuable resource, it should not be used to teach everything. For some lessons, technology isn't necessarily the best means of teaching, and more importantly, as just “one tool among many, technology cannot be expected to change bad teaching into good” (Sandholtz et al 174). As a whole, it is most appropriate to use technology in the classroom for concept development and critical thinking activities.

In one of the more recent articles relating to this subject, it describes how “virtual education,” or teacher and student interactions that are computer-mediated, have grown from being a novelty to commonplace in the classroom. It is no longer surprising that an educational institution would offer some form of online class, and the existing statistical data clearly support this notion. “In a non-random 2007 survey of school districts, as many as three out of every four public K-12 school districts responding reported offering full or partial online courses” (Glass 1). This is one of the more complex and challenging areas of communications technologies in education because the rapid growth of this phenomenon prompts policy changes, questions of cost, and funding from officials and school boards. In addition to these numerous challenges, there is also the issue of the Internet as a distraction to students. While some websites can be filtered due to age inappropriate content, there is concern from teachers about “competition from Web sites put up by ESPN, CNN, and CBS sports, as well as myriad other pop culture sites that are not on the filter list but distract attention in the classroom” (Pflaum 193). Although the Internet can be a great classroom resource, teachers need to constantly play the role of a monitor for online distractions.

In another, not quite as recent resource, technology is seen as a benefit and described as helping to reinforce critical skills. On the topic of inquiry-based curriculums that deal with gathering, evaluating, analyzing and presenting skills, it has been argued “technological tools exist for each of these skills. Both students and teachers need to be aware of the choices they have so that they effectively use the right tool for the job at hand” (Holcomb 12). Technology in this case also takes learning one step further because it can offer so many supplements to plain text. “Classroom research today takes the text-based references familiar to most adults and augments them with CD-ROMs containing music, speeches, diagrams, animations and film clips” (Holcomb 12). This resource also explains how technologies in the classroom can prompt education reform as far as using it to include and plan goal-setting techniques.

In reviewing the existing literature on the subject of communications technologies in education, it can be seen that there was a gradual shift over time in how exactly technology has been implemented in the classroom. The earlier literature deals with the very basics of technology, defining it and even stating possible impacts or repercussions. In a review of a dated piece of literature, visual presentations are considered for learning. What is completely commonplace in classrooms and during presentations today, once started as a unique concept. Programs such as Microsoft PowerPoint can create “presentations suitable for the classroom by offering a multimedia environment for concepts and ideas important for student understanding” (Tomei 73). Furthermore, multimedia Clip Art, pictures, sounds and movies can be added in to enhance the final product. While communications technologies have certainly come a long way over time, little is currently known about what the most popular forms are today for elementary schools and how teachers implement them within their classrooms and individualized curriculums. This study will fill the gap and create a greater understanding of how education can benefit from improvements in communications technologies.

III. Research Questions

This study investigates how communications technologies in elementary school classrooms are used on a daily basis. The research is specific to rural North Carolina and identifies the various forms of technologies used by the teachers as well. The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not communications technologies are a help or a hindrance to both students and teachers at the elementary school level.

The main questions of this study asked:

RQ1: What forms of technology are used in elementary school classrooms?

RQ2: What is the level of the effectiveness of the technology that is used?

RQ3: What are the obstacles of communications technologies? Has it made teaching/learning more

efficient or more difficult?

RQ4: Where do teachers see the future of technology in classrooms going?

These questions help to shape the main focus of this research and identify how communications technologies are perceived by the practitioners of elementary education. This research is important because technology is infused in every part of our daily life. It is therefore critical that children learn this early on, not just at home, but in the classroom as well. Most children growing up in today's society have access to a great deal of technology in their homes, and if there is a disconnect between home and school, they will fail to be motivated in the classroom. When elementary school teachers use different forms of communications technologies, they are actively engaging their students and creating stimulating work environments.

While the existing research has been conducted on a national level, this specific study is unique because it focuses on a small area of the country at a very specific education level in a state considered to be a research and technology powerhouse. North Carolina is home to several of the nation's top universities and the Research Triangle Park, a globally prominent high-technology research and development center ("Research Triangle Park"). Therefore it is critical to understand how different forms of technology are being implemented in the surrounding area. This study specifically focuses on the implementation, the effectiveness and the future of digital technology in the elementary school classrooms, adjacent to the Research Triangle Park.

IV. Method

In order to answer the proposed research questions, in-depth interviews were conducted with eight different teachers randomly selected from three local elementary schools in the area. Since the answers would be qualitative rather than quantitative in nature, interviews were used to obtain "unique information or interpretation held by the person interviewed" (Stake 95). Initially phone calls were placed to the schools to determine the best way to contact the potential respondents, and emails were then sent to each of them explaining the purpose of the study and asking if they would be willing to participate. The selected teachers were seven females and one male, representing the elementary grades from first through fifth.

All of the respondents were told that the responses would remain anonymous and there would be no identifying factors within the study. As stated in Bruce Berg's book on qualitative research, "Researchers commonly assure subjects that anything discussed between them will be kept in strict confidence" (Berg 65). The researcher reiterated the purpose of the study before the interview and asked if the respondents had any questions before beginning. Typically the interviews lasted between 20-30 minutes and were conducted at a time most convenient for the respondents so they were comfortable and willing to give information. The overall structure was flexible so the researcher could alter or change questions based on information provided by the elementary school teachers.

Ten questions as shown in Appendix were asked to seven of the eight respondents via telephone interviews, and one replied via email response. The first question asked for very basic information regarding number of years teaching and current grade level so a teaching background for the individual could be established. The second question was the one that respondents took the most amount of time to answer, since it asked them to identify any and all types of communications technologies that they use in their classroom. The third question sought to discover the true benefits of using technology in the classroom, and the fourth asked respondents to consider whether or not they felt communications technologies were a real aid to learning, or if they were more of a hassle and poor use of class time. The last question in the first part of the interview asked about the difficulties associated with using technology.

In the second half of the interview, respondents were asked if they see a learning curve with their students for using technology, and if some students fall behind when it is used. Respondents also had to quantify the amount of time they spend on a daily basis using communications technologies in their classroom. Additionally, respondents were asked to discuss the existing monetary support for communications technology from the state or school district. The final two interview questions asked the respondents to think futuristically and describe their ideal classroom with technology, and finally, predict where they see the future of communications technologies evolving for the elementary school classroom. The specific questions are attached at the end of this study.

In total, eight respondents were interviewed for this study due to the amount of resources available.

The general guideline for arriving at this number within the field of qualitative research can depend “on the nature of the topic, on the numbers of different milieus that are considered relevant, and of course, on the resources available” (Bauer and Gaskell 43). The responses started becoming similar by the eighth interview, which can be common with in depth interviews, and at “some point a researcher realizes that no new surprises or insights are forthcoming” and no further research is necessary (Bauer and Gaskell 43). After all of the interviews had taken place the researcher transcribed the notes and analyzed the data for the common themes and key issues related to the questions. The data was then reviewed several times and the results were built from this careful analysis of the data.

V. Findings

Regarding the first research question of determining how technology is used in elementary school classrooms the majority response given by seven out of the eight respondents was that they most often use a SMART board. This technology is an interactive whiteboard that has been designed to positively increase learning. It combines the “simplicity of a whiteboard with the power of a computer” and allows teachers to “deliver dynamic lessons, write notes in digital ink, and save [their] work – all with the simple touch of a finger” (“Smart Tech”). Not only do the SMART boards help to captivate student interest better than a whiteboard and marker can, but the work and the notes never have to be erased and can be saved and accessed for a later lesson.

Another common form of technology mentioned by the respondents were Classroom Performance System (CPS) clickers, a form of instant response technology which teachers can use for assessment purposes. According to the company website, the clickers are “small, handheld devices that allow students to respond to questions asked verbally, on paper or on screen” for which the teacher then has immediate access to (“E Instruction”). The respondents who use the CPS clicker technology in their classrooms found it to be beneficial as a form of assessment or as a review tool for their students.

The third most common answer given by the respondents was the Internet, or use of the respective elementary school’s website. In this case, common uses of the Internet were for interactive education websites, online assessments, and student blogging as well. Some teachers stated that their students email them about homework outside of class, and parents use the school website as a crucial tool for involvement and up-to-date information. In one third grade classroom, the website *Discovery Education* was used as a part of the science unit, a website which specifically has a network for “educators passionate about teaching with digital media” (“Discovery Education”). Another website that attracts technology-savvy educators is called *Study Island*, an online tool that provides standards-based instruction, practice and testing for the End of Grade (EOG) assessments. *Study Island* is specific to each state in the country and it adheres to the North Carolina Standards and Common Core Standards Mastery objectives (“Study Island”).

The final forms of technology listed by the eight respondents included Microsoft PowerPoint, audio or recording devices for reading activities, in some rare instances, iPad applications and an ELMO Document Camera, which is the latest technology to replace overhead projectors. The ELMO technology is used as a digital visual presenter for the students, and replaces the days of making overhead transparencies for the teachers (“Protech Projection”). As one of the more recent changes in classroom technology for teachers, the ELMO model comes equipped with audio and video recording capabilities, simple aspects that were not previously possible with an overhead projector.

The second research question had to do with the success of the technology teachers use in their classrooms. The research indicated that each of the eight respondents felt that without technology, their students would fail to be as interested as they currently are. The majority of responses mentioned the benefits of using communications technologies in the classroom, and all of the respondents agreed that it helps to actively engage their students. For some teachers, they stated that because technology is such a large part of daily life and many children have access to it at home, a classroom without any technology would be completely unappealing.

Students become immediately more excited when technology is introduced into their education. Communications technologies in the classroom can provide a better hands-on, or even a better visual experience for students than what they would take away from just reading a textbook. Through using these mediums of technology, their interest is piqued and they can develop a stronger understanding of key ideas and concepts.

Furthermore having access to technology for the elementary school classroom helps to keep lesson plans from becoming boring or stale, and increases overall student involvement and willingness to participate.

The third research question mainly focused on the obstacles associated with using communications technologies. While technology is an advantage for student engagement and participation, it is not a resource completely void of challenges. In answering this question, both the students and the teachers must be considered. For the teachers, they found communications technologies to be an obstacle when there was an error or glitch with technology, whether this be a frozen program, blocked website, or just a general malfunction. Some respondents also mentioned that financial constraints are often an obstacle because then there is either a lack of technology, or the existing technology cannot be updated.

The respondents also answered that communications technologies can be challenging for their students to use. While this answer was more common for the lower elementary grades, it can also be an issue for the upper grade levels when a new student enters the class and must quickly catch up on the technology being used. Despite these difficulties faced by both the students and the teachers, overall, respondents agreed they felt communications technologies have helped to make learning in the classroom more efficient. The majority of the respondents also felt that time allowance for technology can be difficult, especially with system glitches which can take away valuable academic time during the day. As communications technologies are being used more frequently in the classroom, the respondents agreed that even with certain obstacles, it can be a true aid to learning.

Finally, the last research question addressed the future of technology in elementary school classrooms. Respondents were each asked at the end of the interview to design an ideal classroom with technology and predict where they see the future of technology for education evolving. All of the respondents wished they had more technology available to them for their respective classrooms. Each respondent gave the same answer in predicting the future of this technology, and that is a movement towards more individualized education. Whether it is an iPad or a laptop for every child, each respondent saw the future of technology in classrooms to be individual and personal technology for every student. Not only would this help to captivate attention from students, it would also allow teachers to differentiate instruction and tailor assignments to individual students' interests and ability level.

As another prediction for the future of this technology, respondents identified a form of paperless assignments and assessments. In some elementary schools, the end of grade (EOG) testing has already been moved to an online format. In the future, communications technologies could be used for having assignments submitted electronically in an effort to go paperless. The last prediction respondents offered dealt with one specific form of communications technology, the peer-to-peer video chat capabilities of Skype. While some respondents saw this as a great way to have guest speakers talk to their class, or have online pen pals, one respondent stated that Skype had the ability to completely alter parent and student communication for the future, strongly implying that Skype could revolutionize the future of parent/teacher conferences and peer-to-peer communication within education.

VI. Discussion

One of the main themes that emerged from the research was the idea that technology and teaching have become seamlessly woven together. As both teaching styles and school systems continue to evolve, so too does the learning environment for students. Since technology is such a large part of daily life, students have become accustomed to not only using it at home, but in the classroom as well. They quickly become bored with a typical textbook reading lesson and find school more exciting when technology is put into their hands to manipulate and learn from. As stated by the respondents, communications technology is beneficial because it engages students and provides them with a hands-on learning experience.

With the use of technology in elementary schools becoming widespread, children are being socialized to learn with the latest innovations available. Teachers are already employing various forms of communications technologies in their classroom to pique the interests of their students and compete with video games and iPod applications. Learning has now become more of a game more than ever before as children use electronic programs, and virtual applications instead of a pencil and composition paper. As teachers are integrating these electronic approaches in their classrooms, their students are rapidly developing high ex-

expectations for technology in the learning process. A direct cause and effect relationship then occurs from the elementary age; as students grow accustomed to using technology, their expectations of school for the rest of their educational career are thus molded and shaped.

The obstacles and challenges associated with using communications technologies was another key theme made evident by the research findings. While this current new generation of teachers does not view the unpredictability of technology as a major issue that would cause them to stop using it in their teaching, there are other associated issues that are important to address. A main concern expressed by several teachers was a lack of resources or funding for technology. In some classrooms there can be brand new laptops for the students to use, but there will only be 10 for a class with 20 students. With these situations where there are limited resources, both teachers and students face constraints for maximizing the effectiveness of the technology. These ever changing forms of communications technologies can be very expensive and this is difficult for budgeting purposes since the money allocated for such resources varies by school district. Some schools can be awarded money based on growth scores at the end of the year but this is a particularly tricky cycle if the technology is not up to date because it then only further perpetuates a lack of growth and failure to obtain funding for technological improvement.

Another obstacle that teachers face when working with assorted forms of communications technologies are the unpredictable challenges in the classroom such as student capabilities. Technology is such a powerful tool to have access to for teaching, but many activities that involve interactive technology can be difficult for a blind or deaf student. The most popular technologies used by teachers all have a visual element, which is why it is so engaging for students, but with a blind child in the classroom, the teacher must rethink using technology for the lesson. While some forms of communications technologies are fortunately compatible with Braille, not all of them are designed this way and can create an unforeseen obstacle for many teachers.

Individualized education was another prevalent theme that came through in many of the discussions. Teachers indicated that given the speed of technology advancements and the individualized development of software, the next big step is technology being able to adapt to individuals' different speeds of learning. Currently teachers are using a wide range of communications technologies to teach broadly to their students on a very general level. With technology rapidly evolving, it is not unreasonable to predict that in the near future, it will have the capability to become more personalized and specific to different needs.

Many of the respondents targeted this area and noted the need for improvement within their own classrooms. They hoped that in the future, technology would in fact become more personal and one day, each child would be able to have a personal laptop or iPad to use in the classroom. This would not only facilitate instruction for the teacher but it would also revolutionize the efficiency of assignments and make grading easier if students were to submit work directly from their laptops. In the future, communications technologies will be put into the hands every student so that instruction can be differentiated and assignments could be developed based on students' interests and ability level allowing them to be more engaged in learning than ever before.

VII. Conclusion

In the 21st century, technology in the elementary school classroom has not just become commonplace, but rather, it has become a staple. More than ever before, teachers are relying upon the latest technologies to actively engage their students in new lessons. Technology is now at the forefront of education and its role in the classroom has evolved from a mere distracting gadget to an integral teaching tool vital for effectively conveying information and knowledge. This study showed the impact and effectiveness that these technologies can have at the elementary school level. Popular technologies such as SMART boards, CPS clicker systems and interactive education websites form the basis of lesson planning and learning activities during the school day. These communications technologies help to actively engage students, drive participation, and are a vital part of both teaching and learning in the classroom.

There were some limitations that constrained this study, including the non random sample. While teachers were represented from every grade level, they were from only three schools in the surrounding area, and only one male teacher was represented. In addition, responses to the questions varied depending on the income levels for the school district. In some cases, certain schools had more money in their budget to put towards technology whereas others did not. This factor varied responses on how familiar respondents were

with certain forms of technology or what they had experience with using for their students.

Because of certain limitations to this study, there remains ample room for future research. This was a very specific study on a small portion of the education population and could be further expanded in the future to include other regions, or gather information from a statewide study. Additionally, since technology will continue to improve and evolve, there is always more current research to be done and the latest forms of innovation will need to be identified as well.

The topic of communications technologies in elementary education has proven to be an ever changing and dynamic. With so many different forms of interactive technology currently available to teachers, the possibilities for transforming education are endless. Children are learning to use technology earlier than ever before both at home and at school, and it is quickly beginning to shape how school curriculums are designed. Although working with technology can oftentimes be unpredictable, the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages in terms of educational benefit for the students. As a whole communications technologies in elementary school classrooms have proven to be a true aid to learning by actively engaging the students and encouraging participation.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. How long have you been teaching and what grade do you currently teach?
 2. What types of communications technologies do you use in your classroom?
 3. What are the benefits of using communications technologies?
 4. Would you consider communications technologies to be a real aid to learning?
 5. What do you find difficult about using technology?
 6. Is there a learning curve to it, are some students behind in it?
 7. How much of your daily classroom routine involves using communications technologies?
 8. Is there any support from the state, monetary or otherwise for communications in the classroom?
 9. What is your ideal vision of a perfect classroom with technology?
 10. Where do you see technology in the classroom evolving, what will it be like in the future for both students and teachers?
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Going Viral: Factors That Lead Videos to Become Internet Phenomena

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Abstract

The author examined the top 20 viral videos as determined by Time Magazine. Each video's content was recorded for analysis of its main features. Eventually nine factors were deemed "important determinants" for a viral video: title length, run-time, laughter, element of surprise, element of irony, minority presence, music quality, youth presence and talent. This research is important because an understanding element within viral videos, such as "Charlie Bit Me," can help explain why they have become fixtures in today's popular culture. Likewise, understanding the prevalent elements within viral videos will allow for the prediction of which videos will become popular. This information will be useful for viral marketing campaigns.

I. Introduction

A recent article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* entitled "iPhone Subway Performance Goes Viral on YouTube" is a great example of the sometimes *unlikely* popularity of certain YouTube videos. The video featured in this article depicts a New York band playing one of its hit songs, *Take Me Out*, using only iPhones (iPhone, 2008). Although some may not find an iPhone concert entertaining, more than 2 million people have viewed this video on YouTube. It is important to note that this iPhone video is not alone in the spotlight. According to Burgess (2008), many seemingly insignificant videos have acclaimed worldwide fame. The large audience for these clips illustrates yet a larger phenomenon in the world of viral video: the apparent unpredictability of viral success. Why do some videos become wildly popular while others do not?

The objective of this research is to answer that general question by seeking to systematically discover commonalities among viral videos. By understanding the shared characteristics of viral video, one can more accurately predict which videos will become widely successful and why. This research can be very helpful in assisting companies with video marketing campaigns. For example, Old Spice's recent YouTube campaign has gone viral and has improved the brand's popularity among young consumers (Reiss, 2010). In order to continue to benefit from online video, companies such as Old Spice must isolate and perfect the recipe for creating effective viral content. Another goal of this research is to gain more insight into popular culture of the 21st Century. Many videos such as "Charlie Bit My Finger," have become household names. By understanding the reasons behind videos' successes, scholars will better understand the factors that lend themselves to today's popular culture.

Among Time Magazine's list of the top 50 viral videos of all time, there are clips of animals, dancing, singing, falling, and crying (just to name a few) (Fletcher, 2010). These clips also include many different types of people. It is important to note that simply because the content of these clips *seems* to be different does not

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rule out the possibility of common elements. In fact, this research seeks to draw connections between elements such as a video's presentation, run-time, content, and popularity. The research strategy was drawn from the work of many scholars in the field of online entertainment. Many of these scholars focused on how the YouTube platform encourages users to rate videos. Within this literature, there was found to be a lack of research on the subject of how videos become viral. This research builds upon previous scholarly work by expanding research methods to include the content analysis of viral YouTube videos.

II. Literature Review

Scholars argue that viral video is a new driving force of pop culture. Linkletter et al. (2009) claim the influence of online video is so strong; certain clips have persuaded people to take unhealthy risks. Burgess (2008) seeks to give meaning to these accusations by defining the parameters of a viral video. She argues that a viral video is born when user-led distribution causes a clip to become wildly popular. Furthermore, she claims that a viral video must contain some element that appeals to the popular culture of the time. Usually, this element of pop culture appeals mainly to the younger generation.

Although the influence of viral video has been researched extensively, much less attention has been given to the elements within viral videos. However, scholars such as Fletcher (2010) and Briggs (2010) have published works analyzing the reasons behind the popularity of certain videos. Briggs (2010) published a viral video case study in which he closely analyzes the "BlendTec Will it Blend" campaign. According to Briggs, this campaign has been wildly popular and is a useful example of the methodology behind viral videos. He explains that BlendTec has been successful in its online video endeavors because it created *buzz* content. He also argues that the irony of blending expensive objects in a blender is part of these videos' appeal. Burgess (2008) content surveyed a sample of 4,300 popular YouTube videos. Burgess notes that these videos are usually not traditional media content. She concludes that "oddness" and "amateurism" lead to the irony found in much of her sample size.

Another factor that scholars argue leads to the popularity certain videos is "layout." Hilderbrand (2007) argues that the site design of YouTube is much like that of television. YouTube allows the user to quickly move through videos by toggling arrow buttons. The interface also employs a large viewing area in the middle of the page. Hilderbrand argues that this quick viewing mechanism makes skimming videos easy. Users on YouTube can quickly move from video to video to find popular content. Hilderbrand also stresses the fact that many popular videos on YouTube have been aggregated from more conventional media sources.

Other researchers who have focused on the creative aspects of viral videos are Southgate et al. (2010). These researchers studied 102 video ads released in the United Kingdom. Their findings suggest that the creative details behind video advertising can be used to predict a video's popularity. Like Hilderbrand (2007), Southgate et al. (2010) argue that the presentation of videos is directly related to their popularity. Specifically, Southgate et al. (2010) focus on how visual branding drives a video's proliferation. Their research specifically relates to the advertising niche for viral video. In this way, the research of Southgate et al. (2010) and Briggs (2010) is closely related. Both researchers focus on the future potential of viral video in the realm of advertising.

A portion of the preceding research on the influence of YouTube has relied on anecdotal reports. For example, Rosenberg (2010) published an article profiling a university president's experience with viral video. He argues that this college president's YouTube fame is to be expected. By using this anecdotal evidence, Rosenberg (2007) was able to explain that viral videos are often results of their environments. He suggests that videos originating in well-defined social networks (such as universities) are destined to become more popular.

Several researchers have studied the link between news proliferation and viral video. Sagan et al. (2010) argue that viral video is changing the way people get their news. They include quantitative research to track people's reliance on video to get their news. They also suggest that newsworthiness is a factor in determining a video's viral capabilities. However, newsworthiness does not act alone in determining the popularity of a video. Sagan et al. (2010) suggest that a news video must also appeal to viewers in the 18-25 age groups to become widely popular. To support their findings, these researchers used evidence from the 2004 election in which online video feeds of the event received over 670 million views, mostly by younger

viewers. Another researcher who has written about the newsworthiness of viral videos is (Wallsten, 2008). He suggests that the blogosphere has attributed to the rise of many viral YouTube videos. He also argues that, because many people receive their news from online bloggers, the video posts of online bloggers become very important. Many viral YouTube videos have ties to popular blogs and commentary.

III. Methods

The purpose of this research was to determine the common elements of viral videos. This information could in turn, help predict which videos may go viral in the future. To determine the commonalities between viral YouTube videos, it was important to choose a sample for this study.

Sample: The sample size was obtained from Time Magazine's list of the top 50 viral videos (Time 2009). The top 20 videos on the list were chosen as the sample for the research (See Table 1 below for the complete list of video samples.)

Coding units: To remain consistent in the findings, each video was subjected to the same analysis. First, a pre-coding review was conducted with the last 10 videos on Time's list. From these videos, 7 common elements that manifested themselves in at least 30 percent of the pre-coding sample: Brevity, laughter, surprise, irony, and a short title, youth, talent, music, and minority presence. "Talent and "youth" were added as significant elements while coding the top 20 videos. Throughout this research the elements of "brevity" and "short-title" appeared as reasons for the proliferation of a video. However, in conducting the annotated bibliography, no information regarding the importance of surprise, irony, or laughter was discovered. The determinant of three words for the title was selected because 70% of videos in the coding sample had titles containing three words or less. The determinant of brevity (under 3 minutes) was chosen because half of the videos in the sample were under three minute run-times.

Coding protocol and categories: The first step was to evaluate each video in the sample in the same manner. A coding protocol was used to determine the common elements of viral videos. This research analyzed the content of the top 20 videos. In order to accurately evaluate the content, each video was watched twice. Each video was analyzed for the elements discovered in the pre-coding sample. The coding sheets for these videos were marked "yes" or "no" or "short" "long" based on the existence or nonexistence of each element.

- short title: If the title of the video was composed of three or fewer words, it was marked "s" for short. If it was longer, it was marked "l" for long.
- brevity: If the video was under two minutes it was considered brief
- laughter: If someone laughed in the first 30 seconds of the video it was marked with laughter
- surprise: If a person in the video appeared to be surprised it was marked surprise.
- irony: If part of the video exhibited something contradictory to societal expectations it was marked ironic.
- minority: If the video contained a person of ethnic minority status it was marked with minority.
- music: If the video contained a musical element it was marked musical.
- youth: If a person under 18 appeared in the video, the video was marked as having a youth element.
- talent: If the actions in the video seemed to require practice, the video was marked as requiring talent.

Observations were also recorded about each clip. By recording qualitative comments, the author was able to draw conclusions that they did not anticipate. This allowed them to discover unknown factors leading to the popularity of certain videos.

Table 1. List of sample videos.

| No. | Videos ranked by Times Magazine |
|-----|---------------------------------|
| 1 | "Charlie Bit My Finger" |
| 2 | "Evolution of Dance" |
| 3 | "David After Dentist" |
| 4 | "Here it Goes Again" |
| 5 | "Rick Roll" |
| 6 | "Leave Brittany Alone" |
| 7 | "Don't Tase Me, Bro" |
| 8 | "Keyboard Cat" |
| 9 | "Dramatic Chipmunk" |
| 10 | "Hitler's Downfall" |
| 11 | "Flea Market Montgomery" |
| 12 | "United Breaks Guitars" |
| 13 | "Kittens, Inspired by Kittens" |
| 14 | "Potter Puppet Pals" |
| 15 | "Jill and Kevin's Big Day" |
| 16 | "Sneezing Panda" |
| 17 | "Otters Holding Hands" |
| 18 | "Literal Music Videos" |
| 19 | "OMG, Shoes" |
| 20 | "Baby Laughing" |

IV. Findings

In order to establish the commonalities between viral videos, this study examined the top 20 YouTube videos as named by Time Magazine. During the coding of these videos, seven video elements were analyzed including: Title length, run-time, laughter, element of surprise, element of irony, minority presence, and musical quality. The study analyzed the overall percentage of "yes" to "no" in each category. In this way, it could be determined whether a video element had enough of a presence to be considered a viable factor. This coding method allowed for the discarding of several coding categories. Any factor representative of less than 25% of the sample group was ignored. Coding results and the percentage of each category are shown in tables 2 and 3 below.

Title Length:

In this study, a short title was considered to be composed of three words or less. Following the coding sheet, any title three words or less was marked "S" for short. Any video over three words was marked "L" for long. The results for this variable are as follows: 75% percent, or 15 out of 20 videos, had short titles. This

overwhelming proportion of short to long titles seems to reflect the pre-sample size used to format the coding sheet. The average title length in the sample was 2.76 words.

Run-Time:

The difference between long and short run-times was more subtle than in most other variables. A video's run-time was considered short and marked with an "S" if it was three minutes or less. Any video that ran over three minutes was considered long "L." The results for this variable are as follows: 60% or 12 out of 20 videos in the sample size were three minutes or less. The average run-time for all videos was 2 minutes and 47 seconds. The longest video in the sample was "Jill and Kevin's Big Day" at 5 minutes and 9 seconds. This video depicts a wedding party entering a church while dance to Chris Brown's song "Forever". The video with the shortest run-time was "Dramatic Chipmunk". In this video a Chipmunk turns its head while dramatic music is played.

Element of Laughter:

Within this study, a video was considered to have an element of laughter if someone was seen or heard laughing during the first 30 seconds of the clip. This criterion allowed for a simple "N" for no and "Y" for yes on the coding sheet. Laughter can sometimes be difficult to notice. For this reason, each video in the sample size was viewed twice. The results for this variable are as follows: Laughter was recorded in 30%, or 6 out of 20 videos. This means that 70%, or 14 out of 20 videos had no element of laughter. The video that exhibited the most visible was aptly named, "Baby Laughing". This video featured a baby boy being prompted by its parent to laugh for 1 minute and 40 seconds.

Element of Surprise:

A video was considered to have an element of surprise if someone in the clip made a visual or audible expression of surprise. For example, a video showcasing a practical joke in which the subject screamed would be considered to have an element of surprise. The results for this variable are as follows: 50% of videos had an element of surprise, and 50% of videos lacked surprise. The video with the most visible surprising element was "Don't Tase Me Bro". This video featured a shocked college student being tasered for raising his voice at a John Kerry speech.

Element of Irony:

Any video that displayed an element contrary to what was expected was considered to exhibit an element of irony. This variable was more difficult to measure, however, most videos analyzed seemed to display the breaking of social norms. In fact, this variable was the most present of all variables in this study. The results for this variable are as follows: 90% of videos, or 18 out of 20 videos exhibited an element of irony. 10% of videos or 2 out of 20 did not possess ironic elements. Because most videos exhibited some type of irony, it was difficult to differentiate between levels of this variable.

Ethnic Minority Presence:

Any video that displayed one or more people of ethnic minority status was considered to have a minority presence. The presence or lack of minority presence was recorded on the coding sheet by writing "N" for no and "Y" for yes. The results for this variable are as follows: 20%, or 3 out of 20, contained a minority presence, and 80% or 17 out of 20 videos, did not contain a minority presence.

Musical Quality:

Any video that displayed someone singing, contained background music, made references to a popular song, or was a music video was considered to have musical qualities. The lack or inclusion of musical qualities was recorded by marking "N" for no and "Y" for yes on the coding sheet. The results for this variable are as follows: 60%, or 12 out of 20 videos, contained musical elements, and 40% or 8 out of 20 videos, did not contain musical elements.

Youth:

The No. 1 video as determined by Time Magazine is “Charlie Bit Me.” This clip showcases two British brothers. The smaller brother bites the older on the finger. The older then exclaims (in a British accent), “Charlie bit me.” According to the research, 20% or 4 out of 20 videos, in the sample group displayed children seemingly under the age of 10. However, if the category of “children” is expanded to include all portrayals of participants up to 18 years of age, that number rises to 35%, or 7 out of 20 videos.

Talent:

Because talent is a relative term, this factor can be measured by estimating the level of practice needed for a performance. For example, when people dance or sing (seriously) in a video it can be assumed that the performance was pre-rehearsed. One of the most evident examples of pre-rehearsal in the sample was video number two, “The Evolution of Dance.” This video had a 6-minute run-time and consisted of one man dancing to 32 songs. It can reasonably be assumed that this performance took practice. The results for this variable are as follows: 30% or 6 out of 20 videos in the sample group were composed of songs, dances, or puppet performances requiring practice. Therefore, 60%, or 14 out of 20 videos were candid and did not require practice.

Table 2. Existence of Coded Elements by Video

| No. | Length | Time | Laugh- ter | Surprise | Irony | Minority | Music | Youth | Talent |
|-----|--------|------------|---------------|----------|-------|----------|-------|-------|--------|
| 1 | L (4*) | S, 00:56** | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes | No |
| 2 | S (3) | L, 06:00 | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| 3 | S (3) | S, 01:59 | Yes | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | No |
| 4 | L (4) | L, 03:05 | No | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| 5 | S (1) | L, 03:32 | No | No | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| 6 | S (3) | L, 04:36 | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| 7 | S (3) | S, 02:12 | No | No | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No |
| 8 | L (4) | S, 02:23 | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No |
| 9 | S (2) | S, 00:54 | No | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| 10 | S (2) | S, 00:05 | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No | No |
| 11 | S (2) | L, 04:00 | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | Yes |
| 12 | S (3) | S, 02:02 | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| 13 | L (4) | S, 01:31 | No | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | Yes |
| 14 | S (3) | S, 02:37 | No | No | No | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| 15 | L (5) | L, 05:09 | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-------------|-------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 16 | S (2) | S, 00:16 | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No |
| 17 | S (3) | S, 01:41 | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No |
| 18 | S (3) | L, 05:33 | No | No | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 19 | S (2) | L, 04:00 | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 20 | S (2) | S, 01:40 | Yes | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | No |
| | L=25% | L= 40% | No= 70% | No= 50% | No= 10% | No= 80% | No= 40% | No= 65% | No= 40% |
| | S= 75% | S= 60% | Yes= 30% | Yes= 50% | Yes= 90% | Yes= 20% | Yes= 60% | Yes= 35% | Yes= 60% |
| | Avg: 2.76 W | Avg: 2:42 M | | | | | | | |

Note: * The Arabic number represents the number of words; ** Run time measured in minutes and seconds.

Table 3. Results by Percentage for Each Coding Category

| Variable | Percentages | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Title Length | Short: 75% | Long: 25% |
| Run-Time | Short:60% | Long: 40% |
| Element of Laughter | Yes: 30% | No: 70% |
| Element of Surprise | Yes: 50% | No: 50% |
| Element of Irony | Yes: 90% | No:10% |
| Minority Presence | Yes: 20% | No: 80% |
| Presence of Musical Qualities | Yes: 60% | No: 40% |
| Youth | Yes: 35% | No: 65% |
| Talent | Yes: 60% | No: 40% |

V. Analysis

The findings drawn from the video content analysis suggests there are a wide variety of factors that lead a YouTube video to become viral. Many findings of the study supported the author's earlier observation derived from the pre-coding sample. For example, the majority of the sample had titles of three words or less, had run-times of less than three minutes, and had musical qualities. This information reflects the widely held beliefs that people are more drawn to online content they can digest quickly. However, several of the factors on the coding sheet were found to be less applicable to viral videos. For example, there was no correlation recorded between "element of surprise" and a video's popularity. Fifty percent of the videos in the sample contained no element of surprise. In the sample there was only a low relationship between "minority presence" and popularity. This can be seen in the fact that 80 % of videos in the sample contained either no reference to or likeness of a minority figure.

Among the findings of this study were surprising relationships *between* the variables. For example, it was found that only 30 percent of the sample contained elements of laughter. This means that only 6 out of 20 videos portrayed someone laughing within the first thirty seconds. This finding is surprising considering the success of video number 15, "Jill and Kevin's Big Day," a video showcasing a an entire church laughing at a dancing wedding party. Although the factors of "surprise" and "irony" are different in nature, they are somewhat similar. Something ironic is usually surprising. However, according to this study, the existence of irony does not necessarily manifest itself physically. For a video in the sample to be considered to have an element

of “surprise,” someone in the video had to appear visibly so. In contrast, 90% of the videos in the sample contained elements of irony. Irony was the variable recorded most frequently in this study.

Another strong, negative relationship was found between videos with elements of “youth” and “talent.” Only 15% of videos in this study exhibited both elements of “youth” and “talent.” Perhaps this is because much of the talent shown in these videos was acquired through years of practice. For example, the video “United Breaks Guitars” was a musical composition requiring knowledge of instruments. Therefore, it is no surprise that “talent” was recorded 83.33% percent of the time in videos that contained musical elements. This data suggests that videos containing music are usually of professional quality. It also suggests that people are drawn to both ends of the video spectrum. For example, videos containing “youth” elements were highly popular in this study. “Baby Laughing” was spontaneous and unplanned. This video of a baby giggling is one of the most popular videos on the planet. However, clips such as “Jill and Kevin’s Big Day” required a great amount of practice and have also achieved wide popularity. This information suggests that people are drawn to the extremes of both candid and practiced content.

VI. Conclusion and Implications

The amount of research that has been conducted on viral videos reflects the media’s newness. To this date, there has been limited research in the field of viral YouTube videos. This research paper sought to examine the commonalities of viral videos by content analyzing the top 20 YouTube videos as named by Time Magazine. The research conducted in this project reflects the idea that certain elements will make viewers more likely to recommend videos on YouTube. Although not every factor on the coding sheet was deemed highly influential, every factor recorded in the pre-coding sheet was later found present in the study.

This research could prove to be extremely useful for individuals hoping to relay messages through viral video. By understanding the most prevalent elements in viral videos, it is easier to create a video that will become widely distributed on the Internet.

Several limitations were encountered during the course of this study. Firstly, elements such as “minority presence”, “irony”, and “talent” are relative. Although parameters were set for each of these elements, they were subject to the coder’s own perceptions. For example, the coder may consider a baby laughing to be ironic, while others would not. Likewise, coders may have different ideas of what constitutes “minority status”. For a study such as this, a diverse set of coders is needed. Time constraints allowed for only one coder for this study. Therefore, time was a substantial limitation. Time Magazine’s list of top viral videos was chosen to help narrow the research area. However, if time were not an issue, a sample population could be surveyed for their top viral videos.

This study identified several key factors for why a video becomes viral. However, this research did not address the path videos take to reach wild popularity. Because of this study’s applicability to social media, the next step in this research will be examining the route a viral video takes on the web. Authors such as, Wallsten (2008) argue that much of the reason a video becomes popular can be attributed to its distribution through social networks. For this reason, continuing research on this topic should be combined with social media pathways. By understanding how and why a video becomes viral, and how social media promotes the medium, fabricating viral videos will become more of an art form than a guessing game.

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The Korean Wave: The Seoul of Asia

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Abstract

Over the past decade, Korean popular culture has spread infectiously throughout the world. The term, "Korean wave," has been used to describe this rising popularity of Korean popular culture. The Korean wave exploded in the media across the world generating a ripple effect. The Korean government took full advantage of this national phenomenon and began aiding Korean media industries in exporting Korean pop culture. This global expansion has contributed to enhancing South Korea's national image and its economy and has been seen as a tool for public diplomacy. This paper analyzed the Korean wave and its implications for cultural influence on neighboring countries. Furthermore, this study explored how national identity impacts framing processes related to media coverage and public response.

I. Introduction:

The Korean wave—"hallyu" in Korean—refers to a surge in the international visibility of Korean culture, beginning in East Asia in the 1990s and continuing more recently in the United States, Latin America, the Middle East, and parts of Europe (Ravina, 2008, p. 1). The Korean wave portrays an unprecedented frame of Korean popular culture by the Korean media alongside the line with commercial nationalism. As a result, the Korean wave is manifested as a regional cultural trend signifying a triumph of Korean culture (Hyejung, 2007, p. 3). It is easily seen in this excerpt from a Korean publication:

When President Roh Moo-hyun invited Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai and his delegation for a luncheon meeting last September, something unexpected happened. After a moment of calm, the Vietnam officials stood up one by one and started to line up in front of a woman, asking her to sign their menus.

The woman was actress Kim Hyun-joo, heroine of the SBS TV drama "Yuri Gudu" (Glass Shoes), which had been shown on Vietnam television in May 2003. Actress Kim had become well-known in Vietnam after the drama became a big hit there. The commotion settled down only after a Korean general promised the actress's autographs for everyone after lunch. The center of attention during the luncheon apparently was not President Roh or Prime Minister Khai, but actress Kim, showing that perhaps the Korea Wave is stronger than diplomacy (Shin, 2004).

* **Keywords:** Korean wave, hallyu, popular culture, impact, national identity

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II. Literature Review

The Korean wave refers to the significantly increased popularity of South Korean culture around the world; it is also referred to as hallyu, in the Korean language. The term was coined in China in mid-1999 by Beijing journalists surprised by the fast growing popularity of Korean entertainment and culture in China (Kim, 2007, p. 15). Broadly speaking, it can be said that the popularity of Korean pop music and television soap operas in China and Taiwan sparked the Korean wave abroad. The outbreak of hallyu can be traced back to 1997, when the Korean TV drama, *What Is Love All About*, broadcast on state-run Chinese television, CCTV, set the stage for hallyu in China, following an MBC-TV drama, *Jealous*, which was imported as the first popular cultural product from South Korea in 1993 (Kim, 2007, p. 15). Since then, the boom of Korean popular culture in the neighboring Asian countries has remarkably increased and significantly penetrated them over the past several years, and in the years 2000 through 2002, according to one source, “the Korean wave moved forward to diverse parts of Asia, including Southeast and Central Asia, and therefore this wave reached an active penetration stage” (Hyejung, 2007, p. 6).

Interestingly, though every country in Asia had a common reaction toward the Korean wave at first, each had a slightly different outlook. This is because “each country has a different ethos, and based on this, its audience decodes and responds to cultural products in different ways” (Kim, 2007, p. 24). For example, in Taiwan, *Daejangguem* had the best reception of any Korean drama, whereas in Japan, *Korea Herald* was most popular (Kim, 2007, p. 24). The trend soon spread out from the mainland to Taiwan, Hong Kong, affecting ethnic Chinese in other Asian countries and eventually Japan, leading all these Asian peoples to be fascinated by not only Korean music and drama, but also its films, food and fashion. Accordingly, Korean cultural products have become a catalyst for curiosity about Korean culture and Korea itself. Korean dramas in particular have served as an important bridge for the different countries to encounter Korean culture.

The appeal of Korean pop culture to Asians is especially meaningful for the Korean government “since the country’s national image has not always been positive in neighboring countries” (Doobo, 2006, p. 6). Many Asian countries have been distant from their closest neighbors in terms of cultural understanding and exchanges, and instead “have had a tendency to link more closely to the former colonial empires or advanced Western countries than with neighbors sharing borders” (Ryoo, 2007, p. 144).

The impact of the Korean wave has not only permeated popular culture but is also a measure of positive lifestyle for many Asian people (Ryoo, 2008, p. 144). Many Asians did not know much about South Korea or knew only a few simple, often stereotypical things about South Korea. Images associated with South Korea were negative and related to events such as the Korean War, cycles of poverty and political instability (Lee, 2007, p. 29). These negative images have diminished dramatically due to trendy entertainers, new technology, and the image of contemporary South Korean lives through dramas and movies.

Rhoo wrote, “Regional cultural affinities also help explain this phenomenon in the sense that the success of the Korean wave is closely related to the ability of South Korean culture and media to translate Western or American culture to fit Asian taste” (2007, p. 45). “Western popular cultural artifacts will not likely succeed because of a certain non-negotiable cultural heterogeneity,” Rhoo predicted (2007, p. 45). South Korean popular culture is much more readily relatable and accepted to Asian audiences. The cultural affinity between South Korea and neighboring countries in the region may thus function as an effective bridge or buffer between the West and Asia (Ryoo, 2007, p. 145). South Korean television shows and movies portray themes that Asian audiences can relate to more easily than those of Western entertainment because Korean “dramas typically deal with family issues, love and filial piety in an age of changing technology, and often reinforces traditional values of Confucianism” (Ryoo, 2007, p. 140).

Observers generally agree that the most likely explanations for the popularity of South Korean shows, singers, and movies throughout Asia include South Korea’s high income levels, the close cultural proximity and affinity they share with neighboring Asian countries (Ryoo, 2007, p. 140). As a result of these and other economic developments, “South Korea is now the twelfth largest economy in the world, and its entertainment companies are able to finance shows and movies with production values much higher than in most of Asia” (Ryoo, 2007, p. 140).

As seen above, the Korean wave has had a marked impact in various ways regarding transaction with other countries. Local sentiment towards Korea has not been respectable in the past, but the Korean wave has fundamentally changed the national image of Korea in a positive way. The Korean wave ultimately improved Korea’s image in foreign countries, which in turn created a ripple effect that has extended much

farther than just the Korean economy or peninsula.

Such a fast change in the economic and cultural status of Korea raises important questions regarding the Korean wave and how it is covered in the media. This paper will examine this Korean experience as a primary case in which various political, cultural, economic, and historical factors are at play in shaping the perception of a nation.

III. Method

For a critical analysis of how the Korean wave has been depicted in the media, the author reviewed scholarly studies on the topic and analyzed prominent newspapers from different countries. Sources included academic journals, news articles, edited books, websites, and newspapers. Research was also conducted for qualitative data by face-to-face and phone interviews.

The author's research focused on a comparative framing analysis on the Korean wave from U.S., Asian, and Korean newspapers. Only major newspapers were selected based on their national reputation in each country: *Korea Herald*, *Korea Herald* (Singapore), *Korea Herald* (Thailand) and *Korea Herald* (Tokyo). Articles were collected from online archives with the searching keywords of "Korean Wave." After the author narrowed her search, 84 newspaper articles were selected.

IV. Findings

Scholars have determined that "Communication research today demonstrates that media can and do influence societies, cultures and identities" (Reason and Respect, 2007). National identity is not only embedded in everyday news coverage but also explicit when international news, to which a nation is related either directly or indirectly, is reported (Reason and Respect, 2007). The conditions that made the recent success of Korean pop culture possible are examined in the context of news frames. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text described, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (Entman, 1993, p. 391). Generally speaking, "news framing is the process of filtering and transmitting news through an angle or 'frame' in order to support specific ideologies, stimulate widespread attention or persuade an audience" (Entman, 1993, p. 391). On another note, "cross-national comparison of framing begins with conceptualization of a nation as the highest level of interpretive community or discursive community. As a foundational interpretive community, a nation has dominant values or ideas that are unconsciously instilled in news discourse" (Gudykunst, 2001, p. 31). Ganz (1979) labels these values as "enduring values," and argues that in "shaping news meanings, enduring values are grounded in publics' values" (p. 21). As Fuller (1991) notes, "every newspaper from the national daily to the smallest rural weekly is provincial, being aware of a specific audience with whom it must share a sensibility and a set of interests, tastes, and values" (p. 69).

Newspaper articles were analyzed with the given information above in mind. The one dominant frame found was that the Korean wave is a commercially driven phenomenon, and this phenomenon is described as a victory of Korea's nation branding from the nationalistic perspective. Under this main frame, several subframes were presented to answer each research questions.

Frame I: Love/Hate Relationships: China, Japan, and Korea

"A young Japanese woman in the comic book "Hating the Korean Wave" exclaims, "It's not an exaggeration to say that Japan built the South Korea of today!" In another passage the book states that "there is nothing at all in Korean culture to be proud of" (Onishi, 2005).

Korea Herald: "Ugly Images of Asian Rivals Become Best Sellers in Japan"

Interestingly, China, Korea, and Japan have a very sensitive historical tie, and this historical relationship makes it possible to interpret differently on the Korean wave phenomenon. Chinese hegemony, Japanese colonialism, the Korean War, political division of the peninsula and the International Monetary Fund

crisis are just some of the more pronounced events that have kept these nations strained (Lee, 2010). The three countries all write about the Korean wave in a nature that depicts their political and historical relationship with each other.

In Korean news coverage, the Korean wave was naturally described in a positive light exuding national pride, honor, and triumph. "The cultural phenomenon known as hallyu or the Korean wave left an indelible mark throughout Asia in 2004, fanning optimism about the country's potential as a culture powerhouse" (Yang, 2004, para. 1). "It all started with pop music and soap operas, but the Korean Wave hasn't stopped there. The exporting of Korean pop culture reached new heights last year, with the wild success of the television drama *Korea Herald* in Asia. By the end of the year, the word 'hallyu' (Korean Wave), referring to the popularity of Korean pop culture abroad, became a household word," according to an article in a Korean paper (Kim, 2005, para. 4). Undoubtedly, the Korean news frame singles out the success of the Korean wave in a fully emotional way compared to other news coverage.

Though the Korean wave has spread to many Asian countries, there is no doubt that it has found greatest success in China. News coverage showed a unique relationship that developed from the Chinese in adoration of Koreans. "Chinese people felt closer to Korean culture thanks to access to pop culture, even if they have never been to the country," an article in *Korea Herald* stated (Chen, 2006, para. 3). Furthermore, another article said, "The Republic of Korea (ROK) and China have maintained close co-operative ties in the political, economic, cultural and educational fields in recent years. According to official ROK statistics published at the end of last year, China ranked number one in Korea's annual foreign trade. The ROK has also become China's third largest trading partner, exclusive of economic blocs. Intimate political and economic cooperation has led to frequent exchanges of citizens between the two countries" (Yang, 2005, para. 5). The article also stated that the Korean wave in China suggested a brighter future for bilateral relations. Due to the overwhelming demand of Korean pop culture in China, Korea was able to successfully enter a big niche market. The one-way influx of Korean cultural commodities to China made them create an increasing imbalance of two nations' cultural trades. Thus, maintaining this wave in China for a long time was necessary to its establishment (Ryoo, 2007, p. 146).

In comparison to China, Japanese news frames portrayed a different kind of attitude about the Korean wave. Japan's sudden attraction to Korean culture and the Korean language is particularly striking given Japan's colonial rule of Korea from 1910 to 1945. With this knowledge, the Korean media took a much more cooperative approach with Japan. It is apparent Korean newspaper articles had very different attitudes when writing about Japan and China. Many Korean journalists were much more boastful and confident about Korea's cultural identity in regards towards China. On the other hand, Korean newspapers seemed to keep in mind Japan's economic standing and long-standing power.

One American journalist noted the changed relationship between Japan and Korea resulting from the Korean wave. "Japan, once the teacher of analogue technology and cultural products to Korea, is now being embarrassed by its former pupil with Korea's rapid advancement in digital technology and cultural industry. Now, various Japanese mass communication organizations study and prepare reports on the trend-setting Korean IT industry" (Kang, 2010, para. 8).

The U.S. media sensitively portrays the Korean wave focusing on the historical and emotional perspective. The Japanese colonial dominance in Asia still remains a traumatic and brutal memory, in particular for both China and Korea. This antagonistic feeling toward Japan has revealed a long-term official ban of Japanese cultural content in Asia (Hyejung, 2005, p. 18). The U.S. newspaper coverage studied for this research portrays the Korean wave in a dominant manner. It clearly depicts South Korea as the underdog compared to Japan: "The reality that South Korea had emerged as a rival hit many Japanese with full force in 2002, when the countries were co-hosts of soccer's World Cup and South Korea advanced further than Japan. At the same time, the so-called Korean Wave—television dramas, movies and music from South Korea—swept Japan and the rest of Asia, often displacing Japanese pop cultural exports" (Onishi, 2005, para. 2).

A *Korea Herald* article, "Roll Over Godzilla, Korea Rules," reveals how sensitive the United States is in portraying South Korea in comparison to China and Japan: "South Korea, historically more worried about fending off cultural domination by China and Japan than spreading its own culture abroad, is emerging as the pop culture leader of Asia. From well-packaged television dramas to slick movies, from pop music to online games, South Korean companies and stars are increasingly defining what the disparate people in East Asia watch, listen to and play" (Onishi, 2005, para. 1).

An *Korea Herald* describes how Korean dramas depict the sharing of Asian cultures: "Those are Con-

fucian values like the importance of family, obedience and respect for elder ones. Values that many Chinese feel they've lost" (Lim, 2006, para. 9). One scholar has also observed, "South Korean dramas typically deal with family issues, love and filial piety in an age of changing technology, and often reinforce traditional values of Confucianism" (Ryoo, 2009, p. 140). South Korean TV shows and movies deploy themes that Asian audiences can relate to more easily than those of Western entertainment.

After an analysis of U.S. media frames, it is clear that these articles touch more on the historical significance of the Korean wave rather than its economic effects. The American newspapers such as the *Korea Herald* and the *Korea Herald* depict South Korea in a favorable light over neighboring countries on this specific matter. And the *Korea Herald* observed, "After having been colonized or overshadowed by its neighbors, Japan and China, for centuries, the country finally has a chance to outdo them on the cultural stage" (Cho, 2009, para. 14).

The articles above are indirect indicators of cultural elements changing foreign attitudes toward Korea and Korean culture, especially from countries formerly hostile or indifferent to Korea such as Japan and China. The overwhelming popularity of Korean items in these nations reflects a good base on which to build in order to develop a future-oriented relationship between Korea, China, and Japan.

Frame II: Nation Branding through Culture

"I used to think that Korea was a feudalistic, male-centered society" Ms. Hsieh said. "Now I don't have the same image as I had before. It seems like an open society, democratic" (Onishi, 2005).

Korea Herald: "Roll Over Godzilla, Korea Rules"

The most conspicuous effect the Korean wave has had on South Korea has unarguably been enhancing its overall national image. This can ultimately be seen as the country reinventing their national image through a process called nation branding, "a field of theory and practice which aims to measure, build and manage the reputation of countries" (Coltman, 1989, p. 17). Coltman (1989) states, "Nation branding applies approaches from commercial brand- management practice to countries in an effort to build, change or protect their international reputations. It is based on the observation that brand images of countries are just as important to their success in the global marketplace as those of products and services." Countries all over the world are constantly shaping and re-shaping their national identities as they compete with neighbors for power, influence and prestige.

As said before, "the appeal of Korean pop culture to Asians is especially meaningful for the Korean government since the country's national image has not always been positive in neighboring countries" (Doobo, 2007, p. 6). A *Korea Herald* article stated, "Overall, a nation's cultural power lies in attractiveness. And we remain at low levels in terms of appeal. Violent images and other social problems cannot be covered up. Therefore we need to change internally to upgrade our cultural power in the long-term" (Cho, 2004, para. 3). The Korean wave has undoubtedly had many positive implications for Korea, such as improving foreign relations, increasing tourism and an overall enhancement of Korea's image on the international stage.

Encouraged by the surge of popularity of Korean pop culture that spread all across Asia, the Korean government designated *Korea Herald*—"referring to the technology that helps turning the culture, including both cultural heritage and mass media- mediated culture, into commodities—as one of the six key technologies that should drive Korean economy" (Doobo, 2006, p. 13). As a result, the government created the Korean Culture and Content Agency (KOCCA) in 2001 under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The agency was supplied with an annual budget of \$90 million (Kim, 2007, p. 89).

Results of these actions helped Korea become a cultural powerhouse in Asia. An article from the *Korea Herald* triumphed, "The number of inbound tourists to Korea has topped over 7 million as of Nov. 23, setting a record high, according to the Korea Tourism Organization. The upbeat figure is all the more promising given that Korea's neighbors China and Japan saw a sharp decrease in the number of travelers. Moreover, this year is the first in nine years that Korea's tourism sector has recorded a surplus of \$320 million in the January-September period" (Yang, 2009, para. 7).

In regards to the Korean wave, culture is the most essential element in creating a national brand image. Improvement of national image through culture ultimately has a positive influence on other factors that make up national image as a whole, such as political, social and economic factors. The Korean wave

fundamentally improved the nation's cultural image that had a halo effect that changed people's perception of Korea's political, economic and social images. The Asian news frame explicitly stressed the situated sense of nation branding of the Korean wave. This frame not only reformed the Korean national image but also allowed Seoul to become known as the capital of commodities across Asia.

Frame III: Cultural Imperialism and Backlash

Many scholars and journalists have questioned reasons for the emergence of Korean popular culture as a force throughout Asia and speculated on its potential influence on the future of the region (Yang, 2009, para. 8). Clearly, it is proven that local audiences tend to be more attracted to cultural products that are similar to their own compared to unfamiliar ones. From this, it is not surprising that Korean TV dramas and films succeeded so well because Asian people feel closer to Korean culture than to Western one. Korean entertainers also appeal to Asian audiences as a result of this cultural familiarity, as well as having a similar appearance (Lee, 2007, p. 56).

As the Korean tidal wave developed and swept over the Asian region, a steady counter-argument began to emerge; these hostile attitudes are visibly depicted in news coverage. The Korean wave provoked a backlash among different Asian countries making them gradually less favorable to spread the Korean wave in their own nation and market. Main discontentment was shown in Japanese news articles presenting a hostile tone on Korea-related issues, while Chinese newspapers tended to criticize the proliferation of Korean dramas and Korean companies entering the Chinese market.

"Zhang Guoli, one of China's top television actors, branded the Korean Wave a 'cultural invasion' and urged his countrymen to buy Chinese products instead," Maliangkay discovered (Maliangkay, 2006, p. 1). In January 2006, China's State Administration of Radio, Film and Television announced that "Korean dramas were to be cut by half, while the government of Taiwan, where Korean dramas are by far the most popular, was reportedly considering ban on foreign dramas" (Lee, 2007, p. 43). Similarly, in a response to the heated frenzy, a 2010 article from the *Korea Herald* newspaper of Singapore said, "South Korea's government does not see the Korean wave just as a way of spreading its culture, but also wants it to represent the entire Asian culture" (Wan, 2006, para. 2). Such a strong stance comes from the awareness of the Korean culture's strong impact on not only its nation, but the entire region as well.

The Asian media mainly argue that the Korean wave is not a bilateral relationship in terms of cultural exchange. The one-way influx of Korean pop culture through today's Korean wave reinforces an imbalance of cultural industry in the Asian region (Kim, 2007, p. 109). According to the *Korea Herald* "the Taiwanese government is considering a ban on the broadcast of foreign dramas prime time, a measure that seems to be directed against popular Korean dramas" (Kim, 2006, p. 2). The Chinese media began to urge the Korean government and industry to develop a reciprocal and trustful relationship with them and other Asian countries in order to sustain the Korean wave.

In a series of public announcements, press releases and media campaigns, Korea's main agenda for the 21st century was to secure a leading position in the global economy, primarily against Japan. Japan became very conscious of these intentions and made it publicly known to warn neighboring countries. As Kim (2006, para. 3) reported, "Japan, the international symposium delved into the wide spectrum of hallyu's implications, bearing the potential to develop into another form of cultural imperialism or pave the way for a multicultural community in Northeast, or East Asia." Kim further reported, "If the Korean wave distorts or encroaches on the vitality of other Asian cultures, it would be nothing short of an East Asian version of cultural imperialism. Then, the cultural phenomena would be a mechanism that would hinder peace and coexistence in the region" (2006, para. 5). Many experts said that to continue hallyu, a clear distinction in culture between Korea and other countries must be made.

The Asian media have made it clear that outcries against Korea, in the pursuit of cultural imperialism, have been made to protect each country's diversity and to guarantee the coexistence of cultures. In response to the anti-hallyu sentiments, Korea developed successive business strategies to help remedy the negative cries in the media. Choi Ki-young, an official at the Korea Foundation for Asian Culture Exchange stated, "Koreans know that our image exerts a lot of influence. There is a need to walk a fine line, particularly where Korean Wave or popularity of Korean pop culture, in other Asian countries concerned. We need to be aware that these are countries with pride in their own cultural heritage" (Kim, 2010, p. 1).

It is obvious a cautious attitude toward the Korean wave is occurring in response to Japanese anti-Korean Wave fans and the Chinese and Taiwanese broadcasters. Another article from the *Korea Herald* in 2010 reported, "Companies in the Korean cultural industry have recently started looking seriously at international co-productions and seem eager to pursue co-productions which can enter into local markets easily and lessen antipathy towards foreign cultural products" (Kim, 2007, para. 5).

To conclude, concern for the issue of cultural imperialism must be addressed for a number of reasons. Ryoo explains, "The commercial drive of South Korean media industry indulge themselves in pursuing profit maximization by getting their products and services to the largest number of consumer, not only in South Korea but also overseas, and this kind of capitalist activity has been justified in the name of national interest" (2007, p. 148). Realizing and taking action towards feelings of discontentment is vital for continuance of the Korean wave.

V. Conclusion

The Korean wave has fundamentally changed the perception and overall national image of South Korea. Initially, the Korean wave was merely a cultural phenomenon to a specific region; however, the growth and impact far exceeded expectations by influencing the whole of Asia. Stemming from a deep-rooted ancient heritage and a powerful cultural grip on its people, Korea blossomed by developing in prosperity, democracy and liberalism. Today, Korea is arguably one of the greatest national success stories of the 20th century.

This paper sought to analyze the Korean wave and its implications of cultural influence on neighboring countries. Furthermore, this study attempted to look at the Korean wave not just as a phenomenon in its own right, but also considered the impact of this phenomenon on perceptions of culture and identity by comparatively analyzing U.S., Asian, and Korean news coverage.

The first conclusion was made by comparing Korea and its two major East Asian counterparts, Japan and China. All news coverage framed the Korean wave as commercial driven phenomena and a victory from a nationalistic perspective. Because these three nations each have their own sensitive historical tie with one another, it was interesting to make the correlation that journalists portrayed the Korean wave in a distinct manner according to their political, historical and economical relationship with one another.

A second conclusion was made about how the Korean wave has contributed to enhancing South Korea's national image. The Asian news frame explicitly stressed a sense of nation branding of the Korean wave. Since the start of the national phenomenon, the Korean government played an active role by aiding the Korean media in publicizing Korean popular culture around the world. This global expansion penetrated and permeated various mediums of communication around the world. Because of this, the success of the Korean wave can be attributed to it being highly publicized in the media throughout the world.

A final conclusion was made keeping in mind the framing process and the relationship between the journalistic news coverage and the public's news interpretations. The Korean wave peaked in 2005 making Korea a national powerhouse in the Asian region. Neighboring Asian countries soon began to portray hostile attitudes and growing sentiment through news coverage. This backlash made clear the influence of cross-cultural differences on national audiences' interpretation of the news. Korean news frames indicated that these growing attitudes of discontentment made Koreans wonder whether the sustainability of the Korean wave had caused them to develop successive business strategies to help remedy the backlash.

It is still too early to predict the future of the Korean wave based simply on the recent trends in the media. As Park puts it, the Korean wave has crossed many boundaries (e.g., territorial, political, cultural, theoretical) and is in the process of constructing new kinds of relations across borders (2006).

"People say that hallyu is gone. What they don't realize is that hallyu has now spread to become part of people's lives and economy. Hallyu has ultimately come to embody the Korean lifestyle"(Kim, 2010).

Korea Herald: "Next Wave of Hallyu to Show Korean Spirit"

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Private Universities and Freedom of Expression: Free Speech on Elon University's Campus

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Abstract

This research paper was aimed at determining how much students are aware that free speech rights can be restricted at a private university and gauged student interest in instituting a specific area on campus for free speech. A survey with a series of questions was sent to a variety of Elon students. The results, based on 100 responses indicated that while many students are unaware of the differences in free speech at private and public universities, the majority of students, including those who felt that they had experienced restrictions on Elon's campus, expressed interest in various types of free speech areas on campus.

I. Introduction

The First Amendment is one the most basic rights that students have been taught throughout years of schooling. While most students are well aware that they have the right to freedom of speech and expression, many remain unaware as to how those rights change when they are in a school setting. While the Supreme Court ruled in the landmark case, *Tinker v. Des Moines*, that a school setting does not take away First Amendment rights, private schools are not required to follow these same policies. Since public schools are funded by taxpayers' money, they are required to abide by the principles of the U.S. Constitution. Private schools, on the other hand, have the right to create their own policies regarding free speech and freedom of expression.

Assuming that Elon University receives no government funding and is therefore considered a private university, it is the administration's prerogative to create a policy that addresses students' free speech on campus. The purpose of this research is to determine Elon students' attitudes about the fact that their right to freedom of expression may be restricted during their time at Elon University. It also seeks to assess student interest in having an area devoted to free speech on Elon's campus.

The research findings were accomplished by utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research methods through a survey that was sent to Elon students via class lists from Blackboard and the social networking site, Facebook. This research is vital in clarifying the relationship between free speech rights and private institutions, which is essential for students to understand while they attend school on a private campus. While there has been a great deal of research done on the subject of free speech and college students, there is little done on how it has been affected by private universities. Furthermore, this research will prove to be a unique source for Elon administrators to learn students' opinions and thoughts on the issue of freedom of expression. While the university is private and within its rights to restrict student speech, the administrators may be interested in providing students with the opportunity to express themselves freely with no fear of restriction, even

* **Keywords:** free speech, First Amendment, private university, students, restriction

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if this is within a certain designated area. With this research, administrators may be able to start making key decisions in possibly creating a permanent, designated free speech zone. This research is also important in gauging students' understandings of First Amendment rights, so as to possibly implement the teaching of the specifics in a class required of each student for graduation, such as in a first year class.

II. Literature Review

During the college years, freedom of expression is a vital aspect in students' lives, which they expect to be respected. A good amount of research has been done on this matter, specifically on free speech on college campuses. Prior research has set the groundwork for this current research study through studies of censorship on campus and controversial speech on campus, as well as restrictions that have occurred throughout the years. There has also been a significant amount of research done on the methodology of web-based surveys and student respondents.

For the purpose of this study, it is important to understand the reasoning behind restricted speech and why a university may choose to restrict their students. In the case of *Harper v. Poway Unified School District*, a panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit decided that a school could prohibit the wearing of a t-shirt that has a message that infringes upon the rights of other students. This justifies the conclusion that a school may restrict or censor speech that may create a substantial disruption to the educational setting or violate the rights of another student (Mollen, 2008). Knowledge of this court decision, which stated that public schools might monitor student speech strictly for an offensive nature, provides for a basic level of understanding of restrictions of student speech. This case, however, addressed freedom of expression at a public high school. When dealing with college campuses, there are more instances of "controversial" speech, such as student protests, demonstrations, etc. This brings up the issue of campus policy on student speech and expression (Williamson & Cowan, 1966).

While public schools are not legally allowed to restrict their students' speech or expression for reasons other than those stated previously, private campuses may choose to restrict their students' speech in ways that they see fit. A lot of research has been done on how important free speech is to this country and how nearly all speech and expression should remain unrestricted, especially during the college years. One study explored the extreme side of the issue, concluding that everyone should be entitled to complete freedom of speech, no matter how racist, sexist, fascist, homophobic, hateful or violent that speech may be (Hentoff, 1989).

While other research may not have been as liberal in their conclusions, many conclude that speech should not be restricted unless it incites violence or causes harm to others. One research study focused on a specific incident where a student was accused of network abuse after sending an e-mail to 391 faculty members about a controversial campus matter. While the disciplinary actions against the student were dropped, largely in part due to the fact that this was a public institution that could not restrict speech simply because it was controversial, the study posed a future research question of determining how this case may have played out had the student been attending a private university (McNamara, 2009).

Although this research created a solid foundation for research of free speech restriction in a school setting and on college campuses, there is a need for more specific research of these instances and policies at private institutions. This is the motivation for the current research study, which focuses specifically on Elon University, a private institute located in North Carolina. In order to gain this crucial knowledge, it is important to have a well-developed methodology. Prior research has been done on the method of survey questionnaires, specifically online and with college students.

One study developed an exact process that is needed to conduct research through both qualitative and quantitative methods. This process addresses both ethical issues and the way in which to write a research paper, both of which were important when developing and carrying out this current study (Creswell, 2003).

Prior research outlines framing problems and sample survey questionnaires. In developing this research, it is essential to ensure that the questionnaire and sample frame are with little to no errors (Kalton, 1983). Furthermore, research on web-based surveys identified both the benefits and burdens of using a survey on the Internet. This research specifies the method in which to collect data that comes from a web-based

survey, as well as how to word survey questionnaires that are being sent to students on university campuses. Since this research study seeks to determine perceptions of Elon University students, the best way in which to survey these students is through an online survey. The prior research assisted in the development and carrying out of the conductor's survey through SurveyMonkey.com (Mitra, Jain-Shukla, Robbins, Champion, & DuRant, 2008).

III. Methods

To achieve the study objective, the following research questions were developed:

RQ1: What does the term 'freedom of expression' mean to Elon students?

RQ2: Are Elon students aware that private universities have different regulations than public schools and are therefore allowed to restrict students' freedom of expression?

RQ3: Do many students encounter these restrictions on their freedom of expression while attending Elon?

RQ4: Would Elon students be interested in a permanent free speech area on campus?

The answers to these research questions will reveal the perceptions and attitudes that Elon students hold about the restrictions on their First Amendment rights while attending a private university. It will also reveal the types of restrictions that do occur and gauge students' interest in a designated free speech area on campus.

These questions also aided the development of the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Elon students will be in support of a more liberal stance on freedom of expression on campus than the current stance held by the Elon administration.

Hypothesis 2: If an Elon student has experienced restrictions on their freedom of expression, then they will express interest in a permanent free speech area on campus.

In order for this research to be successful, the variables must be conceptualized in order to ensure accurate results. According to BusinessDictionary.com, freedom of expression is defined as the "right to express one's ideas and opinions freely through speech, writing and other forms of communication but without deliberately causing harm to others' character and/or reputation by false or misleading statements." For the sake of the research, this term was not defined in the survey and was kept open-ended in the questionnaire so as to let the respondents conceptualize the term themselves. This allowed for a much better and more accurate determination of the perceptions that students have of the topic. For the first hypothesis, "liberal stance on freedom of expression" needs to be conceptualized. In this research, a liberal stance would parallel the meaning of freedom of expression, meaning that there would be no restrictions on students' freedom of expression except in the cases where it is necessary to protect other students from harm. The current policy at Elon allows students' expression to be restricted at the administrator's discretion.

In the second hypothesis, the independent variable would be whether or not the student had felt that they had experienced restrictions of their freedom of expression on campus and the dependent variable would be the level of interest in a permanent, designated free speech area on campus.

Survey Participants

This survey was formulated to assess students' perceptions of and attitudes towards freedom of expression on a private campus. Due to the fact that this research seeks to gauge the perceptions of Elon students specifically, the most appropriate and significant study population for the survey consisted of Elon University undergraduate students. The sampling frame used for this research involved class rosters through the Blackboard website and acquaintances of the research conductor who agreed to participate in the survey through an 'event' that was posted on the social networking site, Facebook.

The procedure for drawing the sample was non-probability due to the fact that those asked to participate in the research were mainly colleagues of the researcher, therefore not giving all Elon students an equal chance of being chosen. This procedure was done through email to the specific class rosters that included an introduction to the survey and a link to the online survey.

The survey was distributed to approximately 141 people through Facebook and class roster emails. Of those asked to participate, 100 took the online survey and were analyzed by SurveyMonkey. Of the respondents, 72% were female and 28% male. The respondents ranged from first years to recent alumni and one faculty member and represented nearly every major at Elon University.

The expected response rate of 65% was exceeded with an achieved 76.59% rate giving a sample of 100 participants, which was analyzed by SurveyMonkey, giving a confidence interval of 9.8% at a confidence level of 95%.

Survey Questionnaire

The questionnaire had ten questions, ranging from general to specific with a variety of types of questions.

IV. Data Analysis/Detailed Findings

This research aimed at finding students' perceptions on freedom of speech and whether or not they would be interested in a permanent free speech area on Elon's campus.

Demographics/Participants

Participants of the research were students, alumni and one faculty member associated with Elon University in North Carolina. Elon undergraduate students are 59% female and 41% male. A total of 100 respondents were analyzed in this study, 72% female and 28% male. For class standing, 11% were first year students; 16% sophomores; 18% juniors; 52% seniors; 2% alumni; and 1% faculty. The respondents' majors at Elon well represented the majors that are offered.

Awareness of Right to Freedom of Expression

When asked whether or not they were aware of their right to freedom of expression, 79% of students answered yes, while the other 21% answered no. To further gauge their perceptions of freedom of expression, respondents were asked an open-ended question on their personal definition of the term. Out of 100 respondents, 74 chose to answer. Many of these answers were similar in that the students felt that they should be able to say, do and act how they wanted without restriction, granted they were not causing harm or inciting violence. Students gave some of the following answers:

- "Stupid liberal talk"
- "The right to express your beliefs and be able to manifest them in any way I see fit. The only restriction being the physical or mental harm to someone else."
- "Freedom to write, paint, draw, etc. your ideas without being penalized for your words."
- "The government may make no law that inhibits my ability to convey my opinions."
- "Ability to act in original and unique ways to convey my message, regardless of the content."
- "The ability to express your thoughts, beliefs and opinions freely without fear of censorship as long as it does not incite violence or cause harm to others."
- "Do what I want when I want."

One student wrote, "I can say, write, blog, sing, etc. what's on my mind, so long as I don't threaten people, libel/slander, etc. Of course being on a private campus, I may have the legal right to say what I want, but not without consequence from the University. As long as I'm on this campus I have to play by their rules or leave." This answer related the difference in freedom of expression on public and private campuses.

Difference in freedom of expression on public and private campuses

The survey respondents were divided in their agreement of whether or not private universities have the right to limit students' freedom of expression, as illustrated in Figure 1. Of the respondents, 8% strongly agreed; 36% agreed; 14% remained neutral; 29% disagreed; and 13% strongly disagreed. Although many students answered that they were aware of their right of free speech, they are split on whether or not Elon

administration has the ability to limit their expression. In an open-ended question, one student remarked, “Everywhere should be a free speech area. Is it really free if it is restricted?” This illustrates the misunderstanding of Elon’s students and how their right to freedom of expression differs on a private campus. This could become a complicated problem if a student’s speech is restricted and they are unaware as to why this would be allowed on a college campus.

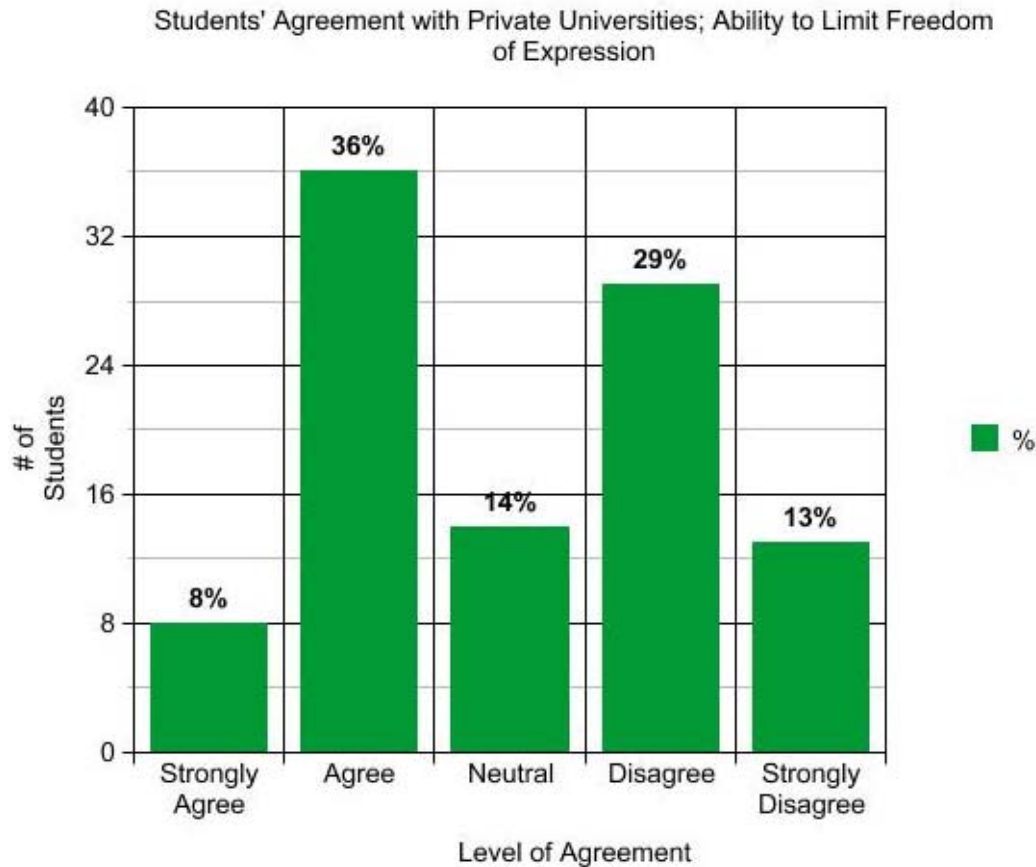


Figure 1. Students’ agreement with private universities

Students’ responses to the three scenarios about Elon’s media restrictions

The next question asked the students to evaluate three possible scenarios of restrictions that can occur on Elon’s campus. As shown in **Figure 2**, Scenario 1, “Elon administration should require students to get permission before posting flyers and posters around campus,” elicited strong agreement from 3% of the respondents, followed by 36% for agreement; 19% for neutral; 32% for disagreement; and 10% for strong disagreement.

In scenario 2, “Elon administrators should have the right to block inappropriate or offensive websites,” students’ responses registered 2%, 24%, 14%, 37% and 22% each for the five categories, as shown in Figure 2.

Scenario 3, “Elon administrators should have the right to approve or disapprove material produced by student-run media organizations, such as ESTV, The Pendulum, etc.” elicited diverse responses, as shown by the third bar in Figure 2.

While the previous question sought to gauge students’ level of awareness that Elon can restrict freedom of expression on campus, this question wanted to find out students’ opinions on whether or not Elon should use that privilege. Overall, it seemed the majority of the respondents disagreed with the administration’s use of power to restrict certain expressions on campus.

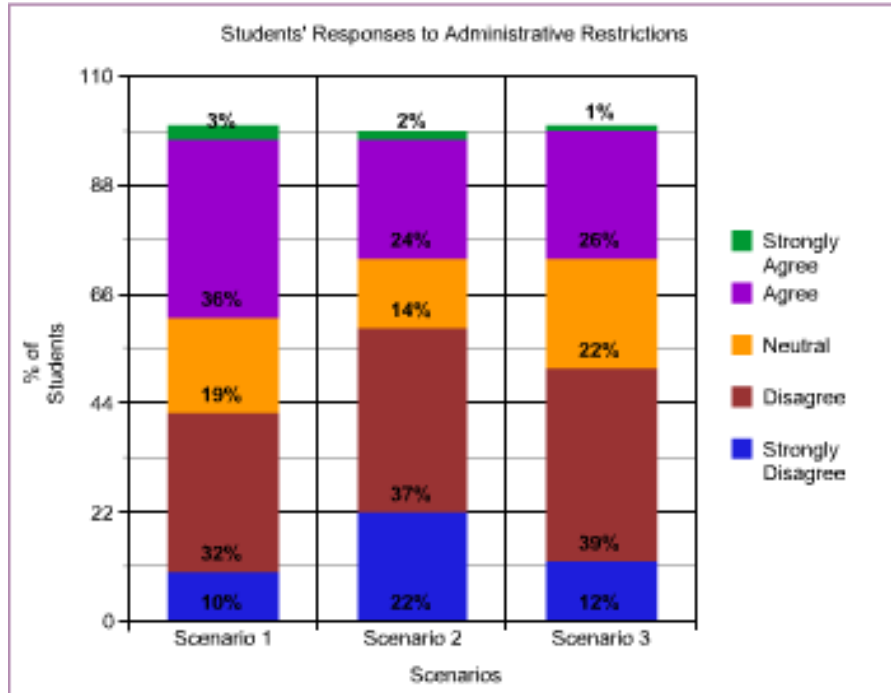


Figure 2. Students' responses to administrative restrictions

Experience of restrictions on campus

Of the respondents, 50% answered that they had never experienced restrictions by Elon administration. Among those who answered that they had experienced restrictions, 45% had to ask for permission before posting a flyer or a poster, 9% to carry out a free speech demonstration, 11% to post something on e-net altered or denied, and 9% to do other specific things. Some of these situations included getting organization t-shirt designs approved and content approval for ESTV and The Pendulum. One interesting answer was, "I work at The Pendulum and tour guides have told us the administration will send out e-mails asking tour guides to steer clear of The Pendulum when certain crime stories come out." Although restrictions do not occur to all students during their time at Elon, it has still happened to half of the respondents. The open-ended answers also gave more insight into the types of restrictions that may go on behind the scenes that many students and faculty may not even be aware of.

Interest in a permanent, designated free speech area on campus

Regarding a permanent, designated free speech area on campus, 24% were very interested; 25% interested, 31% somewhat interested, and 16% were not interested.

Relationship between students' experience of restriction and interest in a free speech area

The results of student interest in a free speech area were cross-tabulated with students who had experienced restrictions on campus. As shown in Table 1, the majority of the students who had experienced a restriction of some sort were interested in a free speech area.

Table 1.

| Students' Experience With Restrictions and Their Interest in a Free Speech Area | | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Restriction | Poster | E-Net | Demonstration | None |
| Not Interested | 6/13.33% | 2/18.18% | 1/11.11% | 10/20% |
| Somewhat Interested | 13/28.89% | 2/18.18% | | 18/36% |
| Interested | 11/24.4% | 3/27.27% | 1/11.11% | 13/26% |
| Very Interested | 13/28.89% | 4/36.36% | 7/77.78% | 8/16% |
| Not Sure | 2/4.44% | | | 1/2% |
| 100%= | 45 | 11 | 9 | 50 |

Location of free speech venue

According to the results of the survey, 80% of the respondents expressed some level of interest in a designated free speech area. As illustrated in Figure 3, 52% of these respondents expressed interest in free speech walls in the tunnel, 47% were interested in a free speech board in Moseley, and 46% were interested in a free speech chalk zone on campus. 8% of the respondents utilized the "other" section of the question to further express their interest in some of these options, such as "I like the idea of a free speech board near McEwen, where it's been in the past. It is fitting to have it near the School of Communications."

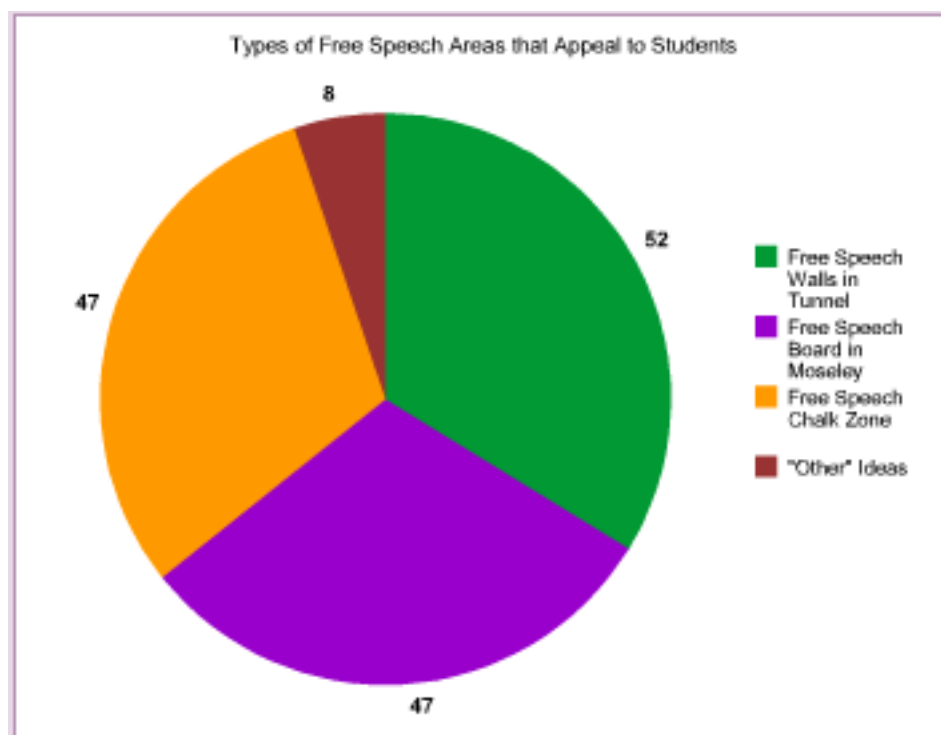


Figure 3. Types of free speech areas that appeal to students

Students' class standing vs. their interest in free speech area

The last three questions of the survey were demographic questions, looking at the gender, year, and

major of the respondents. These questions guided the cross-tabulation of the students' class standing and their level of interest in a free speech area. The results of this cross-tabulation are described in Table 2.

The second cross-tabulation analyzed both the class standing of the student and their interest in a free speech area on campus. As shown in the table, about 55% of the first year respondents would be interested in a free speech area, followed by 81.25% of sophomores, 72.23% of juniors, and 87.28% of seniors. Students expressed interest in free speech walls in the tunnel, a free speech board in Moseley, and a free speech chalk zone on campus. Students also offered some further excitement about these ideas in the "other" category that was provided. One student said, "I would love to be able to graffiti that tunnel. It would be so cool to have it not be the rape tunnel and to be like a chill spot."

Table 2.

| Students' Class Standing and Their Interest in a Free Speech Area | | | | |
|--|-------------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Class Year | First Year | Sophomore | Junior | Senior |
| Not Interested | 3/27.27% | 1/6.25% | 5/27.78% | 7/12.73% |
| Somewhat Interested | 2/18.18% | 6/37.5% | 5/27.78% | 19/34.55% |
| Interested | 2/18.18% | 6/37.5% | 5/27.78% | 11/20% |
| Very Interested | 2/18.18% | 1/6.25% | 3/16.67% | 18/32.73% |
| Not Sure | 1/9% | 2/12.5% | | 1/1.82% |
| 100%= | 11 | 16 | 18 | 55 |

V. Conclusion

The goal of the current study was to determine if Elon University students were aware of the difference in free speech rights on a public campus versus a private campus, as well as to gauge the students' level of interest in a possible free speech area on Elon's campus. The research found that Elon students were very mixed in their understanding of how their right to freedom of expression changes while attending a private university. The current study also found that half of the respondents claimed to have experienced restrictions on their freedom of speech by Elon administrators and, of that group of respondents, the majority expressed interest in implementing a free speech area.

Although private institutions are able to dictate how students' free speech will be handled on their campus, it is important for administrators to acknowledge opinions and knowledge of their students on these matters. Such research will require a larger scale of quantitative and qualitative research. The author hopes this research will serve as a foundation for Elon administration to consider creating a free speech area for Elon students, and serve as a starting block for more expansive research of free speech and college students at private schools.

Shortcomings of this research include a non-probability sample. Although the class roster email through the Blackboard website allowed for a diverse sample of respondents in major and class standing, the majority of the respondents were upperclassmen. The male and female ratio of 28% vs. 72% may skew the results, too.

The survey should have been pre-tested a couple times to get detailed feedback on the wording and order of the questions to ensure that there would be little to no confusion.

To enhance the representativeness of the sample, the author could have handed out physical surveys to a couple of classes in each major field or should come up with methods to get responses from under-represented groups, such as males and underclassmen.

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More Than the Consumer Eye Can See: Guerrilla Advertising From an Agency Standpoint

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Abstract

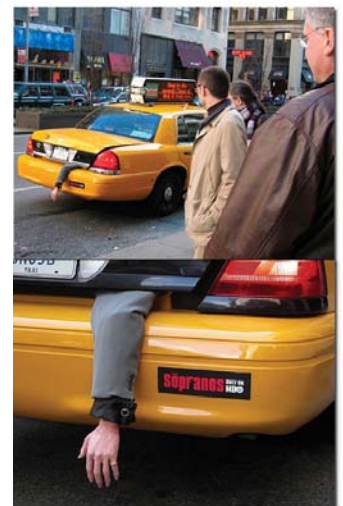
This research analyzed the viewpoints of advertising agency professionals regarding the effectiveness of guerilla advertising. Guerilla advertising is defined by the researcher as a creative, non-traditional and many times interactive type of advertising that is typically a low-budget production. This study compared guerilla advertising to traditional advertising, examined which clients guerilla advertising is most effective for and looked at the benefits of these types of campaigns. Through intensive one-on-one interviews with advertising professionals, this research found that while guerilla advertising is an effective type of advertising, it does not necessarily replace traditional advertising. It was found to be ideal for small, unestablished companies with a limited budget since the campaigns are focused on creativity at a modest cost.

I. Introduction



You are walking down the streets of Thailand and something yellow catches your eye. It's not a taxicab, but a water fountain. And what's that attached to it? Nothing other than a large bright yellow Scotch-Brite sponge that has replaced the normal drainage system, not what you expected to be attached to a water tap. You watch as all the water from the tap drains into the sponge without leaking at all. You are awestruck by its super absorbency and you rush off to tell your friends about it.

In New York, you are walking down the sidewalk and a taxi passes. Normally, you pay little attention to the traffic of taxis that whoosh past in a hurry to get somewhere. A taxi is stopped at a red light and out of the corner of your eye you see what you think is an arm hanging out of its trunk. Upon your double take, you realize it is indeed an arm, adorned in a gray suit coat with a black shirt underneath and a ring on one of the fingers



* Keywords: guerrilla advertising, non-traditional advertising, agency viewpoints, alternative advertising, creative advertising

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of the hand. Your first thought is one of horror as you picture the rest of the body in the trunk, creating a mob murder scene in your head. Then you see the bumper sticker next to the arm: "The Sopranos Only on HBO." You then realize the arm is only a marketing tool—and one that caught your attention just like it was supposed to. Walking home, you ponder how you can rearrange your schedule in order to watch the season premiere of *The Sopranos*.

These campaigns are considered to be guerrilla advertising. For the purpose of this research, the definition of guerrilla advertising is based on the definition provided by J. C. Levinson in his book, *Guerrilla Marketing: Secrets for Making Big Profits from Your Small Business*, and is defined by the researcher as a creative, non-traditional and many times interactive type of advertising that is typically a low-budget production. These imaginative creations do not require placement in the usual advertising outlets making them an emerging potential alternative to traditional advertising. The creativity is the heart of the campaign rather than the budget. The whole idea is to get the consumer to interact with the product in a way that is unexpected yet memorable. The campaigns described above accomplished this exact objective: they each had the consumer interact with the brand in a non-traditional, unexpected way to make them more aware of the product. This research seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of guerrilla advertising from the standpoint of advertising agencies.

II. Literature Review

Consumer perceptions of guerrilla marketing suggest that it is an effective tool for advertising. In previous research, it has been proved that guerrilla marketing campaigns (also known as non-traditional advertising) were rated by consumers as having a higher perceived value than traditional advertising campaigns (Dahlen, Granlund, Grenros, 2009). Guerrilla marketing was first created with small, unestablished brands and companies in mind as a low-budget alternative to traditional advertising. Even with the evolution of guerrilla marketing, research has found that less known brands that used guerrilla marketing were perceived to have more valuable advertising than well-known brands using the same type of campaigns and the guerrilla marketing campaigns used by these less known brands was perceived by consumers as more valuable than their traditional advertising (Dahlen, Granlund, Grenros, 2009). Guerrilla marketing is intended to create communication between advertisers and consumers, but when consumers do not feel that advertisers are providing an adequate exchange, guerrilla marketing can actually produce negative effects, hence why it seems to be better designed for less known companies and their products (Dahlen, Granlund, Grenros, 2009). When well-known companies use guerrilla marketing campaigns, which are known for being cost efficient, the campaigns can be viewed with a lower value since they do not reveal the high-perceived expense consumers expect from these brands (Dahlen, Granlund, Grenros, 2009).

A consumer's perceived value of an advertisement is a key factor in whether or not the advertisement is deemed worthwhile enough to spend time processing. Consumers instinctively evaluate an advertisement in order to assess its exchange value, what they will gain in exchange for the effort and time of processing the ad (Ducoffe and Curlo, 2000). An advertisement believed to have a low expected advertising value is automatically skipped over while one with a high expected advertising value is deemed worth the effort it takes to process an advertisement (Ducoffe and Curlo, 2000). These perceived values have to do with the expectations of consumers for advertisers to add value to their communication, not just to effectively induce a sale (Ducoffe and Curlo, 2000). It is not always as much about the advertisement itself as it is about people assessing how they desire to spend their time and effort and what is considered a worthwhile use of this time and effort (Ducoffe and Curlo, 2000).

When consumers do not deem advertising worthwhile, such as when it is excessive, they tend to avoid it in any way they can. Speck and Elliott (1997) discovered advertising avoidance was most common for television. With the invention of new technology, such as VCRs that delete commercials while recording and remote controls designed to avoid commercials, it has become even easier for consumers to avoid television advertising (Speck and Elliott, 1997). The second most common advertising avoidance was found in entertainment magazines where consumers found the advertising to be excessive rather than in a balanced editorial-to-advertising ratio (Speck and Elliott, 1997; Ha and Litman, 1997). Ha and Litman's (1997) "study shows advertising clutter can yield diminishing and negative returns to the magazine industry" rather than boosting magazine revenue with the amount of advertisements included as might be perceived and intended.

When consumers view a magazine as having too many advertisements, they tend not to buy the magazine in order to avoid sifting through the clutter to get to the parts of the magazine they deem reason to buy it. Consumers' perceived value of individual advertisements and advertising in general declines when the amount of advertising becomes excessive (Ha and Litman, 1997).

In order for avoidance to occur, consumers must identify advertising as advertising. Researchers have found that the context of advertising (the medium chosen for its placement) affects consumers' abilities to classify the message as advertising (Dahlen and Edenius, 2007). By placing advertising in non-traditional mediums, advertisers may improve the effectiveness of their messages as consumers perceive them with more credibility and regard them with a more positive attitude since they do not readily activate a consumer's advertising schema (Dahlen and Edenius, 2007). Not only does creative media choice affect effectiveness, but it also may have positive effects on advertising and brand perceptions (Dahlen, 2005). The idea behind certain placements is to blur the boundary between the advertised message and its surrounding content making it more difficult for consumers to identify advertising as advertising as it is made less irritating and disrupting of the content (Dahlen and Edenius, 2007). Creative media choices have strength solely in their ability to surprise a consumer while still staying relevant to its advertising message (Dahlen, 2005). Dahlen (2005) suggests "a creative media choice does not necessarily mean advertising in an extreme setting, such as on an egg." Instead, it means thinking creatively and relevantly about the media selection for an advertising campaign, whatever the medium may end up being (Dahlen, 2005).

Although there has been a significant amount of research into consumer perceptions and insights about guerrilla advertising, there is a lack of research that delves into agency standpoints on guerrilla advertising campaigns. Because of this insufficiency, this research seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of guerrilla advertising from the standpoint of advertising agencies. The research seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: Is guerrilla advertising an effective alternative to traditional advertising?

RQ2: What type of client is guerrilla advertising most effective for?

RQ3: What benefits does guerrilla advertising have for its campaigners?

This research is unique in that it seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of guerrilla advertising through the eyes of a creative person rather than from the standpoint of a client (a company using this type of campaign), the standpoint of a consumer, or using statistical data to evaluate sales and branding effectiveness. This research uses qualitative data rather than quantitative data to gain participant thoughts and views (Zhou and Sloan, 2009). This study is important in educating companies and agencies on the effectiveness of guerrilla advertising campaigns in order to help them make an informed decision as to whether or not this type of advertising would be the most successful type for their company or client.

III. Method

The primary method for this research was intensive one-on-one interviews in order to collect the viewpoints and experiences of executives from traditional, full-service advertising agencies on the effectiveness of guerrilla advertising. The researcher chose agencies randomly based on convenience sampling.

The sample included agencies ranging in size from about 10 employees to 350 employees. The researcher sought to interview agencies that were of a size where employees would have worked on both traditional and guerrilla marketing campaigns in order to obtain a well-rounded view from each agency person. Choosing agencies larger than 350 employees could have led to speaking with people who work in a guerrilla marketing department in which they primarily created guerrilla marketing campaigns rather than a combination of both traditional and guerrilla advertising. Variety was a key component in choosing agencies with a range in size.

Executives at advertising agencies were contacted via email informing them that they had been chosen to participate in this research and asking if they would be interested in participating. Email correspondence was used to pinpoint a time for the interview. Six interviews were conducted via telephone due to the inability to meet in person. These interviews were conducted with professionals ranging in position, including President, Managing Partner, Account Executive, Creative Director and Senior Copywriter. This variety gave the researcher various viewpoints with regard to creating a guerrilla advertising campaign. After six interviews

were conducted, data redundancy was reached (Morrison, et al., 2002). Intensive notes were taken during each interview and responses were analyzed.

During each interview, the same general twelve questions were asked based on five topics and other questions were asked based on responses from the interviewee (See Appendix) (Morrison, et al., 2002). Each interviewee was first asked to define guerrilla advertising in order for the researcher to understand what each was referring to in his or her answers. The questions asked interviewees to articulate their views about and experiences with the specifics of guerrilla marketing and its practice in general.

IV. Findings/Results

Findings for RQ1: Is guerrilla advertising an effective alternative to traditional advertising?

Because consumers are constantly being exposed to advertising messages, they have developed a sophisticated filtering system that can pose a barrier to traditional advertising messages. Guerrilla marketing is one of the ways to break through these filters by presenting a consumer with an unexpected form of message presentation. Guerrilla advertising is intriguing, witty and clever, catching a consumer's attention in a complimentary way.

As effective as guerrilla marketing can be when used correctly and appropriately, in most cases it is not an alternative to traditional advertising, but rather a valuable addition to a traditional advertising campaign. It can be difficult to create a brand promise solely from a guerrilla standpoint (personal communication, November 15, 2010). Instead, guerrilla advertising campaigns are a place where current brands can be reinforced and expanded upon.

In the case of small brands with a small budget, a guerrilla marketing campaign can be an effective alternative to traditional advertising. For these brands, guerrilla advertising can be a solution to the problem of not having the money to run advertising as effectively in a traditional medium. Guerrilla marketing can help small brands stretch their budget efficiently, reaping the greatest results and benefits for their brand. Rather than spending their budget to run three commercial slots on television, a small company can spend their budget on a guerrilla advertising campaign that will bring their brand more awareness than those commercials since that one campaign will reach more people than those three commercials (personal communication, November 16, 2010). As one interviewee stated, "Many businesses have gone broke advertising" (personal communication, November 16, 2010). This is due to small companies thinking that in order to become a well-known brand, they must advertise like the well-known brands do. With the help of guerrilla marketing, they do not have to.

Findings for RQ2: What type of client is guerrilla advertising most effective for?

With any agency, the most effective type of campaign for a client is on a case-by-case basis, depending on the brand, budget, target audience, desired message, and product that is being advertised. Clients have to be willing to take on the risks that guerrilla marketing poses that are out of their control: mainly that of unfavorable public reactions, including confusion or misinterpretation, which lead to a failed campaign. Small brands are more likely to be willing to brave the risks of guerrilla advertising for the sole reason that the benefits outweigh the risks: they have less to lose and more to gain. For large and small brands alike, guerrilla advertising can be a successful way to break through the advertising clutter a consumer is constantly filtering (personal communications, November 15-19, 2010).

Guerrilla advertising campaigns are typically low-budget endeavors focusing more on the creative work than the medium, making them ideal for small brands with a small budget. These small brands can use guerrilla marketing campaigns in place of traditional advertising campaigns as a way to either save money or to more resourcefully use their money (personal communications, November 15-19, 2010).

Guerrilla advertising can be effective for large, established brands, but is more of a risk for these brands than for small, unestablished brands. Established brands are expected to advertise with traditional mediums and to continue campaigning in the same way with a similar message. It is tradition. Guerrilla marketing can be an effective way to re-launch a product in a different light or to paint the entire brand in a

different light, especially if it has been portrayed in the same way for a significant amount of time. This type of campaign can break the tradition, giving a brand a new angle and positive energy that traditional advertising is not capable of offering. An effective guerrilla marketing campaign for a larger brand reaps significant benefits. Because of how memorable such a campaign is, if a guerrilla marketing campaign for a large brand fails, this can take a brand on a negative downward spiral. This is why guerrilla campaigns for large brands must be carefully crafted keeping the brand message consistent and keeping appropriateness in mind (personal communications, November 15-19, 2010).

Findings for RQ3: What benefits does guerrilla advertising have for its campaigners?

The main benefit guerrilla advertising beholds for its campaigners is brand awareness. This is one of the reasons this type of campaign is ideal for small, unestablished brands. It gives the brand the opportunity to make a strong, positive reputation for itself in a memorable fashion (personal communications, November 15-19, 2010).

Social media has brought a whole new meaning to the idea of spreading news by “word of mouth.” With the introduction of social media, news travels even faster than before. This includes successful guerrilla advertising campaigns that are on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook for others to see creating a “buzz” about the campaign making it even more noteworthy. With social media, consumers who cannot experience the campaign firsthand can witness it secondhand with the reactions of consumers who have experienced it (personal communications, November 15-19, 2010).

Guerrilla marketing gives a brand energy that traditional media cannot offer. Guerrilla campaigns leave an impression on consumers that many traditional media and advertisements cannot rival. This is especially due to the ability of guerrilla advertising to break down barriers consumers have created to filter traditional advertising messages and actually get inside a consumer’s mind in order to make a lasting impression with the new and exciting ideas these campaigns pose to their consumers (personal communications, November 15-19, 2010).

V. Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that the effectiveness of a guerrilla advertising campaign is best defined by a boost in brand recognition and positive communication feedback among consumers both by in the digital space and by word of mouth, with the Internet providing the most accessible way to judge effectiveness. A boost in sales and return on investment are the most measurable indicators of effectiveness, but many times these indicators may not be immediate.

The study showed that while guerrilla marketing is an effective campaigning strategy, in most situations it is not a replacement for traditional advertising. Unless used for a small brand that cannot afford to effectively advertise traditionally, guerrilla advertising is considered a beneficial supplement to a traditional advertising campaign.

The most effective guerrilla marketing campaigns are those that are simple with a single-minded message placed appropriately. When creating a campaign that will convey a message in an unexpected way, agencies need to be aware of the importance of trying to accomplish a narrowly defined agenda. It is important to note not only how to draw the most attention to a brand, but how to do this in a way that is deemed tasteful and appropriate by all audiences, not just the target audience. By taking these factors into consideration, agencies can be confident in the campaigns having a very small risk of complete failure or catastrophe.

Guerrilla marketing is effective for both large and small brands, but clients with small brands are more willing to partake in these types of campaigns because for them the benefits outweigh the risks. A successful guerrilla advertising campaign gives both large and small brands the benefit of brand awareness in a more memorable way than traditional advertising. For large brands, guerrilla campaigns are effective adjuncts to traditional campaigns in order to reinforce an already established campaign message. For example, in the case of Tide, the television message was reinforced when the Tide trucks with washing machines were sent out and the consumers were given the opportunity to wash their clothes in the trucks using Tide in order to experience the laundry detergent’s effectiveness without having to buy the product in order to test it.

The effectiveness of guerrilla advertising campaigns is difficult to measure, even in terms of sales.

The best way to measure the effectiveness is by taking note of the “buzzworthiness” (personal communications, November 16, 17, 2010) of the campaign in the digital realm on social media sites such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Campaigns can use tracking by directing their consumers to a website and tracking hits to the site, handing out coupons and tracking their use, or surveying consumers after their experience, but social media remains the best way to be able to track success.

The main concern about using guerrilla marketing is that the campaign will ultimately fail, due to misinterpretation, confusion, or inappropriateness of the placement of the message. Because of this concern, many clients are unwilling to take the risk of campaigning in this manner even though the benefits are substantial. Catastrophes in guerrilla advertising are rare. As long as the message is clear and simple, the avenue for misinterpretation and confusion is eliminated. Carefully considering what the target audience and anyone else who might come into contact with the campaign consider appropriate alleviates the chance of the campaigning being cast in a negative light. In most cases, if a guerrilla advertising campaign is unsuccessful, it is because it is not noticeable enough and it goes unmentioned. While this is an unfortunate circumstance, it poses the same risk of a traditional advertising campaign that results in nothing worthwhile. The difference is that most guerrilla campaigns are less expensive than traditional campaigns.

From an agency standpoint, guerrilla marketing campaigns are not only beneficial to the client and brand, but to the agency itself. Agencies can take credit for successful guerrilla campaigns, priding themselves on the creativity that is exerted for each of these endeavors. Successful campaigns give their agency creative credibility that traditional advertising does not, becoming just as much of a success story for the agency as it is for the client and brand.

In the future, guerrilla advertising could be considered traditional. Advertising will continue to strive to invent new, creative ways to convey messages and break through to consumers. Social media is already an important part of guerrilla advertising, especially with regard to measuring its effectiveness and creating a prime benefit to guerrilla campaigns. Because of this, guerrilla advertising has the potential to be shaped and evolved according to the development of social media and technology.

VI. Conclusion

This research found that executives in advertising agencies find guerrilla marketing to be an exciting campaigning tool for their clients. Executives see guerrilla marketing as an effective way to induce brand awareness and positive impressions of the brand. Although guerrilla marketing is found effective, it is not considered a complete alternative to traditional advertising but rather a preferred addition. Guerrilla advertising is ideal for small brands that do not have a considerable amount of money to spend on advertising. It gives these brands the opportunity to establish their brand without going beyond the reaches of their budget. Large, established brands can use guerrilla marketing efficiently as well with more significant risk to their brand, but also more significant benefits.

Limitations of this research include the use of a convenience sample of the population, a non-probabilistic sample that cannot be generalized to the whole population. The research was limited to “regional” agencies, which may or may not hold the same view on guerrilla marketing as larger or smaller agencies. The research is slightly skewed due to the participation of mostly males in the interview process.

Future research can include research about the future of guerrilla marketing and how social media and technology could potentially shape it. This could also include research on the use of guerrilla marketing from the standpoint of advertising agencies outside the United States. In later years, research similar to this study can be conducted to determine if at that point factors have changed to introduce guerrilla marketing as being able to replace traditional advertising as an effective advertising strategy for all businesses and brands rather than just small, unestablished ones.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. How would you define guerrilla marketing?
 2. What is your current point of view on guerrilla marketing? How has this view evolved? Why has it evolved?
 3. What are the risks of guerrilla marketing?
 4. What are the most important lessons you have learned about guerrilla marketing?
 5. What is the most effective guerrilla marketing campaign you have seen?
 6. What additional benefits (besides a boost in sales) does guerrilla marketing have for its campaigners?
 7. How has guerrilla marketing evolved since its start?
 8. Do you feel guerrilla advertising is beneficial for an advertising agency? Why or why not?
 9. Which clients is this campaigning most effective for?
 10. Do you feel guerrilla advertising is an effective alternative to traditional advertising? Why or why not?
 11. How are results for effectiveness measured?
 12. Where is guerrilla marketing headed?
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