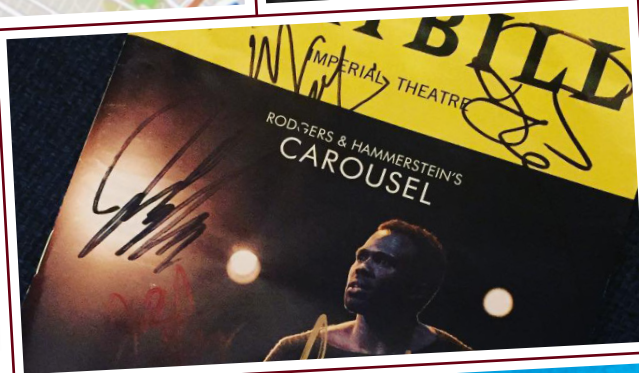
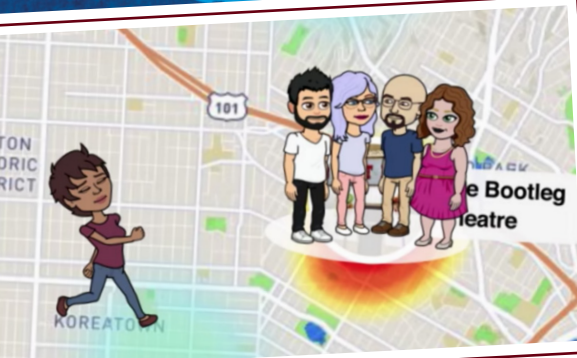


ELON JOURNAL

OF UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH IN

COMMUNICATIONS



Best Of
News Design
CALL FOR ENTRIES

Fall 2018

VOLUME 9, NO. 2



ELON
UNIVERSITY

School of Communications

Joining the World of Journals

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

The website of the Council on Undergraduate Research lists more than 200 undergraduate research journals nationwide (http://www.cur.org/resources/students/undergraduate_journals/).

Some of these journals focus on a discipline (e.g., Journal of Undergraduate Research in Physics), some are university-based and multidisciplinary (e.g., MIT Undergraduate Research Journal), and others are university-based and disciplinary (e.g., Harvard Political Review).

The Elon Journal focuses on undergraduate research in journalism, media and communications.

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

The three purposes of the journal are:

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

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

Articles in the journal may be downloaded, reproduced and redistributed without permission for non-commercial purposes as long as the author and source are properly cited. Student authors retain copyright ownership of their works.

A Celebration of Student Research

I am so proud that Elon University is home to the nation's only undergraduate research journal in communications.

This twice-a-year publication provides opportunities for our students to extend themselves beyond the classroom and investigate new areas of interest tied to their fields of study. Through research, our students further develop critical thinking skills, creativity, problem-solving abilities and intellectual independence.

This journal reflects what we enjoy seeing most in our students – continued intellectual maturation.

Complemented by video introductions featuring the student authors, these articles make us aware of the solitary hours that students spend in research, as well as the untold hours in which students and teacher-mentors work together to revise a paper for public consumption. These relationships and experiences often transform a student's future career path, making these projects truly life-changing.

This journal is a celebration of undergraduate research, as well as a celebration of learning, critical thinking and exploration.

Dr. Rochelle Ford, APR
Dean, School of Communications

Editorial Board

Thirty faculty members in Elon's School of Communications served as the Editorial Board that selected nine undergraduate research papers for the 2018 fall issue.

From more than 100 research papers written in advanced School of Communications classes, 30 papers were submitted to the journal by Elon communications students through the encouragement and mentoring of capstone teachers and other professors in the school.

Professors who served as the Editorial Board were Lorraine Ahearn, Bill Anderson, Janna Anderson, Vanessa Bravo, Naeemah Clark, David Copeland, Vic Costello, Kelly Furnas, Kenn Gaither, Jessica Gisclair, Don Grady, Ben Hannam, Sana Haq, Dan Haygood, Jooyun Hwang, Jonathan Jones, Alex Luchsinger, Derek Lackaff, Harlen Makemson, Barbara Miller, William Moner, Phillip Motley, Tom Nelson, George Padgett, Paul Parsons, Glenn Scott, Michael Skube, Kathleen Stansberry, Amanda Sturgill, and Hal Vincent.

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

Editor's Note

Having taught at Elon for more than 17 years, I have consistently been impressed with our students' willingness to tackle complex questions related to media and the communications field.

This semester, my first as editor of the Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications, finds me humbled by the ability of our best undergraduate students to study these difficult issues in a meaningful and rigorous way.

Troubled by how media often portrays minorities, ethnic groups, and the underrepresented? Young scholars such as Daniela Ceron, who examines race within the context of online feminist movements, and Samantha Maoz, who looks at how Jewish characters are presented on television, each offer nuanced studies that demonstrate how these portrayals come to be and are disseminated.

Horried by the potential negative effects of media? Kristina Lee's study of social media's possible role in mass shootings, and Jenna Sachs' examination of how a map feature in Snapchat can contribute to adolescent anxiety, gives us additional pause.

Perplexed about today's fragmented media audiences? Articles in this issue by Maya Abbott-Smith, who studies participatory fan culture on Broadway, Emily Flynn, who examines why moviegoers still head to the theater, and Nicole Feudi, who analyzes the role of music in influencing collective memory, gives us insight on how these audiences can come together and interact with and through media.

Unsure of how to reach those fragmented media audiences? Abby Dionise's study of online branding by heads of state, and Stephanie Hays' analysis of what characterizes award-winning newspaper pages, shows us some techniques that are effective.

If the current issue is any indication, I am going to learn a lot in this new job.

Harlen Makemson
Professor
Editor, Elon Journal

Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications

Volume 9, No. 2 • Fall 2018

Everyone's A Critic: Social Media, Participatory Fan Culture, and Postmodern Presence in Broadway Musicals <i>Maya Abbott-Smith</i>	5
Communicating Royalty: A Study of Modern Monarchs' Online Branding <i>Abby Dionise</i>	18
Mass Shootings and Media Contagion Theory: Social Media's Influence on Frequency of Incidents <i>Kristina J. Lee</i>	27
Jews on TV: A Snapshot of Modern Television's Representation of Jewish Characters <i>Samantha Maoz</i>	36
An Analysis of Design Components of Award-winning Newspaper Pages <i>Stephanie Hays</i>	44
Psychological Repercussions of Location-Based Social Networks in Today's Youth <i>Jenna Sachs</i>	64
How Women of Color Are Discussed in Hashtag Feminist Movements <i>Daniela Ceron</i>	76
Bye, Bye Miss American Pie: How Music Shapes Collective Memory <i>Nicole Feudi</i>	87
Discovering Audience Motivations Behind Movie Theater Attendance <i>Emily Flynn</i>	94

Everyone's A Critic: Social Media, Participatory Fan Culture, and Postmodern Presence in Broadway Musicals

Maya Abbott-Smith

Strategic Communications
Elon University

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

Abstract

Amy Jensen's theory of participatory fan culture, and Chantal Pontbriand's concept of postmodern presence, each help explain how Broadway musicals are able to encourage online buzz. Fans using social media interact with shows, and they are sometimes being noticed by those in charge of the production. This study explores how fans and audience members interact with three Broadway musicals through social media, and how that contrasts with how theatre critics in traditional media perceive these productions. By doing so, these fans are able to create narratives that can drown out the views of critics.

I. Introduction

The Broadway musical is an American icon that has been an entertainment source since the late 1800s. From long-running hits like *Wicked* and *The Phantom of the Opera*, to new productions like *Dear Evan Hansen* and *Hamilton*, Broadway musicals are big, bold and entertaining while reflecting relevant topics in today's society. Musicals are an extremely costly venture in time and money, as noted in *The New York Times*:

Bigger-scale musicals tend to cost \$10 million to \$15 million these days. (The hit musical "The Book of Mormon" cost about \$9 million.) The most lavishly produced musicals are even higher: DreamWorks has confirmed that "Shrek the Musical" cost \$25 million to mount on Broadway, while the producers of "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark" have confirmed that the show cost \$75 million to stage (Healy, 2011).

Creative teams can spend months doing workshops, staged readings, rewrites and out-of-town tryouts perfecting their show before getting the green light to bring it to New York. The 2017 hit musical *Come From Away* had five out-of-town tryouts, which included an international engagement in Toronto, in order to perfect the show. The large time and financial investment is made in hopes of producing a musical that will receive great acclaim once it opens in New York. The success of a musical can be seen in many forms: good reviews in major newspapers like *The New York Times*, award nominations or wins, and word-of-mouth

Keywords: Broadway, musical, *Mean Girls*, *Carousel*, *Frozen*
Email: msmith113@elon.edu

publicity from audience members are the most common. However, box office sales are what fuel a musical's recouplement, and up until the mid-2000s, a good newspaper review is what made a musical.

In the digital age, print reviews have significantly less of an influence on production success than they once did. In the past, a rave review from *The New York Times* would guarantee a musical's longevity and success due to the influence critics had on the public's decision to attend productions. Now, in the 21st century when digital and social media have taken over the presentation of media, Broadway musicals are having to adapt to different sources for production success. Musicals still use quotes from reviews for print advertising, but traditional print media criticism is disappearing, and in the digital age, anyone can declare themselves a critic. Audiences and fans can engage with musicals in fresh and innovative ways. Through social media, anyone can share their own thoughts and perceptions of a production and the sheer number of these opinions can drown out credible critics. Bud Coleman (2017) sums up the challenge of arts criticism in the 21st century: "What is the point of a reviewer in an age where everyone reviews?" (p. 334).

Theoretical frameworks: Postmodern presence

Social media has enabled musical theatre to interact with productions on levels never before available. They are free to share their thoughts and experiences in addition to interacting with the musicals themselves. This interaction can be understood as a form of "postmodern presence, which scholar Chantal Pontbriand (2017) defines as a condition where "presence is no longer dependent on materiality but instead depends on the artwork's exhibition value, its multiplicity, and its accessibility" (p.136). Social media has also helped extend Broadway's reach on a geographic scale. Prior to the internet, Broadway was contained to a small, physical location in New York. Now, thanks to out-of-town tryouts of musicals, national tours of successful productions, TV appearances on the *Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade*, and the online sale of production souvenirs, the musical theatre fan no longer has to be in New York, or even have seen the production, to be a dedicated fan. The internet has defied the traditional limitations of live theatre and enabled accessibility so that fans anywhere in the world can interact with musical theatre at any time they wish. Postmodern presence also offers musical theatre producers and production teams a fantastic marketing opportunity. If handled correctly, fan interaction on social media can ultimately lead to increased box office revenues for the musical.

#Ham4Ham and the 21st Century Musical King

Every so often, a musical becomes so popular that it becomes "the musical" for that generation. There is little debate that the king of 21st century musical theatre is *Hamilton*. Created by Lin-Manuel Miranda and the team that created *In The Heights*, *Hamilton* exploded onto the New York theatre scene in 2015. Even in its off-Broadway run at the Public Theatre, the musical was a sold-out success being praised for its incredibly diverse cast and its incorporation of hip hop and rap into a traditional musical. Once the musical moved to the Richard Rodgers Theatre, tickets sold out in a matter of hours for months of the run. In the three years since it has opened at the Public Theatre, *Hamilton* continues to expand its U.S. and international reach. It now has two permanent productions in the states, one in New York and another in Chicago, two national tours on the road visiting cities around the country, a permanent production in London, and a staging planned in Puerto Rico, with Miranda set to return to the title role.

When speaking of the musical, set designer David Korins comments "It's the first social media show. It's put theatre at the heart of pop culture conversation and all media conversation" (Hillman-McCord, p. 123). *Hamilton* was first introduced to the world as a 4-minute, 30-second video on YouTube when creator and star Lin-Manuel Miranda performed the opening number at the White House. Since the musical's genesis began on the internet, people were able to develop a personal connection to Miranda and the piece before it even became a full-scale production. This led to two audiences for *Hamilton* – those who somehow have managed to get into the actual theatre, and a much larger base of fans that gets its fix of the musical online. For its dedicated fans, according to Hillman-McCord (2017) "Hamilton's digital life offers an integral and inseparable part of the experience" (p. 120). The "Hamilfans" have a variety of names for themselves, and they are able to express themselves on numerous social media platforms. Some create their own fan cultures within those platforms, and others are just there to watch and observe. Since it began previews on Broadway, *Hamilton* has encouraged fans to interact with the show in person and on social media.

The evening that *Hamilton* was set to begin previews, the show was sold out except for a handful of lottery seats that would be sold a few hours prior to the performance. More than 700 fans turned up at

the Richard Rodgers Theatre hoping to enter and Miranda, moved by the number of people who showed up, came out the stage door to acknowledge the fans. Thus a new tradition started, prior to the next day's show Miranda inaugurated the *Ham4Ham* performances. A short performance presented on the sidewalk in front of the theatre before the lottery featuring cast members from *Hamilton* and other Broadway companies. An active member of Twitter, Miranda would also drop hints on his account leading up to some of the performances. Through *Ham4Ham*, he created a new way to connect with fans that was interactive and rewarding, no matter how far away fans were.

Participatory fan culture

Although passionate online fandom is not exclusive to *Hamilton*, it is the best modern example of the participatory fan culture for a Broadway musical. Musicals create obsessive and very interactive fans, who find personal connection and representation in a variety of musicals. With the addition of social media, the musical theatre fandom has many sources for fans to feed their love and obsessions. They will buy tickets to see shows multiple times, send gifts and flowers to the theatres, and share their passion for their musicals all over social media. According to Amy Jensen (2017), participatory fan culture and the internet places:

... the virtual spectator at the center of the theatrical narrative, which extended beyond the world of the play into the world surrounding the performance...the participatory spectator has learned to advance theatrical narratives beyond the threshold of theatre space into their own private space (Hillman-McCord, p.122).

On social media, fans can feel a part of the production and the process. Through backstage video blogs on *Broadway.com*, YouTube interviews with production teams, and Twitter and Instagram posts from performers. Fans can get an intimate look into what life in a Broadway musical is really like. It is a whole new fan culture.

Intensive knowledge has always been a traditional trait of musical theatre fan culture. In-depth knowledge of a particular show is the norm, including its production history, cast members, cast recordings and additional content such as books is considered a privilege. Through social media, musical theatre fans are able to create content and talk to other fans with the possibility of being noticed by the production and its stars. A symbol of one's status in the fandom can be a very important entity, and being recognized multiple times by the stars or creators can be incredibly "valuable," even though it carries no actual worth.

Even though the knowledge and statuses in the musical theatre fandom have no monetary value, the amount of love and support for the many different musicals is profound. The ultimate gratification for musical theatre fans is validation by the production team that their love and support for the musical is appreciated. It is important to note that fans will offer continued support to performers as they move from production to production. Any actresses who have played Elphaba or Glinda in the Broadway phenomena *Wicked* automatically inherit the production's passionate fan base. In addition, performers from the Disney musical *Newsies* carry the "fansies" from that production with them now even though the musical has been closed for four years. A permanent association is established with many musicals that fans will continue to identify with even after a performer leaves or the show closes.

In her acceptance speech for *Dear Evan Hansen*, the winner of the 2017 Tony Award for Best Musical, producer Stacey Mindich not only thanked the cast and production team, but fandom. "Thank you to our fans from Martha and Jule in California to Kaho in Japan, you have been seen and heard and found. You matter" (2017 Tony Awards, CBS, Live Telecast). Acknowledgement of the musical theatre fans through fan interaction is a valuable marketing tool for musical theatre producers. By acknowledging the audience, people can be compelled to come see or return to the musical.

II. Methods

This study uses qualitative research methods and examines the social media related to three Broadway musicals – *Frozen*, *Mean Girls* and *Carousel* – contrasting them with reviews from professional theatre critics in legacy media outlets. The objective of this research, through data analysis, is to identify how users of social media create a participatory fan culture and postmodern presence that counters the voice of credible theatre critics.

Broadway musicals have their own social media presence and accounts on various social media sites run by production teams or producers. By joining social media, musicals can share content and news with those following the show, with the goal of encouraging attendance and ticket sales. Supporting participatory fan culture on these platforms also allows audience members to share their thoughts and feelings about the productions with the people that matter. McDonald (2017) writes that “Fan buzz is also recirculated by the producers through their official social media channels, but exclusively online ... pre- and post-show photo opportunities are facilitated at performance venues generating more content for fans to circulate on social media” (p.35).

For new Broadway musicals, this social media buzz can be valuable. By interacting with fans of the production early on they can encourage sales while the show is still in previews and generate positive audience buzz around the production. This study will analyze how social media musical theatre fans have the ability on social media to drown out the voices of credible reviewers in legacy media.

New Broadway musicals run for a few weeks in previews, which is an ideal opportunity to gauge what social media audiences are saying about each new show. For this study, social media will be examined for each musical’s “preview period.” Each preview period lasts three to four weeks, where the show is being worked on during the day and being performed at night. This is a critical time as the production team scrambles to add rewrites as necessary before the show is put into its final form. Social media buzz and media coverage during these weeks can be very valuable to boost ticket sales before the reviews from theatre critics are posted after opening night. The type of audiences that shows get in previews are quite different from those seeing the show once it is up and running. According to Anita Gates (2008):

If you choose to see a big Broadway production during previews, you will probably find yourself among a different crowd than during a show’s official run. Some of the seats are filled by family and friends of the cast or the director...some were invited by the producers to “paper the house,” as theater people say, and may have paid little or nothing for their tickets, so there can be an unusual number of industry people there...some have other professional reasons to be there...and some theatergoers are just trying to save money.

The fact that the show has yet to take its final form can be a big appeal to audiences. A preview show could be completely different from what ultimately makes the final version. Avid musical theatre fans can easily be found in the preview audiences for the seasons newest musicals. Some are there to see if a show lives up to preexisting buzz, good or bad, or if a show is looking like it will be the next big hit. Attending a new musical during previews can ensure seeing the show with the original stars before the ticket prices skyrocket after opening.

The 2017-2018 theater season was an interesting one for musicals. All of the new productions opening in the spring were adoptions from other pop culture forms, movies being the most common. This can be helpful since there is a percentage of the audience that will likely attend, however, this can also be difficult because the doorway for comparisons is wide open. If audiences have a negative reaction to the stage adoption, this can also hurt online buzz and ultimately the ticket sales. Of the three chosen musicals, Disney’s *Frozen*, *Mean Girls* and Rodger and Hammerstein’s *Carousel*, two are pop culture adoptions and the third is a revival of an old musical.

***Frozen*:** The stage adaptation of the smash hit animated Disney film featured music by the team of writers who scored the movie, and a cast full of Broadway veterans, including Cassie Levy (*Hair*, *Les Miserables*, *Wicked*), Patti Murin (*Wicked*), and Greg Hildreth (*Cinderella*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*). The musical had a very successful pre-Broadway run in Denver during 2017. This production already had a

large fan base from the movie that was only increased by the pre-Broadway tryout. However, New York theatre critics and award nominators alike are notorious for not favoring Disney theatrical productions. Stage adaptations of *Tarzan*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Mary Poppins* have all found their way to Broadway but they were more hit with audiences than critics. The only Disney musical that seems to be an exception to this trend is the stage adaptation of *The Lion King*.

Mean Girls: An adaptation of the 2004 cult classic film, *Mean Girls* had a very successful tryout in Washington D.C. in the fall of 2017. With Tina Fey as the production's book writer, acclaimed Broadway director Casey Nicholaw, and another cast of Broadway veterans, including Taylor Louderman (*Kinky Boots*, *Bring It On*, *Peter Pan Live*), Kerry Butler (*Xanadu*, *Catch Me If You Can*, *Hairspray*), Ashley Park (*King and I*) and Kate Rockwell (*Rock of Ages*), *Mean Girls* also comes to Broadway with a sizeable pre-existing fan base. Unlike *Frozen*, the production does not have a negative stigma surrounding its creative team.

Carousel: Revived by Lincoln Center, this Rodgers & Hammerstein musical classic is the only one featuring a Tony Award-winning performer starring in it. Jessie Mueller (*The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, *Waitress*, and *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*) rose from the chorus ranks to center stage, winning a Tony for her portrayal of the title character in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*. The rest of the company is equally impressive with Tony nominee Joshua Henry (*Hamilton*, *In the Heights*), Renee Fleming, and a chorus of familiar Broadway dancers.

Data Collection

The study examined each production's official Facebook page, where content and announcements can be shared, and where fans can review the production. Twitter served as the ideal platform for monitoring each musical's account for fan interactions and opinions, and in addition, allowed the broad ability to search for each show. By searching the hashtags for each musical – #FrozenBroadway, #MeanGirlsBroadway and #CarosuelBroadway – a wider range of opinions were available, not just the positive comments the official accounts are retweeting. This social media data was contrasted with reviews from major newspapers and well-known entertainment publications there were published after the official opening night, to gauge how social media created a participatory fan culture and postmodern presence that differed from how legacy media evaluated these musicals.

Frozen

As foreshadowed by its Disney predecessors, the production didn't receive good reviews from most of the major newspapers. Jesse Greene (2018) from *The New York Times* wrote:

Forget girl power, sisterly love and the high-belt clarion call of "Let It Go." Anxiety over the handling of a previous gift is the theme that comes through loudest in "Frozen," the sometimes rousing, often dull, alternately dopey and anguished Disney musical that opened on Broadway on Thursday.

Likewise, Johnny Oleksinski (2018) of the *New York Post* added:

For its new stage musical "Frozen," Disney should've heeded the sage advice of Queen Elsa: Let it go. Broadway should be the place to see what you can do, test the limits and break through. No right, now wrong, no rules for thee – you're free! But that's wishful thinking. With "Frozen" the house of Mouse doesn't let us in, doesn't let us see. Stays the good Mouse it always has to be. Conceals, doesn't feel. Doesn't let us know. Well, here's what I know: "Frozen" is not a very good show.

Reviews like this in a print-reliant age would have been a death sentence for *Frozen*. The musical only has a small number of usable quotes for marketing, since the dislike was shared by the majority of reviewers in traditional media. However, on *Frozen's* Facebook page, fans showed mixed responses in the review section. While some had already seen the production multiple times and responded positively, others were lukewarm towards it. The musical was often viewed by fans as a good evening out with the family, but

fewer found it as a Broadway sensation that marketing suggested.

Another point of interest is that there was no fan interaction on the official *Frozen* social media accounts at all. While Facebook seemed to serve all three musicals solely as a marketing outlet, Twitter was the platform for the most fan interaction. But while *Mean Girls* and *Carousel* were at minimum retweeting fan comments, the account of *Frozen* showed only production tweets.

The lackluster professional reviews were not the reception *Frozen* hoped for, but this production also was not nearly as dependent on social media buzz from audiences or theatre critics for commercial success. The official social media accounts did not go out of their way to engage with fans, perhaps because the *Frozen* franchise was already well-known. Unlike *Mean Girls* and *Carousel*, it is the only musical of the three backed by Disney, one of the best-known media companies in the world. In addition, its predecessor was a smash hit movie which automatically gives it a very specific but fanatic pre-set audience. Simply having the Disney name on the production was an easy sell for families, and it joins *The Lion King* as one of the few shows running on Broadway that is kid friendly. *Frozen* wasn't created to be a Broadway hit in the traditional sense, it was created because people thought it would make a great musical. There are plenty of other Disney movies that would translate to the stage much better, but since it is such a popular children's movie in recent memory having the typical "Broadway success" story wasn't a factor in *Frozen* becoming a hit.

Mean Girls

Mean Girls received lukewarm reviews following the opening. Ben Brantley (2018) from *The New York Times* wrote:

The disconnect that troubles this musical isn't a matter of adapting to changing times. Scott Pask's set, Gregg Barnes's costumes and Finn Ross and Adam Young's video designs render sociological exactitude with flat comic-strip brightness. No, the trouble lies in the less assured translation of Ms. Fey's sly take on adolescent social angst into crowd-pleasing song and dance. Mr. Richmond and Ms. Benjamin's many (many) musical numbers are passable by middle-of-the-road Broadway standards.

Alexis Soloski at *The Guardian* echoed Brantley:

Mean Girls is fine. *Mean Girls* is fun. The songs, by Fey's husband Jeff Richmond and lyricist Nell Benjamin, are catchy enough, the book is reasonably witty, the staging, by Casey Nicholaw, sufficiently fluid. The anti-bullying message is straightforward enough (maybe too straightforward, the show says it twice): "Calling someone ugly doesn't make you better looking. Calling someone stupid won't make you any smarter." But - no offense, okay? - *Mean Girls* is basic.

On Twitter, fans actively shared their thoughts on the musical, and in contrast to *Frozen*, the *Mean Girls* Twitter account retweeted fan comments on a regular basis, giving them the gratification of being noticed by the production. This helps promote a participatory fan culture for the musical. Content being shared on Twitter ranged from fan pictures at the theatre, to art and videos, as seen in *Figures 1-4*.



Figure 1. *Mean Girls* fan tweet featuring photos in front of theatre, cast, and program.



Figure 2. *Mean Girls* fan tweet featuring catchphrases from the musical and a signed program.



Figure 3. *Mean Girls* fan tweet featuring multiple catchphrases from the musical.



Figure 4. *Mean Girls* fan tweet featuring the inside and outside of the theatre.

The *Mean Girls* account also shared production-related content like backstage pictures, related articles from print sources, and promotions of their *Broadway.com* vlog *Too Grool for School*, created by star Erika Henningsen. This ensures that there is a range of material available for those following the *Mean Girls* account to interact and promote participatory fan culture and postmodern presence. The fan content re-tweeted fell into two primary categories, tweets that contain any sort of references to the musical, and pictures of the audience experience. Much of the buzz on Twitter describes the experience of seeing the show, dressing in pink, recreating the logo's pose, and tweeting catchphrases from the musical versus comments on the production itself. This could be linked to the movie fans being content with any sort of stage adaption instead of insisting the musical adhere strictly to the film.

Carousel

Carousel received great reviews from the majority of the critics who saw the production. The only recurring negative comment was justifying the violent relationship the musical's plot revolves around to modern day audiences. Ben Brantley (2018) at *The New York Times* wrote:

The tragic inevitability of "Carousel" has seldom come across as warmly or as chillingly as it does in this vividly reimagined revival. As directed by Jack O'Brien and choreographed by Justin Peck, with thoughtful and powerful performances by Mr. Henry and Ms. Mueller, the love story at the show's center has never seemed quite as ill-starred or, at the same time, as sexy.

Adam Feldman (2018) from *Time Out New York* was complimentary as well:

Director Jack O'Brien invites us to admire the show as an exemplar of classic American musical theater, lovingly emphasizing its virtues. Prime among them is Rodgers and Hammerstein's innovative and varied score, repolished by orchestrator Jonathan Tunick and sterlingly sung by the cast; Henry offers a powerful account of Billy's long and winding first-act finale, "Soliloquy," and opera star Renée Fleming-though too grand in manner for the role of Julie's kindly cousin-adds elegant vocal luster to the stirring "You'll Never Walk Alone." The gorgeous choreography, by New York City Ballet's Justin Peck, is danced with aplomb by a very fine ensemble led by NYCB's Brittany Pollack and Amar Ramasar. Santo Loquasto's set, Ann Roth's costumes and Brian MacDevitt's lighting are first-class.

Carousel fans also showed lots of love for the musical on social media. They often wrote long statements about how much they love this new staging and how good the cast is. The *Carousel* Twitter account shares *Mean Girl's* encouragement of fan interaction and postmodern presence by actively retweeting audience content. But the comments shared on their account are much more centric on praises for the production, cast, and personal connections, as reflected in *Figures 5-8*.



Figure 5. Tweet from actress Anna Chlumsky complimenting *Carousel*.



Figure 6. Fan tweet sharing a personal connection.



Figure 7. Fan tweet congratulating *Carousel* and, specifically, Josh Henry.



Figure 8. Fan tweet praising *Carousel* and sharing a personal story.

Carousel was highly praised for its creative elements by reviewers and audiences alike. They are also a *New York Times* Critic's Pick meaning that the publication has recommended the musical to their readers. You can go online to *The New York Times* theatre section and look at shows that were specifically critic's picks and why the production was chosen. This gives the musical a variety of ways an audiences can access it. More traditional viewers can go online to *The New York Times*, while more contemporary audiences can go on social media and interact with the content available from fans and past audience members.

III. Conclusion

This paper sought to contrast the waning influence of credible theatre critics to the rapidly expanding wave of social media buzz online. The data supports previous research that suggests participatory fan culture can work in concert with social media to create a postmodern presence for musical theatre fans. *Mean Girls* and *Carousel* both used social media to encourage audience interaction by retweeting audience content. The *Mean Girls* Twitter account was very centric on sharing the production experience, while *Carousel*'s account shared audience thoughts on the production and personal stories. *Frozen*, in contrast, didn't engage in any sort of participatory fan culture on any of its social media platforms. However, due to the production being backed by one of the biggest companies in the world and the popularity of its cinematic predecessors they were not nearly as reliant on a positive audience and critic reception.

The use of social media for two of these musicals supports Chantal Pontbriand's theory of postmodern presence in which musical theatre fans are no longer restricted to physically being in the theatre to feel involved as a fan. Thanks to its pop culture significance and movie predecessor *Mean Girls* has been able to cultivate a passionate fan base from all over the world thanks to cast recording, video blog and social media accounts giving fans an opportunity to talk about the production and their connection to it. Likewise, thanks to social media and similar participatory methods like fan retweets, *Carousel* enabled a new generation of theatergoers to share their connection and feelings of this classic Rodger & Hammerstein musical, while still connecting to older audiences with positive reviews from theatre critics.

Facebook, Twitter, and numerous other social media sites have brought the world of Broadway far beyond Manhattan and enabled fans, as Amy Jensen states, "to advance theatrical narratives beyond the threshold of theatre space into their own private space" (Hillman-McCord, p.122). By allowing Broadway musicals to build an online presence and interact with audience members and fans on a regular basis, future audiences are able to form and grow. While *Frozen* didn't utilize social media for the same type of fan interaction as *Mean Girls* and *Carousel*, its very presence on Twitter and Facebook enabled all three to be accessible to theatre fans from around the world.

This research provides insight into the future marketing of Broadway musicals. In a digital-dominated age, it is more important than ever for producers and production teams to acknowledge social media as a third audience with a vast geographic range. Its significance needs to be taken into account in addition to credible theatre critics and audiences. By knowing the value of all three audiences and by utilizing the influence of fans on social media, the voice of theatre critics, and the physical word of mouth from audiences, social media accounts will continue the success of the Broadway musical.

Acknowledgments

The author thanks Harlen Makemson, professor at Elon University, for his supervision and revision, without which the article could not be published. The author also appreciates numerous reviewers who helped revise this paper, and the infinite love and support from friends and family.

References

- Ault, N. (2016). *Jazz hands in the 21st century: How Broadway marketing navigates social media* (Thesis). University of Missouri--Columbia. Retrieved from <https://mospace.umsystem.edu/xmlui/handle/10355/56040>
- Brantley, B. (2018, April 12). Review: A 'Carousel' that spins on a romantically charged axis. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/12/theater/carousel-review-broadway.html>
- Brantley, B. (2018, April 8). Review: 'Mean Girls' sets the perils of being popular to song. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/08/theater/mean-girls-review-broadway-musical.html>
- Chandler, C. (2017). 'Does anybody have a map?' The impact of 'Virtual Broadway' on musical theatre composition. Presented at the song, stage and screen XII, Guildford School of Acting. Retrieved from <https://repository.edgehill.ac.uk/9495/>
- Chow, A.R. #Ham4Ham shows to end, for now. *The New York Times*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/31/theater/ham4ham-shows-to-end-on-wednesday.html>
- Coleman, B. (2017). The ever-evolving world of twenty-first century musical theatre criticism. In J. Hillman-McCord (Ed.), *iBroadway: Musical Theatre in a Digital Age* (pp. 331-346). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Foreman-Wernet, L. (2017). Reflections on elitism: what arts organizations communicate about themselves. *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, 47(4), 274–289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10632921.2017.1366380>
- Gates, A. (2008, August 28). Pros and cons of Broadway previews. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/29/theater/29prev.html>
- Gates, S. (2013). Moneyball on Broadway: A statistical and economic exploration of how to succeed on Broadway without really trying. *Proceedings of the National Conference of Undergraduate Research 2013*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncurproceedings.org/ojs/index.php/NCUR2013/article/view/491>
- Green, J. (2018, March 22). Review: 'Frozen' hits Broadway with a little magic and some icy patches. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/22/theater/frozen-review-disney-broadway.html>
- Gross revenue of New York Broadway shows 2006-2017 | Statistic. Retrieved February 27, 2018, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/193006/broadway-shows-gross-revenue-since-2006/>
- Hillman-McCord, J. (2017). Digital fandom: *Hamilton* and the participatory spectator. In J. Hillman-McCord (Ed.), *iBroadway: Musical Theatre in a Digital Age* (pp. 119-139). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hillman-McCord, J. (2017). Musical theatre in the digital age. In J. Hillman-McCord (Ed.), *iBroadway: Musical Theatre in a Digital Age* (pp. 1-12). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Healy, P. (1311261350). The Staggering Cost of Broadway. Retrieved February 25, 2018, from artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/07/21/the-staggering-cost-of-broadway/
- MacDonald, L. (2017). Connection in an isolating age: Looking back on twenty years of engaging audiences and marketing musical theatre online. In Hillman-McCord, J (Eds.), *iBroadway: Musical Theatre in a Digital Age* (pp. 17-37). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Paulson, M. (2017, August 29). Race, money and Broadway: How 'Great Comet' burned out. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/29/theater/great-comet-broadway-race.html>
- Roundups, R. (2018, March 22). Review roundup: Did critics find a winter wonderland at FROZEN on Broadway? Retrieved from <https://www.broadwayworld.com/article/Review-Roundup-Did-Critics-Find-A-Winter-Wonderland-at-FROZEN-on-Broadway-20180322>
-

- Roundups, R. (2018, April 8). Review roundup: Did the critics think MEAN GIRLS was fetch? Retrieved from <https://www.broadwayworld.com/article/Review-Roundup-Did-the-Critics-Think-MEAN-GIRLS-Was-Fetch-All-the-Reviews-Updating-Live-20180408>
- Roundups, R. (2018, April 12). Review roundup: Critics weigh-In on CAROUSEL on Broadway, starring Jessie Mueller and Joshua Henry. Retrieved from <https://www.broadwayworld.com/article/Review-Roundup-Critics-Weigh-In-on-CAROUSEL-on-Broadway-Starring-Jessie-Mueller-and-Joshua-Henry-20180412-facebook>
- Sedgman, K. (2016). 'What's bigger than a standing ovation?': Intimacy and spectacle at the Tony Awards. *Studies in Musical Theatre*, 10(1), 37–53. https://doi.org/10.1386/smt.10.1.37_1
- Shao, G. (2009). Understanding the appeal of user-generated media: A uses and gratification perspective. *Internet Research*, 19(1), 7–25. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10662240910927795>
- Staff, P. (2018, February 21). Schedule of upcoming and announced Broadway shows. Retrieved from <http://www.playbill.com/article/schedule-of-upcoming-and-announced-broadway-shows-com-113677>
- Statistics - Broadway in NYC | The Broadway League. (n.d.). Retrieved February 27, 2018, from <https://www.broadwayleague.com/research/statistics-broadway-nyc/>
- Whiting, A., & Williams, D. (2013). Why people use social media: a uses and gratifications approach. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 16(4), 362–369. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-06-2013-0041>.
- Wickman, F. (2015, November 24). The show is nonstop. *Slate*. Retrieved from http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/theater/2015/11/ham4ham_lin_manuel_miranda_and_the_cast_of_hamilton_reward_ticket_lottery.html
- Williams, D. L., Crittenden, V. L., Keo, T., & McCarty, P. (2012). The use of social media: an exploratory study of usage among digital natives. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 12(2), 127–136. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.1414>
- Wingfield, G. (2014, Sept. 9). 8 surprising things you didn't know about Broadway previews. Retrieved from <https://broadway.showtickets.com/articles/8-surprising-things-about-broadway-previews/>
- Wollman, E.L. (2017). Looking backward, looking forward: an afterword. In J. Hillman-McCord (Ed.), *iBroadway: Musical Theatre in a Digital Age* (pp. 351-358). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
-

Communicating Royalty: A Study of Modern Monarchs' Online Branding

Abby Dionise

*Strategic Communications
Elon University*

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

Abstract

Modern monarchies have received both criticism and adoration throughout the years. Prior research indicates that to maintain relevance and public acceptance, royals need to communicate certain identities in their branding. Using a content analysis, the author coded for various branding elements present on the official websites of three monarchs. This study sought to determine the brand personality and narratives told by each monarch. Overall, each monarch employed various elements of traditional and heritage branding to create a unique brand personality and narrative.

I. Introduction

The monarchy is one of the world's oldest institutions of rule. In existence for thousands of years, monarchies around the globe have remained an intriguing spectacle of tradition and opulence. Inherently rooted in the past, today's monarchies are challenged with perpetuating the rituals that are the basis of their allure while maintaining relevancy in a modern world.

Currently, there are 26 active monarchies presiding over 46 nations. The monarch's degree of involvement and actual political power varies by country. The current landscape of royals can be broken down into monarchs who are head of state, monarchs who have some power, and monarchs who are figureheads with no legitimate political power (Dewey & Fisher, 2013). Other differentiating factors include succession rules, official title, history, and perceived role within a country.

Arguments in favor of monarchies include boosts to international trade, economic growth, diplomatic benefits, and increased national pride (Ansink, 2013). Those opposed to the institution cite riskiness of hereditary succession, inherited privilege, cost, lack of transparency, and perpetuation of class divides as negative implications (Smith, 2012).

Due to the elevated visibility and controversial nature of modern monarchs, establishing a strong personal brand and public image are crucial to continued survival and public approval. While some monarchs cultivate worldwide celebrity status, others are household names only within their country of rule. Can this divide be attributed to corporate image differences of "the Crown" in these countries? Online platforms offer

monarchs a platform to establish their own narrative and global brand identity apart from media coverage or public perceptions. A monarch's self-representation online indicates volumes about his or her personal and national ideology, as well as desired corporate image.

This study will examine the communication tools and tactics employed by various royals in self-branding online. The three royals selected for this study are King Harald V of Norway, King Abdullah II of Jordan, and King Mswati III of eSwatini (formerly Swaziland). These three monarchs maintain comprehensive official websites and distinctive narratives. The author chose to examine these particular monarchs because of their origins in different regions of the globe and differing levels of political influence.

King Mswati III of eSwatini

One of 60 sons, Mswati III was born in 1968 and ascended to the throne in 1986 at age 18. Mswati has received criticism for his many wives, luxurious lifestyle, and autocratic style of rule. In the early 2000s he was criticized for trying to limit democracy (Swaziland Profile, 2015).

King Harald V of Norway

Harald V was educated in Norway and Oxford. He ascended the throne in 1991 after achieving the rank of captain in Norway's armed forces. He is a constitutional monarch with largely ceremonial duties, including the head of the armed forces and church (Norway Profile, 2013).

King Abdullah II of Jordan

Abdullah II ascended the throne in 1999 and is believed to be a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. Powers include appointing governments, approving legislation, and dissolving parliament. Jordan's peace agreement with Israel and close relations with the United States are unpopular among many citizens (Jordan Profile, 2015).

II. Literature Review

To investigate the role of monarchy branding online, this literature review encompasses basic elements of branding, online branding, brands with heritage, royalty as a brand, and online leader branding.

Branding Basics

To critically examine the branding efforts of various monarchs, it is essential to first determine the definition of a "brand." Branding is the foundation of an entity and its differentiation from other similar competitors through a defined brand image and brand promise (Haygood, 2014). Branding can also be defined as the name, term, signal, symbol, or features that distinguish a brand (Chung & Ahn, 2013).

A well-defined brand employs clear brand architecture, brand personality, and brand value. Brand architecture is the definition of a brand's attributes, benefits, values, personality, and brand essence (Haygood, 2014). Attributes are the basic features of a product and benefits are the emotional and rational implications derived from those attributes. Brand value is the entity's representation of what it stands for. Brand personality is the idea that a brand can portray human-like qualities, such as youth or classiness (Haygood, 2014). By defining itself with brand personality and brand value, a brand is able to communicate to consumers a belief and value set that make it appealing.

Another dimension of branding is the concept of brand as an identity system. As an identity system, a brand takes on qualities of culture, personality, reflection, and relationship that are meaningful to the consumer (Maurya & Mishra, 2012).

Beyond functional benefits, a brand provides a means of self-enhancement for consumers (Chung & Ahn, 2013). Consumers typically build strong relationships with and loyalties to brands that represent a desired trait, such as wealth or popularity. This means of self-expression is another way that brands can provide distinct value to consumers. By using branding elements that are easily recognizable with a positive association, a corporate name or logo can lend equity to a product (Maurya & Mishra, 2012). With strong branding, a certain level of quality or status becomes synonymous with the logo, colors, or name of that

brand. By employing these elements, a brand can establish brand affinity and consumer loyalty.

Online Branding

The internet is pervasive. With constant internet access through a variety of devices, the internet is a critical touch point for brands to reach consumers. Not only does a brand need to maintain strong brand identity through physical products, but also by maintaining brand authenticity across various platforms (Shaker & Hafiz, 2014).

Online platforms and tools provide the opportunity for a brand to communicate its positive and favorable attributes. Two critical components in building a strong brand identity online are text-based information and image-based information. When portraying a brand online, the online representation should be built on an aspect of human personality. Last, online branding should highlight the strengths, goals, and personality of a brand in a persuasive manner (Shaker & Hafiz, 2014).

The internet provides an element of interactivity that can help to enhance a brand. Interactivity is reciprocal, two-way communication between a brand and its consumer that can positively affect attitude, memory, and behavioral intentions towards that brand (Chung & Ahn, 2013).

Brands With Heritage

Brands with heritage have unique elements of branding and points of differentiation. Brand heritage is a dimension of a brand's identity found in its track record, longevity, core values, use of symbolism, and belief that history is important (Urde, Greyser & Balmer, 2007). Rooted in the past, heritage brands are reliant on tradition, customs, and a sense of nostalgia. Heritage brands emphasize history as a key component of their identity (Urde, Greyser & Balmer, 2007). Heritage and longevity also lend a brand identity and legitimacy (Suddaby, Foster & Trank, 2010). Stewards of heritage brands have the unique task of maintaining the past glory of a brand while also positioning it as forward facing and relevant.

According to Balmer, effective heritage brands employ the concept of relative invariance. Relative invariance is the manner in which heritage identities remain the same in some regards, while evolving over time (Balmer, 2011). For example, the status or symbols of a brand might remain the same, but the meaning or connotation changes slightly over time (Balmer, 2011). Key elements to heritage brand maintenance are trust, authenticity, and affinity (Balmer, 2011).

Corporate heritage brands are unique in that they contribute to collective identity to build equitable reputation (Foster et. al, 2011). Corporate heritage brands enter into the common consciousness of a group's collective memory while embodying cultures, places, and time frames (Balmer, 2011). To maintain relevance over time, a heritage brand needs to employ adaptability (Urde, Greyser & Balmer, 2007).

Previous scholars have identified elements of corporate heritage branding within monarchies, including heavily symbolic communication, integral use of history as part of identity, and significant institutional longevity (Urde, Greyser & Balmer, 2007). Monarchs employ symbolism in several branding elements, such as use of recognizable crests and imagery of the crown. The symbol of the crown has become synonymous with prestige, quality, and exclusivity. Critical elements in maintenance and emphasis of the heritage of most monarchies include public pomp, ritual, and pageantry (Otnes & Maclaran, 2018). Monarchs, in some ways operating like a CEO, leverage themselves as a heritage brand to enhance their country's social balance and core values; thus a royal motto serves much in the same manner as a corporate tagline (Urde, Greyser & Balmer, 2007).

Royalty As a Brand

The aim of this study is to examine the branding and communications efforts of various monarchies. Before conducting original research on the royals, it is important to examine the role of the monarchy and prior studies of monarchy branding.

European monarchies are symbolic and ceremonial institutions, mainly responsible for bolstering national image through affirmation of values and heritage (Otnes & Maclaran, 2018). Another view is that royals are a human expression of the institution of the crown (Balmer, Greyser & Urde, 2006). The royal narrative is critical for humanizing monarchs. For example, these authors argue that the "underdog meets prince" narrative of the United Kingdom's Prince William has an allure that is conducive to brand loyalty and interest (Otnes & Maclaran, 2018). The use of diverse and calculated imagery can contribute to a well-defined

narrative for public figures (Gaither, 2007). Additionally, some monarchs provide an endorsement of sorts to certain brands with the “by royal appointment to” certification (Otnes & Maclaran (2018).

According to Balmer, Greyser, and Urde, the Crown is a brand with characteristics of a corporate brand and should be managed as such. Therefore, the institution of monarchy employs several traditional branding elements, such as attributes, core values, and brand promise. Similar to corporate brands, monarchs employ powerful visual symbols or vision statements akin to brand promise (Balmer, Greyser & Urde, 2006). The five key elements or “5 R’s” to distinguishing the Crown as a brand are royal, regal, relevant, responsive, and respected (Balmer, Greyser & Urde, 2006). Monarchs employ the attribute of “royalty” as a way of setting themselves apart, for example with coats of arms and crown jewels. By “acting in a royal manner” monarchs are regal. They have to maintain relevance and respect and must be responsive and flexible to change (Balmer, Greyser & Urde, 2006).

Similar to a corporate brand, monarchs reinforce their efficacy by building a brand personality and adding value to target groups. Although embodying certain elements of a corporate brand, the monarchy cannot rely on traditional advertising and promotion, instead using philanthropic efforts, speeches, and royal events to build their brand (Balmer, Greyser & Urde).

Loss of reputation is the main threat to the crown, making communications efforts extremely important for monarchies. Shaping the national identity, building an emotional relationship with the country’s citizens, and gaining the support of important publics such as Parliament are among the top priorities (Balmer, Greyser & Urde, 2006). As an historic institution and consistently challenged with criticisms of irrelevancy, monarchs have to work extra hard to maintain a place of importance and affection in the minds of citizens.

Online Leader Branding

Gaither’s study (2007) of online branding for leaders of developing nations parallels this study. Gaither used a mixed methods approach to examine the official websites of global leaders. He performed a content analysis of 31 leader websites.

Gaither also established a list of commonalities among the website homepages, such as presence of speeches, flags, emblems, and leader biographies. He analyzed how leaders attempted to portray themselves through narrative analysis, for example, citing Putin as a leader that aimed for the narrative of someone with “normal human values.” Gaither also examined organizational and operational information, such as whether the website defined a vision for the future of the country or government agency information.

III. Methods

Based on prior research and the literature review, this study raised the following research questions:

RQ1: How do monarchs incorporate branding strategies on their websites?

RQ2: How do branding efforts contribute to a corporate image and brand narrative?

The research in this study followed a mixed-methods approach through content analysis and narrative analysis to reveal patterns in the online branding of monarchs. The content analyzed included the material published on the chosen royals’ official websites at the time this study was conducted. The author analyzed content ranging from photos, to press releases, imagery, symbols, and other elements.

The sample for this study includes the official websites of King Harald V of Norway, King Abdullah II of Jordan, and King Mswati III of eSwatini. The author selected these monarchs because each maintains up-to-date information and material detailing various aspects of the monarchs’ duties, lives, and aspirations. This sample was also selected because it represents geographically diverse monarchs, with sovereigns from Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. This sample revealed three different approaches towards monarchy branding.

The first method this study employed is content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is “an approach to documents that emphasizes the role of the investigator in the construction of the meaning of and in texts. There is an emphasis on allowing categories to emerge out of data and on recognizing the significance for understanding the meaning of the context in which an item being analyzed (and the categories derived from

it) appeared” (Bryman, 2004). This research revealed similarities and differences in elements of messaging presented by the sample of monarchs. The study used a coding sheet adapted from Gaither’s methodology.

The second method in this study is narrative analysis, a qualitative research method that emphasizes “stories” told by the subject matter being studied to see how people “impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives” (Riessman, 1993; Ferguson, 2011). Additionally, narrative analysis allows a researcher to “identify patterns, themes, and discourses based on these stories and uncover a deeper meaning that is not always readily evident through quantitative research methods” (Ferguson, 2011). Through narrative analysis, this study distilled all of the website content into distinctive narratives for each monarch.

IV. Findings & Analysis

King Mswati III of eSwatini

The website of King Mswati III of eSwatini employs various elements of branding to espouse a specific brand image for the crown of eSwatini (Thekingofswaziland.com). The website features a balance of historical information and forward thinking theories. As discussed in the literature review, monarchs rely heavily on symbolism. This website features the eSwatini flag as well as the coat of arms with a lion representing the King and an elephant representing the Queen Mother. Last, the website theme is in the same color as the flag of eSwatini, contributing to an overall cohesive website that although is for one individual, portrays the identities of the whole nation. It is important to note that the website is available only in English, not in the national language of Swazi, indicating that the website is meant to act as an outward communications tool, not necessarily for the eSwatini constituents.

The website is carefully crafted to show two distinct sides of King Mswati III; a traditional King juxtaposed with a polished suit-and-tie wearing leader interacting with various other nation heads. A “History and Culture” section features Mswati exclusively in traditional attire, performing in various festivals, whereas the “Home” page of the website overwhelmingly features Mswati in a suit and tie, greeting western leaders such as Barack Obama and the Prince of Wales. No photos show a more relaxed King, or any insight into his family or hobbies. This presents a uniform, archetype version of the King. Language on the website emphasizes heritage and a collective identity, “Here live the Swazis, proud of their heritage, who hold tight to traditions that are to them as sacred as life itself.”

The website presents Mswati as the steward of these important traditions: “His Majesty faces a world ignorant of the Swazi traditions that he is duty bound to sustain and it is with patience that His Majesty continues to reign, the only absolute monarch in Africa who rules his country with a firm hand.” The website also explains various ceremonies that the King plays an integral role in throughout the year, solidifying his role as protector of ancient Swazi tradition. As discussed earlier, modern monarchs seek to embody the five R’s to maintain relevance: royal, regal, relevant, responsive, and respected (Balmer, Greyser & Urde, 2006). The website of King Mswati III portrays these traits fairly well. It communicates “royalty” by emphasizing the family tree, central role in the culture, and coat of arms and crown. Rhetoric paints the King as “regal” by discussing his esteemed role as King and how he has held the role for over two decades, maintaining the lineage. “Responsiveness” is demonstrated, not in terms of direct correspondence with constituents, but in the King’s Vision 2022 plan in which he recognizes a need for improved education, welfare, and quality of life and outlines a plan to achieve these goals.

The website aims to show that he is respected by positioning him as a peer to other global leaders—emphasized in photos of him conducting meetings with recognizable leaders. The language used to describe King Mswati III is almost reverent, describing him as “an extraordinary monarch who lives the legacies he has inherited, sustaining tradition with care” while also keeping an eye “to the future so he may bring his people safely into the 21st century.” The website also describes the King as “wise, humble and full of pleasant smiles.” As a brand, the King of eSwatini’s attributes might include a leader who can implement plans for the future of the country and plays a role in traditional ceremonies. These add value to people of eSwatini by improving their daily lives and contributing to their sense of tradition, culture, and a collective eSwatini identity by looking to the King as a national icon.

The narratives present within the website content include maintenance of history and vital tradition, forward thinking for a better eSwatini, and bringing eSwatini onto a global stage through foreign investment and interaction with global leaders. In terms of a brand personality, the website content paints King Mswati III to be a well-rounded, almost holy monarch. According to this narrative, the traditions of the country and culture could not exist without him, and the hopes for a better future rest within his hands. His brand personality is regal and untouchable. The language takes on a strong stance, almost providing justification that King Mswati III is a fit leader and should be respected, because he is King, doing a lot of “telling” why he is a great King, with less “showing.”

King Harald V of Norway

The official website of the Norway monarchy presents King Harald V as a very traditional, royal king (<https://www.royalcourt.no>). While the website links to social media for the entire royal court of Norway, the remainder of the website maintains a comprehensive and classic air. Information is easy for anyone to attain, with a dedicated “For the Press” section, where journalists can find photos, speeches, and up to date information on the King’s activities, emphasizing the media access cited as important for monarch branding (Balmer, Greyser & Urde, 2006). One narrative present throughout the website is that King Harald V is a constitutional monarch, and therefore “the King is formally the head of state, but that his duties are mainly representative and ceremonial.” The website very clearly outlines the duties of the King, which include serving as the formal head of the Church of Norway and as the head of the Army and the Navy. In each of these duties, the section of the Constitution affording the King these duties is highlighted, almost providing evidence that he deserves to have these duties.

The branding is extremely reliant on symbols to evoke a sense of royalty. King Harald’s crowns, royal residences, regalia, and flags appear throughout the website. An entire section of the website is dedicated to regalia, with imagery and information about the King’s Crown, Queen’s Crown, orb, scepter, anointment horn, and sword of state. Further emphasizing the importance of symbolism, the site describes and provides images of the various Norwegian orders and medals that the King can award, as “laid down in Article 23 of the Constitution.” This relates to the idea that a royal endorsement can provide brand equity via transferring some of the “royal” status and superiority equated to royalty and The Crown. This idea is also present in the inclusion of “Patronage” to societies such as the Norwegian Cancer Society. The website notes “Royal Patronage serves to raise public awareness of an organization or a specific event that supports a worthy cause,” a tactic outlined as a replacement for traditional advertising in monarchy promotion.

A key narrative in the website is history of the monarchy. The narrative emphasizes the Norwegian monarchy’s age of over 1,000 years and highlights a family tree. A “History” section also chronicles Norwegian monarchy involvement throughout history, in regards to World War II and gaining Norway’s independence from Denmark. In highlighting these world events, the website emphasizes the monarchy’s involvement and shows how although a constitutional monarchy now, Norway’s kings and queens have maintained a stalwart institution for a century, acting as an identity system for the Norwegians. The website also extensively describes the 1,000-year-old coronation, consecration, and anointing ceremonies, and how they have changed and been maintained throughout the years. In images, King Harald is portrayed mostly formally, with official sashes, regalia, and traditional pomp and circumstance in the forms of a royal guard and opulent backgrounds. A few images show him on a boat or in the Amazon rainforest, but these all maintain a somewhat distinguished feel, hardly toeing the line of casual. Although the website updates visitors on current official visits and events conducted by the King, there is no information about his personal vision for the country or desires for change.

Concerning “the five R’s,” the website heavily emphasizes “royal” and “regal” with symbolism and history concerning powers granted only to the monarch. In terms of “relevant,” the website highlights current events and activities the King participates in, and offers tours of the Royal Palace. “Responsive” is not really highlighted on the website, since the King does not evoke change, although the website links to social media accounts for the monarchy, which may foster more direct contact with constituents. “Respect” is highlighted by the elevated status in which the King is presented. By the very nature of having the “royal” elements, a certain respect is connoted. The attributes of King Harald include a protector of the past and the benefits include maintaining tradition and ritual, with a potential value of unifying Norway and improving life through philanthropy. The brand personality of King Harald is distinguished, traditional, and exactly what one might expect of a white, European monarch.

King Abdullah II of Jordan

King Abdullah II's website is comprehensive and all elements work together to create a strong "King Abdullah II" brand image (<https://kingabdullah.jo>). The amount of information, both written and visual, is extensive. Aside from a tab about the history of the Hashemite Kings, the majority of the website pivots around King Abdullah's progress and future plans for Jordan. A three-prong vision statement extensively explains his plans for progress, faith, and peace in Jordan along with "Vision 2025." Additionally, the website features "Discussion Papers" published by King Abdullah, and a robust "Media Centre" featuring speeches, photos, videos, op-eds, and a press room with updates on his daily activities, emphasizing the need for content and media in royal branding. A "Facts and Figures" graphic also highlights the number of activities, such as meeting with foreign leaders or military activities, that he has completed in the previous calendar year. Symbolism is present throughout, with a golden crown animation often appearing next to the King's name or titles, as well as the coat of arms, which features the Hashemite crown. Jordanian flags and the Flag of His Majesty the King of Jordan appear throughout the website.

The imagery of the King is diverse. He is often pictured in military gear, abroad with various world leaders, and greeting citizens. In contrast, several photographs in the "Personal" or "Hobbies" section feature him playing with his children on playgrounds, reading while traveling, and riding a motorcycle. He is almost always pictured with a smile. This creates the narrative that although he is a royal, he too enjoys spending his free time with the people, or things, he loves making him relatable. Social media accounts are also linked to the website, which features live updates of each platform. The use of social media and casual, relatable imagery evoke a sense of modernity and accessibility not mirrored by King Mswati or King Harald.

Although there is a strong focus on the future, the website content is not without a nod to the past. The website clearly explains that King Abdullah II is the 41st direct descendant of the Prophet Mohammad and that he falls at the end of the line of prior Hashemite Kings. This portion of the website explains the heritage of the Hashemite Kings and that they "call for making a better, dignified life for the Arab people, while shunning violence and extremism." It is also noted that the Kings have custodianship over the Holy Sites within Jordan, and that in 2013, King Abdullah signed a historical agreement reaffirming the King's guardianship over historic sites. A list outlines the ten restoration projects completed under King Abdullah, including the historic Al Aqsa Mosque.

Overall, the narrative presents history as a justification for how King Abdullah became King and what legacy he upholds. Beyond providing a background for his rule, history is not heavily relied on for his brand image, which is future-focused overall. In regards to the five R's, King Abdullah emphasizes "relevant" strongly on the website with ongoing publication of papers and opinions, tweets about what is happening with citizens, and recent meetings with world leaders. The website conveys "royalty" with the recurrent crown symbol as well as imagery showing the King giving speeches from his throne. Imagery portrays the King as "regal" and "respected" while on his throne, or interacting with citizens and prominent leaders.

Language on the site paints the King as "responsive" to national issues, by explaining how he reacted to a public health issue, and developed the Hakeem Program for public health in response. Another narrative that is present throughout all facets of the website is King Abdullah's frequent and well-documented activity. He is portrayed as a dynamic monarch that accomplishes tasks and portrays this image on his website in clear, easy to understand reports, such as the "Facts and Figures" sections.

The attributes of King Abdullah include a well-respected global leader with benefits of improving Jordan and its relationship with other nations. The brand personality of King Abdullah is accessible, future focused, modern, and relatable, while still maintaining a sense of tradition and heritage. He is the King that "does it all."

V. Discussion

The websites of these three royals reflect similarities in addition to sharp dichotomies. The absence or presence of certain elements on their official websites contributes to distinctive brand images and personalities. King Mswati III and King Abdullah II have more power than the constitutional monarch King Harald V. As a result, King Harald's branding and narrative is heavily reliant on symbolism, history, and ritual. His branding focuses on the idea of "pulling back the curtain" on a status and standard of living not

experienced by the “common folk.” This is evident in images of diamond-encrusted crowns and advertised tours in which the public can peak into the royal palace for a glimpse into the lives of the elite monarchy. King Harald’s narrative also relies on his role in rituals to justify his maintained power. The content describes in plain language how century-old ceremonies and rituals function, and what exactly the King’s role is within the traditions. The website attempts to show that the King is active.

In contrast, King Mswati and King Abdullah’s websites combine elements of tradition, with heavily developed narratives for the future of their country including outlined vision statements and initiatives. It appears as though these monarchs are aiming to evade public criticisms of modern monarch irrelevancy. Instead, their website narratives demonstrate how the monarchs positively impact their constituents and add value through initiatives and action. Although both show high activity levels, the brand personalities of these two active and powerful monarchs are very different. The juxtaposition between a more closed off, untouchable King Mswati and a more transparent, accessible King Abdullah is very apparent. These brand personalities are achieved through imagery. For example, the only images of King Mswati show him in official capacities, from meeting with global leaders to participating in ceremonies. This creates a flat, two-dimensional portrayal of him as a king figure. Images of King Abdullah show the same formal scenarios, but also expand to show him with his family, holding his newborn child, or driving a motorcycle. As a result, he is more humanized and the audience gets a sense of who he is as a person, not just as a king. This contributes to a more well-rounded and relatable brand personality. With an institution as old as monarchy, criticism of its relevancy is more prominent now than ever before. To maintain a positive public image, creating a strong brand personality that aligns with the values of the country and constituents is critical to maintaining positive public perception.

VI. Conclusion

This study provides insight on the different levels of involvement that exist within a monarchy, how priorities and needs influence communication strategy, and how this communication strategy is crucial for building and maintaining a brand that upholds the monarch’s reputation.

Each of the three monarchs presented a distinct brand personality and brand essence. All three heritage brands emphasized history as a key component of their identity. King Abdullah II and King Mswati III portrayed relative invariance, by evolving over time, whereas King Harald V’s narrative was mostly history-centric. As research predicted they would, all three monarchs’ websites emphasized symbolism. Additionally, since none of the monarchs could rely on traditional advertising to strengthen their brand, they all use royal events, speeches, and philanthropy to bolster their brand identities, a tactic outlined in the literature review.

Overall, these three websites were consistent with many of the heritage and royal branding findings outlined in previous research (Balmer, 2011). This study confirmed that just as any corporate brand would, monarchs, though distinct, are also reliant on branding elements to build a strong brand personality and narrative.

This study was conducted over the course of one semester and the four-month time frame limited the extent of examination and the number of monarchs. The content analyzed was limited solely to the monarchs’ websites, and further research could examine the monarch’s social media platforms as a branding tool in addition to their websites.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to express gratitude to Glenn Scott and Kenn Gaither, faculty members at Elon University, for their guidance in writing this paper. The author would also like to express gratitude to those who edited it, including Rachel Echevarria.

References

- Ansink, J. (2013, April 30). The business case for monarchies. *Fortune*. Retrieved from <http://fortune.com/2013/04/30/the-business-case-for-monarchies/>
- Balmer, J. M. T. (2011). Corporate heritage identities, corporate heritage brands and the multiple heritage identities of the British Monarchy. *European Journal of Marketing*, 45(9/10), 1380–1398.
- Balmer, J. M. T., Greyser, S. A., & Urde, M. (2006). The Crown as a corporate brand: Insights from monarchies. *Journal of Brand Management*, 14(1–2), 137–161.
- Berelson, B. (1952). *Content analysis in communication research* (Foundations of communication research). Glencoe, Ill: Free Press.
- Bryman, A. 2004. *Social research methods* (2nd ed). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Chung, H., & Ahn, E. (2013). Creating online brand personality: the role of personal difference. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 19(2), 167–187.
- Dewey, C., & Fisher, M. (2013, July 22). Meet the world's other 25 royal families. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/07/22/meet-the-worlds-other-25-royal-families/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.f158dd9789fa
- Ferguson, S. (2011). The Roman Catholic Church in America through online media: A narrative analysis. *The Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, 2(2).
- Foster, W.M., Suddaby, R., Minkus, A. et al. (2011). History as social memory assets: The example of Tim Hortons. *Management & Organizational History* 6(1): 101–120.
- Gaither, T. K. (2007). *Building a nation's image on the world wide web: a study of the head of state web sites of developing countries*. Youngstown, New York: Cambria Press.
- Greyser, S. A., Balmer, J. M. T., & Urde, M. (2006). The monarchy as a corporate brand: some corporate communications dimensions. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40(7/8), 902–908.
- Haygood, D.M. (2014). BRAND. *Communication: Journalism Education Today*, 47(3), 3-7. Jordan profile-leaders. (2015). BBC. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14636308>
- Maurya, U. K., & Mishra, P. (2012). What is a brand? A perspective on brand meaning. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 4(3), 122–133.
- Norway profile-leaders. (2013). BBC. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17745324>
- Otnes, C. C., & Maclaran, P. (2018). Royalty: marketplace icons. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 21(1), 65–75.
- Riessman, C.K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Shaker, F., & Hafiz, R. (2014). Personal Branding in Online Platform. *Global Disclosure of Economics and Business*, 3(3), 7–20.
- Smith, G. (2012, June 1). Why UK should abolish its “failed” monarchy. *CNN*. Retrieved from <https://edition.cnn.com/2012/05/30/world/europe/uk-jubilee-republicans/index.html>
- Suddaby, R., Foster, W.M., & Trank, C.Q. (2010) Rhetorical history as a source of competitive advantage. *Advances in Strategic Management*, 27(2010): 147–173.
- Swaziland profile-leaders. (2015). BBC. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14095704>
- Urde, M., Greyser, S. A., & Balmer, J. M. (2007). Corporate brands with a heritage. *Journal of Brand Management*, 15(1), 4–19.
-

Mass Shootings and Media Contagion Theory: Social Media's Influence on Frequency of Incidents

Kristina J. Lee

Strategic Communications
Elon University

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

Abstract

As the number of mass shooting and acts of violence increase nationwide, researchers have set out to determine the specific underlying cause. This study explored a pattern between two variables: the spread of mass shooting news on social media platforms, and the increase in these crimes. This study analyzed and compared media activity from mass shootings at Columbine, Virginia Tech, and Parkland. These school shootings occurred in three separate media eras, and data from a mass shooting archive was used to examine the frequency of incidents over time. Evidence showed increased social media usage aligned with increased numbers of mass shootings.

I. Introduction

Columbine. Virginia Tech. Orlando. San Bernardino. Las Vegas. Sandy Hook. Parkland.

These are only a handful of the places where mass shootings have occurred in the United States in the past 20 years, and these violent crimes are increasing in frequency. An event where four or more individuals are shot now occurs every 12.5 days in this country (Meindl & Ivy, 2017). This rise in mass shootings has recently been linked to “media contagion” theory, which suggests that society’s never-ending news cycle has a “copycat” effect on these crimes (Meindl & Ivy, 2017). It is important to note that the primary media circulating this news are not just television and newspapers anymore, but also social media platforms and online news sources. These new media, including Snapchat, Facebook Live, Twitter, and online blogs, have made the spread of information about mass shootings nearly effortless. It is no coincidence that connections have been made between social media milestones and mass shooting numbers in the United States. This study analyzed social media platforms, online news sources, and mass shooting archives to determine the relationship between two variables: the spread of mass shooting news on social media platforms and the increase in these crimes.

II. Literature Review

According to Schildkraut and Elsass (2016), a mass shooting can be defined as “an incident of targeted violence carried out by one or more shooters at one or more public or populated locations” (p. 56). A mass shooting incident is also associated with multiple victims and occurs within a 24-hour time frame (Schildkraut & Elsass, 2016). Due to the increase in these acts of violence, researchers have been trying to determine the specific underlying cause. A growing body of research indicates these crimes are “contagious” and related to a heavy amount of traditional news and social media coverage. James Meindl and Jonathan Ivy state that “Contagion models an outcome — when someone engages in a behavior, there is a probability that someone else may do the same” (Meindl & Ivy, 2017, p. 368). Often, “copycat” behavior is influenced by media sources, especially social media. Extensive coverage of mass shootings on these platforms allows potential criminals to identify with a criminal act, leading them to feel they need to fulfill a personal calling (Meindl & Ivy, 2017).

Jennifer Murray identified seven different stages of mass shooting coverage, all of which ultimately contribute to sensationalizing the shooter. Murray demonstrated that shootings such as Virginia Tech and Sandy Hook were inspired by the Columbine shooting in 1999, and shooters Seung-Hui Cho and Adam Lanza, respectively, showed signs of infatuation with Columbine through self-recordings, photos, and notes (Murray, 2017). Murray explained that the way in which today’s mass shootings are portrayed in the news allows, and sometimes tends to support, copycat crimes. “Round-the-clock breaking news is valued more for its entertainment factor,” Murray wrote, “rather than impartial accounting of events and quite often tragedies are sensationalized” (p. 114).

Related research looked at how contagion affects and portrays those with mental illnesses. Using a survey and control groups, Emma McGinty, et al. (2013) showed that media coverage caused the public to have a negative attitude towards those with mental illnesses due to the way that these criminals were depicted (McGinty, Webster, & Webster, 2013). Another study found that mass shooters “may have, consciously or sub-consciously, been inspired to act on previously suppressed urges by exposure to details of similar events,” especially in shootings where four or more people are killed (Towers, Gomez-Lievano, Khan, Mubayi, & Castillo-Chavez, 2015, p. 2).

Researchers have also found that shooters are attracted to media’s ability to easily facilitate fame. The combination of the narcissistic tendencies of these shooters and heightened media coverage seems to have assisted in the increase of these crimes. According to Bushman (2017), “in today’s digital age, one does not have to wait for the FBI or *New York Times* to release the manifesto. One can easily find the manifesto on the Internet, such as on YouTube or Facebook” (p. 8). Lankford found that shooters today receive the equivalent of several million dollars’ worth of earned media coverage for their acts. Data suggests that shooters have even planned their attacks during certain months because they knew there was an opportunity to gain more attention (Lankford, 2018).

Other scholars have examined the culture and impact of social media before, during, and after shooting events. Mazer, Thompson, Cherry, Russell, Payne, Kirby, and Pfohl (2015) found that Twitter was the most-used form of social media after a mass shooting, and that social media users tended to be most active 20 minutes after a shooting, with activity spiking again after the name of the shooter and victims were revealed. Schildkraut and Elsass (2016) found that Twitter activity after two mass shootings caused “digital waves” such as the creation of incident specific hashtags, the establishment of certain trends, and the posting and sharing of millions of tweets. Guggenheim, Jang, Bae, and Neuman (2015) found that Twitter users actually influenced traditional media in terms of what is reported, and that users found Twitter helpful for passing on quick facts and basic information.

The “media contagion” theory is fairly new and has come to relevance within the 21st century. According to previous studies, there is significant evidence to show that the media, traditional and social, have played a significant role in the imitation and “copycat” aspect of these crimes. This study will specifically focus on social media activity and how the evolution of the tool has allowed for the amplification of mass shooting news and the subsequent effect on copycat behavior.

III. Methods

Throughout the data collection phase of this study, it was important to consider two specific factors: how the different media eras have affected the coverage of mass shootings, and how social media have influenced the frequency of these events in the digital age.

To address the first factor, an analysis of media activity and involvement from three historical mass shootings was conducted, specifically focusing on how news was spread among media platforms and how the public used social media as a communication tool during and after the event. The way in which these shootings were portrayed within the media at the time was of particular importance. This study focused on the Columbine, Virginia Tech, and Parkland shootings because these mass shootings took place during three different points in social media's evolution. When the infamous Columbine High School shooting occurred in Littleton, Colorado in April of 1999, social media platforms did not exist, forcing the public to get a majority of their news from newspapers, radio, and television (Hale, 2015). Eight years later, when Seung-Hui Cho shot and killed 32 individuals at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA, popular platforms such as MySpace (2003), Facebook (2004), and Twitter (2006) were in use (Hale, 2015). Social media has continued to advance rapidly since then and when the Parkland, Florida shooting took place at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in February 2018, news spread instantaneously on almost all digital platforms including everything from Snapchat and Instagram to Facebook Live and YouTube. With each shooting, it was important to take note of how the media portrayed the incident on digital platforms during this time. By analyzing these mass shootings from three different time periods, media coverage and activity from each can be compared and contrasted, ultimately showing the effects of social media advancement and how social media may have contributed to contagion.

The second factor was then examined through the analysis of a *Mother Jones* mass shooting archive. The dates and the frequency of shootings were examined in particular in order to reveal patterns of contagion. The year of 2011 was used as a "benchmark" for this method due to a Harvard study that showed the rate of mass shootings tripled after this date (Cohen, Azrael, and Miller, 2014). The year was also a landmark for social media, as Twitter doubled its number of users, Facebook reached 750 million users, and Instagram had its one-year anniversary (Lang, 2015). A clear increase in mass shootings after 2011 would suggest that social media may have an impact.

IV. Findings & Discussion

This study found significant patterns between the spread of mass shooting news on social media platforms and the increase in these crimes. The analysis of three different historical mass shootings revealed there to be a difference in coverage due to the media environment in which the shootings occurred. Evidence from an archive then showed that shootings tripled in numbers around the same year that social media use skyrocketed.

Columbine

On April 20, 1999, 13 lives were taken in what many call the most tragic and recognized shooting in history (Mannino, 2012). This mass shooting is known as the Columbine High School Massacre in Littleton, Colorado. Columbine shooters Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris went to their high school that day with the intent to kill, targeting minorities and athletes (Byock, 2009). After analyzing the media coverage that resulted from Columbine, one can recognize the role the specific media era played in terms of how the shooting was publicized in the news. Once again, it is crucial to remember that social media did not exist during this era, and that the closest site resembling a social media platform at this time was Six Degrees, a site used for blogging and instant messaging (Hale, 2015).

The analysis revealed that Columbine's media coverage consisted mainly of newspaper articles, radio broadcasts, and television reports. Due to this lack of immediacy, the public did not receive information as quickly about the shooting, ultimately causing both rumors to spread and individuals to remain unaware of the incident (Shepard, n.d.). Interestingly, media coverage on Columbine hit its peak on the second day after the shooting took place (Schildkraut & Muschert, 2013). This would not be the case today, due to the never-

ending news cycle and rise of popular social media platforms.

Columbine's coverage also revealed one large difference from today's mass shooting coverage, being that the news reports did not include any type of video from the actual shooting besides the school's security footage. Today, it is common to see videos posted on Twitter, Facebook, and Snapchat from the viewpoint of victims involved in the actual shooting. In 1999, students did not have cellphones with cameras capable of taking video. Instead, they mainly used beepers, pagers, and landlines to communicate (Jones, 2009). It is important to note that a majority of the images included in news coverage back then were shots of the scene outside by photographers and news crews (Arenstein, 2018). This difference partially explains why media coverage of Columbine was delayed. Because news reporters and news stations did not have images and videos of the shooting itself, they had to collect accurate information through phone calls and interviews with victims and witnesses (Mannino, 2012).

Media coverage of the Columbine massacre would look different if the shooting had happened in today's digital world. Most likely, the incident would take over the digital space, producing millions of posts, tweets, and shares. The public would be notified on their smartphones instantly and videos from the shooting would be replayed all over television news. After analyzing the media coverage of a mass shooting in 1999, one is able to recognize just how much of a role social media has played in the amplification of news in these crisis situations. For this reason, it is instructive to compare Columbine's media coverage to Virginia Tech's media coverage, the difference being that Virginia Tech occurred eight years later when major social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter became popular.

Virginia Tech

On April 16, 2007, in Blacksburg, Virginia, 32 people were shot and killed on Virginia Tech's campus. The Virginia Tech shooter, Seung-Hui Cho, was a senior at the time. This shooting took place over the course of two and a half hours, with the first and second half of the shooting separated by Cho's decision to stop and mail a "confession" package to NBC News ("How the Virginia Tech," 2007). After studying the media coverage that resulted from this horrific event, it is clear that the coverage reflects the media era in which the shooting took place. By 2007, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter were being used in full force and a majority of the public received news updates from websites, blogs, and other online resources. The digital landscape in 2007 clearly changed since Columbine in 1999, and the coverage of the Virginia Tech shooting, both traditional and social, clearly highlights this difference.

In 2007, Pew Research reported that the Virginia Tech shooting was the single most covered story in the news that year. In the five days following the Virginia Tech shooting, records show that more than half of all news coverage was devoted to updates on the incident ("Biggest Story by Week," 2007). Along with traditional television and radio broadcasts, Facebook and Twitter appeared to be the primary social media platforms used to spread news about the shooting.

Immediately after the attack, Facebook was used by students on digital and mobile devices to notify others that they were safe and alive. This is something that Columbine students were not able to do due to the limitations of the technology at the time. The platform was also used by the public to create certain support groups, such as "Christians Praying for Virginia Tech" and "Canada Supports Virginia Tech" (Pelofsky, 2007). These groups created a lot of attention, each group containing hundreds to thousands of members. On the other hand, Twitter also played a crucial role in the spreading of news about the shooting, with multiple celebrities, bloggers, news stations, and media outlets commenting on the violent attack. For example, WLWT.com tweeted at 1:14 that afternoon, "Waiting for confirmation that at least 30 are dead in Virginia Tech shooting, including the gunman," and soon after, NTV News tweeted, "33 Dead in Virginia Tech shooting. The gunman chained shut the doors of a hall before opening fire. The gunman killed himself." Twitter history shows that hundreds of tweets were coming in every couple of minutes, constantly updating the public on additional details. These social media platforms became vital sources of information not only for the victims involved in the shooting, but also for those all over the world who wanted to know what happened in Blacksburg, Virginia that afternoon.

Media coverage of the Virginia Tech shooting only intensified when information was released concerning the package that Cho had sent to NBC. The network received the package in New York and found it to contain photographs, videos, and an 1,800-word manifesto explaining his malicious behavior. The material shows Cho's anger, frustration, and resentment. In one of the videos, Cho says, "I didn't have to do this. I could have left. I could have fled. But no, I will no longer run. It's not for me. For my children, for my

brothers and sisters that you f---, I did it for them” (Johnson, 2007). Cho's behavior reveals just how desperate he was to become recognized within the public eye. He took time out of his attack to physically send a news station several materials to explain himself. It is assumed that Cho did this with a desire for fame. After NBC posted online some of the materials, the network received public backlash. More than 1,200 comments were posted on NBC's message board in response to Cho's mailed materials in less than 12 hours (Johnson, 2007).

Overall, Cho's actions show recognition of the fact that the media at the time could spread his story. Without Facebook, Twitter, and the other social media platforms, it is certain that news coverage of the shooting would not have reached as many people as quickly. It is interesting to compare the media coverage of Columbine and Virginia Tech because the two incidents received such different reactions due to the eight-year time difference. Clearly, as social media and the digital world developed, news coverage became amplified more easily.

Parkland

The Parkland shooting is the third and last shooting included in this comparative analysis. Nikolas Cruz shot and killed 14 students and three teachers on February 14, 2018 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Cruz purposely set off the fire alarm in order to draw students and staff outside of their classrooms. All within an hour and a half, the shooting took place, the shooter escaped, and was arrested (Chavez, 2018). The media coverage of this incident was unlike any other, creating millions of posts on social media platforms and highlighting powerful student-run protests and campaigns for weeks on end.

The coverage of the Parkland shooting occurred during the media's most-developed era and attracted attention from political leaders, celebrities, and especially students all over the nation. It is important to recognize that by 2018 it is not uncommon for individuals to solely rely on social media and online news sources for updates on current events. Since Virginia Tech in 2007, popular visual sharing platforms such as Instagram (2010) and Snapchat (2011) had dramatically changed the way in which these incidents are covered.

Parkland media coverage differed in one important way. Instead of honing in on the shooter and his or her motives, the bulk of coverage focused on the students and their plan to end gun violence. One observer recognized, “It has a lot to do with the fact that those kids from that school are super pissed. They've taken a much different activist role than we've seen in previous shootings” (Francis, 2018). The students and survivors of the Parkland shooting quickly realized that social media and online platforms were their best bet in having their voice heard.

The coverage of Parkland through social media started shortly after the shooting began. Content ranging from Snapchat videos to emotional posts for help were released and shared on multiple platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Students captured the incident on their own phones, including videos of them shielding themselves and areas in the classroom that were damaged from the shots. Students were using Facebook and Twitter specifically to determine if certain friends or family members were still alive, a few posts received thousands of shares from the public. Even during the attack, students still sent tweets. One student stated, “my school is being shot up and I am locked inside” (Shayanian, 2018).

The Parkland coverage on social media did not end there. Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School students called out lawmakers and created a plan for action. The most popular social media platforms became flooded with photos and videos of protesting students, Emma González, David Hogg, Cameron Kasky, and Sarah Chadwick. These students used social media to voice their opinion, call out lawmakers, and spread awareness about gun control. Twitter rapidly verified the accounts of these four students to support their credibility of their information (Wagner, 2018).

Coverage of the shooting progressed with the creation of the #NeverAgain movement and the March For Our Lives demonstration. With this movement and demonstration, students aimed to end gun violence and organized a march in Washington, D.C., on March 24, 2018. All major news organizations reported on the march throughout the day and even celebrities such as Oprah, Miley Cyrus, and Taylor Swift showed their support through social media and monetary donations (Amatulli, 2018).

The extensive media coverage of the Parkland shooting represented a more-developed media era. Much of the coverage surrounding this shooting took place in digital space, with postings on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, and Instagram. The natural reaction of students to immediately take phones out

and post on social media demonstrated just how much of a role the digital space had in the coverage of this crisis situation in 2018. Unlike the media coverage from Columbine and Virginia Tech, the media coverage of Parkland sparked a global conversation and nationally recognized campaigns. This may be attributed to the social media era and its impact as a communication channel.

Mother Jones Archive

It is evident just how much of an effect the evolution of digital platforms and social media has had on how news of these shootings is disseminated. It is also key to analyze how these findings relate to contagion by looking at the frequency of incidents throughout the media eras. As stated within the methodology, the year of 2011 may be used as a benchmark, due to the surge of social media milestones that year. The mass shooting archive analyzed in this study was provided by Harvard researchers through *Mother Jones* (Cohen, Azrael, & Miller, 2014). The data provides specific information, including an entire record of mass shootings from 1982 to 2018. The archive also provides information on the location of shootings, what year shootings took place, a brief summary of incidents, a count of fatalities and injuries, and other details on weapons used and mental health involvement.

This archive revealed that the number of shootings did in fact increase over time, especially after 2011 (Figure 1). From 2011 to 2018, the numbers noticeably increase and become more consistent. During this time, social media use also became prevalent in society. As Lang (2015) explained, during the year of 2011 Twitter doubled its users, Facebook exceeded 750 million users, and Instagram celebrated its one-year anniversary.

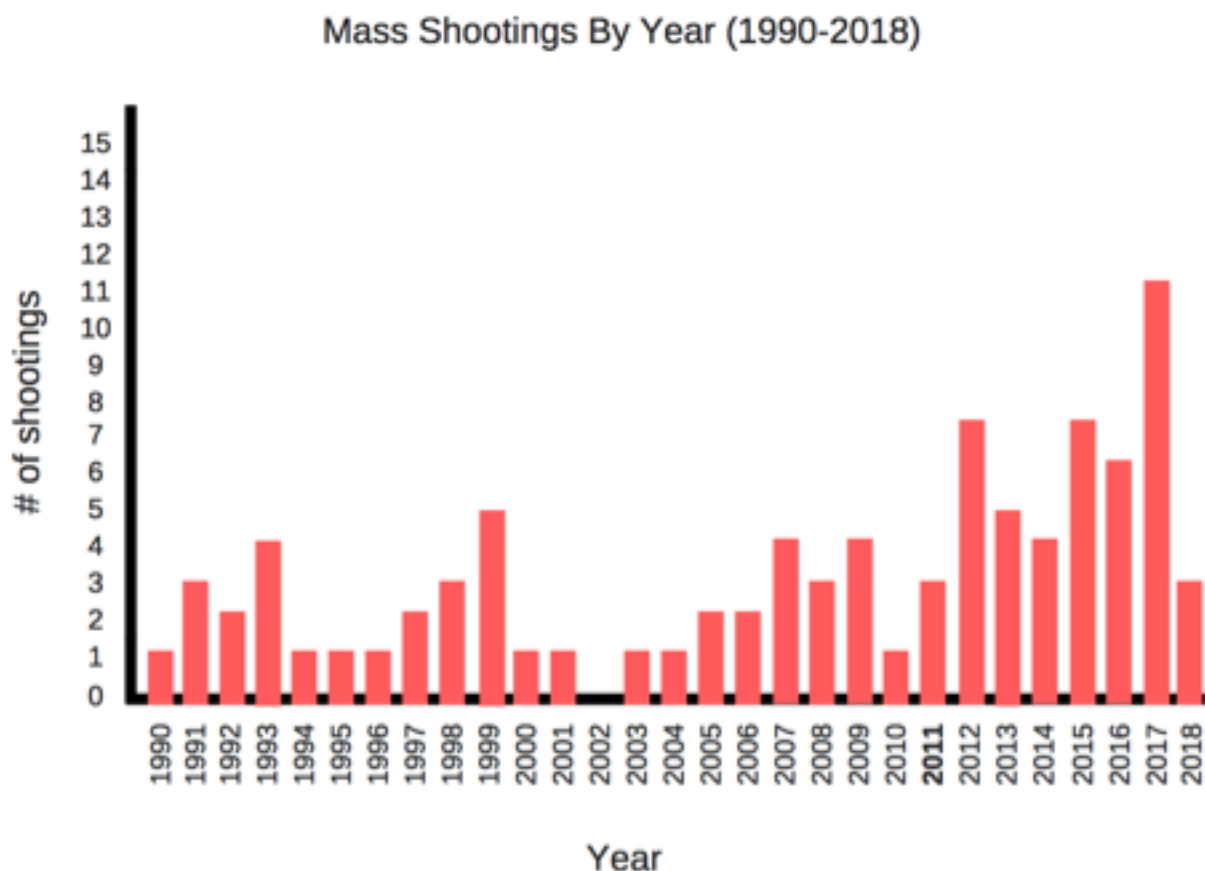


Figure 1. Column graph that represents the number of mass shootings over time (1990-2018). Shows increase in incidents over the years, tripling after 2011. Note: Number of shootings in 2018 is through April.

As seen in *Figure 1*, the average number of annual mass shootings from 2004-2010 was 2.5, compared to 7.5 from 2011-2018. The evidence shows that mass shootings did in fact triple after 2011, suggesting a possible relationship between the spread of mass shooting news on social media platforms and the increase in these crimes.

V. Conclusion

Through analysis of media coverage, both traditional and social, of the shootings at Columbine, Virginia Tech, and Parkland, one can conclude that the media era in which a shooting took place had an enormous effect on how shootings were covered in the news. This study suggests that there is a pattern between the spread of mass shooting news on social media platforms and the increase in these crimes. Over time, as social media has increased in usage, so has the coverage of news concerning mass shootings. This also further reflects shooters' desire for fame and their tendency to copy a crime.

Evidence from this study reveals a large increase in the number of mass shootings after 2011's social media milestones, and one can conclude that social media most likely has some effect on these crimes, although the degree of this relationship is beyond the scope of this study. Other factors, such as treatment of mental illness, or current gun regulations, may well be contributing factors in the rise of mass shootings also. In any case, these findings raise difficult questions about keeping the public informed in a media environment that only seems to encourage these horrific acts.

Future research could focus on protests and campaigns that have been sparked as a result of mass shootings. Students after the Parkland shooting in 2018, for example, blanketed both traditional and social media with hash tags, campaigns, and calls for change, however, how these movements affect future shootings remains to be seen. Or, will they encourage more violent acts?

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Anthony Hatcher, associate professor at Elon University, for his dedication, guidance, and support throughout this research process. The author would also like to thank all of the Elon communications faculty members that she has had the opportunity to work with for their outstanding influence on her educational path.

References

- Amatulli, J. (2018, March 24). Celebrities take to the streets, social media for March For Our Lives. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/celebrities-take-to-the-streets-social-media-for-march-for-our-lives_us_5ab66a82e4b054d118e33caf
- Arenstein, S. (2018, February 15). High school shootings find their ugly real-time social media moment. Retrieved from <http://www.prnewsonline.com/high-school-shootings-find-their-ugly-real-time-social-media-moment/>
- Biggest story by week – Virginia Tech. (2007, August 20). Retrieved from <http://www.journalism.org/2007/08/20/biggest-story-by-week-virginia-tech/>
- Bushman, B.J. (2017). Narcissism, fame seeking, and mass shootings. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 62(2), 229-241.
- Byock, L. (2009, March 11). Columbine, now and then. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/columbine-now-and-then>
- Chavez, N. (2018, March 8). What happened, moment by moment, in the Florida school massacre. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/15/us/florida-school-shooting-timeline/index.html>
-

- Cohen, A.P., Azrael, D., & Miller, M. (2014, October 15). Rate of mass shootings has tripled since 2011, Harvard research shows. Retrieved from <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/10/mass-shootings-increasing-harvard-research/>
- Francis, L. (2018, March 4). *The Parkland survivors are changing how the media covers school shootings*. Retrieved from <https://www.fatherly.com/love-money/parkland-survivors-changing-how-media-covers-school-shootings/>
- Guggenheim, L., Jang, S.M., Bae, S.Y., & Neuman, W.R. (2015). The dynamics of issue frame competition in traditional and social media. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 659(1), 207-224. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0002716215570549>
- Hale, B. (2015). *The history of social media: Social networking evolution!* Retrieved from <http://historycooperative.org/the-history-of-social-media/>
- How the Virginia Tech shootings unfolded. (2007, April 30). *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/aug/30/highereducation.usa>
- Johnson, M.A. (2007, April 19). *Gunman sent package to NBC News*. Retrieved from http://www.nbcnews.com/id/18195423/ns/us_news-crime_and_courts/t/gunman-sent-package-nbc-news/#.WsRaUC-ZPwc
- Jones, K. (2009, April 20). *Covering Columbine – 10 years ago today*. Retrieved from <http://ac360.blogs.cnn.com/2009/04/20/covering-columbine-10-years-ago-today/>
- Lang, N. (2015, December 7). *Why 2011 was a tipping point for social media and mass shootings*. Retrieved from <https://www.dailydot.com/via/social-media-mass-shootings-2011/>
- Lankford, A. (2018). Do the media unintentionally make mass killers into celebrities? An assessment of free advertising and earned media value. *Celebrity Studies*. doi:10.1080/19392397.2017.1422984
- Mannino, M. (2012, April 13). Columbine vs. VA Tech shooting: The media frenzy [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://blogs.longwood.edu/michellemannino/?p=198>
- Mazer, J.P., Thompson, B., Cherry, J., Russell, M., Payne, H.J., Kirby, E.G., & Pfohl, W. (2015). Communication in the face of a school crisis: examining the volume and content of social media mentions during active shooter incidents. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 53, 238-248. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2015.06.040
- McGinty, E.E., Webster, D.W., & Barry, C.L. (2013). Effects of news media messages about mass shootings on attitudes toward persons with serious mental illness and public support for gun control policies. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 170, 494- 501. doi:10.1176/appi.ajp.2013.13010014
- Meindl, J.N., & Ivy, J.W. (2017). Mass shootings: the role of the media in promoting generalized imitation. *American Journal of Public Health*, 107, 368-370. Retrieved from http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303611?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori%3Arid%3Acrossref.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub%3Dpubmed
- Murray, J.L. (2017). Mass media reporting and enabling of mass shootings. *Cultural Studies – Critical Methodologies*, 17, 114-124. doi:10.1177/1532708616679144
- Pelofsky, J. (2007, April 18). *Facebook becomes bulletin board for Virginia Tech*. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-crime-shootings-facebook/facebook-becomes-bulletin-board-for-virginia-tech-idUSN1742895920070418>
- Schildkraut, J., & Elsass, H.J. (2016). *Mass shootings: Media, myths, and realities*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.
- Schildkraut, J., & Muschert, G.W. (2013). Media salience and the framing of mass murder in schools: A comparison of the Columbine and Sandy Hook massacres. *Homicide Studies*, 18(1), 23-43. doi:10.1177/1088767913511458
-

- Shayanian, S. (2018, February 15). *Mass shooting in social media age: A lifeline – and live view to horror*. Retrieved from <https://www.upi.com/Mass-shooting-in-social-media-age-A-lifeline-and-live-view-to-horror/1741518703301/>
- Shepard, A.C. (n.d.). *The Columbine shooting: Live television coverage*. Retrieved from <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/journalism/j6075/edit/readings/columbine.html>
- Towers, S., Gomez-Lievano, A., Khan, M., Mubayi, A., & Castillo-Chavez, C. (2015). Contagion in mass killings and school shootings. *PLOS One*, 10, 1-12. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0117259
- Wagner, K. (2018, February 21). *Twitter is going out of its way to verify the accounts of some of the most prominent students who survived the Parkland shooting*. Retrieved from <https://www.recode.net/2018/2/21/17038038/twitter-verifying-accounts-student-survivors-parkland-mass-shooting-guns-marjory-stoneman>
- Wallenfeldt, J. (2017). *Texas tower shooting of 1966*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/event/Texas-Tower-shooting-of-1966>
-

Jews on TV: A Snapshot of Modern Television's Representation of Jewish Characters

Samantha Maoz

*Strategic Communications
Elon University*

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

Abstract

While Jews represent only two percent of Americans, they are widely shown in modern television. These Jewish characters often represent outdated stereotypes that affect public perception. Cultivation theory and social identity theory suggest that audiences tend to believe characters on television to be accurate representations of real life. This paper researched common stereotypes and investigated to what extent these stereotypes were present in modern television. Based on a qualitative content analysis of three different shows, results indicated that stereotypes were present and not questioned. Representations of Jews were largely similar across the three series; characters were open about their Jewish identity and were naturally integrated into American culture, though frequently subject to negative assumptions because of their religious cultures.

I. Introduction

Most people can easily think of a show that features a Jewish character. While this seems positive, many Jewish characters are inaccurately represented, using outdated and unrealistic stereotypes. Throughout history, Jews have been portrayed in different ways on the screen. The most famous characters have filled the roles of three main stereotypes: the Jewish American Princess, the overbearing Jewish mother, and the cheap Jew.

Television has represented Jewish characters in varying degrees; in programs such as *Seinfeld*, the Jewish characters display their religion rather obviously. In the sitcom *Friends*, however, three of the six main characters are Jewish, but Judaism is rarely introduced as a topic throughout the course of the ten seasons. This paper analyzed current seasons of television to discover the ways in which Jewish characters are portrayed.

II. Literature Review

This literature review focuses on two main theories, cultivation theory and social identity theory. It also identifies two pressing issues relevant to the topic: Jewish stereotypes in television and the idea of “otherness” in religion and culture.

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory is frequently cited in mass communications. It proposes that the more people who view television, the more they are affected by and truly believe the images and stereotypes portrayed on television; and with increased viewership comes increased belief that events on the screen accurately portray reality (Gerbner, 1998). This means that, even if actors on the screen do not represent realistic issues or attributes, viewers may still take their actions on screen to be the truth. This is especially important when considering religious and cultural groups. “For some people with limited direct contact with other ethnic groups in social settings, television becomes a tool with which to observe minority groups and form subsequent opinions” (Lee et al., 2009, p. 98). This is problematic because if these groups are absent from the screen, it suggests they are unimportant, yet a narrow view may interpret characters as representatives of a large group of people. (Graves, 1999; Lee et al., 2009). For example, Fujioka (1999) found that when viewers see groups on TV they do not regularly see in their own lives, they are more likely to believe the stereotypes on the shows.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory suggests that a key factor in individual identity and self-concept is group membership (Lee et al., 2009). According to social identity theory, “Individuals strive for positive self-regard; when group membership is internalized as an aspect of their self-concept, individuals may favor their ingroup over outgroups to produce positive self-regard” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1987).

Based on this theory, the sheer number of media representations is important, as the rate of minority occurrences represents the “group’s strength in the intergroup context and reflects the social value and status of the group” (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005, p. 112). Like other groups without these representations, Jewish people could believe their group is not significant because of its lack of appearances on television. Tajfel (1978) explains that people try to compare the most favorable characteristics of their own people (in group) with the least favorable characteristics of the outgroup (Lee et al., 2009). This means that, if programs only represent the least favorable characteristics of Jewish people, then outgroup members will automatically latch onto these stereotypes, without even being given the opportunity to see the positive characteristics of those different from themselves.

Jewish Stereotypes in Television

Researchers of popular television have identified three dominant stereotypes of Jews in television: the overbearing Jewish mother, the cheap Jew, and the Jewish-American Princess. Dozens of examples in television history have portrayed characters with these characteristics.

The idea of the overbearing Jewish mother has been analyzed in numerous texts, including Antler (2007). Even the title of the book, *You Never Call! You Never Write! A History of the Jewish Mother*, demonstrates the idea of a mother who is so concerned about her children’s lives that she constantly nags them about anything from their dating lives to their diet. According to Gasztold (2013), the qualities of the Jewish mother can be boiled down to “unrelenting emphasis on food and a fear of ever feeling hungry, a myriad of ‘be carefuls,’ which are to protect a child from the dangers of everyday life, and the insistence on constant contact with grown-up children.”

A second stereotype is that of the cheap Jew. One of the most popular Jewish characters on the sitcom *Friends* is Ross Geller, a Jew from Long Island. While Ross makes a good wage as a paleontologist at a museum, he still displays moments of the stereotypical cheap Jew. While on a vacation at a nice hotel, Ross proceeds to steal anything that he can get away with. He fills his suitcases with dozens of shampoos, conditioners, and even toilet paper and tissues. Ross is also known to get his hair cut at the most inexpensive locations and refuses to leave a tip. While Jews have a stereotype for being in the business of making money, they are also subject to the assumption that they are stingy with their money. Topic (2014) analyzed *Friends*

use of stereotypes and argued that in modern day television shows, “Jewish representation still remains based on questioning [the Jewish characters’] distinctive identities and showing them as assimilated into Christian culture, or showing how a minority complain to the majority that accepts Christian tradition” (p. 4).

Topic’s research also explored the idea of the Jewish American Princess. After examining the show *The Princesses of Long Island* as background research, Topic found that “Jewish tradition and culture are largely presented through hedonism, and as if Jewish girls are only interested in fashion and luxury goods” (2014, p. 8). This show, which aired in 2013, reflects “the historical stereotyping of the American Jews, and girls who cast in the show resemble all stereotypes of typical Jewish women” (2014, p. 8). Female characters in both *Friends* and *The Princesses of Long Island* represent characteristics associated with the Jewish American Princess. These three main stereotypes are present in varying degrees in television programs and are important to understand when analyzing Jewish television characters.

The Idea of Otherness in Religion

The identity of Jewish characters on TV often comes to light as a contrast to other religious faiths. Instead of saying “I’m Jewish,” the characters seem to be saying “I’m not Christian.” This small detail can make a big difference and can be captured in the term “otherness.” In many television shows, “Jewishness is only expressible as the opposite of Christianity; that it is only ever in a negative relation to the dominant culture” (Pateman, 2007, p. 66). In most shows, if religion isn’t introduced as a topic, the viewer assumes that the characters are Christian. With Jewish characters, religion needs to be worked into the plot. This is not necessarily surprising, since Jews only represent 2.2 percent of the American population (“Jews in America: By The Numbers,” 2017), but the ways they are introduced is crucial to the successful portrayal of the Jewish religion. Baskind (2007) argued that otherness is portrayed in three ways: “by the discrimination [that the character] experienced, through flagrant stereotypes, or by concealing or merely implying their Jewishness” (p. 2). In Topic’s study of *Friends*, she found the characters “are largely presented in a stereotyped way and as embracing Christianity not only as a part of their Jewish identity but also as a prevailing religious identity in some aspects” (2014, p. 6). The idea of “otherness,” as well as its risks and benefits to the Jewish people, is further examined in this paper.

III. Methods

A content analysis was used in order to gain information from the selected television programs. A content analysis is an “objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2017).

The research analyzed the shows *New Girl* (2011- present), *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (2000-present), and *Transparent* (2014-present.) These programs were chosen because each of them features at least one Jewish character, all in varying roles, and each of them is currently on air.

Curb Your Enthusiasm is a comedy that focuses on Larry David, a wealthy, semi-retired television writer and producer, who plays himself. David plays his role alongside his ex-wife, Cheryl; his partner-in-crime, Leon; his best friend, Jeff and Jeff’s wife, Susie, who David constantly fights with. David is known for pushing boundaries, refusing to be politically correct, and getting himself into trouble because of his tendency to obsess over nothing. David is often disliked because he doesn’t know how to keep his mouth shut and always tells it like it is. He is open about being Jewish and has mostly Jewish friends. The show went on a hiatus for seven years, from 2011 until 2018, when it returned for its ninth season.

New Girl is a comedy that portrays the life of Jess, a quirky, upbeat schoolteacher who lives in a Los Angeles loft with her three male roommates: Schmidt, Nick, and Winston. Schmidt is a self-made Jewish man in marketing who loves to dress well and show off his style. He has a slight obsession with his body because he grew up obese, but recently lost all the weight, so he has sculpted muscles that he enjoys showing off. Nick is a law-school dropout who works at a bar and barely makes enough money to pay his rent. Nick often gets into situations where he needs Schmidt to take care of him, both physically and financially. Nick and Schmidt have been best friends since they became college roommates, and have lived together ever since. Winston is a police officer who often plays along with the shenanigans of his roommates.

Transparent is a comedy-drama that focuses on the Pfeffermans, a Jewish family with three children. The main character of the show is Maura Pfefferman (born Mort,) a transgender woman who revealed her gender identity to her family after living her life as a man. Maura was previously married to Shelly Pfefferman, who is accepting of her ex's identity. Maura and Shelly have three Jewish children, Sarah, Josh and Ali, one of which has children of her own. The show contains themes about transgender individuals and the struggles they endure. It also highlights the family's experience with Judaism.

The analysis aimed to qualitatively examine the current state of Jews on television. The content analysis focused on three main themes. The first theme was what type of role the characters played, whether that be a main role, supporting role, villain, or hero. The second theme was the ways in which the characters portray their Judaism, in regards to their vocalization and pride in their religion. The third and most important theme was how the characters played into traditional stereotypes of Jewish people. To do this, the author selected one of the most recent seasons from each of the shows, in which the character was well established in the role (meaning it wasn't their first or last episode.) By selecting one season from each, the author was able to thoroughly examine the content in each of the shows, and compare and contrast the various characters.

The characters were initially coded for three main stereotypes – the overbearing Jewish mother, the Jewish American Princess, and the cheap Jew – although additional stereotypes emerged through the coding process. The author chose three stereotypes because each has been established as a recognized stereotype of Jewish people in the United States. The author examined these television characters based on external descriptions of these specific stereotypes found in previous research. A coding sheet was used to categorize each of the actions portrayed by these characters into one of three main categories (role, expression of Judaism, and stereotypes), and then three sub-categories (the overbearing Jewish mother, the Jewish American Princess, and the cheap Jew.)

The first step of this process was to categorize the content. Clear and functional categories lead to manageable overall systems (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2017). For the first main category, the units of analysis were the number of episodes a character was featured in the season, and then how many scenes within an episode focused on that specific character. This was done to identify the importance of the role of the specific Jewish character. For the second main category, the unit of analysis were how many times a character discussed being Jewish within the season. For the third main category, the unit of analysis were how many times the character exhibited an action that related directly to one of the three sub-category stereotypes. Specific phrases from previous research that described these stereotypes were used to establish the scale.

RQ1: Do the characters in these shows represent traditional stereotypes of Jews?

RQ2: Do the characters in these shows openly discuss the fact that they are Jewish?

RQ3: Do the three shows represent Jews in a similar manner?

RQ4: What roles do these Jewish characters play in these shows?

IV. Findings

First, the Jewish characters in the show were categorized into main characters or supporting characters. Larry David (*Curb Your Enthusiasm*) and Schmidt (*New Girl*) are both main characters. In *Transparent*, Maura is a main character and the rest of the members of the Pfefferman family are supporting characters. None of these characters played roles such as the villain or hero. For the purpose of coding, three main themes were identified: the cheap Jew, the overbearing Jewish mother, and the Jewish American Princess. After coding three full seasons, two new themes emerged: the ideas of Jewish appearance and the casual use of Jewish expressions. The Jewish American Princess, however, was not represented in any of the shows. For this reason, the main Jewish themes coded were revised to: the cheap Jew, the overbearing Jewish mother, Jewish appearance, and the casual use of Jewish expressions. Important scenes and lines were quoted for their significance.

The Cheap Jew

These storylines revealed a generational difference in terms of willingness to spend. In *New Girl*, Schmidt makes his own money and enjoys spending it freely. He spends thousands of dollars on suits and even offers to pay for his roommates' expenses to alleviate their stress. When searching for a wedding venue, Schmidt is willing to spend his entire life savings on the one event.

However, in *Transparent*, 68-year-old Shelly Pfefferman is notoriously stingy with her money. She never wants to spend more money than she has to and even creates a chart to track her spending. When Shelly says that she doesn't want to waste money on a hotel, one of her children responds: "Mom, you don't have to be so stingy with yourself." This raises the possibility that there is a generational difference when it comes to Jews and spending.

But this observation is challenged in *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, where 70-year-old Larry David uses his money freely. After believing that he is under attack, David is willing to move to a fancy hotel indefinitely, and even considers buying another house where he can hide out. David is known for having extravagant things; he lives in a mansion and even has private security living in his house. Part of this willingness to spend could be related to the fact that Larry David is a television celebrity, not just a wealthy Jew out of the spotlight.

The Jewish Mother

In an unconventional way, Schmidt fills the role of the overbearing mother in the way he takes care of Nick, his best friend. Nick's life is in shambles, and he struggles to find his path. Schmidt plays perfectly into the stereotypical behaviors associated with the overbearing Jewish mother, such as worrying about Nick's dating life, wanting to build up Nick's confidence by telling him he can go back to law school to have a career again, and making sure that he is eating well. The stereotypical mother even worries that the children aren't eating enough. In one scene, Schmidt says to Nick: "I'm happy you're eating breakfast, Nick, good to see you're taking care of yourself now."

In *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, Larry David is friends with the nasally Susie, who is annoying, overbearing, and always wants to know everyone's personal business. Susie is also fiercely protective of the people she loves, just like a Jewish mother. When David offends Susie's future son-in-law, Susie kicks him out of the house and demands an apology if David wishes to be friends with the family again. This extreme measure to protect her family demonstrates how Susie falls into the stereotype of the overprotective mother.

In *Transparent*, Shelly Pfefferman is so concerned about her son's poor diet that she constantly tries to make him a meal, get him to go to the Kosher deli, or pour his refreshments to make sure he's feeling satisfied and healthy. Shelly often goes too far, overstepping her boundaries because she is so obsessed with taking care of her children.

Jewish Appearance

In the show *New Girl*, Schmidt receives an overwhelming number of comments about his Jewish appearance, including:

"Has anyone ever told you that you look like a Jewish Kennedy?"

"You're really sexy for a Jew."

"How do I look? How Jewish? I mean like good Jewish or bad Jewish?"

"I'm having my teeth shaved by a 25th of an inch. Fawn thinks that I have the teeth of an immigrant. She says every time she looks at me, all she can see is Fievel Mousekevitze singing 'There Are No Cats in America.' Those little mice Jews."

All of these statements give Schmidt's appearance a negative connotation.

In *Transparent*, it is difficult to identify Jewish themes in regards to appearance because looks are a central element of the show itself. Since so many of the characters are either transgender or gender non-conforming, their appearance isn't related to their faith nearly as much as it is related to the gender they identify with.

In *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, the characters make many jabs at Larry David's appearance. At one point, David wears a wig and mustache as a disguise in order to hide. When he bumps into a very attractive female

friend, she says: "I like the wig. It hides the Jew." When Larry rides in an Uber and discusses his heritage, his driver tells him: "On a scale of one to five, looks-wise, you're a two."

In all of these examples, the subject of the Jewish comment does not outwardly express any anger towards the derogatory comments. Instead, the subject continues on with the conversation, acting as if the statement was never even said.

Casual Use of Jewish Expressions

In each of the shows, there were instances in which both Jewish and non-Jewish characters used traditional Jewish expressions in a very casual manner.

Larry David constantly uses Jewish expressions and casually indicates his Jewish heritage:

When David sets up a friend with a hooker, he says: "I did a hooker mitzvah."

When yelling at a friend, he screams, "You're just a Jew from the Bronx!"

When explaining a wedding, David talks about the "rabbi or minister or whoever."

When talking about mail carriers, he mentions women wearing "shmatas," which is Yiddish for an ugly housedress.

David also has a close friend, Leon, who is black and often talks about his skin color. When Leon discusses issues he encounters because of his race, David frequently makes comparisons to situations he encounters because he's Jewish. In one scene, David and Leon discuss when they're on the phone, they can identify the respective race or religion of the person on the other end of the line. David says: "Jews I can tell within a minute. Man or woman. Two minutes and I could tell you if they're reform or conservative." As David walks into his home one afternoon, he hears two people having sex, one of which has a thick New York accent. Within a split second, David says: "Do I hear a Jew?" David and his friends often throw dinner parties, which include both Jews and non-Jews. During one of those parties, Susie casually uses the Yiddish word "beshert" to describe David's destiny.

In *Transparent*, Shelly is constantly saying "oy" or "mazels" (which is short for mazel tov) and other characters say phrases such as "living like a Malibu Jew," indicating that the person lives a wealthy lifestyle. When one of the young children goes to a deli and asks for a potato pancake, his mother casually says, "No, I think those are only for Hanukah." These anecdotes are all small and seemingly insignificant. What's important about them is that they were seamlessly integrated into the dialogue of the show, without mentioning the actual Jewish religion or culture.

Throughout these shows, each of the characters is very open about the fact that they are Jewish. None of the episodes contain moments in which Jewish characters try to hide their faith and background. Instead, the Jewish characters remain open about their religion, despite the fact that it often results in receiving negative comments.

Of the three series coded, *Transparent* is the only one in which Judaism is a key element to the storyline. In the Pfefferman family, Judaism is an important yet sometimes frustrating part of the characters' lives. In some scenes, the characters take pride in their Jewish heritage, and openly discuss their experiences with their religion and cultures. In other scenes, the family members resent the way that Judaism has negatively affected their lives and made them different than the typical American. Judaism is likely an important element of the plot because each of the main characters is Jewish. In the other two shows, the main characters are a mix of Jews and non-Jews, and Judaism is mainly expressed in regards to expressions and appearances.

V. Conclusion

This paper sought to examine the current state of Judaism on television and the portrayal of Jewish characters. The characters in these shows represented traditional Jewish stereotypes, as opposed to questioning them. While the research sample is limited to three television shows, each of the shows represents a different type of Jew, ranging from characters who closely identify with their faith, to characters who do not believe it to be an important part of their identity. The roles of these characters ranged from leading actor to supporting-role. The three shows also represent a range in the number of Jewish characters

in a typical scene. *New Girl* has the fewest number of important Jewish characters, then *Curb Your Enthusiasm* with a few important ones, and finally *Transparent* with the greatest number of Jewish main characters.

The analysis found four dominant themes: The cheap Jew, the overbearing Jewish mother, Jewish appearance, and the casual use of Jewish expressions. Mentions of Judaism were often used as a way to perpetuate stereotypes. In terms of Jewish appearance, none of the comments were positive. Instead, all referred to undesirable Jewish features that made the character stick out from the norm. Each show featured moments in which the Jewish characters received these negative comments about their appearance. A clear pattern exists in these moments; the characters never respond to the comments, but instead act like they never even happened. This raises the question of why they don't respond to the comments, and what effect this may have on both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences of these shows. According to cultivation theory, audiences may believe that this type of behavior is both common and acceptable.

Many Americans hold a racial connection that is not affected by religion, but Jews differ in this way. This issue is unique to Jewish people, because of their strong geographic connection, which leads to the frequent use of "gene talk." In her work on Native Americans and DNA, Kim Tallbear uses the expression "gene talk" to refer to "the idea that essential truths about identity inhere in sequences of DNA," (Imhoff & Kaell, 2017, p. 96). This is one possible explanation for why the issue of appearance in religion is such a prominent theme throughout these three shows.

These findings come at a time when religious relations are a highly contested topic, according to the Pew Research Center. In the center's research entitled "Americans Express Increasingly Warm Feelings Toward Religious Groups," Jews were found to be among the groups that receive the warmest ratings (2017). This indicates that, while Jewish stereotypes are persistent, they do not result in overall negative attitudes toward Jewish people. Another interesting finding is that, in all of the negative comments made about appearance, none of them were made from Jew to Jew. This may be because "religious groups tend to rate their own group most positively" ("Americans Express," 2017). While the use of these stereotypes might not be negatively affecting the perception of Jewish people, it still means that these Jewish characters are defined by these stereotypes.

This research is interesting in contrast to Grell's (2017) "The Fight for Equality: The Role of Latino Stereotypes in *Jane the Virgin*," who found that *Jane the Virgin* contained many stereotypes, but these stereotypes were "presented to be questioned and challenged" (p. 42). The television shows in this paper found quite the opposite, with stereotypes being reinforced rather than questioned. While *Jane the Virgin* was able to benefit from the positive impacts of cultivation theory, these three shows were not. This research adds to previous knowledge by demonstrating that, while some progressive shows shape the plot of the series to challenge stereotypes, many others still give in to these negative beliefs.

Research regarding Jews on television is meaningful for a wide range of audiences, even for television producers. In general, the most accurate and meaningful representations of Jews were found when multiple Jewish characters appeared in a scene. On the flip side, the most negative comments about Judaism were made when a character was the only Jew in the scene. In future series, producers may keep this in mind, and consider including multiple Jewish characters. Doing this may result in more accurate representations of Jewish life and will demonstrate how the everyday lives of Jews are quite similar to other American people. As discussed in the literature review, Judaism was often portrayed in regards to "otherness," meaning that Judaism was only brought up for its differences from other religious groups. When multiple Jewish characters are seen on the screen, the idea of "otherness" isn't relevant because the characters aren't being compared to non-Jews. This results in more positive representations of Jewish characters. Cultivation theory forged many of the paths for this research paper, and should also affect the decisions of television producers, who have the ability to shape public perception. Research like this is important because it affects not only the people playing these roles, but also the audiences who view these shows.

Based on the analysis of these shows, the representation of Jews was rather similar across the board. No single show represented Jews in a markedly different manner, nor were any Jews depicted as heroes, outcasts, or villains. Instead, the Jewish characters blended in naturally with the other characters. Additionally, each of these people maintained relationships (both friendly and romantic) with non-Jews. These characters did not hide the fact that they were Jewish, but instead were vocal about their religion, even if that meant receiving criticism. Overall, the Jewish characters in these three series all appeared proud to represent

their religious cultures but nonetheless reinforced traditional stereotypes.

The research contains limitations because of its narrow scope. To delve deeper into the findings, further research could include coding more seasons per shows, as well as coding other shows that include a wide range of Jewish characters. Based on the comedic nature of two out of the three shows, coding more sitcoms would provide a more thorough view of Jews in comedy.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Glenn Scott, associate professor at Elon University, for his support, encouragement, advice, and inspiration throughout the process of writing this piece.

References

- Baskind, S. (2007). The Fockerized Jew?: Questioning Jewishness as cool in American popular entertainment. *Shofar*, 25(4), 3-17.
- Gasztold, B. (2013). Self-sacrificing and/or overbearing: The Jewish mother in the cultural imagination. *Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia*, 11, 161-173.
- Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. (1976). Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of Communication*, 26, 173-199.
- Grell, C. (2017). The fight for equality: The role of Latino stereotypes in "Jane the Virgin." *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, 8, 35-43.
- Imhoff, S., & Kaell, H. (2017). Lineage matters: DNA, race, and gene talk in Judaism and Messianic Judaism. *Religion & American Culture*, 27(1), 95-127.
- Jews in America: By the numbers. (2017, February 21). Retrieved February 26, 2018, from <http://www.pbs.org/weta/washingtonweek/blog-post/jews-america-numbers>
- Lee, M. J., Bichard, S. L., Irely, M. S., Walt, H. M., & Carlson, A. J. (2009). Television viewing and ethnic stereotypes: Do college students form stereotypical perceptions of ethnic groups as a result of heavy television consumption? *Howard Journal Of Communications*, 20(1), 95-110.
- Mastro, D. & Behm-Morawitz, E. (2005). Latino representation on primetime television. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82, 110-130.
- Pateman, M. (2007). "That was nifty": Willow Rosenberg saves the world in "Buffy the Vampire Slayer." *Shofar*, 25(4), 64-77. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42944415>
- Pew Research Center (2017). Americans express increasingly warm feelings toward religious groups. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/02/15/americans-express-increasingly-warm-feelings-toward-religious-groups/>
- Tajfel, H. (1978). *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. London: Academic Press.
- Topic, M. (2014). "Do you even understand what off the rack means?" Americanization and Jewish identities in the television series Friends. *International Journal of Religion and Society*, 5(2), 119-140.
-

An Analysis of Design Components of Award-winning Newspaper Pages

Stephanie Hays

*Communication Design
Elon University*

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

Abstract

The design of newspapers has evolved significantly since their inception, lately focusing on using photography, infographics and modular design to capture the audience's attention. This study examines the design components that award-winning newspaper pages from the Society for News Design's Best of News Design awards and what the pages have in common and the kinds of dominant imagery they use. The research discovered that the dominant media takes up the vast majority of the page, headlines run small, pages contain large amounts of white space and there are several images per page. The most common dominant media across all sections was photography.

I. Introduction

Newspaper design has had many changes over the years, and has focused on the different dynamics between a variety of components, including image size, headline size, white space, and the number of photos. As designers try to find the best way to present stories, methods for laying out pages in newspapers have evolved.

In the 1960s, newspaper design was characterized by tight pages that were packed with content on the front page. Newspapers began to shift toward larger gutter sizes, more hierarchy, and standard typefaces. By the 1970s, modular design became more popular, creating focal points that increased readers' ability to easily scan the text for information. Photographs also became the dominant graphic element on the front page.

The 1980s saw the launch of *USA Today*, which had many different points of entry on its front page. These entries allowed readers to easily locate articles or stories that interested them within the newspaper, which increased how scannable the design was. During this time, most newspapers (66.7 percent) featured two photographs on the front page, with 96.2 percent using a dominant photograph (Utt & Pasternack, 1984).

Graphics and thumbnail images became more popular in the 1990s, as they were paired with points of entry to help cater to visual readers. By then, nearly all newspapers were using color, color photography, color graphics, and modular layout (Utt & Pasternack, 1995). The early 2000s saw an increase in the use of color, information graphics, and stories packaged together. Modular design became the typical layout

Keywords: Newspapers, Design, Photography, Infographics, Modular Design
Email: shays2@elon.edu

option for newspapers (Harrower, 2002). This research looks at news design over the past year (2017), and the qualities that characterize award-winning newspaper pages. This study will give an overview of what is common between different newspaper sections and how it varies geographically.

II. Literature Review

The Audience

When understanding why particular designs are considered better than others, it is important to consider what attracts a reader's attention and what keeps it. While initial interest in a page doesn't necessarily mean the design is good, it does provide insight into what designers need to consider when creating a page that effectively displays the article in a way that captures the audiences' attention.

Readers are immediately drawn to particular design elements. A study of Nordic newspapers found that the most important factor is large size, then the position of the article (the upper left draws attention in western cultures because people read from left to right and top to bottom), then drop quotes or fact boxes, then a large photo, and finally clear axial symmetry (Homqvist, 2005). Leckner (2012) concluded that the main cues that draw readers in are the main images and headlines. Readers typically enter a page through the main photo or image, then move on to a large headline or photo, and then finally to text.

According to Bergstrom's (2008) book, *The Essentials of Visual Communication*, one element in a design should draw the reader's attention, such as a large image or heading. Thus, the size of the dominant image is an important factor to consider because it helps establish a clear hierarchy and point of entry for the audience.

Different aspects of design

The main variables explored in this research fall under five main categories, white space, headline, dominant media, color, and number of images.

White space

Tsai, Wang, Liu, & Hong (2014) define white space as the empty space that exists around different elements of a page layout, which includes columns, lines of type, photos, graphics, and more. White space is also sometimes referred to as negative space when the actual color of the space isn't white, but has no text or subject matter within it. The authors also state that white space helps to separate elements, which gives them greater prominence from the background.

According to Bergstrom, images and headlines will also garner greater attention if there is ample white space surrounding them. Therefore, it follows that white space would be a common tool on award-winning pages because a designer will want to bring attention to an article or imagery that goes with it.

Headlines

Headlines today are typically aligned left, are wider rather than narrower and sometimes include decks (Harrower, 2002). In order to make the hierarchy of a page clear, it is also important to make sure that the size of the headline is sufficient to make it stand out from the rest of the page. According to Bergstrom (2008), the size of the headline also doesn't need to be excessively large if it is surrounded by white space because additional space gives it a greater impact.

Dominant Media

Using photography is common in newspapers, and as mentioned earlier, is often a way for readers to enter the page. But the kind of photo or dominant imagery also affects how quickly the audience looks at a page. According to Leckner (2012), pictures may be divided into four different types: information graphics, maps, drawings, and photos. Photos attract readers regardless of the subject of the article it is associated with, and if the photo is natural, it will be looked at longer than a staged photo. Photos with faces in them are also looked at earlier than photos with objects (Leckner).

Staged photos and photo illustrations are defined as, "Photos that have been altered with gradients and blurs, images that have been created by compositing two or more images and images of people who

have been removed from their backgrounds.” These have also become much more common in newspaper front pages, and photos are used in 86.3 percent of newspapers (Leckner, 2012).

As a pictorial element, infographics require more effort from readers, but they also make content more easily accessible and looked at sooner (Holmberg, 2004). Illustrations are often used for abstract concepts. Drawings that are based on the tone of a story, instead of a direct representation of the people, are also often common in features pages (Harrower, 2002). Overall, dominant art is typical used on newspaper front pages. In 76.2 percent of newspapers, a single photo is used as the main art, while 10.2 percent used an illustration or photo illustration. 4.9 percent of newspapers used illustrations; 4.6 percent used a photo package, and 0.8 percent used headline art and infographics (Morris II & Haight, 2018).

Color

According to Bergstrom (2008), color in newspaper design is often seen as a way to grab the attention of readers through contrast with the black and white background of a paper. Now that most newspapers print certain pages in color, color often is used functionally, to attract, inform, structure, teach, and create the correct atmosphere that fits with the content. However, studies have found that color doesn't necessarily grab a reader's attention first, but does help increase reading time for an accompanying article (Leckner, 2012).

Currently, 98.7 percent of newspapers use both colored text and color photographs on their front page, making color a popular design choice (Morris II & Haight, 2018). Research has also found that 46.2 percent of newspapers use two or three main photographs on their front page and 12.1 percent of newspapers only use one photo (Morris II & Haight, 2018).

How visuals interact with words

Of course, there is more to excellent news design than just the individual components of each page. In de Vries' (2008) “Newspaper design as cultural change,” he explains that there are three main areas of newspaper design projects: a technical and typographic side, editorial and component ideas, and systems thinking to adjust processes for clients (2008).

de Vries also discussed how designers need to focus not just on the aesthetics of pages, but how they relate to their audience and reflect their culture. Visuals should be seen as a necessary part of a newspaper and thought about at the conception of stories instead of at the end to give the design team time to best reflect the content of an article.

Media logic framework

While page designs vary significantly for different articles, topics, newspapers, and sections, there are still commonalities that can be found among top-tier designs. By expanding the current research about the common characteristics of newspaper designs and focusing instead on what makes a page an award-winning design, this research will provide insight about the proportions and statistics of particular page elements and the similarities and differences between newspaper sections.

This research is similar to other studies of award-winning design, such as by Beyers (2006), which focuses on the presence of four main components in websites of a variety of news organizations. The same framework used in Beyers' study, the media logic of new media, is applied in this study. Media logic is defined as, “The particular institutionally structured features of a medium, the ensemble of technical and organisational attributes which impact on what gets represented in the medium and how it gets done” (Beyers, 2006). Therefore, the focus of this research is also on the technical attributes of design, and not on how they relate to the actual content of the articles.

While award-winning design is based on the relationship of visuals to the article and the best way to explain a story to readers, this research will focus on the individual components that make up each page. But it is important to realize that following the exact proportions and numbers detailed in this paper won't guarantee an award-winning design.

III. Method

For this research, the award winners were used from the Society for News Design's "The Best of News Design 38." This competition is an annual event where newspapers around the world submit their best designs in a variety of categories. Winners, ranging from "World's Best Designed," to Best in Show, Judges Special Recognition, Gold, Silver, and Awards of Excellence, are determined by a variety of judging panels. There were separate teams consisting of five people on each panel, including news, features, long form, visuals, and world's best. Two conflict judges would step in in case a judge was asked to examine a page from his or her own paper.

"The Best of News Design 38" contained the winners from the 2016 calendar year. Only winners from certain categories were used. Pages that won for single-day photography, multi-day photography, infographics, redesigns, combination print and digital, portfolio (individual and staff), illustrations, and magazines were not counted.

Coding scheme

Pages were coded for a variety of topics, including:

Page details

- The name of the paper
- The newspaper's location
- The section a page was published

While the other two categories were easily taken directly from the page details in "The Best of News Design 38" book, pages were attributed to four different sections: news, opinions, features, and sports. Pages that were in the news section counted as news, pages in the sports section counted as sports, pages in the opinions section counted as opinions and all other pages counted as features, including business, arts, travel, and lifestyle. Obituaries were always counted as news.

Pixel-based

- Total pixels on the page
- Size of the dominant image
- Size of the dominant headline
- Amount of white space

Pages were coded by opening jpeg images in Photoshop and measuring the number of pixels on the page. Boxes were drawn around the largest image on a page and the largest headline, and the number of pixels in the selected area was recorded.

For white space, the page was converted to grayscale and then bitmapped, so that all pixels below the 50 percent threshold became black, and anything above that threshold became white. In that way, all the white pixels could be counted as the white space on the page.

However, there were limitations to how white space was measured. Because bitmapping counted all pixels that were below 50 percent black as white, portions of photos that were lightly colored were also counted as white. Also, text that was lightly colored was counted as white space, despite not being white.



Figure 1.

As seen in *Figure 1*, the image on the left has a fair amount of lightly colored blue sky that houses the headline. In the bitmapped image on the right, it is counted as white space because of its light color. While not actually white, it contributes to the feeling of airiness which gives it an effect that is similar to white space on a page.

Additional details

- Number of images
- Color or black and white page
- Dominant imagery on a page

The number of images on a page was determined by counting separate photographs, illustrations and infographic sections.

When determining the type of dominant imagery was on a page, four different categories were used: photo, photo illustration, illustration, and infographic. The definitions of the different categories are as follows:

- *Photo*: Any snapshot of a real-life event with little to no editing
- *Photo illustration*: Heavily edited or staged photographs that have additional elements beyond just a picture
- *Illustration*: A hand-done or computer generated drawing
- *Infographic*: Graphic giving an in-depth explanation of a certain topic, often through numbers

After coding the data, the results were tallied in an Excel spreadsheet, and calculations were done to determine:

- Percent dominant image
 - Percent headline
 - Percent white space on each page
-

These percentages were then analyzed by country and by section to determine the geographic and sectional differences in each image.

IV. Findings

Overall results

Overall, 495 award-winning pages were coded. Of the 495 pages, there were 18 countries represented and four different sections.

On average, the dominant image was 49.20 percent of a page, the dominant headline was 3.96 percent of a page, 60.41 percent of the page was white space, and there was an average of 6.72 images per page (see Table 1). These percentages add to more than 100 percent because on some pages, the headline was on top of the photo, or the photo counted as some of the white space, which causes some pixels to be double or triple counted.

Table 1: Overall results

Dominant Media Image	49.20%
Dominant Headline	3.96%
White Space	60.41%
Average Number of Images	6.72

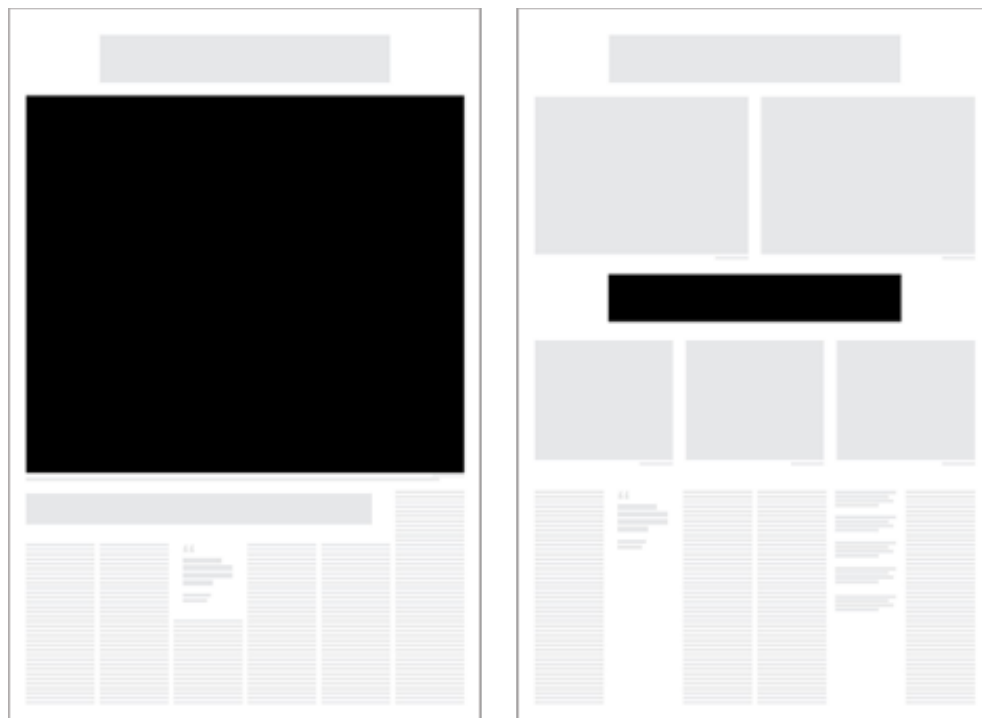


Figure 2. Left: A sample page shows the size of the average dominant image (49.20%).
Right: A sample page shows the size of an average headline (3.96%).



Figure 3. Left: A page that shows the average amount of white space on a page (60.41%).
Right: A sample page that shows the average number of photographs on a page (6.72).

Regarding the kind of dominant media images on the pages, 49.49 percent of the dominant media was photography, 29.9 percent was an illustration, 11.11 percent was a photo illustration, and 9.49 percent was an infographic (see Table 2).

Table: Overall dominant media results

Kind of dominant media image	Percentage
Photo	49.49%
Photo Illustration	11.11%
Illustration	29.9%
Infographic	9.49%

The vast majority of the pages were printed in color; 94.34 percent of all pages were in color and only 5.66 percent were in black and white.

Results by section

Results were also calculated based on what section of the newspaper pages were printed. As indicated in Table 3, the sports section had the largest dominant images (54.73%), opinions had the largest headlines (5.28%) and the most white space (66.51%), and sports had the most images per page (9.68).

On the other side, the news section had the smallest dominant images (44.53%), sports had the smallest headlines (3.17%) and the least white space (57.94%), and opinions had the fewest number of images per page (4.19).

Table 3: Section results

	Percent dominant image	Percent headline	Percent white space	Number of images per page News
News	44.53	4.84	60.1	6.35
Opinions	49.96	5.28	66.51	4.19
Features	52.04	3.41	61.74	5.82
Sports	54.73	3.17	57.94	9.68

For the news section, the dominant media was 44.53 percent of the page, the headline was 4.84 percent of the page, white space was 60.1 percent of the page, and there were 6.35 images per page.



Figure 4. Left: A sample news page with the average dominant image (44.53%).
Right: A sample news page with the average headline (4.84%).

For opinion pages, the dominant image was 49.96 percent of the page, the headline was 5.28 percent of the page, the white space was 66.52 percent of the page, and there were 4.19 images per page.



Figure 6. Left: A sample opinions page with the average dominant image size (49.96%).
Right: A sample opinions page with the average headline size (5.28%).



Figure 7. Left: A sample opinions page with the average number of photos (4.19%).
Right: A sample opinions page with the average amount of white space (66.51%).

The features section had an average dominant image that was 52.04 percent of the page, an average headline that was 3.41 percent of the page, the white space was 61.74 percent of the page, and an average of 5.82 images per page.

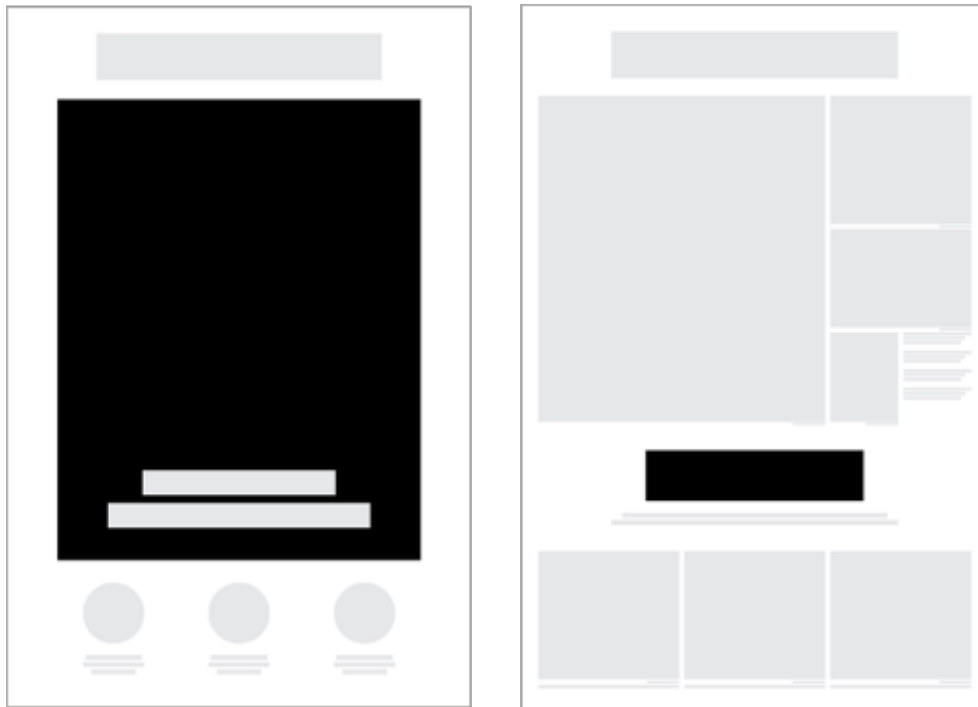


Figure 8. Left: A sample features page with the average dominant image (52.04%).
Right: A sample features page with the average dominant headline (3.41%).



Figure 9. Left: A sample features page with the average number of photos (5.82).
Right: A sample features page with the average amount of white space (61.74%).

Regarding sports, the dominant image was 54.73 percent of the page, the headline was 3.17 percent of the page, the white space was 57.94 percent of the page, and each page had an average of 9.68 images per page.



Figure 10. Left: A sample sports page with the average dominant image (54.73%).
Right: A sample sports page with the average dominant headline (3.17%).

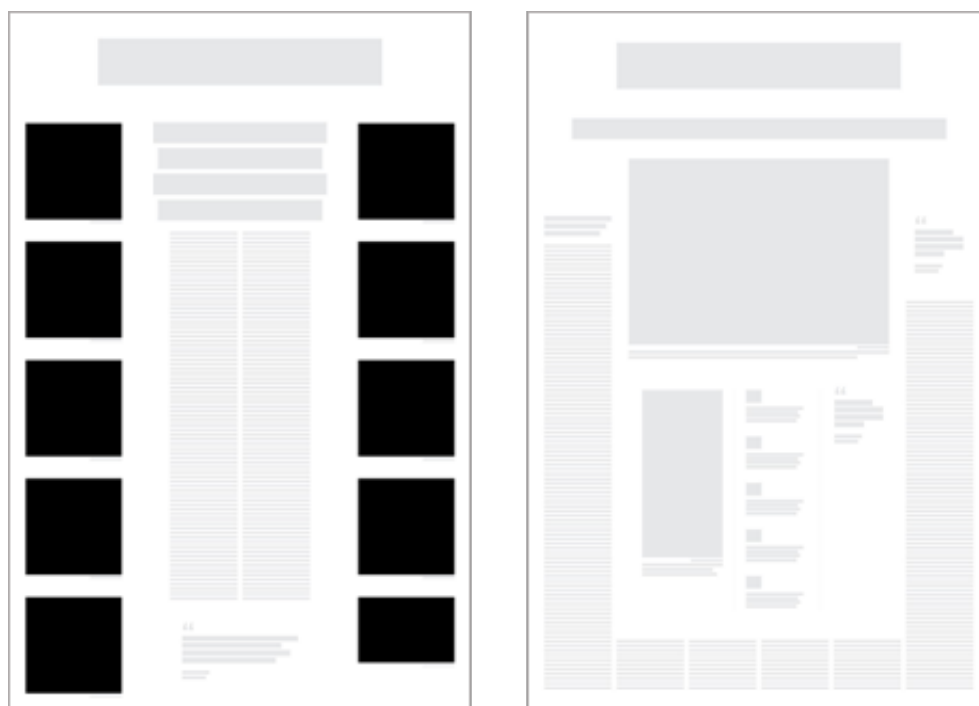


Figure 11. Left: A sample sports page with the average number of photos (9.68).
Right: A sample sports page with the average amount of white space (57.94%).

The dominant imagery of the sections also differed. News and sports used photography the most often (60.85% and 55.56% respectively) while opinions and features both used illustration the most (61.29% and 42.31% respectively). Features was also more likely to use a photo illustration than any other section (17.69%) while news was more likely to use infographics than any other section (11.91%).

Table 4: Section dominant image results

	Percent photo as dominant media	Percent photo illustration as dominant media	Percent illustration as dominant media	Percent infographic as dominant media
News	60.85	9.79	17.45	11.91
Opinions	22.58	9.68	61.29	6.45
Features	30.77	17.69	42.31	9.23
Sports	55.56	6.06	33.33	5.05

Results by country

Results were also analyzed based on the country newspapers were published. There were 18 different countries that were represented in the study. Some newspapers had a significantly larger number of data points due to them winning more awards. For example, the United States won 310 different awards, making the results for the U.S. much more of a comprehensive look at news design. The country that got the second-most awards, Canada, only received 45. And on the other end, Peru and El Salvador only won one award each. As a result all of the data for Peru and El Salvador comes from just a single page, which doesn't give a comprehensive look at that country's news design. Table 5 provides a list of the number of awards won by each country.

Country	Number of awards won
United States	310
Canada	45
Germany	24
Sweden	18
China	16
Oman	11
Ecuador	11
United Kingdom	10
Denmark	9
Mexico	8
Belgium	7
Brazil	7
United Arab Emirates	6
Argentina	5
Colombia	4
Portugal	2
El Salvador	1
Peru	1

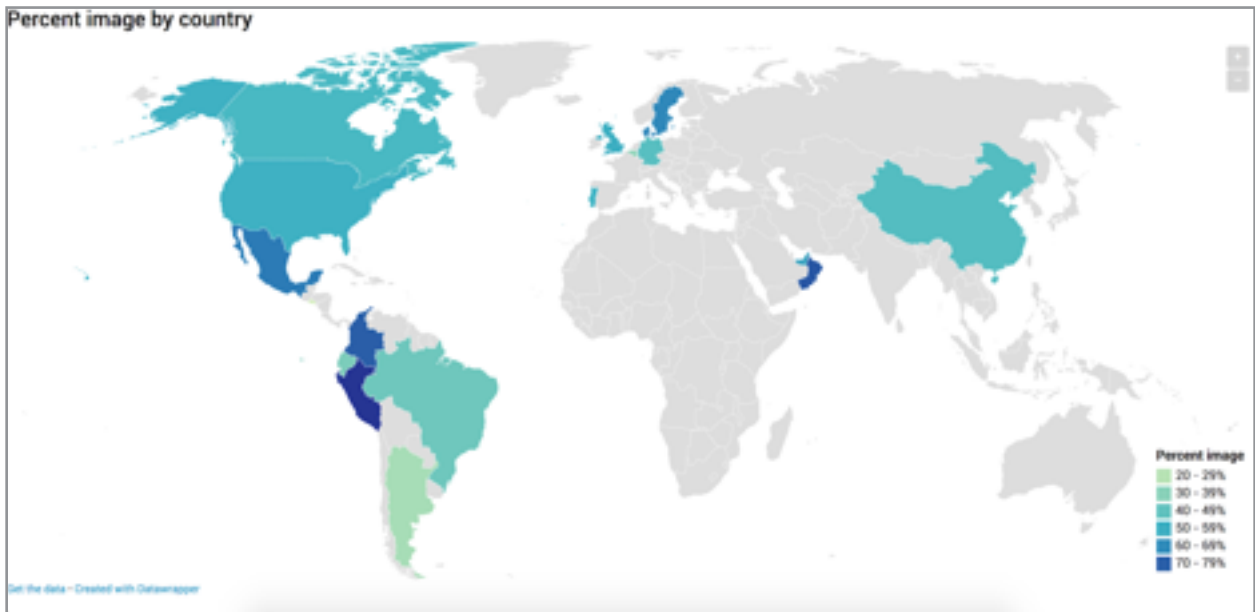
Below are the results by country from highest to lowest for four different categories:

Table 6

Country	Percent image	Country	Percent headline	Country	Percent white space	Country	Number of images
Peru	79.26	Peru	12.38	Ecuador	87.87	El Salvador	25
Oman	72.15	Germany	8.72	El Salvador	87.2	Mexico	17.25
Colombia	70.37	Mexico	7.43	Portugal	79.05	Ecuador	16.73
Mexico	64.46	Portugal	7.36	China	75.41	China	16.69
Denmark	61.64	Brazil	7.06	United Arab Emirates	74.51	Colombia	10
Sweden	61.03	El Salvador	6.81	Argentina	68.75	Brazil	9.14
United Arab Emirates	53.3	United Kingdom	6.24	Colombia	65.32	United States of America	6.9
United Kingdom	50.08	Argentina	5.82	Brazil	64.62	United Arab Emirates	6.33
United States of America	49.44	Belgium	5.69	Mexico	64.11	Oman	5.82
Portugal	48.44	Sweden	5.41	Germany	62.47	Argentina	4.6
Canada	45.72	Canada	4.29	Peru	60.81	Germany	4.29
China	43.02	Denmark	4	Oman	59.23	Portugal	3.5
Germany	41.88	United Arab Emirates	4	Canada	58.88	Belgium	3.43
Brazil	36.35	Ecuador	3.43	United States of America	58.45	UK	3.1
Ecuador	32.72	United States of America	3.28	Belgium	56.68	Sweden	2.67
Belgium	28.58	Oman	3.08	Denmark	56.01	Canada	2.44
Argentina	23.39	Colombia	2.27	United Kingdom	51.77	Denmark	2.33
El Salvador	13.98	China	1.67	Sweden	51.54	Peru	1

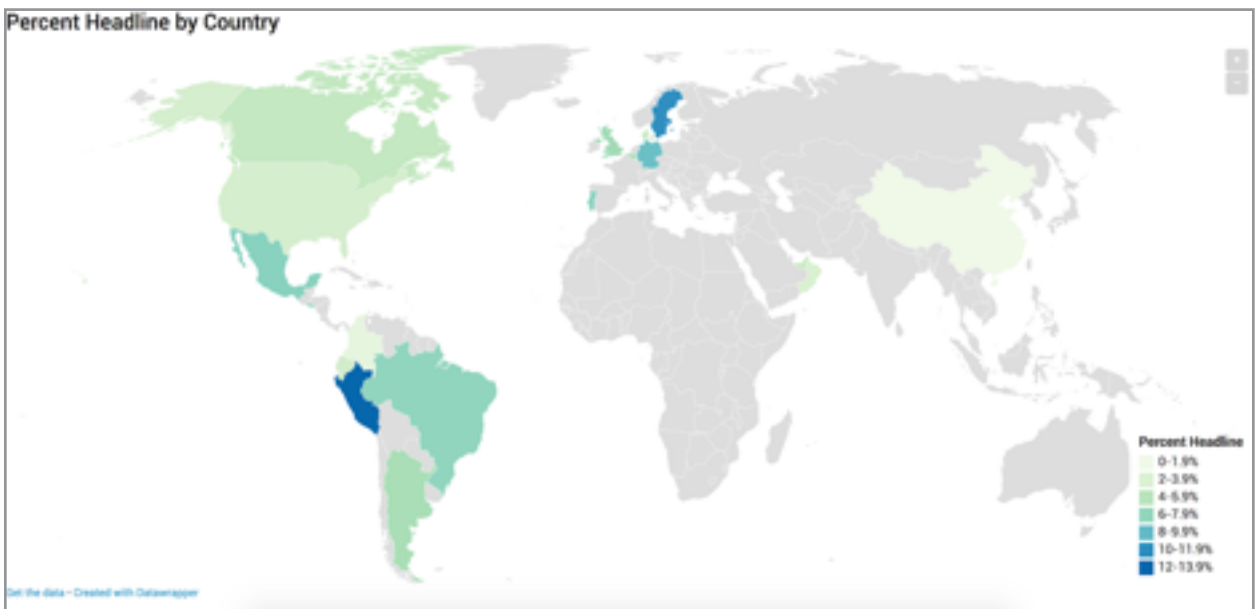
Percent image

Peru had the highest percent image (79.26%), while El Salvador had the lowest (13.98%). The United States of America had the ninth most percent image (49.44%).



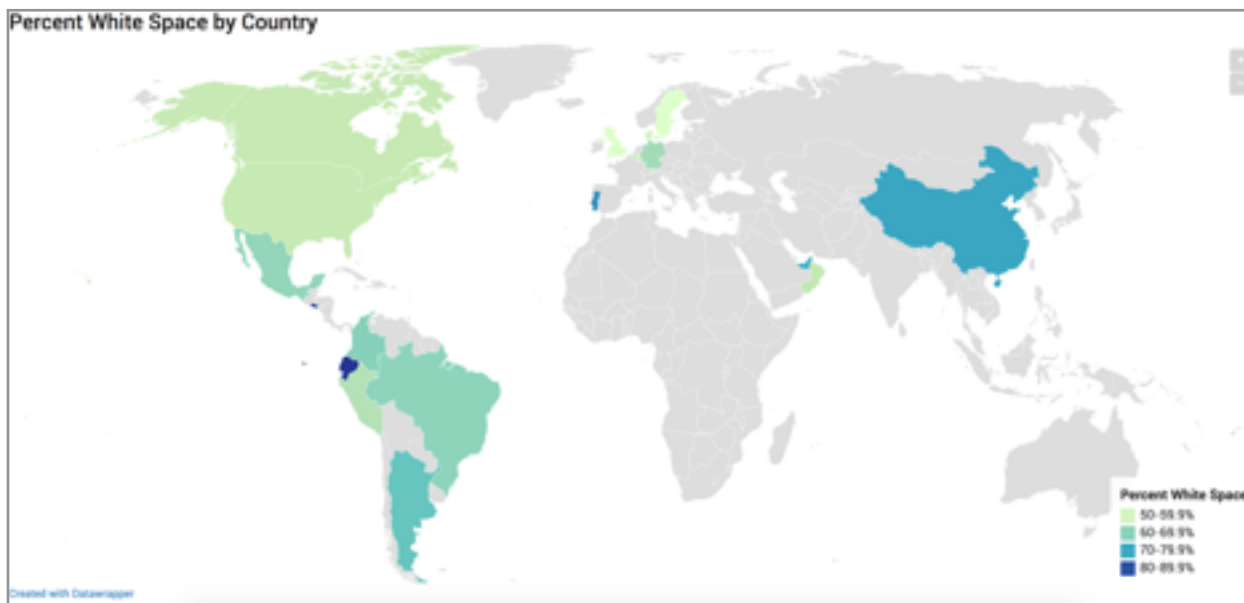
Percent headline

Peru had the highest percent headline (12.38%), while China had the lowest (1.67%). The United States of America had the 15th most percent headline (3.28%).



Percent white space

Ecuador had the highest percent white space (87.87%), while Sweden had the lowest (51.54%). The United States of America had the 14th most percent white space (58.45%).



Number of images

El Salvador had the highest number of images (25), while Peru had the least (1). The United States of America had the seventh most number of images (6.9).

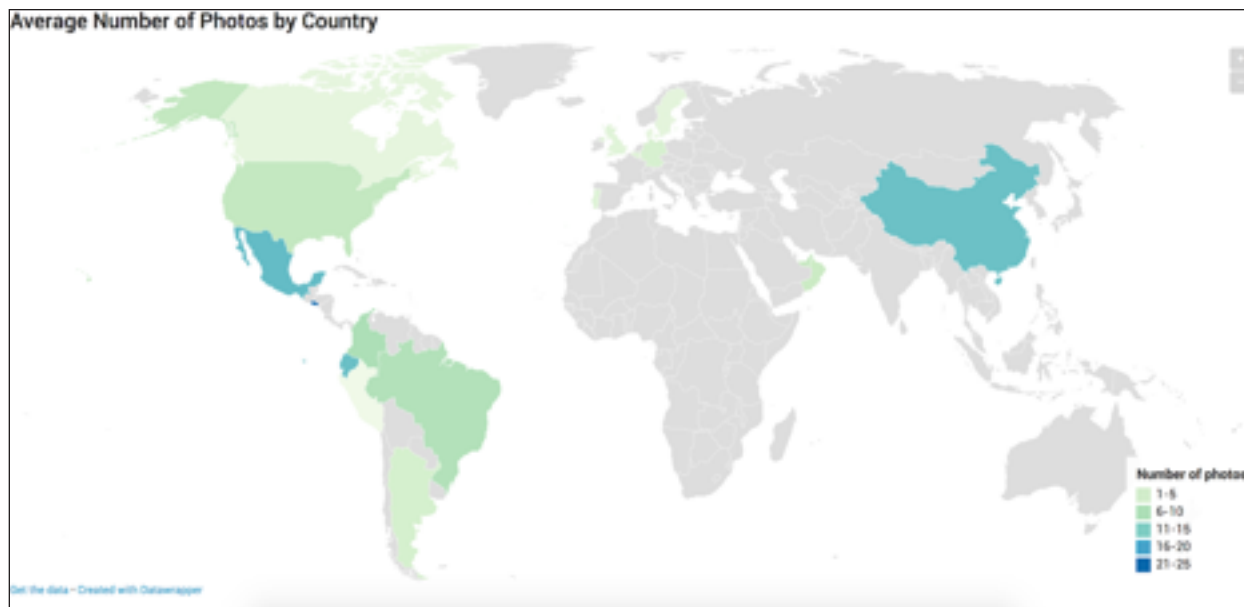


Table 7 provides the dominant image results by country from highest to lowest.

Table 7

Country	Percent photo as dom. media	Country	Percent photo ill. as dom. media	Country	Percent illustration as dom. media	Country	Percent infographic as dom. media
Sweden	72.22	Brazil	42.86	Portugal	100	El Salvador	100
Argentina	60	United Kingdom	30	Peru	100	Ecuador	90.91
United Kingdom	60	Germany	29.17	United Arab Emirates	66.67	China	43.75
Belgium	57.14	Oman	27.27	Denmark	55.56	Oman	27.27
United States	56.77	China	18.75	Canada	44.44	Colombia	25
Colombia	50	United Arab Emirates	16.67	Belgium	42.86	Mexico	25
Canada	42.22	Canada	13.33	Mexico	37.5	Argentina	20
Germany	41.67	Mexico	12.5	Oman	36.36	United Arab Emirates	16.67
Denmark	33.33	Sweden	11.11	Germany	29.17	Brazil	14.29
China	31.25	Denmark	11.11	United States	29.03	United States	6.45
Mexico	25	Ecuador	9.09	Brazil	28.57	Canada	0
Brazil	14.29	United States	7.74	Colombia	25	Germany	0
Oman	9.09	Argentina	0	Argentina	20	Sweden	0
Ecuador	0	Colombia	0	Sweden	16.67	Denmark	0
United Arab Emirates	0	Belgium	0	United Kingdom	10	United Kingdom	0
Portugal	0	Portugal	0	China	6.25	Belgium	0
El Salvador	0	El Salvador	0	Ecuador	0	Portugal	0
Peru	0	Peru	0	El Salvador	0	Peru	0

V. Discussion

Overall results

The findings of this research reveal qualities that make up award-winning news design. Overall, it is clear that large main images are quite common, with the average dominant image taking up nearly 50 percent of a page. Headlines are generally small, around 4 percent of a page. There also is a substantial amount of white space, with around 60 percent of each page being counted as white space. Despite the size of the dominant image, there is often more than one image, with an average of 6.72 images on each page.

The average page dominated by a large image is to be expected, as larger images catch the readers' eye first and draw them into a story (Homqvist, 2005). The standard deviation of the dominant image size is 27.09, meaning that 68 percent of the pages have a dominant image that falls between 21.93 percent and 76.11 percent of the page. This is a fairly large standard deviation considering that of the 495 pages that were coded; 158 (32 percent) had dominant images that fell outside of that range. And of those 158 pages, 46 had dominant images that were less than 10 percent of the page, while there were just 13 that had dominant images that were more than 90 percent of the page. Therefore, it is clear that the size of dominant images varies widely throughout different pages and there isn't necessarily a hard and fast rule.

Part of what could explain the large differences in image size could be the relationship between the number of images on the page and the size of the largest image. If there are many smaller illustrations combined to form one idea or concept, the main illustration would be fairly small, despite having an important impact on the page. Infographics too, generally were very small, but there were a lot of different ones. But on sports pages or feature pages, they were often dominated by a very large image and thus did not have much room for a bunch of smaller pictures.

Headlines were often fairly small at around 4 percent of a page, but as mentioned in the literature review, the size of a headline doesn't also need to be excessively large if it is surrounded by white space because the additional space gives it greater impact (Bergstrom, 2008). This tends to be common on a lot of pages, especially ones that have a greater amount of white space, because the text doesn't have to compete with many other components for readers' attention. The main outliers are the sports pages of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, which have very small headlines on a small black background, often splashed across very busy photos. These pages are meant to focus much more on the action in a photo, and words are simply a small supplement.

The standard deviation for headlines is 6.05, so 68 percent of headlines fall between being 0 percent of a page and 10.01 percent of a page. Since headlines are generally much smaller than other images on a page, this smaller range in size represents a significant array of headline sizes. An interesting thing to note is that there were 11 pages that didn't have a headline at all and there were 42 pages that had headlines that were greater than 10.01 percent of the page, with the largest headline being 57.33 percent of the page. These outliers show that variation in headline size is still apparent, but not as common as variation in dominant image size.

White space on pages is trickier. A term that is more accurate than white space may be "empty space," since many pages have lightly colored photos or illustrations that let the text and headline breathe and give a sense of emptiness on the page. This is why the percentages of the white space, headlines and images add up to more than 100. It is common to have a lightly colored sky background in images with use of empty space to place the headline or the start of the article. As explained earlier, while not explicitly white, it still adds an airy feel to the page.

The standard deviation for white space on a page is not as large as the one for dominant imagery, but is still substantial at 20.66. So, 68 percent of all pages have between 39.71 and 81.03 percent white space. There were 31 pages that had white space that took up more than 90 percent of the page, but just three pages that were less than 10 percent white space. It seems clear then, that while pages varied amounts of white space, having next to no white space is generally avoided, potentially due to readability concerns of dark pages and a lack of images that are almost entirely dark.

Regarding the number of images on a page, while it may seem as though it would be difficult to fit 6.72 images on a page when the largest one is nearly half the size of the page, it is typical for pages to have multiple very small images as little graphics, or to accompany teasers. Headshots are also common on news

pages, and photos of book covers or sports logos are often seen on features or sports pages. All these count as separate images, making it possible to tally up a large amount of very small images on a page.

Results by section

It is clear that pages of all sections are often dominated by large images that take up close to half of a page or more. There is not great variance by section, but news sections tended to have smallest images, because those pages tend to focus more on having multiple stories and plenty of text, with not as much focus on the images that accompany them. Sports has the largest dominant image at about 54 percent of the page. This is most likely explained by blowing up large reaction shots from exciting moments in sporting events. Because people often express a great deal of emotion, newspapers typically enlarge a photo so that people immediately see and connect with it.

Headlines though, are generally fairly small, taking up less than 5 percent of the page. It seems to be common (especially on sports pages) to let the dominant image do most of the talking and keep the headline smaller and more subtle to not distract. Headlines are generally largest in the opinions section, which could be the result of longer headlines needed to explain an opinion column. But it is also important to note that the opinions section also had the smallest sample size, with just 31 data points.

White space is also prominent in all sections, and only sports has white space below the average amount of 60.37 percent at just 57.94 percent. This is likely explained because sports pages tend to be dominated by large, busy photos with less empty space. This is partially because of the papers that most often won in sports design – the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* – often used black backgrounds, particularly for Rio Olympics coverage, which decreased the amount of white space.

The average number of photos (6.72) overall is a result of the combination of pages that often only had 2 or 3 images in features and opinions, with a very high number of images on sports pages (9.68). Sports may have a higher number of images because the pages often trying to captures multiple key moments in a game or event, instead of an overall feeling. Features and opinions usually had fewer images because they were dominated by one large photo with smaller images often reserved for tiny headshots or teasers. News was in the middle ground because there were both more stories on news pages that needed images and because news articles would often use more than one photo per article.

News and sports are the two sections that tend to lean heavily on photography for visuals. Both use photography significantly more than any other kind of image, because both sections focused on capturing specific moments, such as breaking news topics like car crashes, fires, attacks, or sporting events like a particular pitch or game-winning point. Features and opinions, which tended to use illustrations more often, generally try to convey emotions, feelings or in the case of opinions, complex topics that aren't necessarily conveyed by one photo.

Results by country

Geographically, it's difficult to make assumptions about any of the results because of the low sample size of so many of the countries. So it is important to understand that despite some papers that only use illustrations (such as Peru), that doesn't necessarily represent other newspapers from the same country.

What is interesting is that there were a fair number of countries that didn't win any awards for infographics, and some that predominantly won awards for infographics. For example, China won 16 awards and 43.75 percent of them were for infographics. Ecuador won 11 awards, and 90.91 percent of them were for infographics. Canada though, while winning the second-most awards with 45, didn't win any awards for infographics at all. It seems as though some newspapers have very skilled infographics staff who are able to compile well-designed pages and graphics, but may not necessarily for traditional news pages.

Regarding percent image, Peru had the largest image size, at 79.26 percent. Peru though, only had one award-winning page. Oman had the next largest, at 72.15 percent, and it had 11 award-winning pages. The awards that Oman tended to win for were feature pages, which generally have larger dominant images than news or opinions and larger imagery in general.

Peru also had the largest headline size (12.38%) and Germany had the second largest (8.72%) and they won 24 different awards, so it seems German papers tend to lean toward having larger headlines.

Ecuador had the most white space on pages, with 87.87 percent of pages consisting of white space. The country won 11 awards, and 10 of those awards were for infographics. Their infographics were often

illustrated, but because of the way images are spaced out in graphics, it makes sense that there was a large amount of white space on these pages.

And El Salvador had the most images per page with 25, but that was because it was the only winning page for El Salvador, and it was an infographic that contained a vast amount of small images. Mexico had the second most images per page with 17, which is interesting because the most common dominant imagery was illustration, which didn't generally lend itself to a large number of images.

Regarding the kind of dominant media used, Sweden used photos the most often, using them 77.22 percent of the time and never used infographics. Brazil used photo illustrations the most often, 42.86 percent of the time, Portugal and Peru both used illustrations 100 percent of the time, and El Salvador used infographics 100 percent of the time.

It is nearly impossible to make broader generalizations about the news designs of these countries newspapers because of the small sample size of all countries except the United States. The U.S. though, leans toward using photos most often (56.77 percent of the time) and then uses illustrations second most often (29.03 percent of the time). This could be explained because America's larger sample size includes a wider range of pages, especially news and sports, which are more photo heavy than features or opinions. Some countries tended to win for pages for specific sections, such as Oman, which predominantly won for features pages, and thus tended to skew results toward the typical design for that section of the paper.

VII. Conclusion

The findings from this study highlight what the main components of award-winning news design are and how they vary across section and country. Overall, dominant images on pages tend to take up around half of the page, while headlines are very small and only around 4 percent of each page. White space is approximately 60 percent of each page, and there's an average of 6.72 images per page.

The limitations of this study are that when charting the results geographically, it is almost impossible to make generalizations about results simply because there were not many data points for the majority of the countries. Another limitation is that white space was calculated by determining which pixels were below 50 percent black when converted to grayscale, which isn't necessarily the most effective way to measure purposeful white space on a page.

Additional studies could focus solely on white space with a more intricate methodology focused on breaking down purposefully added white space that ignores the typical leading and margins of a newspaper. This would give a more detailed look at how papers employ white space to make particular items jump out to the reader, whether that be around photos, headlines or body copy.

Another study could look at additional award-winning designs over the course of multiple years to chart the changes in design components and see how design has changed over time. This could be done in either consecutive years, or every five or ten years depending on what time frame is analyzed. Because there is so little research done regarding award-winning news design, there is plenty of additional research that can be done to further investigate what makes pages particularly compelling, unique and interesting.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Kelly Furnas, lecturer at Elon University, for his revisions, support, and advice throughout the project and writing of the article. He was instrumental in narrowing the scope of the project and providing insight and overall. His encouragement and frankness were also much appreciated. The author would also like to thank the numerous reviewers who helped edit the article.

References

- Bergström, B. (2008). *Essentials of visual communication*. London: Laurence King Publishing.
- Beyers, H. (2006). What constitutes a good online news site? A comparative analysis of American and European awards. *Communications*, 31(2), 215–240.
- de Vries, J. (2008). Newspaper design as cultural change. *Visual Communication*, 7(1), 5–25.
- Harrower, T. (2002). *The newspaper designer's handbook* (5th ed. ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Holmberg, N. (2004). *Eye movement patterns and newspaper design factors: An experimental approach* (unpublished Master's thesis). Lund University, Lund, Sweden.
- Holmqvist, K., & Wartenberg, C. (2005). The role of local design factors for newspaper reading behaviour: An eye tracking perspective. *Lund University Cognitive Studies*, 127.
- Leckner, S. (2012). Presentation factors affecting reading behaviour in readers of newspaper media: an eye-tracking perspective. *Visual Communication*, 11(2), 163–184.
- Morris, D. L., & Haught, M. J. (2018). America's front pages A 30-year update. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 39(1), 105–120.
- Tsai, M.-T., Wang, K.-A., Liu, Y., & Hong, J.-S. (2014). Perceived visual aesthetics of text-overlaid images: Computational models and experimental research for white-space fraction. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 30(1), 1–23.
-

Psychological Repercussions of Location-Based Social Networks in Today's Youth

Jenna Sachs

*Communication Design
Elon University*

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

Abstract

In the past decade, technology has rapidly progressed and replaced traditional social media platforms with highly advanced location-based social networks (LBSNs). Previous research has indicated a strong relationship between social media use and anxiety, however, there is little information about the potential psychological implications related to the use of LBSNs. Snapchat's Snap Map launched in June 2017, and since then has become a favorite feature among today's youth. This study utilized a qualitative research method to understand the behavior of adolescent users and their relationship with Snap Map, compared to users in different stages of development. After comparing data collected from four in-depth interviews and an online survey, the author analyzed these findings based on four social psychological theories: belongingness theory, social comparison theory, spatial-self, and the uses and gratification theory. Results indicate a strong relationship between the emergence of evolved social media platforms and specific stages of lifespan development. Because adolescent users are amid an impressionable stage of development, they are more susceptible to the emotional implications of using an LBSN feature such as Snap Map.

I. Introduction

Over the past decade, the capability of social media platforms has rapidly evolved due to technological advancements and the expansion of digital communication. Initially created with the intention of increasing direct contact among users, social media platforms today can communicate and manage social interactions, establishing a co-presence of physical and virtual space (Saker, 2016). These highly advanced social media platforms referred to as "location-based social networks" (LBSNs) not only allow the user to establish an identity through digital self-presentation, but also through identifying, sharing, and observing specific locations and their apparent meaning (Schwartz, 2014). In the past few years, LBSNs have become a part of daily life and have influenced researchers to examine the relationship between social media use and overall well-being of the user. As inquiry on this relationship expanded, it became clear that social media has the ability to increase anxiety, exclusion, and loneliness in users (Burke, 2010).

The emergence of LBSNs has exposed users with immediate locational information, making this relationship even stronger (Schwartz, 2014). Snapchat is a prime example of a popular LBSN that draws in more than 187 million daily users and is used the most by adolescents ages 13 to 18 years old (Smith,

Keywords: Jewish, Characters, Television, American Culture, Stereotypes
Email: jsachs2@elon.edu

2018). This application was created in 2011 as a way for users to send photos or “snaps,” which disappear after a certain amount of time. Since its launch, Snapchat has rapidly evolved and now allows users to send messages and videos, create live stories, and engage in several other forms of communication (Vaynerchuk, 2016). In June of 2017, Snapchat introduced a feature called Snap Map, a virtual map that allows users to share and track their friends' locations in live time. Although past research has demonstrated has indicated a relationship between LBSNs and anxiety in users, there is little information about how Snapchat's LBSN feature, Snap Map, might contribute to anxiety in adolescent users (2016).

To understand both the nature of the user and the emotional implications of engaging in LBSNs, this study uses a research approach consisting of in-depth interviews and an online survey to examine whether or not checking Snapchat's Snap Map feature induces anxiety in adolescent users. This study also aims to understand the phenomenon of “The Fear of Missing Out” (FoMO), and how this concept correlates to checking Snap Map. Because adolescents have developed during an explosion of social media innovation, this study will also examine the implication of using LBSNs compared to traditional social media platforms, and how this relates to the various stages of lifespan development. This article first analyzes the evolution of social media networks and their relationships with the user, explicitly examining previous research conducted on the emotional implications of social media use. It then explores the concepts of FoMO and anxiety concerning social media use, building on the theories of belongingness, social comparison, and self-presentation. Next, the study examines the phenomenon of LBSNs, the theory of the spatial-self, and Snapchat's Snap Map, one of the most evolved features in the history of LBSNs. Finally, using these theoretical frameworks to understand results from in-depth interviews and an online survey, the study proposes that anxiety in adolescents is a direct implication of using an LBSN feature such as Snap Map.

II. Literature Review

Social Media Networks, Anxiety, and FoMO

Social media has become an essential part of modern-day life that has changed the way we communicate, interact, and share information (Walrave, 2016). Social networking sites (SNS) initially were created with the intention of increasing direct communication among users by “providing a platform for active communication between friends and more passive observation through aggregate streams of social news” (Burke, Marlow, & Lento, 2010, p. 1). Additionally, social media sites provide opportunities for users to express their ideal selves by establishing an identity and building on relationships by sharing content (Mebdizadeb, 2010). Although users can regulate what they want to reveal on various platforms, the rapid increase of information distribution in today's society has made it difficult to process content effectively (Petronio & Durham, 2008).

As technology increases, the media and social web have become more intertwined with personal life, providing even more opportunities for users to consume and share content (Walrave, 2016). Additionally, the variety of social media platforms serve multiple functions and have made it possible for individuals to keep track of both online and offline social activities of other people (Przybylski, 2013). While social media has provided many opportunities for social interaction, it has also contributed to information overload by providing “more options than can be perused given practical restrictions and limited time” (Przybylski, 2013, p. 1841). This dual nature of social media has been proven to cause a great amount of social anxiety and exclusion, often referred to as the “Fear of Missing Out,” or FoMO (Przybylski, 2013). Through constant direct communication and monitoring of content available on virtual social circles, the user is more susceptible to experiencing FoMO (Burke, 2010). As researchers continued to examine the individual factors impacting this complicated relationship, a common theme emerged: Online social networking could influence comparison between users and predict various mental health effects (Baker, 2016).

According to researchers, FoMO is defined as a “persuasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent” (Przybylski, 2013 , p. 1841). Past research demonstrates how the more social media content users view, the more likely they were to relate their personal lives to what they were seeing or reading. The rise of technology has made it even easier for users to compare their lives to other individuals and experience anxiety, inadequacy, and loneliness (Abel, 2016).

Individuals with higher levels of FoMO also report having low self-esteem, find it difficult to make decisions, and have a more difficult time connecting with others (Przybylski, 2013). Building off Baumeister & Leary's belongingness theory (1995), recent research has also shown that when individuals were unable to view social media, they experienced short-term anxiety, in part because of a basic human desire to belong to the "in-group," whether it is physically or virtually (Abel, 2016).

These findings are further informed by research related to the social comparison theory, which suspects people decide their worth based on the way they compare themselves to others (Festinger, 1954). Because social media allows individuals to experience their friends' activities in real time it has become easier for individuals to compare themselves to other users (Abel, 2016). Such comparisons can lead to social exclusion and low self-esteem (Gerber, 2016).

Social media use and anxiety in adolescence

The adolescent stage of development is one of the most vulnerable stages of development, and research on the behavioral and cognitive factors of social anxiety and peer relationships in adolescence found that teens are more susceptible to developing social anxiety as a result of peer pressure (Erath, 2007). Concerning social media use, there are several online risks that young people confront, including compulsive behavior, impulsive decision-making, and jealousy (Antheunis, 2016).

Today's youth use social media to share experiences and interact with an online social network, however, this constant connection makes it almost impossible to avoid FoMO and other emotional implications that come from social media use (Cidem, 2017). According to a study on adolescent addiction to social media, 40% of respondents claimed that social media had increased their FoMO, and 83% claimed there was an overwhelming amount of information in their daily lives. Additionally, 8 out of 10 participants believed that people used social media to brag about what they are doing in attempts to make other users jealous (Cidem, 2017).

Because digital data is so shareable and can be viewed by large audiences, past studies have shown how adolescent users tend to construct a social media presence that doesn't always depict reality (Valkenburg, 2006). Researchers have found that in adolescent users, "lower levels of need satisfaction, general mood, and overall life satisfaction related to seeking out social media engagement only insofar as they related to higher levels of FoMO" (Przybylski, 2013, p. 1847). Specifically, students in high school who tended to check social media throughout the day reported having higher levels of FoMO and anxiety, compared to students who did not (Przybylski, 2013). These results suggest that identity can be easily reinforced and presented by adolescents through social media use. Through the emotional communication that takes place on social networking sites, adolescents are "not only staging their own identity but are co-constructors of each other's identity" (Larsen, 2016).

Location-Based Social Networks (LBSNs)

Location-based social networks, also known as LBSNs, can be defined as spaces that blend the physical and digital worlds while providing different forms of locative information (Saker, 2016). When comparing LBSNs to traditional SNS, social networking sites provide opportunities to create an identity through digital objects like photos, videos, and self-descriptions, while LBSNs can mimic social interactions in real time (Schwartz, 2014). This distinction contributes to the concept of the "spatial-self," a theoretical framework which refers to how users often use locative media to express identity. Saker (2016) found that users of Foursquare were aware that others could potentially view their location and developed ways to avoid these potentially high-tension situations by choosing whether or not they want to share their location.

Additional exploration of this relationship revealed how LBSNs like Foursquare have the potential to impact the user's digital and physical space in forming an identity (Schwartz, 2014). Users felt more significant when they were able to check in and share their location, however, when they were unable to do so, they began to worry about what other users might think (Saker, 2016). Research also suggests that platforms such as Foursquare contribute to anxiety and FoMO to an even greater significance because of how quickly locations are posted (Schwartz, 2014).

Snapchat

Snapchat is an LBSN that “allows users to send images, videos and text with a specified amount of time for the receiver to view the content before it becomes permanently inaccessible to recover” (Vaterlaus, 2016, p. 594). It was launched in 2011, as a way for users to send and share pictures and messages that disappeared after a certain amount of time (Bayer, 2015). It is unique because it offers more private communication compared to other SNS platforms, allowing the user to expect a greater level of self-exposure (Vaterlaus, 2016).

Additional research used focus groups and in-depth interviews to examine how Snapchat use impacted interpersonal relationships among teens, who reported it was popular because it allowed users to quickly connect with friends while providing social content. Snapchat was most popular among teens who felt the platform fulfilled “need gratification” (Vaterlaus, 2016). The uses and gratification theory has also been used to explain how the platform addresses various psychological and social needs, and found that young adults reported using Snapchat to stay in touch with friends and loved ones, but also led to increased jealousy in certain relational circumstances (Leung, 2013).

Snapchat's Snap Map feature

Snapchat recently launched a feature called “Snap Map,” which allows users to share and update their location on a live map (Constine, 2017). If the user does not want his or her location shared, location services can be turned off or set to “ghost mode,” which essentially makes the user invisible on the map. Unlike other social media, not only is the user able to see what his or her friends are doing, but also where and when they are doing these things. Past research has demonstrated how viewing social media updates might cause the user to feel less connected with their friends and could induce feelings of anxiety and FoMO (Burke, 2010). With this in mind, it would be predictable that a user who is viewing social media updates in the form of a live map would be even more susceptible to experiencing these feelings. Because adolescents are especially vulnerable at this point of development, one could predict that checking Snap Map would correlate to feelings of anxiety and low-self-esteem in users (Oberst, 2017).

Based on the theoretical understanding of the spatial-self, Snap Map makes it even easier for users to strengthen their identities and exhibit their physical experiences in real time. With this in mind, it is important to understand how the viewer is impacted by these updates if they are not in the same physical place as their friends. Researchers examining the roles of gratification with social media found that the need to belong, as well as receive recognition through self-presentation, were the main reasons why adolescents used social media (Leung, 2013). It would make sense that less-confident adolescent users, who are driven by the need to belong, might be more susceptible to feeling excluded or anxious after viewing the location of their friends on Snapchat's Snap Map.

Although social media has helped facilitate relationships and communication between users, it has also caused a great deal of negative emotional consequences when adolescents used these platforms in excess (Antheunis, 2016). This has created a paradox where on the one hand, these platforms can increase feelings of belonging and connecting, but on the other hand, they also have the ability to make adolescents aware of a wide range of information that is not always necessary beneficial (Oberst, 2017). Snapchat's Snap Map is a perfect example of this additional source of information, which provides users with a virtual map of where their friends are at all times. Although past research has examined the impact and repercussions of social media on adolescents, there is little information on how LBSNs in general impact might contribute to FoMO and anxiety in adolescence, and even less information in regards to the potential emotional implications of Snapchat's map feature. Unlike most SNS, where users can “optimize their self-presentation through their profiles” through descriptions, pictures, and content, it is impossible to optimize a location on Snap Map unless the user turns on “ghost mode” (Valkenburg, 2006). Past research has found social media platforms to increase anxiety induced by social comparison and self-presentation theories, however, there is limited data in regards to LBSN. Since LBSN have been found to induce anxiety in users, it is crucial to examine whether or not Snapchat's Snap Map feature intensifies anxiety in adolescents.

This study builds from previous research conducted on social media use and FoMO to examine the relationship between Snapchat's Snap Map and anxiety in adolescence. In order to discover the psychological implications of this LBSN feature, the study will ask the following questions:

RQ 1: How does Snapchat's Snap Map feature intensify anxiety in adolescence?

RQ 2: Does checking Snap Map increase FOMO in adolescence?

Snapchat User Demographics

In order to determine a target audience for this particular research, it is essential to understand the demographics and overall trends of the average Snapchat user. According to a *Statista* study conducted in 2017, significantly more American youth used and preferred Snapchat to other social media networks. Specifically, 22.1 million U.S. adolescents ages 12-17 used Snapchat, compared to 4.2 million who used Instagram and 1.4 million who used Facebook (Most popular social media, 2018). This significant gap between Snapchat use and other social media activity for teenagers is not as substantial for older age groups. Because this younger age group is more likely to choose Snapchat over other platforms, they are expected to be more susceptible to the potential emotional implications of using an LBSN.

III. Methods

The first segment of research was obtained through four in-depth interviews conducted with individuals between the ages of 15 and 18, both male and female. This method of research, involving intense individual interviews with a small group of respondents, was used to explore the subject's personal experience and emotional interaction with Snap Map and to explore their overall perspectives towards this LBSN feature. Due to the issue of these interviews and the primary age group of respondents, all names have been changed to protect the identities of the interviewees. The same set of questions was used for each interview, but the specific conversations, and any additional questions varied depending on each conversation. Each interview was recorded and transcribed.

Volunteers were selected through purposive sampling based on relevance to this specific research. All of the selected participants are social media users and considered to be part of the middle adolescence stage of lifespan development. The interviewees for this section of research included Carly, age 16; Kristin, age 17; Tom, age 15; and Jack, age 18. Each answered a total of 15 questions, and response length varied for each interview. Some example questions include: *What is your most used social media platform and why? What is your most used feature on Snapchat? Are you familiar with Snapchat's Snap Map Feature? What do you like about the Snap Map feature? What do you dislike about this feature? What is your motivation for checking Snap maps?* Other questions focused on the users' understanding of anxiety and their overall perceptions of Snap Maps.

The second segment of research involved an online survey administered to people between the ages of 22 and 30. Because Snap Map emerged when current millennials (ages 22-37) were past the point of adolescence, this survey serves as a comparison point with current teenagers, who past research suggests will see more anxiety when using Snapchat and other LBSNs. The online survey consisted of 15 questions that prompted both qualitative and quantitative answers. The target population was early-adulthood social media users, and the participants were obtained through convenience sampling, in which anyone between the ages of 22 and 30 could complete the survey. IRB permission was secured for the survey.

IV. Findings

After analyzing responses from the in-depth interviews and the online survey, several interesting findings emerged. The in-depth interviews with teens ages 15-18 showed unique patterns and perceptions associated with Snap Map, suggesting that these users are greatly affected by LBSNs compared to older users. Additionally, the findings from the online survey with respondents ages 22-30 supported the prediction that users in a more developed stage of life are less susceptible to experiencing anxiety from Snap Map. This section includes a detailed examination of each method to gain a better understanding of how exactly adolescent users are affected by Snapchat's Snap Map feature, compared to more mature users.

In-depth Interviews

Although the respondents varied in age and gender, each conveyed extreme concern towards Snap Map and appeared to be greatly impacted by this LBSN feature.

The respondents reported getting their first smartphone between the ages of 10 and 13 years old, which appeared to be the norm for most peers. Regarding their preferred social media platform, all teens identified Snapchat to be their platform of choice, followed by Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Each respondent reported using social daily, for up to four hours per day. When discussing why Snapchat was the most-used application, most talked about how easy it was to connect and stay active with other users. Tom, age 15, explained how he preferred Snapchat over other social media platforms because of “how easy it is to constantly check Snapchat and use it every minute of the day to communicate without much effort.” Kristin, age 17, expressed how it is “easier to maintain friendships and stay in touch with friends.” Another common point expressed was how easy it was to update Snapchat: “People are constantly updating what they are doing and feel the need to Snapchat everything” (Carly, age 16). In addition to these reasons, respondents also expressed that Snapchat was generally more entertaining compared to Instagram, and that it was easier to stay active without necessarily posting anything.

Most began using Snapchat between the ages of 11-13 and reported using it 2-4 hours per day. All four respondents stated having more than 100 Snapchat friends, but each had a unique perception of the nature of these friendships. For example, Tom expressed how although he has many Snapchat friends, he doesn't know most of them personally and only interacts with about 15 people regularly. For Kristin, however, Snapchat allows her to connect more spontaneously and personally with people she normally would not keep in touch with. Another common theme among respondents was their purpose of using Snapchat. The most common reasons were as followed: to make social plans, to avoid missing out, to check friends' locations, and to stay in the loop. Less common reasons included avoiding boredom and to communicate more efficiently.

All four respondents checked Snap Map daily, ranging from 1-2 times a day to 5-6 times a day, and all respondents had their location displayed. Positive statements toward Snap Maps included the ability to:

- *Decide who can and cannot see my location*
- *Locate people easily and see what is going on around me socially*
- *See where my friends are at any given moment*
- *See where and when people are when I am unsure*

Negative statements toward Snap Maps included:

- *It tells me when someone was last on Snapchat and 100 plus people (even the ones I do not know personally), can see my location*
- *People can locate me whenever and wherever*
- *It forces me to pay more attention to plans I make because friends will be able to see where I am (cannot get away with lying)*
- *It makes me want to check the map compulsively to see what other people are doing and if they are potentially excluding me*

In general, respondents conveyed that they were more likely to check Snap Map when they felt lonely, anxious, or if they were experiencing FoMO. While three respondents explained that they checked Snap Map to “stay in the loop” and to find their friends, Kristin offered an alternative motive:

The Snap Map feature shows who people are with and when, so if someone doesn't answer my text and I see that they are on their phone, or if they tell me they are alone, and then I see them with a group of people on the maps, it is extremely hurtful.

When asked about how they felt after checking Snap Map, each respondent had very similar answers. Most commonly, there was an increased feeling of exclusion, sadness, and low-self-esteem. These feelings especially were elicited when users saw two or more of their friends in the same location, even if they were included in the plans. Furthermore, respondents expressed that when they saw a group of friends together, they were more likely to think negatively about themselves and question why they were excluded. This suggests that when adolescent users feel lonely, they turn to Snap Map in hopes of feeling more connected even if doing so had the opposite effect. For example, Carly, who suffers from depression and anxiety, explained how checking Snap Map impacts her personally:

Checking Snap Maps almost never makes me feel secure or good. I get anxious if I see my friends are alone without me or doing something that I was not invited to, or even if I see a group of people I do not know that are together. It's a constant reminder that I am on the outside and it does not make me feel better.

The only scenario in which respondents reported positive feelings was when the user checked Snap Map while surrounded by friends or a large group of people. For 18-year-old Jack, when others surrounded him and he was able to visualize his location, he felt more social, confident, and included. An overwhelming pressure to be in a particular time and place, however, sometimes trumped these positive feelings.

All interviewees agreed that checking Snap Map caused them to experience FoMO, which could be induced by both positive and negative interactions with Snap Map. For example, Kristin told a story about a time when she was invited to hang out with friends, but was extremely tired and decided to stay home. She was happy that her friends included her and did not feel lonely, however, once she checked Snap Map and saw all of her friends together in one place, she began to doubt herself. This doubt accompanied anxiety and obsessive thoughts about what her friends might be doing. She expressed that she suddenly forgot why she decided to stay home in the first place and ended up joining her friends later that night.

Tom experienced FoMO in an entirely different way. Tom and his best friend, Mike, had plans to watch their high school's football game on a Friday night until Mike texted him saying he was feeling sick. Not wanting to attend the game alone, Tom ended up staying home instead. Feeling lonely and bored, he opened up Snap Map and saw that Mike was at their high school with a group of six other people. Tom described feeling betrayed and excluded. He regretted not going to the game and spent the night thinking about how much fun everyone was having and what he was missing out on. Not only did he experience FoMO, but he also began questioning why Mike lied to him and excluded him.

Although these examples are different in many ways, both individuals felt the urge to be somewhere else after they saw other people's location on Snap Map. Other responses from these interviews revealed that most of the time users checked Snap Map to *avoid* FoMO, but almost always end up experiencing it regardless of what they saw. While some respondents thought Snap Map was helpful, all agreed that checking Snap Map caused them to increase the degree of FoMO they felt before checking. Additionally, while not all respondents reported having a mental health condition, they each reported experiencing general symptoms of anxiety at some point in their life, especially after checking Snap Map. Additionally, those who did not find Snap Map helpful were more likely to report feeling excluded and left out by their friends. Regardless if the user had a positive or negative experience with Snap Map, they all experienced a fear of missing out after visibly seeing the locations of those around them.

In addition to feelings of FoMO, when asked how Snap Map impacted their peers, respondents expressed how many teenagers are "addicted" to this application and check it compulsively. As Jack put it:

I think people my age use Snapchat so much not just because they have FoMO, but because they are addicted to feeling as if they are in the know and like they belong to a social group, even if that means they might feel left out after checking Snap Map.

In addition to this, all respondents said social media affected them significantly and felt that social media contributes to anxiety.

Online Survey

The second part of this research involved an online survey generated for young adults between the ages of 22-30. The information collected from this survey facilitated a comparison between young-adult users and adolescent users. Together these findings emphasized a significant difference in answers and an overall shift in perspective towards Snap Map, which depended on the respondent's current stage of development.

Among those responding to the survey, 80% of respondents got their first smartphone between the ages of 14 and 16 and most reported using social media for 2-4 hours per day. For this age group, Instagram was the most popular social media platform, followed by Snapchat, Facebook, and Twitter. Daily Snapchat users reported spending between 1-2 hours on the application and used it mostly to keep in touch with friends or to avoid boredom. When comparing Snapchat to other social media platforms, respondents explained how there was less worry about sending personal information via Snapchat, since all conversations, photos, and videos disappear after a certain amount of time. The most used feature for respondents was the Snapchat group chat, followed by "Snap Story" updates and sending single Snapchats.

Most respondents were aware of Snap Map, and about 75% had their location on "ghost-mode." Most of these young adults reported not actively using or checking Snap Map, and those who did, checked it about 1-2 times a week and had 60-80 friends. Most positive feelings regarding Snapchat centered around the convenience of having a map connected to a phone. For example, many people mentioned how Snap Map was helpful if they lost their phone or if they were worried about the safety of a friend. As one respondent wrote:

I don't really use Snap Map that much, but I like that I can use it to see where my friends are especially if they forgot to answer my text or if I want to find them quicker and am too lazy to ask them.

Other respondents who were on ghost-mode did not like the fact that Snapchat operates as a "tracking device," blurring the concept of personal privacy. Concerning checking locations, those who did check their friend's location did it out of boredom or convenience to make plans. Those who did not check Snap Map expressed how they didn't feel the need to check their friends' location because they ultimately trusted their friends. In addition, 90% of users claimed that checking Snap Map had a minimal effect on their mood and daily life.

The final portion of this study revealed that users between the ages of 22 and 30 reported being hardly affected by Snap Map. While young adult participants acknowledged how checking Snap Map could potentially increase feelings of loneliness, exclusion, and anxiety, at the end of the day they simply did not care as much as younger Snapchat users. These participants were very aware of FoMO but felt that it had no direct relationship to checking Snap Map. Instead, participants expressed their awareness toward what they might see on Snap Map and prepared themselves for this before using the application. Those who suffered from anxiety and other mental health conditions tended not to check Snap Map as frequently as those without these conditions, because they were aware of the potentially triggering content. Overall, the majority of respondents believed that Snap Map did not contribute to anxiety any more than traditional social media platforms.

V. Discussion

This study has identified a difference in adolescents' emotional response to Snap Map, compared to older users. The most obvious comparison was the amount of time spent checking Snap Map, and also the impact Snap Map had on the user after checking. All adolescent participants reported checking Snap Map 1-2 times a day, while the 90% of young adults reported checking Snap Map 1-2 times a week. In terms of how users felt after checking Snap Map, three out of four adolescent users checked Snap Map to stay in the loop and to avoid exclusion, but also reported increased feelings of loneliness, anxiety, FoMO after checking the application. Young adult users checked Snap Map out of boredom or convenience and tended to feel

indifferent after checking the application. Despite these differences, both age groups believed that social media contributed to anxiety in users. See *Figure 2*.

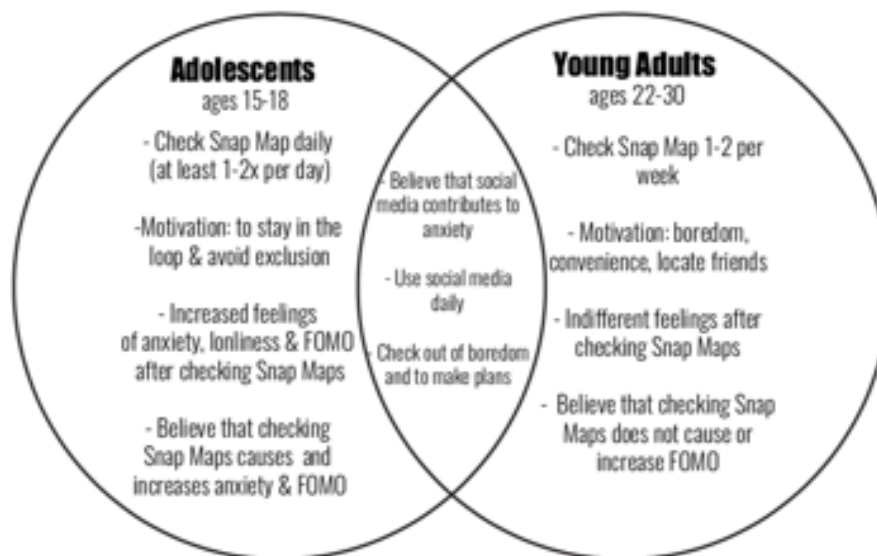


Figure 2. Critical comparisons between Snap Map use in adolescence and early adulthood.

The baseline survey conducted with young adults was a crucial step in understanding the results collected from the in-depth interviews with adolescents. In summary, the research findings support this study's hypothesis, which states that adolescents are more prone to develop severe emotional distress such as anxiety or FoMO, after checking Snapchat's Snap Map. Specifically:

- I. *Adolescents are more susceptible to the emotional implications of using Snap Map because their age and stage of development align with emerging technology trends in social media (Snap Map).*
- II. *Location-Based Social Networks (LBSNs) may cause significantly high levels of anxiety in adolescent users compared to traditional social media networks, due to the ability to mimic social interactions in a digital space and create a co-presence of physical and virtual reality (Saker, 2016).*

This study found common themes in adolescent social media behavior that are further explained by theory. For example, the belongingness theory states that it is our primary, human desire to belong to the "in-group," and also indicates that social exclusion causes anxiety because it signals and actual loss of belonging (Baumesiter & Leary, 1995). The adolescent respondents reported that they check Snap Map to see where their friends were to avoid exclusion, followed by an increased amount of anxiety. The belongingness theory suggests that adolescents are motivated to check Snap Map to find out what members of the group are doing at a given time and to fulfill their innate desire to belong. In addition, these users may fear missing out on events others find fulfilling (Przyblski, 2013). Snap Map allows users to view content constantly with minimal effort and to check the application to see what they potentially are missing out on. This understanding explains why adolescent users reported feeling "sad," "inadequate," and "isolated" after checking Snap Map, even if they were attempting to avoid these feelings in the first place.

According to the social comparison theory, individuals in uncertain situations evaluate their self-worth based on how they compare to others (Festinger, 1954). With this in mind, participants who were unsure of their friends' whereabouts or felt excluded (the uncertain situation), were compelled to check Snap Map and reported experiencing higher levels of anxiety and low-self esteem after doing so. This evaluation of self-worth translates to the participant checking Snap Map to confirm or deny their beliefs, and then experiencing negative emotional responses after making a comparison to their friends' location. Snap Map allows users to

actively engage with friends on a live map, but it can also be associated with increased feelings of jealousy and anger in users. Participants expressed how immediate access to locational information directly impacted their mood, especially when they saw something that confirmed their doubts. Something interesting to note is that even when participants were aware of the negative feelings that could arise after checking Snap Map, their desire to confirm or deny self-doubt exceeded concerns over these potential consequences.

The theory of the “spatial self,” where the individual can “document, archive and display” their everyday experience (Saker, 2106) also explains this study's findings. Participants relied on Snap Map to document their experiences and present themselves in a way that would appeal to other users. When participants were with a large group of friends, they tended to feel more confident and significant about their online presence; if they were alone, they tended to feel more insecure about how other users might perceive their location. According to this theoretical framework, the participants' self-presentation was based highly on their levels of self-awareness and maturity. This “spatial self” also explains why the majority of adolescent participants had their location visible, while the majority of older users were on ghost-mode. The adolescent participants chose to share their location on Snap Map in attempts of establishing and confirming their identity through physical awareness, while the older did not rely on Snap Map to optimize their self-presentation, and as a result, they were less inclined to make their location visible. Additionally, Snap Map's ability to provide instant locational information to users forms a virtual sense of reality that creates an unnatural link between real and digital space. Those who reported checking Snap Map over 1-2 times per day were constantly reinforced by this “virtual reality,” and became more reliant on the application.

V. Conclusion

The study aimed to understand adolescents' user behavior with evolved LBSNs, specifically asking whether or not Snapchat's Snap Map feature intensified anxiety and FoMO in adolescents. This study indicated the emergence of Snapchat's Snap Map feature is linked to current adolescent social media users, illustrating how the evolution of social media directly corresponds to the various stages of lifespan development. The results suggest that checking Snap Map provokes anxiety and FoMO in adolescent users. Adolescent users spent more time checking Snap Map and experienced severe emotional vulnerability after checking. Additionally, adolescents' top reason for checking Snap Map was to avoid social exclusion, stay in the loop, or confirm or deny any doubts they might have. Even if the participants had good intentions for checking Snap Map, most reported feeling anxious, lonely, or excluded afterward.

This revelation illuminates a paradox about the purpose of Snapchat and other LBSNs: Instead of fulfilling the adolescents' developmental need to belong, the increased use of Snap Map instead intensified the participants' sensitivity towards missing out on outwardly relevant events. Finally, this study conveys how adolescents are more likely to use Snap Map as a way to establish and confirm their identity through a digital presence, to seek reassurance and fulfill an underlying psychological need not met.

Future research should obtain additional data from a larger, globally diverse sample size. We live in a world where technology is continuously evolving and impacting the way we interact and communicate on a daily basis. The progression of social media platforms and specific LBSN features will continue to grow and correlate to various stages of psychological development. The more data collected about how individuals of various stages of development interact with different platforms of emerging social media, the more we will be able to predict future social media implications and prevent negative interactions with users.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Lorraine Ahearn, former instructor at Elon University, and Kenn Gaither, associate dean at Elon University, for their constant support and guidance throughout the IRB approval process, without which the publication of this article would not be possible. The author would also like to thank Harlen Makemson, professor at Elon University, for his assistance with revisions.

References

- Abel, J. (2016). Social media and the fear of missing out: Scale development and assessment. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 20(2), 341-353.
- Antheunis, M. L., Schouten, A. P., & Krahmer, E. (2016). The role of social networking sites in early adolescents' social lives. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 36(3), 348-371. doi:10.1177/0272431614564060
- Baker, D. A., & Algorta, G. P. (2016). The relationship between online social networking and depression: A systematic review of quantitative studies. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 19(11), 638-648. doi:10.1089/cyber.2016.0206
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin* 117(3), 497-529. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/7777651>
- Bayer, J. B., Ellison, N. B., Schoenebeck, S. Y., & Falk, E. B. (2015). Sharing the small moments: Ephemeral social interaction on Snapchat. *Information, Communication & Society*, 19(7), 956-977. doi:10.1080/1369118x.2015.1084349
- Brandtzaeg, P. B. (2012). Social networking sites: Their users and social implications: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17(4), 467-488. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2012.01580.x
- Bryant, J. A., Sanders & Jackson, A., & Smallwood, A.M. K. (2006). IMing, text messaging, and adolescent social networks. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 11(2), 577-592.
- Burke, M., Marlow, C. & Lento, T. (2010). Social network activity and social well-being. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 1909-1912. Retrieved from <https://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1753613>
- Casale, S., & Fioravanti, G. (2015). Satisfying needs through social networking sites: A pathway towards problematic Internet use for socially anxious people? *Addictive Behaviors Reports*, 1, 34-39. doi:10.1016/j.abrep.2015.03.008
- Cho, E., Myers, S. A., & Leskovec, J. (2011). Friendship and mobility. *Proceedings of the 17th ACM SIGKDD International Conference on Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining*. doi:10.1145/2020408.2020579
- Cidem. (2017, September 02). Study: Our unhappy addiction to social media. Retrieved from <https://www.jwtintelligence.com/2012/05/data-point-our-unhappy-addiction-to-social-media/>
- Constine, J. (2017, June 21). Snapchat launches location-sharing feature Snap Map. Retrieved from <https://techcrunch.com/2017/06/21/snap-map/>
- Erath, S. A., Flanagan, K. S., & Bierman, K. L. (2007). Social anxiety and peer relations in early adolescence: Behavioral and cognitive factors. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 35(3), 405-416. doi:10.1007/s10802-007-9099-2
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations* 7(2), 117-140. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/001872675400700202>
- Gerber, J.P., Chang, S. & Reimel, H. (2017). Construct validity of Williams' ostracism needs threat scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 115, 50-53.
- Gross, E. F. (2004). Adolescent Internet use: What we expect, what teens report. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 25(6), 633-649. doi:10.1016/j.appdev.2004.09.005
- Instagram and Snapchat are most popular social platforms among American teens.* (2017). Retrieved from <http://apnorc.org/projects/Pages/HTML%20Reports/instagram-and-snapchat-are-most-popular-social-networks-for-teens.aspx>
-

- Larsen, M. C. (2016). An 'Open Source' networked identity. On young people's construction and co-construction of identity on social network sites. In M. Walrave, K. Ponnet, E. Vanderhoven, J. Haers, B. Segaert (Eds.) *Youth 2.0: Social media and adolescence*. New York, NY: Springer. Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-27893-3_2
- Leung, L. (2013). Generational differences in content generation in social media: The roles of the gratifications sought and of narcissism. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(3), 997-1006. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2012.12.028
- Mehdizadeh, S. (2010). Self-presentation 2.0: Narcissism and Self-Esteem on Facebook. *Cyberpsychology, behavior, and social networking* 13(4). Retrieved from <http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/full/10.1089/cyber.2009.0257>
- Most popular social media with U.S. teens 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/199242/social-media-and-networking-sites-used-by-us-teenagers/>
- Oberst, U., Wegmann, E., Stodt, B., Brand, M., & Chamarro, A. (2017). Negative consequences from heavy social networking in adolescents: The mediating role of fear of missing out. *Journal of Adolescence*, 55, 51-60. doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2016.12.008
- Petronio, S. & Durham, W. (2008). Communication privacy management theory: Significance for interpersonal communication. In L.A. Baxter & D. O. Braithwaite (Eds.), *Engaging theories in interpersonal communication: Multiple perspectives*. Retrieved from <http://sk.sagepub.com/books/engaging-theories-in-interpersonal-communication/n23.xml>
- Przybylski, A.K., Murayana, K., DeHaan, C.R., Gladwell, V. (2013). Motivational, emotional, and behavioral correlations of fear of missing out. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(4), 1841-1848. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563213000800?+via=ihub++%28Przybylski+2013%29>
- Saker, M. (2016). Foursquare and identity: Checking-in and presenting the self through location. *New Media & Society*, 19(6), 934-949., doi:10.1177/1461444815625936.
- Schwartz, R., & Halegoua, G. R. (2014). The spatial self: Location-based identity performance on social media. *New Media & Society*, 17(10), 1643-1660. doi:10.1177/1461444814531364
- Smith, C. (2018, Feb. 6). *By the numbers: 40+ amazing Snapchat statistics*. Retrieved from expandedramblings.com/index.php/snapchat-statistics/.
- U.S. teens & young adults social media users by age group 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/250176/social-network-usage-of-us-teens-and-young-adults-by-age-group/>
- Valkenburg, P. M., Peter, J., & Schouten, A. P. (2006). Friend networking sites and their relationship to adolescents' well-being and social self-esteem. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 9(5), 584-590. doi:10.1089/cpb.2006.9.584
- Vaterlaus, M., Barnett, K., Roche, C. & Young, J.A. (2016). "Snapchat is more personal": An exploratory study on Snapchat behaviors and young adult interpersonal relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 62, 594-601.
- Vaynerchuk, G. (2017, Dec. 6). *The snap generation: A guide to Snapchat's history*. Retrieved from www.huffingtonpost.com/gary-vaynerchuk/the-snap-generation-a-guide_b_9103216.html.
-

How Women of Color Are Discussed in Hashtag Feminist Movements

Daniela Ceron

*Strategic Communications
Elon University*

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

Abstract

Social media platforms such as Twitter have the power to promote and engage the public in social issues. Often referred to as hashtag activism, movements such as #MeToo and #TimesUp on Twitter often lead to a number of voices sharing their opinion in the public sphere. Moreover, these voices tend to lead to an exclusion of people of color in discussions that concern broad social issues. With an increasing amount of media attention being given to sexual harassment, abuse, and violence against women in the United States, this study examines how women of color are being talked about in the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements. Through a thematic content analysis from tweets collected on both International Women's Day and Equal Pay Day, this study found that women of color were often overlooked on days where all women's rights should be discussed and not just those of white women in the United States. This suggests that in order for the #MeToo and #TimesUp movement to claim that they are inclusive, they need to be more intersectional in their methods and more intentional about recognizing women of color.

I. Introduction

In 2007, Tarana Burke created #MeToo with the intention of bringing awareness to the plight of women who have faced sexual assault and abuse. The popularity of the hashtag dwindled but gained traction for a second time in October 2017 with the help of actress Alyssa Milano (Garcia, 2017). Milano's tweet helped launch the #MeToo movement back into the public sphere, where it gained popularity among the thousands of women who shared their stories online. They vocalized their stories of abuse in an effort to bring awareness to women's experiences with sexual assault and harassment around the world. Later on – with the emergence of other actresses and prominent figures in Hollywood speaking out about their experiences with sexual assault in the entertainment industry – Hollywood actresses and other women spoke out against prominent entertainment figures such as Harvey Weinstein and Matt Lauer, which helped the #MeToo movement stay relevant on a variety of media platforms (Khomami, 2017).

Although the #MeToo movement garnered support, it has been critiqued by many for leaving out the experiences of women of color (Prois and Moreno, 2018). This critique was further highlighted with op-ed articles published in *The New York Times* by prominent actresses of color such as Lupita Nyong'o and Salma Hayek (Nyong'o, 2017; Hayek, 2017). As a result, other hashtags – such as #WOCAffirmation x – were

Keywords: Feminist Movements, Social Media, Twitter, #MeToo, #TimesUp
Email: dceron@elon.edu

created to address and give voice to these experiences as well. Other branches of the movement, such as #TimesUp, were also created to address these disparities by providing legal recourses. These other branches supported by specific hashtags have actively worked to provide a more inclusive platform for women of color who have experienced sexual harassment and/or assault (Garber, 2018).

With recent media coverage of issues such as sexual harassment, misconduct and assault, the #MeToo movement and others like it have become more than social media campaigns. They have emerged as social movements with the power to further efforts that works toward creating real social change. This paper will examine the hashtags #MeToo and #TimesUp and analyze themes that emerge from these movements to see how they address the experiences of women of color.

II. Literature Review

Twitter in Social Activism

Since its conception in 2006, Twitter has served as a platform for people to express their thoughts and perspectives as a way to contribute to the sphere of public opinion. With 68 million monthly active users, people have used this microblogging platform as a way to not only disseminate information, but also as a way to promote and engage in social activism within the confines of its 280-character limit (Larson, 2017).

Social movements such as #MeToo and #TimesUp, among others, emerged from Twitter. It was this specific platform, in addition to other forms of social media, that pushed social movements like #MeToo and #TimesUp into the spotlight. Twitter is one example of how “social media [has] been chiefly responsible for the construction of choreography of assembly as a process of symbolic construction of public space which facilitates and guides the physical assembling [of] a highly dispersed and individualized constituency” (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 5). In other words, Twitter “give[s] a shape to the way in which people come together and act together” and serves as a platform that goes beyond advocacy for social issues where people can organize beyond the digital sphere (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 4).

Another reason Twitter has allowed for the emergence of social movements is because it “prompts users to answer the question ‘What are you doing?’” and it allows users to answer this question in relation to different types of audiences (Marwick, 2010, p. 116). Additionally, what makes Twitter and other social media platforms a viable option for these movements is that these media “eliminate walls between separate social situations, [which contributes] to rapid social change” (Marwick, 2010, p. 115). One reason for the prevalence of the use of social media as a form of activism has to do with the tendency that “this current generation’s activism often takes place online and, at times, exclusively through social media platforms, leading to a heavier reliance on text-based interactions via social media” (Clark, 2016, p. 790).

Hashtag Feminism

Hashtag feminism is a category that scholars nest under the umbrella of hashtag activism. It is a term used to describe those “cases concerning gender equity... within the burgeoning sphere of online feminism” and “can be understood as a particular form of feminist linguistic activism that, due to the immediacy of Twitter, is event-oriented and focused on the discourse surrounding a highly visible social phenomenon unfolding in the moment” (Clark, 2016, p. 793). Movements that fall under the umbrella of hashtag feminism are movements like #MeToo and #TimesUp, which gain traction and popularity because they “become highly visible to wider audiences by being appropriated by the established news media as news stories in themselves” (Latina and Docherty, 2014, p. 1104).

According to a survey published by the Pew Research Center (2018), 78% of women are on a variety of social media platforms, and 24% of these women use Twitter. This statistic highlights the prevalence of women on social media— many of whom take part in some way with the content that is being produced and disseminated on these platforms. For people who are part of the feminist movement, hashtag feminism has “provided feminists of color and feminists working outside of formal organizations with a new, effective means of exposing their work and connecting with others” (Clark, 2016, p. 790). Supporters of hashtag feminism say that “when white feminists miss opportunities to stand with their black sisters and mainstream media overlooks the plight of nonwhite women, women of color use social media as a tool to unite and inform” (Williams, 2015, p. 342).

Although hashtag feminism is said to have provided all women with a platform to advocate for gender equity, critiques of this form of activism say that although it is theoretically more inclusive, it still leaves out the voices of some segments of the population, particularly without access to the Internet and, therefore, no access on the platforms where hashtag feminism is taking place. Another critique of hashtag feminism is that participants also do not take into consideration those who may have access to the Internet but lack the digital literacy to navigate platforms such as Twitter, which are constantly changing (Latina and Docherty, 2014, p. 1104).

Framing & Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda setting theory says, “The media are persuasive in focusing public attention on specific events, issues, and persons in determining the importance people attach to public matters” (Shaw, 2010, p. 96). In other words, the media determine what topics are relevant and should be talked about in the public. This theory highlights the media’s role in determining what the public should be informed about and occurs as a cumulative effect; that is, the more a topic gains publicity, the more it is repeated in the news. Repetition of a topic is one way the media chooses which topics to show the public, and its effects are “more significant when an issue being covered lasts over a greater time interval, while others maintain that the greatest levels of influence occur when information has recently been assigned priority by the media” (Arguette, 2017, p. 39). In addition, agenda-setting is seen by some as “beneficial to the individual and society [because] it fulfills a need of the citizens to orientate themselves properly toward their environment...” (Shaw, 2010, p. 102).

Framing theory is also relevant when talking about social movements that emerge from different forms of new media. Framing theory is “the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue to reorient their thinking about an issue” (Chong, 2007, p. 104). This means that the media has the potential to shape and influence the way the public perceives and forms opinions about a certain issue. The way the media frames an issue “can have a marked impact on one’s overall opinion” (Chong, 2007 p.106). In addition, framing theory also involves “the interaction between individuals’ prior knowledge and predispositions” and offers the public “alternative ways of defining issues, endogenous to the political and social world” (DeVreese, 2005, p. 53).

This is important to consider because the common usage of the Internet and new media platforms allows communication “in almost real time” (Arguete, 2017, p. 39). It reflects the rise of citizen journalism through platforms like Twitter, where “citizen media [have] the ability of impacting the news agenda and of disseminating information traffic while challenging the mass media’s centralized role as news deciders” (Arguete, 2017, p. 51). This suggests that there is a two-way relationship where the media decide what the public should see, and that the public also determines what is relevant as well. This concept is reflected on digital platforms like Twitter, where “users do not require a media stimulus to discuss issues which are meddled in everyday life” because the content is user generated. Agenda-setting and framing theories, as are displayed on Twitter and other weblogs, can then be seen as “a reflection of the public agenda” (Aruguete, 2017, p. 43).

Research Questions

The literature shows that there has been a significant conversation about the impact new media platforms like Twitter have in social change movements. It points out how certain social issues like sexual assault, gender equity, and women’s empowerment are framed by social media and how they, in turn, reflect the opinions of the public on these specific issues.

As part of what some feminist media scholars would categorize as hashtag feminism, #MeToo and #TimesUp also reflect how Twitter can be used to advocate for gender equity. What the literature does not show is how these social movements address issues that are pertinent to the lives of women of color. In regards to the #MeToo and #TimesUp movement specifically, this paper will attempt to address this gap in the literature by examining how both movements address issues of sexual harassment and abuse specifically among people of color. It will do so by answering the following questions:

RQ1: How do both the #MeToo and #TimesUp campaign talk about women of color in relation to issues of sexual abuse and harassment?

RQ2: What salient themes emerge from the #MeToo and #TimesUp movement?

RQ3: Are communities of color talked about on days (such as International Women's Day and Equal Pay Day) that are supposed to be about all women? How are these larger movements being related to (or not) to #MeToo and #TimesUp?

III. Methods

This study uses a qualitative content analysis, which can be defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1277). Tweets were gathered that contained the #MeToo or #TimesUp hashtags, then analyzed for emergent themes, and for the type of narrative that formed around both of these movements, in particular, in relation to women of color.

The top tweets that contained “#MeToo” and “#TimesUp” were analyzed for one particular day: International Women's Day. The tweets featured on the “Top Tweets” page on Twitter are those tweets that “catch the attention of other users” and are identified as “the tweets with the highest velocity beyond expectations” (McGee, 2010). In total, 132 tweets were collected. This date (March 8, 2018) was also four days after the Oscar Awards Ceremony, where actresses Ashley Judd, Salma Hayek, and Annabella Sciorra – all of whom made significant contributions to the #MeToo and #TimesUp movement– came together and made a speech about the importance of spreading awareness about the sexual assault and abuse faced, primarily by women, in the United States and around the world.

Of the 132 tweets, #MeToo was mentioned 78 times, while #TimesUp was mentioned 72 times, and the hashtags were often used in conjunction with each other. Tweets were coded into different categories such as: politics, media, or stories of sexual assault. A thematic analysis then was conducted that observed how the narrative surrounding women of color was constructed. In particular, hashtags such as #WOCAffirmation, and #intersectionality, were examined to see if they were used in addition to the hashtags #MeToo and #TimesUp.

A second round of 31 tweets was collected on April 10, 2018, which is recognized as Equal Pay Day. This day was almost exactly one month after the first round of data collection and was also chosen intentionally because of the focus of the gender pay gap that is recognized as a significant women's issue (“The gender pay gap by the numbers,” 2018).

IV. Findings

From an analysis of 132 tweets from International Women's Day (March 8, 2018), and 31 tweets from Equal Pay Day (April 10, 2018), there are several interesting findings that emerge. A quantitative summary is presented first, followed by an interpretation of the qualitative results.

International Women's Day

From tweets that were collected on International Women's Day, 27 (20.5 percent) out of the 132 specifically referenced in some way –whether through words or pictures– women of color and tied this reference back to either the #MeToo or the #TimesUp movements. A total of eight tweets used only words to reference women of color. Posts under this category included, but were not limited to, words like “intersectionality” or included hashtags such as #diversity or #WomenofColor (Figure 1). A total of 20 tweets used only pictures or some symbol that included women of color.



Figure 1.

Out of the 132 tweets, 39 (30 percent) were a response to issues related to sexual assault or violence in the media that tied these events to the larger #MeToo or #TimesUp movements through hashtags. Some examples of tweets that fell under this category referenced actor Terry Crews (Figure 2) and the news surrounding his sexual assault experience, and tweets that linked to articles that explored how the #MeToo movement works in Korea (Figure 3).



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

Also, 26 tweets (20 percent) out of the 132 tweets specifically mentioned women's experiences with sexual assault, abuse, or harassment, but only one tweet out of those 26 mentioned this experience specifically in relation to women of color. Thirty-one (23.5%) out of the 132 tweets that were analyzed were in some way related to the politics, the policies, or the laws that surrounded the issue of women's rights in court in relation to issues of sexual harassment and abuse. Some of these tweets also referenced political figures and their ties to this issue (*Figure 4*).



Figure 4.

Equal Pay Day

For this section, tweets were searched that had the hashtag #EqualPayDay along with at least one of #MeToo, #TimesUp, #Diversity, #Intersectionality, or #Inclusivity. This means that this research only collected tweets about #EqualPayDay that actually included some aspect of intersectionality or of the social movements under study (#MeToo and #TimesUp).

Of the 31 tweets collected about #EqualPayDay following the procedure described above, 25 tweets (81 percent) mentioned women of color in some capacity, 6 tweets (19 percent) mentioned the #TimesUp movement, and 13 tweets (42 percent) mentioned the #MeToo movement (*Figure 5*). Of these same tweets, only 12 related this day to both women of color and the larger #MeToo and #TimesUp movement. Although the results show there were high mentions of women of color, this is because only a very small sample size (31 out of more than 7,000 top tweets with #EqualPayDay from April 10) was intentionally collected to see what kind of conversation emerged concerning people of color on this particular day.

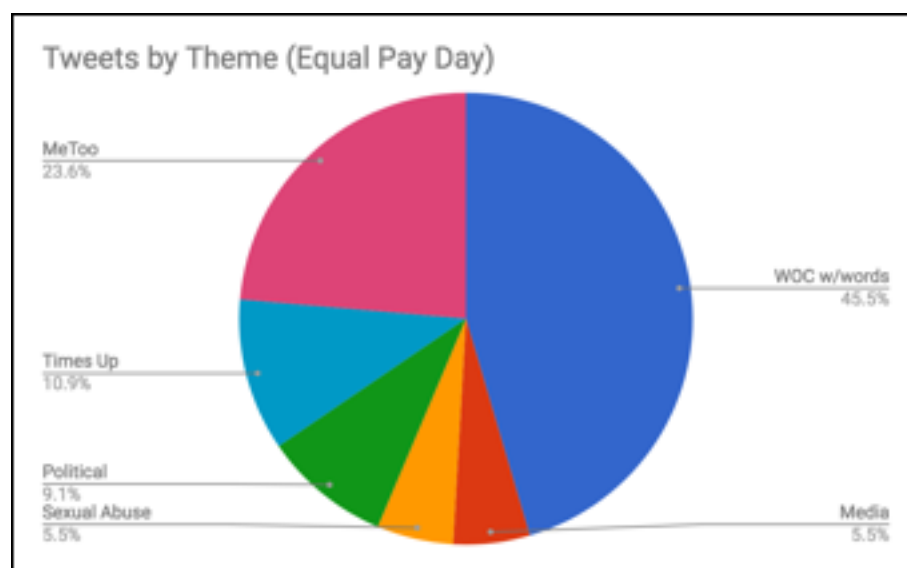


Figure 5.

V. Discussion

Findings from this study suggest a scarcity in the description, portrayal, representation and inclusion of women of color in both the #MeToo and the #TimesUp movements. From the first round of data, which was collected on International Women's Day, there were not many tweets that specifically mentioned women of color from either movement. This suggests that women of color and their specific experiences with sexual abuse and harassment are not being discussed in these campaigns in a substantial way. This aligns with previous findings and reports from various news sources that say that the #MeToo movement "hasn't represented [women of color's] stories" (Prois & Moreno, 2018).

When women of color are mentioned in some capacity, it is sometimes through the use of hashtags such as #intersectionality, but even more so in their use of images and symbols that feature popular figures and women of color (for example, see Figure 6). While, according to the Center for American Progress, women of color are about one-third of all women in the United States, they are mentioned in less than one-third of the tweets related to these movements (Kerby, 2012). While mentioning "women," in a tweet about #MeToo or #TimesUp does not necessarily exclude women of color, at the same time it does not reflect the particular circumstances and challenges that women of color face regarding sexual assault or salary disparities, to name a few of the problems that impact women more often than men, and women of color more often than white women, as previously described in the literature review.



Figure 6.

The lack of conversation surrounding women of color also was reflected in the second round of data collection from Equal Pay Day. Although it has been shown that women make less money than men, even in similar jobs, women of color make significantly less than white women, as some of the tweets collected did demonstrate (Figure 7). In general though, there is scant talk about women of color receiving equal pay in tweets, regardless of whether or not they were tied to the broader #MeToo and #TimesUp movements.

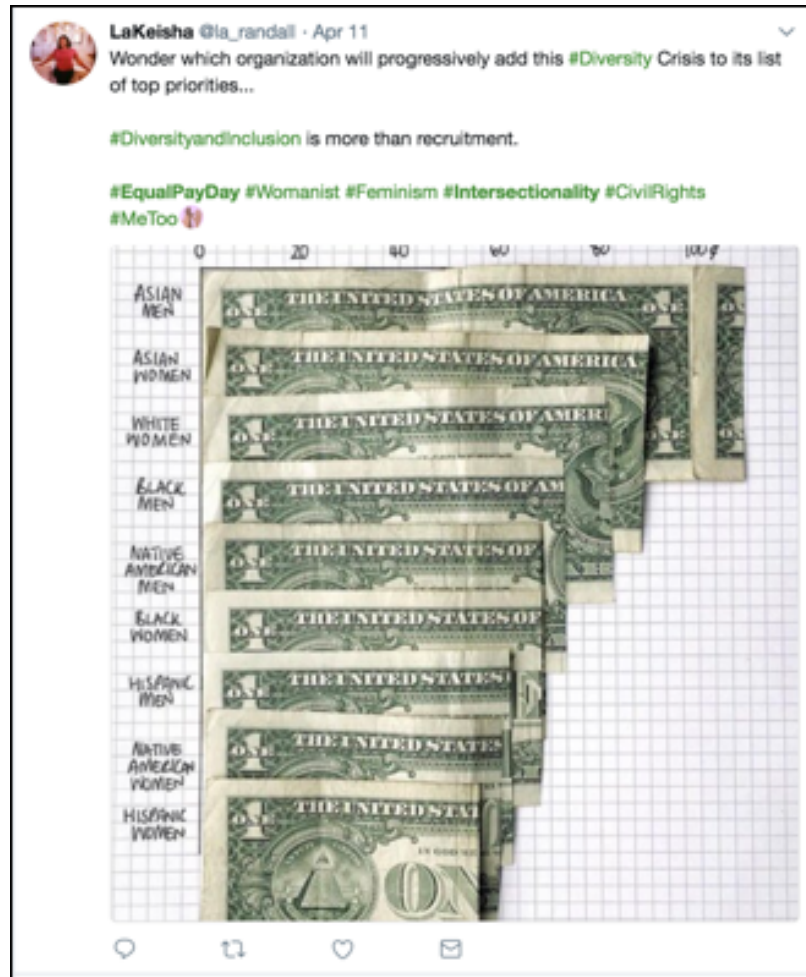


Figure 7.

Some salient themes in the tweets included a push toward policy changes, and demands from women for equal rights. Messages that advocated for gender equity and equal representation in government were predominant in the tweets that were collected on both International Women's Day and Equal Pay Day. There were also a number of tweets expressing frustration over the Trump administration. While several tweets referenced their disdain for the president, other tweets coming from a more conservative angle disregarded and had a negative view of the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements.

The lack of attention to global issues and a narrow focus on women's issues in the United States are other themes that emerged from the tweets. From the tweets that were collected on International Women's Day, there were only a few that focused on women who live internationally (which may have also contributed to the lack of representation of women who are not white). Many of the tweets collected from this day seemed to lack attention to global women's issues, and remained focused on the plight of women in the United States, where the life conditions and the struggles might not resemble the ones of women in other parts of the world. However, there were a few tweets that were in different languages and talked about how the #MeToo movement was taking shape in Korea and Spain.

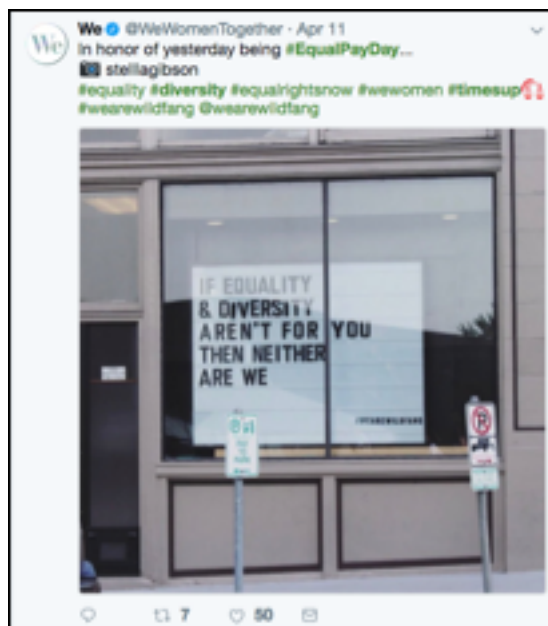


Figure 8.

From the few times women of color were mentioned in the tweets that were collected on both International Women's Day and Equal Pay Day, communities of color were not a substantial part of the conversation/narrative, even though these conversations were taking place on the days that were supposed to be about the equality of all women.

As previously discussed, women of color intentionally strived to insert themselves into the conversation as a way of reminding white women that women of color exist and that their struggles are as real as the ones that are part of the dominant narrative (Figure 8). Some of the tweets that were intentional about mentioning women of color also took the time to recognize the accomplishments of women of color (Figure 9); however, these were relatively few in number.

Additionally, the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements used International Women's Day and Equal Pay Day as opportunities to continue the conversation concerning sexual assault and harassment against women. This helped to keep the movements relevant and gain traction but also connected them to the larger push for gender equity.



Figure 9.

V. Conclusion

The #MeToo and #TimesUp movements serve as opportunities for all women to enter the conversation about issues regarding women's rights and the struggles they face with sexual abuse and harassment on a daily basis. While this may be the case, this study brings into question who exactly these equal rights are being advocated for, and whose story is being told. Are they rights for all women or just for white women?

This study suggests there needs to be a more intentional inclusion of women of color in the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements if they really want to advocate for equal rights for everyone. This inclusion needs to be one where women of color are specifically recognized and are not actively reminding the dominant audience that they exist. The lack of conversation surrounding women of color on these two days, which are supposed to be about all women, is a missed opportunity to be inclusive of not only women of color, but also of global issues that affect women in other parts of the world. The online sharing of advocacy efforts like the ones of #MeToo and #TimesUp demonstrates the power that social media—specifically Twitter—has in facilitating and highlighting women's experiences. While conversations are not as inclusive as they could be, Twitter offers a platform to women of color to have their voices heard and gives them a chance to share their story to contribute to a narrative that affects women all over.

As with any research project, this study has some limitations. One is the small sample size might not be representative of the larger #MeToo and #TimesUp movements as a whole. Another limitation in this study is the potential existence of some level of bias in the coding process. What the researcher may have thought that counted as representative of women of color may not be exactly the same as what another coder would have focused on when analyzing the tweets. Textual elements are more straightforward when coding however, because the coding procedure notes particular hashtags and terms, such as #WOC, "women of color," or "intersectional," and it is likely that any coder would have noticed those elements, regardless of who the coder was.

Additionally, the tweets were collected on days where people were most likely to be thinking about women's issues, which can skew the frequency and depth of the content that was produced on these days, and this content might not reflect the conversations surrounding the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements on normal days.

This limitation, nonetheless, opens a potential avenue for further research: To analyze the portrayal of women of color over a larger time period (for instance, several months instead of specific commemorative days), and to make sure that no special circumstances or out-of-the-ordinary events happen during those months. Another idea for future research could go the opposite way: To analyze the portrayals during a special moment for women, such as the Women's March or around the time of some other event of this nature, to understand the positions and perspectives of the most invested activists on these topics.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Vanessa Bravo, associate professor at Elon University, for her support and feedback in the writing of this paper. Without her expertise or insight on the ways women of color have been left out of certain types of media, I do not think the project would have come to fruition. Additionally, I would like to thank Ansley Hamilton for using her media analytics expertise to help me with Twitter. Without her, I would probably still be reading and counting tweets.

References

- Aruguete, N. (2017). The agenda setting hypothesis in the new media environment. *Las Hipótesis de La Agenda Setting En El Nuevo Entorno Mediático.*, (28), 35–58.
- Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007). Framing theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10, 103-126.
-

- Clark, R. (2016). "Hope in a hashtag": The discursive activism of #WhyIStayed. *Feminist Media Studies*, 16(5), 788–804.
- De Vreese, C. H. (2005). News framing: Theory and typology. *Information Design Journal & Document Design*, 13(1), 51-62.
- Garber, M. (2018, January 2). Is this the next step for the #MeToo movement? *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/01/beyond-metoo-can-times-up-effect-real-change/549482/>
- Garcia, S. E. (2017, October 20). The woman who created #MeToo long before hashtags. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/20/us/me-too-movement-tarana-burke.html>
- The gender pay gap by the numbers. Retrieved from <https://leanin.org/equal-pay-data-about-the-gender-pay-gap>
- Gerbaudo, P. (Ed.). (2012). Introduction. In *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism* (pp. 1–17). London: Pluto Press.
- Hayek, S. (2017, December 12). Opinion | Harvey Weinstein is my monster too. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/13/opinion/contributors/salma-hayek-harvey-weinstein.html>
- Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277–1288.
- Khomami, N. (2017, October 20). #MeToo: How a hashtag became a rallying cry against sexual harassment. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/20/women-worldwide-use-hashtag-metoo-against-sexual-harassment>
- Latina, D., & Docherty, S. (2014). Trending participation, trending exclusion? *Feminist Media Studies*, 14(6), 1103–1105.
- Marwick, A. E., & Boyd, D. (2010). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society*, 13(1), 114-133.
- Number of monthly active Twitter users in the United States from 1st quarter 2010 to 4th quarter 2017 (in millions). In *Statista - The Statistics Portal*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/274564/monthly-active-twitter-users-in-the-united-states/>
- Nyong'o, L. (2017, October 19). Opinion | Lupita Nyong'o: Speaking out about Harvey Weinstein. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/19/opinion/lupita-nyongo-harvey-weinstein.html>
- Pew Research Center. (2018, February 5). Social media fact sheet. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media/>
- Prois, J., & Moreno, C. (2018, January 2). The #MeToo movement looks different for women of color. Here are 10 stories. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/women-of-color-metoo_us_5a442d73e4b0b0e5a7a4992c
- Refinetti, Roberto (2018). The right to disturb. *Sexuality & Culture*, 22(2), 337-339.
- Shaw, E. F. (1979). Agenda-setting and mass communication theory. *Gazette*, 25(2), 96–105.
- Williams, S. (2015). Digital defense: Black feminists resist violence with hashtag activism. *Feminist Media Studies*, 15(2), 341–344.
- Zarkov, D., & Davis, K. (2018). Ambiguities and dilemmas around #MeToo: #ForHowLong and #WhereTo? *The European Journal of Women's Studies; London*, 25(1), 3–9.
-

Bye, Bye Miss American Pie: How Music Shapes Collective Memory

Nicole Feudi

*Communication Design
Elon University*

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

Abstract

The music industry has changed monumentally through online music streaming services such as Spotify. These sites have allowed any person to access almost any song that has ever existed, thus making music more popular than ever. People listen to music for many different reasons, though most of those reasons are to benefit listeners in some positive way. At times, music is created during a time of struggle, such the 1960s and 1970s. While music fans sometimes remember the period as happy and youthful, that is not necessarily the case. This study examines how music has an effect on collective memory of the 1960s and 1970s. While we cannot neglect the issues that existed in the past, music allows the world to cope with them.

I. Introduction

While the music of the 1960s and 1970s may have attempted to get people to think of peace and youth, was this time actually reflective of these characteristics? Maybe not. Music instills a magical feeling that allows people to remember the past as something different than what it actually was. Members of society do this through collective memory, reinventing the past using present needs. By doing such, the past becomes malleable. Since music is a highly influential form of media, it can impact people's thoughts and make them think in a particular way. This research paper attempts to discover more about how music affects collective memory. In an age where technology has increased accessibility to media content, such as music, it's important to understand the effect this has on society. Music streaming services allow people to access whatever songs they want at any time, thus monumentally changing this industry. This study explores the implications of that change across multi-generational perspectives.

II. Literature Review

This study draws on previous research in several areas, including the role of streaming for discovering music, possible effect of music on creating mood and nostalgia, theories surrounding social identity, and the concept of collective memory.

Keywords: Collective Memory, Social Identity, Nostalgia, Music, Music Streaming
Email: nfeudi@elon.edu

Spotify and Music Discovery

In the social media age, music streaming has increased access to music. Spotify, a streaming service established in 2006 by Daniel Ek, is a prime example. In 2018, Spotify reported that it has 60 million subscribers, which is the highest of all music streaming services by far. Its closest competitor is Apple Music with 27 million subscribers. In only two years, Spotify's revenue has jumped from \$1.8 billion to \$3.8 billion. Many use Spotify as a way of discovering new music through the many playlists provided that are updated daily (Knopper, 2017). Spotify also helps users discover new music through its related artists and songs feature, which points users in the direction of related content depending on what they're listening to. It also encourages social sharing so that users can look at what they're friends are listening to, therefore becoming a social network (Ford, 2015).

The Internet and social media have made producing and consuming music much easier for the general population. They have allowed artists to engage in self-promotion and consumers to enjoy their products due to the high accessibility the Internet has provided (Verboord & Noord, 2016). This feature of easy access has instilled in users the desire to continually explore and discover new content, including music. Consumers are innately curious and are therefore willing to spend money on music streaming services to satisfy their curiosity (Nowak, 2016).

Construction of Social Identity

Social identity theory says that people place themselves in certain social groups to help strengthen their self-esteem. Many people, especially young people, use music to define their social identity. Therefore, there is a possible relationship between music preference and social identity/self-esteem (Shepherd & Sigg, 2015). Another study found that participants talked about music with one another more than any other topic, and they were able to use this information to make fairly accurate guesses about the other person's personality (Carlson, Saari, Burger, & Toiviainen, 2017). Music genres have been associated with different personality traits using a five-factor model: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. For example, Openness can be correlated to Reflective and Complex genres, which include classical, jazz, blues, and folk. If a person has a preference for these genres, it is probable that they have a high tendency to be open to new ideas (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003).

Mood Management and Nostalgia

Another reason people listen to music is to change their mood. Listening to music has been found to be a successful method in changing a bad mood, increasing energy, and reducing stress and tension. This relates to the mood management theory, which says that people aim to avoid bad moods and achieve good moods to attain a peaceful and happy state of mind. People are naturally motivated to get rid of a bad mood if they are in one, and will therefore seek out activities that can potentially help with this (Lei Chen, Shuhua Zhou, & Bryant, 2007). Music also encourages people to move and participate in physical activity, which can lead to loss of weight, decreased blood pressure, improved blood sugar and cardiovascular risk factor, and an overall improved quality of life (Murrock & Higgins, 2009).

Nostalgia is associated with personal experience and memories that is commonly evoked by music (Barrett & Janata, 2016). More broadly, nostalgia is considered a specific form of passion, which refers to the emotions a person feels toward a certain object, memory, or experience. Many people develop a passion for the technologies and content of their youth or childhood, often leaving them with a nostalgic feeling. Passion can be brought into existence by many things including, old technologies, childhood memories, and the limits of shared intergenerational experiences. People become more passionate about something when they realize their experiences cannot be shared with younger generations. Through this realization though, members of society are able to discuss and retell these experiences, perhaps inspiring other generations.

Nostalgia Through Rock N' Roll Music

Rock n' roll is a genre of music stemming from the 1950s. At first, many music listeners were hesitant to jump on board due to its scandalous and shocking nature for that time. By the beginning of the 1970s, it had become a way of life. Those who were a part of that culture now had an outlet for their self-expression and were excited to use music to share their experiences with the rest of the world (Dobrotvorskaja, 1992). The nostalgia that rock n' roll created is the reason it will likely remain one of the most popular genres of

music. It will continue to be passed on through generations of younger people, as will the desire to listen to it (Selbin, 1990). It will continue to be used as gifts for significant events such as birthdays and anniversaries, and it will continue to be used to simply pass the time. Rock n' roll's versatility and timelessness are two reasons it provides such a substantial musical nostalgia to many who experience it (Kotarha, 2002).

Controversial Issues of the 1960s/70s

While the '60s and '70s were musically important, numerous social issues made the period a difficult one. African Americans were restricted by many laws (Ware, 2013). Similarly, women had limited rights during this time, struggling for control over their own bodies and equality in the workplace. Domestic violence was not taken seriously, resulting in a significantly large amount of domestic abuse victims (Spain, 2011). The Vietnam War, the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement, and human rights were all movements of this era that caused great struggle for many, though many still look back at those years as a time of peace and youth due to the music that came from it (Twombly & McDonald, 2018).

The Effect of Music on Collective Memory

Collective memory is a theory that states the past is not preserved, but reinvented in the minds of society using the needs and information of the present. Our collective memory uses social frameworks as tools to reconstruct images of the past. Therefore, the past becomes malleable and flexible, and it becomes evident through the media of the present (Cai, 2016). Collective memory attempts to explain why people act the way they do and is represented in the content of media, music being one of many. Events such as the Vietnam War are remembered in different ways by different people. These different thoughts and memories can be combined to create a popular memory, though this still may not be very realistic. Musicians of that time wrote songs in protest of the Vietnam War and in favor of peace. This framed the war in a certain way that encouraged people to remember it differently (Eyeran, Madigan, & Ring, 2017). Music influences the way the world remembers many events, especially traumatic events. People have the ability to actively forget forms of trauma, meaning that while they cannot completely erase the memories, they can turn them into a heuristic resource so they can continue to prosper (Aydin, 2017).

In order to examine how music affects collective memory, this study used a survey and focus group to examine this topic through different generational perspectives.

III. Methods

The study used two research methods. The first method was an online survey including both multiple-choice and open-ended questions intended to reveal how people think about the 1960s and '70s. Facebook was used to distribute the survey to millennial college students, young adults, as well as baby boomers. The survey generated 78 responses, with the two biggest age groups 18-24 (34 responses) and 55-64 (32 responses). For this reason, the study focuses on these two generations.

In addition to gender and age, the survey asked questions including:

- What are a few words you associate with the 1960s/1970s?
 - Can you list any monumental events that happened during this time?
 - How often do you listen to music of this era?
 - If you listen to this music, why do you choose to listen to this over other genres?
 - What are some of your favorite songs/artists from that era?
 - What, if anything, does this music make you nostalgic for/about?
 - Through what means do you think old classic rock songs get revived the most in our generation today?
-

Survey Results

When asked to associate words with the 1960s/70s, those in the 18-24 age group were most likely to say “hippies” (16 responses), followed by “drugs” (8 responses), then “music,” “Woodstock,” “groovy,” “civil rights” and “disco” (6 responses each). Among those aged 55-64, “rock n’ roll” had 8 responses, followed by “fun” and “music/The Beatles” (6 responses each), then “groovy” and “hippies” (5 responses each).

When listing events of the period, those in the age group 18-24 most often listed “Vietnam War” (15 responses), “civil rights” (12), “Kennedy assassinations” (11), “Woodstock” (8), and “Martin Luther King Jr. assassination” (7). The top responses from the age group 55-64 were: “Kennedy assassinations” (21 responses), “Martin Luther King Jr. assassination” (17), “Vietnam War” (15), and “moon landing” (9).

Not surprisingly, the older age group listens to this music much more frequently than the younger age group does. The majority of the 55-64 group listens to this music either every day or a few times a week, while 60 percent of the younger age group listens to this music once a month or less. In addition, nearly half of the older group reported “brings you back to a happy place” as the primary reason for listening to music of the period, compared to only 12 percent of the youngest listeners, who were much more likely to cite “puts you in a good mood” (32 percent), or “just simply enjoy the tune” (35 percent).

In terms of favorite artists, “The Beatles” was overwhelmingly the most mentioned by both the youngest group (16 responses) and the oldest (11). Among the youngest respondents, “I don’t know/no answer” (8) was the second-most offered response, followed by “Jackson 5” (4). Among older respondents, “Elton John,” “The Eagles,” “The Who,” “The Rolling Stones,” and “Joni Mitchell” each received 4 responses.

The two age groups also differed in terms of nostalgia and perceptions of how rock songs get revived in today’s culture. The 18-24 age group overwhelmingly felt the period’s music made them nostalgic for parents and family (50 percent), in contrast to the 55-64 age group, who more often indicated the music made them nostalgic for their childhood or the feeling of youth (63 percent). Interestingly, half of the 55-64 group said music streaming services were the primary means for reviving classic rock songs, while an additional 31 percent said it was passed down through generations. Among the 18-24 group, half of the respondents said classic rock music was primarily passed down through generations, with other responses distributed across film, social media, and streaming music services.

Focus group

A focus group was also conducted in complement to the online survey. The focus group included two people in the 18-24 age group, and two people in the 55-64 age group. Each person was asked to record how they were feeling emotionally that day. After they recorded these answers, they were asked to listen to four songs identified by Spotify as the top two classic rock songs for each decade: “All Along the Watchtower” by Jimi Hendrix, “All Day and All of the Night” by The Kinks, “Across the Universe” by the Beatles, and “American Pie” by Don McLean. As the songs played, they were asked to write down any words that came to mind when listening to the songs. After listening to the songs, they were asked to write down the emotions they felt after listening to the songs. They were then asked if the songs gave them a sense of nostalgia, if they make them want to go back and live in that time, and if they are aware of the many struggles this era had or if they simply think of the music of that time instead.

The two respondents in the 18-24 age group differed only slightly in their answers. Respondent 1, a 22-year-old female, said she was feeling a little flustered, but overall pretty happy. Some words that came to mind when she listened to the songs were “oldies,” “parents,” “dancing,” “good beat,” “happy,” “togetherness,” “motivation,” “exciting,” and “summer.” After listening to the songs she described her emotions as “upbeat,” “good mood,” “at ease,” “happy,” “soothed” and “wanting to dance.” When asked if these songs gave her a sense of nostalgia, she said the songs reminded her of car rides with her family. “American Pie” especially took her back to the summer after graduating high school and the graduation parties and good times she spent with her friends. She also said these songs definitely make her want to go back and live in that time, as she believes it would be a happy place. Finally, when asked if she was aware of the struggles that took place during that time, she responded with “Yes, but the music doesn’t reflect that. I would never associate the music with those times since the music brings so much happiness.”

Respondent 2, a 19-year-old female, described herself as very stressed out at the beginning of the session. While listening to the songs, a few words she wrote down were “boogie,” “70s,” “peaceful,” “lively,” “joyful,” “upbeat,” “happy,” and “light.” She admitted that after listening to the songs she felt much more

upbeat and excited, while also peaceful and relaxed. When asked if this music gave her a sense of nostalgia, she said that although she was not alive during this time, she longs for a time when music still expressed emotions of love and peace, just as these songs do, rather than what she termed “vulgar” emotions music expresses today. While she would like to go back to a time where music was much more meaningful, she is still aware of the racial and political issues that existed. She believes that because people were so invested in the music during those times, it was their only way to detach themselves from those issues.

The two respondents included in the 55-64 age group had much different answers, which was expected, as they lived through this time period. Respondent 3, a 57-year-old female, admitted to being incredibly overwhelmed and anxious. To describe the songs, she used words such as “rebellion,” “anti-government,” “love,” “dancing,” “carefree,” “confidence,” “contentment,” “happy,” “contagious,” and “high school fun.” Each song gave her a different feeling. She went from feeling angst during “All Along the Watchtower,” to youthful and hopeful during “All Day and All of the Night,” to pure happiness during “Across the Universe” and “American Pie.” When asked if the songs gave her a sense of nostalgia, she responded that while she usually listened to different bands and songs, the tune and emotions of the songs definitely brought her back to her youth. She also admitted that while it is tempting to be young again, her life now is just what she wants and she wouldn’t want to go back and live in a different time. For the last question, she answered with, “While I am very aware of the unrest in the youth over government, Vietnam, segregation, etc., I think a lot of the music reflects the unrest and the quest for love and peace.”

The final respondent for the focus group was a 58-year-old male who described himself as incredibly tired. A few words he used to describe the songs were “high school,” “best guitar player” (referring to Jimi Hendrix), “unbelievable,” “freedom,” “talent,” and “unique.” After listening to these songs, he felt at ease, as some of these songs are from his favorite albums that he enjoyed listening to as a child and still enjoys to this day. When asked if these songs gave him a sense of nostalgia, he replied, “of course.” They brought him back to his youth and his high school days. More specifically, “American Pie” reminded him of his Boy Scout camping trip, and he began to feel an overwhelming sense of nostalgia. His answer to the next question was almost identical to that of the 57-year-old female, as he admitted he would not want to go back and live in that time as he likes his present life too much. Again, his answer to the last question was similar to that of the female, stating that there were many struggles, but music was inspired by the current events of that era.

IV. Findings

A review of the survey and focus group data reveals interesting connections. It seems that the 18-24 age group used words related to peace and music to describe the ‘60s/’70s. With words like “Woodstock,” “groovy,” and “disco,” it’s evident that music is the first thing that comes to mind for them. While the 55-64 age group used music-related words, they also used many words that described their experience and what it was like to grow up in that time. For example, two of the most frequently used words were “flower power” and “bell bottoms,” which reflect that time era. This age group also used the word “fun” to describe those years. Both age groups listed the Vietnam War, the Kennedy assassinations, and the Martin Luther King Jr. assassination as important events. It seems as though while people are aware of these events, they choose to remember the more positive things that came of that time, such as the music.

Results also seem to validate the theory of collective memory, at least for the older age group. The most frequent answer for that age group when asked why they listen to this genre of music, was that it brings them back to a happy place. The most frequent answer for the younger age group was they simply enjoy the tune. The second most popular answer for both age groups was that this music puts them in a good mood or relieves stress, suggesting also that the mood management theory is valid.

The last question asked how this music is revived in today’s world. The younger group said it is most revived by being passed down through generations, which was expected. The way most young people listen to or even know about old music is through their parents, so it makes sense that this would be their answer. However, the older group chose a different answer. Most agreed that this music is most readily available through music streaming services, such as Spotify, bearing out that streaming music services have revived old music and allowed people to hear it on demand.

The focus group provided further insights that the survey could not. The two younger respondents

both described the music with happy and joyful words, saying that the songs made them want to dance. They both came into the focus group a bit stressed out and left feeling excited and positive, supporting the mood management theory. Though the feeling of nostalgia was minimal, it still existed for them as the songs brought them back to particular summers, family events, and parties. They both agreed that they would like to go back in time and live in an era where music was much more meaningful, in their view, as it would be a happier place. Though they were aware of the struggles, they believe the music was so powerful that it helped people move past those harsh realities.

The older age group had different conclusions. The words they used to describe the songs had more to do with rebellion, strength, and winning back their freedom. Their words had more of a feeling of inspiration, suggesting that this is how they felt growing up. The way they described the songs makes it seem like music was one of the ways they gained their confidence and strength to make it through those harsh years. They both admitted to the many struggles that existed in that time and agreed that those very struggles were the inspiration for much of the music. While both love listening to this music and remembering feelings of youth, neither would want to go back to that time, as they enjoy their present lives too much to change them. Though there are many issues we live through today, they would like to remain in the present.

V. Conclusion

This topic is important and relevant in today's society, as music is now more prevalent and accessible than ever. Today, people are able to access all genres of music at the touch of a button. It's as simple as taking a phone out, opening up one of numerous music streaming apps, and choosing a song. Spotify, along with other streaming sites, has changed the industry tremendously, and is possibly one of the reasons music is a top form of media content today. While some may argue that sites like these have stripped music of its value, from ease of access, others argue that it has only opened this industry up to more listeners. There are no limitations as to who can and cannot listen to music, which is an optimistic way of looking at it. Music has become a world-wide source of expression and has taken a large role in uniting our society. The ability to access and listen to music is one thing many share a common ground in, which makes music pretty special and worth learning about.

Whether through nostalgia, a construction of social identity, a decrease in stress, or a mood boost, music has many beneficial effects. With the help of music, people are able to take difficult and tragic events and either move on with life or try to take away some positive things about them. When solely looking at the societal struggles during the '60s and '70s, it may have been hard to see the world as anything but negative at the time. Instead, the people of that time chose to see life in a different way by using those events to inspire hopeful and optimistic music. It's possible that without music, many would forever be stuck in the past, and there would be no room for future growth.

References

- Aydin, C. (2017). How to forget the unforgettable? On collective trauma, cultural identity, and mnemotechnologies. *Identity*, 17(3), 125–137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2017.1340160>
- Barrett, F. S., & Janata, P. (2016). Neural responses to nostalgia-evoking music modeled by elements of dynamic musical structure and individual differences in affective traits. *Neuropsychologia*, 91, 234–246. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2016.08.012>
- Cai, S. (2016). Contemporary Chinese TV series: Configuring collective memory of socialist nostalgia via the Cultural Revolution. *Visual Anthropology*, 29(1), 22–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08949468.2016.1108821>
- Carlson, E., Saari, P., Burger, B., & Toiviainen, P. (2017). Personality and musical preference using social-tagging in excerpt-selection. *Psychomusicology: Music, Mind & Brain*, 27(3), 203–212. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pmu0000183>
-

- Dobrotvorskaja, E. (1992). Soviet teens of the 1970s: Rock generation, rock refusal, rock context. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 26(3), 145.
- Eyerman, R., Madigan, T., & Ring, M. (2017). Cultural trauma, collective memory and the Vietnam War. *Politicka Misao: Croatian Political Science Review*, 54(1/2), 11–31.
- Ford, P. (2015). Other people's playlists. *New Republic*, 246(5), 4–5.
- Harsanyi, D. (2017). In the groove. *National Review*, 69(7), 48–48.
- Knopper, S. (2017, August 15). How Spotify playlists create hits. *Rolling Stone*, (1294), 17.
- Kotarha, J. A. (2002). Rock “n” roll music as a timepiece. *Symbolic Interaction*, 25(3), 397.
- Lei Chen, Shuhua Zhou, & Bryant, J. (2007). Temporal changes in mood repair through music consumption: Effects of mood, mood salience, and individual differences. *Media Psychology*, 9(3), 695–713. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213260701283293>
- Murrock, C. J., & Higgins, P. A. (2009). The theory of music, mood and movement to improve health outcomes. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 65(10), 2249–2257. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2009.05108.x>
- Nowak, R. (2016). When is a discovery? The affective dimensions of discovery in music consumption. *Popular Communication*, 14(3), 137–145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2016.1193182>
- O'Sullivan, M.D. (2016). Informing Red Power and transforming the Second Wave: Native American women and the struggle against coerced sterilization in the 1970s. *Women's History Review*, 25(6), 965–982. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2015.1083229>
- Rentfrow, P. J., & Gosling, S. D. (2003). The Do Re Mi's of everyday life: The structure and personality correlates of music preferences. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 84(6), 1236–1256. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.6.1236>
- Selbin, E. (1990). Rock 'N' Roll is here to stay...and stay and stay. *Utne Reader*, 41, 33–34.
- Shepherd, D., & Sigg, N. (2015). Music preference, social identity, and self-esteem. *Music Perception*, 32(5), 507–514. <https://doi.org/10.1525/MP.2015.32.5.507>
- Spain, D. (2011). Women's rights and gendered spaces in 1970s Boston. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 32(1), 152–178.
- Twombly, M., & McDonald, K. (2018). A seismic year: Movements that had been building along the primary fault lines of the 1960s-the Vietnam War, the Cold War, civil rights, human rights, youth culture-exploded with force in 1968. The aftershocks registered both in America and abroad for decades afterward. *Smithsonian*, 48(9), 52–55.
- Verboord, M., & van Noord, S. (2016). The online place of popular music: Exploring the impact of geography and social media on pop artists' mainstream media attention. *Popular Communication*, 14(2), 59–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2015.1019073>
- Ward, S. M. (2017). Lost in translation: Social identity theory and the study of status in world politics. *International Studies Quarterly*, 61(4), 821–834. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqx042>
- Ware, L. (2013). Civil rights and the 1960s: A decade of unparalleled progress. *Maryland Law Review*, 72(4), 1087–1095.
-

Discovering Audience Motivations Behind Movie Theater Attendance

Emily Flynn

Strategic Communications
Elon University

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

Abstract

A content analysis tracked the top box office films of the past six years, and the top box office films of all time, to determine what factors currently draw audiences to movie theaters in comparison to what factors have drawn audiences in the past. Overall, the study concluded that movie theater attendees are more interested in watching remakes of old movies, or films with large fandoms, in order to remain part of an ongoing conversation. Additionally, evidence suggests viewers tend to enjoy watching films in community with others, making movie theaters a prime medium for this type of interaction.

I. Introduction

Brent Lange (2017), Senior Film and Media Editor for *Variety*, noted that despite the rich and successful history of movie theaters, “there is mounting anxiety among theater owners, studio executives, filmmakers, and cinephiles that the lights may be starting to flicker. As consumer tastes and demands change, Hollywood is scrambling to adapt” (p. 1). With streaming services and in-home entertainment devices such as Apple TV and Amazon Fire TV Stick on the rise, younger audiences are choosing the comfort and convenience of home over a trip to the movie theater. However, despite an overall drop in ticket sales, movies released within the past year continue to break box office records. *Black Panther*, which was released in February 2018, had the highest-ever domestic opening weekend for a film released in February, March, or April, earning \$201.8 million over its first three days, not adjusted for inflation (Vary, 2018). Additionally, prior to the release of *Black Panther*, *Wonder Woman* became the highest-grossing superhero origin film of all time, with box office totals around \$821 million (Hughes, 2017).

This article seeks to understand what entices audiences to view a film in theaters versus at home in today’s current technological climate of on-demand streaming services and large-screen televisions. The collective spectatorship theory, which seeks to explain why audiences may enjoy watching films together, provides a framework for this research. This article proposes that audiences are particularly drawn to films in movie theaters when the content of the film is relevant to previously existing aspects of popular culture. Audiences want to experience these types of films in a setting where there is a sense of community in order to remain relevant and part of the overall conversation surrounding the film.

Keywords: Films, Audiences, Motivations, Attendance, Theaters
Email: eflynn4@elon.edu

II. Literature Review

This study draws from literature related to the rise of on-demand and subscription-based streaming services, the current landscape of cinema attendance, and the theory of collective spectatorship, especially in regards to movie viewership in theaters. Also relevant are studies related to online film promotion and selling an experience.

On-Demand and Subscription-Based Streaming Services

With a steady rise in digital media consumption, on-demand streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon prime continue to grow. According to Anderson (n.d.), video on-demand refers to “an interactive system that allows viewers to select a movie from a database and watch it instantly on their television or personal computer” (p. 1). Access to video on-demand is offered through a cable provider, or online through a monthly subscription fee. Some devices such as Apple TV and Amazon Fire TV Stick charge a certain fee per movie or television episode, but regardless of the platform, the movie or television show is available to the viewer for instant consumption. According to a survey published by *Statista* in 2017, around 58% of survey respondents in the U.S. reported having at least one subscription to a streaming service. Netflix was used by 50% of respondents, 29% reported using Amazon Prime, and 14% reported using Hulu (“Share of consumers,” 2017).

The use of streaming services is especially prevalent in younger generations, specifically those between the ages of 18-29. Within this age group, about 61% watch television primarily through streaming services on the Internet (Rainie, 2017). Additionally, the population’s media interactions are constantly changing thanks to a rise in mobile phone usage, and entertainment viewership is no exception to this. Researchers believe that the current boom in online video and music streaming is likely to change the entire structure of the entertainment industry (Chen, Liu, & Chiu, 2017).

Despite the fact that many viewers of on-demand content are watching alone, some researchers believe that it should still be considered a social experience due to the conversation and social connections that form after one watches content. According to Steele, James, Burrows, Mantall and Bromham (2015), “Even if consumers are watching on-demand alone, they are still likely to converse with others during or after their experience. This has been greatly aided by the increase of present technological devices within the home” (p. 219). However, despite the fact that delayed viewing of media allows for more consumers to partake in conversations, it also has the tendency to exclude people from “water-cooler conversation,” as they are afraid to hear spoilers. Therefore, both on social media and in-person, people feel excluded from cultural conversation until they make the time to watch (Matrix, 2014).

Landscape of Cinema Attendance

Throughout history, movie theaters have represented a source of community for various neighborhoods, cultures, and social groups. According to Lockett (2013), between 1908 and 1917, movies had greater success when cinemas repositioned themselves as a “fundamentally local pleasure deeply linked to family and community” (p. 130). These theaters encouraged customers to linger in the lobby before and after the movie, and would often host local charity events, and showcase local businesses. By 1917, these small neighborhood theaters were the main venue for feature films (Lockett, 2013). As time progressed and neighborhood theaters rose in popularity, moviegoing became a fun event for people of every social class. It was a way to socialize and get out of the house without having to pay too much money, but still allowed people to be part of a conversation. At the turn of the twentieth century, millions of new moviegoers viewed films as a language understood universally, and as something that transcended national class and boundaries (Tratner, 2008).

From their very origin, movies and movie theaters were created with a sense of community in mind. However, with the current increase in media technology, films are no longer always released in the so-called “traditional” sense (i.e. a film goes to the theater before being released for everyday use). Tryon (2009) suggests that in today’s digital landscape, “the optimal experience of watching movies with a group of strangers in a darkened theater is about to disappear” (p. 4). For example, the Oscar-nominated film *Mudbound* received limited release in theaters at the same time it was released on Netflix, which caused an ongoing debate between theater owners and Netflix producers, who wanted the film to receive time exclusively in theaters before release to the general public (Pearson, 2017).

As media technology continues to evolve, cinema attendance has slowly begun to reflect this change. Although movie box office numbers tend to fluctuate from year to year, they are currently on the decline, with 2017's box office declining by 2.7% from the previous year (McNary, 2017). These numbers include the release of *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, which was expected to gain more revenue than it did.

Social Media and the Internet's Influence on Film Promotion

Social media in general has changed the landscape for conversation online given the fact that users are able to discuss hot-button issues with large numbers of people in real time. This aspect of social media plays a significant role in the promotion of new films, particularly after a film is released. Sang Ho Kim, Namkee Park and Seung Hyun Park (2013) conducted a study on the importance of word of mouth (WOM) and critic reviews of movies and describes the significance of their findings:

Given that movies are an experience good whose product quality cannot be judged before consumers attend it, moviegoers are likely to rely upon others' reviews and opinions when they make a movie consumption decision. Further, the recent development of the Internet and abundance of social media make it possible for moviegoers to easily find other people's assessment and reviews and exchange information about movies (p. 99).

Essentially, since the information is easily accessible online, moviegoers take into account whether people who have previously viewed the movie gave it a positive review. Advertising tends to be the medium that boosts a movie's media presence, and media presence is what subsequently creates conversation in social networks and forums. However, when people talk about a particular movie (regardless of whether or not money has been spent to promote it), the number of people who go to see the movie is affected (Armellini & Villanueva, 2011).

While it is clear that social media alone is not to be credited for all movie promotion success, it is definitely the medium that fosters the most amount of conversation, which tends to be the highest-driving factor for audiences to attend movies. Additionally, the Internet itself tends to motivate consumers to actively seek information regarding movies, rather than passively watching the trailer on television (Xiaoge, Xigen, & Nelson, 2005).

Selling an Experience

As consumer preferences continually evolve, newer generations have begun to show an interest in paying money for experiences rather than material objects. In fact, this desire for experiences has grown in popularity so much that experts have coined it as the "experience economy." Experiences are often described as a fourth economic category, and businesses have begun to adapt their services in order to position them as experiences. According to Pine and Gilmore (1998), experiences are personal and unique, so they exist "only in the mind of an individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level" (p. 2). Most researchers believe that we haven't quite reached a full experience economy, but as younger generations continue to seek out new experiences, more and more businesses are changing their marketing model to adapt.

It is also important to note that different experiences impact different senses, because they trigger different emotions and levels of effort to comprehend. Movies are mentally demanding experiences, especially those that require consumers to think about the greater social, political or cultural issues surrounding the story (Sundbo & Darmer, 2008).

Theory of Collective Spectatorship

Although the theory of collective spectatorship is relatively new, it builds upon older theories regarding how audiences perceive entertainment, particularly films. In the 1970s and 1980s, some film theorists introduced the concept of "spectator theory" to explain the psychology behind the movie watching experience. These earlier theories, developed by scholars such as Christian Metz, Jean-Louis Baudry and Roland Barthes, all center on the idea that while watching a film, spectators are silent, motionless, and expressionless. Barthes compared film viewing to a type of hypnosis where the viewer is not entirely conscious of what is happening (De Luca, 2016). In contrast, theorist Vivian Sobchack disagreed with the notion that a spectator is "motionless" and "silent," and believed that the viewer is always conscious (De Luca, 2016).

The idea of “collective spectatorship” was originally introduced by Julian Hanich, who disagreed with the idea that watching a film was solely an individual experience, regardless of the medium. According to Hanich (2014), the collective spectatorship theory states that audiences “can enjoy watching a film collectively without being fully aware of this fact” (p. 354). Essentially, the theory suggests that watching a film should be regarded as a joint action. Even though audiences may believe they are paying full attention to a film, the collective spectatorship theory proposes that the viewer hasn’t forgotten the other spectators present. Audience awareness levels reach the very edges of one’s consciousness, because a viewer is usually not actively thinking about those around them, but rather focusing on the film. However, the idea of joint-viewing is especially prevalent in moments of high emotion during a film, as it becomes easier to sense a shared emotion such as deep sadness or happiness (Hanich, 2014).

In light of the previous scholarship, this study seeks to explore communal aspects of movie viewing. In particular, with increasing advances in subscription-based video on demand and declining movie theater box office numbers, what elements influence viewers to choose to watch a movie in theaters versus at home?

III. Methods

The author compiled a list of the top box office films of all time, and the top box office films within the past six years. Both lists are adjusted for inflation, and are based on calculations conducted by the website *Box Office Mojo*. The purpose of comparing the two lists was to determine differences and similarities between the most popular films of all time, and films that are currently considered popular. The author then categorized each film on both lists into the following categories: Pre-Existing Fandom, Remake/Sequel, Superhero Movie, and Cinematic First. If a film fit more than one of the options, it was categorized more than once. If a film did not fit any of the categories, it was listed as Other.

Pre-Existing Fandom refers to any film where the basic storyline and characters had already been introduced to audiences, either in an earlier movie, book, video game, or television show. Remake/Sequel refers to any film that continued or retold a storyline established in an earlier film. Superhero Movie was defined as any film owned and created by Marvel or DC Comics. Cinematic First was defined as any film that incorporated new elements or concepts that had not been previously introduced in the film industry at the time (see Figure 1).

Movie	Cinematic First
Gone With the Wind	First female African American to win an Oscar (Hattie McDaniel)
Star Wars	First use of an animated 3-D wire-frame graphic
Titanic	First film with a budget of \$200 million (most expensive at the time)
Jaws	First summer Blockbuster
Snow White	First animated feature film
101 Dalmations	First feature to solely use a Xerox process for transferring animator’s drawings to cells (important because of all the spots on the dogs)
Jurassic Park	First movie to use DTS digital sound and CGI Dinosaurs
The Lion King	First Disney movie whose storyline was created in-house rather than adapted from a previously written children’s fairytale
Return of the Jedi	First film to be shown in a THX-certified auditorium
Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace	First film to contain over 90% of computer animation and special effects
Black Panther	First Marvel movie with a black director
Frozen	First animated feature in Disney’s studio history to offer two princess heroines.
Wonder Woman	First superhero film directed by a woman

Figure 1: Cinematic Firsts. Source: *AMC Filmsite*

The purpose of categorizing the films was to determine a few of the basic ways the lists differed from one another, as well as what that may imply about current movie theater attendance.

In order to explore the impact that social media may have on the promotion of films, the author also compiled opening weekend box office numbers for the top films listed and compared them to the total box office gross. If a film garners a high percentage of its revenues during the first weekend, it may suggest a high level of social media interaction during the days and weeks leading up to the film's opening.

IV. Findings

Comparison of Top Box Office Films

Top 20 Movies of All Time (Adjusted for Inflation)	Year	Box Office Revenue	Top 20 Movies in the Past Six Years (Adjusted for Inflation)	Year	Box Office Revenue
<i>Gone With the Wind</i>	1939	\$1,854,769,700	<i>Star Wars: The Force Awakens</i>	2015	\$992,496,600
<i>Star Wars</i>	1977	\$1,635,137,900	<i>Jurassic World</i>	2015	\$725,671,700
<i>The Sound of Music</i>	1965	\$1,307,373,200	<i>Marvel's The Avengers</i>	2012	\$705,789,500
<i>E.T.</i>	1982	\$1,302,222,800	<i>Black Panther</i>	2018	\$665,355,740
<i>Titanic</i>	1997	\$1,244,347,300	<i>Star Wars: The Last Jedi</i>	2017	\$620,106,600
<i>The Ten Commandments</i>	1956	\$1,202,580,000	<i>Rogue One: A Star Wars Story</i>	2016	\$554,854,100
<i>Jaws</i>	1975	\$1,175,763,500	<i>The Dark Knight Rises</i>	2012	\$528,601,000
<i>The Exorcist</i>	1973	\$1,015,300,400	<i>Beauty and The Beast</i>	2017	\$521,407,600
<i>Dr. Zhivago</i>	1965	\$1,139,563,500	<i>Finding Dory</i>	2016	\$515,531,300
<i>Snow White & the Seven Dwarves</i>	1937	\$1,000,620,000	<i>Avengers: Age of Ultron</i>	2015	\$491,377,100
<i>Star Wars: The Force Awakens</i>	2015	\$992,496,600	<i>The Hunger Games: Catching Fire</i>	2013	\$469,232,400
<i>101 Dalmations</i>	1961	\$917,240,400	<i>The Hunger Games</i>	2012	\$466,924,700
<i>The Empire Strikes Back</i>	1980	\$901,298,200	<i>Frozen</i>	2013	\$450,196,500
<i>Ben-Hur</i>	1959	\$899,640,000	<i>Iron Man 3</i>	2013	\$448,436,600
<i>Avatar</i>	2009	\$893,301,900	<i>Despicable Me 2</i>	2013	\$430,487,800
<i>Return of the Jedi</i>	1983	\$863,465,400	<i>Captain America: Civil War</i>	2016	\$429,213,000
<i>Jurassic Park</i>	1993	\$841,088,300	<i>Wonder Woman</i>	2017	\$423,340,500
<i>Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace</i>	1999	\$829,064,800	<i>Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle</i>	2017	\$402,881,800
<i>The Lion King</i>	1994	\$818,364,200	<i>Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2</i>	2017	\$399,848,900
<i>The Sting</i>	1973	\$818,331,400	<i>The Secret Life of Pets</i>	2016	\$397,253,600

Figure 2: Top 20 box office films of all time compared to top 20 box office films in the past six years

The only movie to make both lists was *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (highlighted in blue). All other movies on the Top 20 Films of All Time list were released between the years of 1937 - 2009. *Avatar* is the only other movie from the 2000s to make the all-time list.

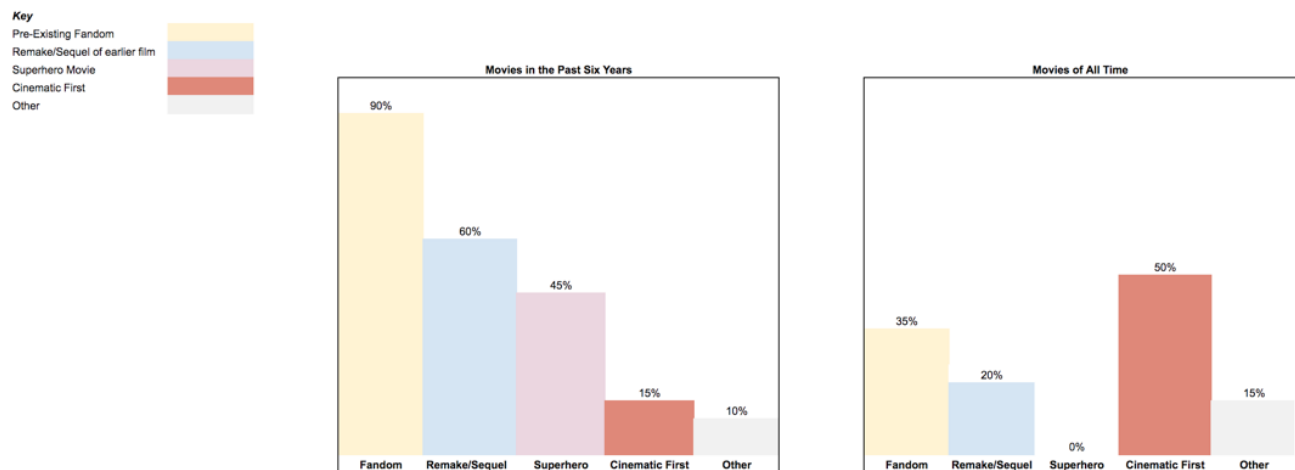


Figure 3: General categories of top box office films

Movies were sometimes placed in more than one category. For example, most superhero movies were also classified as having a pre-existing fandom due to the fact that they are based on comic books. However, the pre-existing fandom category does not exclusively include superhero movies since films such as *The Hunger Games* and *Gone With the Wind* also had pre-existing fan bases due to the fact that they were based on books.

As the data shows, movies from the all-time list contain a lot of cinematic firsts. *Gone With the Wind* continues to hold the highest box office success to date, and is often cited as the first film to use a more

diverse technicolor palette, revolutionizing movies in color (Dirks, 2016). Additionally, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was the first full-length animated feature film ever, a concept for which Walt Disney decided to take a big (and successful) risk (Johnson, 2017). The top 20 movies of all-time list suggests that one of the biggest driving factors for movie theater attendance was the opportunity to experience something new and revolutionary.

In contrast, the movies with top box office performances from the past six years fell mainly into two main categories: they were either a remake or sequel of a previously successful film, and/or they had a pre-existing fan base. In fact, the top two films listed within Top 20 movies of the last six years are remakes or sequels of films appearing on the all-time list (*Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and *Jurassic World*).

Superhero movies also represented a large portion of the movies listed on the Top 20 movies in the past six years list, with *Marvel's The Avengers* ranking third and *Black Panther* a close fourth. However, there is not a single superhero movie on the Top 20 Movies of All Time List.

Comparison of Opening Weekends

Top 20 Movies of All Time (Adjusted for Inflation)	Opening Weekend Box Office	Total Box Office Revenue	Percent of Total Revenue
<i>Star Wars: The Force Awakens</i>	\$247,966,675	\$936,662,225	26.50%
<i>Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace</i>	\$64,820,970	\$474,544,677	13.70%
<i>Jurassic Park</i>	\$47,026,828	\$402,453,882	11.70%
<i>Avatar</i>	\$77,025,481	\$760,507,625	10.10%
<i>The Lion King</i>	\$40,888,194	\$422,783,777	9.67%
<i>Return of the Jedi</i>	\$23,019,618	\$309,306,177	7.44%
<i>Titanic</i>	\$28,638,131	\$659,363,944	4.30%
<i>The Empire Strikes Back</i>	\$10,840,307	\$290,475,067	3.70%
<i>E.T.</i>	\$11,835,389	\$435,110,554	2.70%
<i>Jaws</i>	\$7,061,513	\$260,000,000	2.70%
<i>Star Wars</i>	\$6,806,951	\$460,998,007	1.48%
<i>Gone With the Wind</i>			
<i>The Sound of Music</i>			
<i>The Ten Commandments</i>			
<i>The Exorcist</i>			
<i>Dr. Zhivago</i>			
<i>Snow White & the Seven Dwarves</i>			
<i>101 Dalmations</i>			
<i>Ben-Hur</i>			
<i>The Sting</i>			

Top 20 Movies in the Past Six Years (Adjusted for Inflation)	Opening Weekend Box Office	Total Box Office Revenue	Percent of Total Revenue
<i>Captain America: Civil War</i>	\$179,139,142	\$408,084,349	43.90%
<i>Iron Man 3</i>	\$174,144,585	\$409,013,994	42.60%
<i>Avengers: Age of Ultron</i>	\$191,271,109	\$459,005,868	41.70%
<i>Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2</i>	\$146,510,104	\$389,813,101	37.60%
<i>The Hunger Games</i>	\$152,535,747	\$408,010,692	37.40%
<i>The Hunger Games: Catching Fire</i>	\$158,074,286	\$424,668,047	37.20%
<i>The Dark Knight Rises</i>	\$160,887,295	\$448,139,099	35.90%
<i>Star Wars: The Last Jedi</i>	\$220,009,584	\$620,164,565	35.50%
<i>Beauty and The Beast</i>	\$174,750,616	\$504,014,165	34.70%
<i>Marvel's The Avengers</i>	\$207,438,708	\$665,630,708	33.30%
<i>Jurassic World</i>	\$208,806,270	\$652,270,625	32.00%
<i>Black Panther</i>	\$202,003,951	\$665,630,708	30.30%
<i>Rogue One: A Star Wars Story</i>	\$155,081,681	\$532,177,324	29.10%
<i>The Secret Life of Pets</i>	\$104,352,905	\$368,384,330	28.30%
<i>Finding Dory</i>	\$135,060,273	\$486,295,561	27.80%
<i>Star Wars: The Force Awakens</i>	\$247,966,675	\$936,662,225	26.50%
<i>Wonder Woman</i>	\$103,251,471	\$412,563,408	25.00%
<i>Despicable Me 2</i>	\$83,517,315	\$368,061,265	22.70%
<i>Frozen</i>	\$67,391,326	\$400,738,009	16.80%
<i>Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle</i>	\$36,169,328	\$403,652,109	9%

Figure 4: Opening weekend box office gross in comparison to total box office gross (opening weekend numbers not available for films released prior to the mid-1970s.)

Generally, the opening weekends of newer movies made up a higher percentage of total box office gross than older ones. In fact, *Star Wars* (1977) had a very limited release because movie theater owners believed that it wouldn't do well and didn't want to show it. This changed once audiences began showing great interest. Therefore, its opening weekend only comprised 1.48% of its total box office gross. *Captain America: Civil War's* opening weekend made up 43.9% of the movie's total box office gross, making it the highest out of all the movies listed.

V. Discussion

When considering inflation, the top box office performers of all time were almost all released between 1937-1999 with *Avatar* (2009) and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015) being the only two exceptions. Half of the movies on the Top 20 Movies of All Time list had some sort of historic cinematic first, such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* being the first animated feature film. This implies that audiences are drawn to the theater in large amounts when something new and exciting is occurring. Conversely, the majority of the popular movies released in the past six years were either superhero movies, or remakes of earlier films (such as *Star Wars* or *Jurassic World*). Current audiences aren't necessarily as inspired to make a trip to the movie theater for new content, but rather, they want to re-experience popular movies from the past. Part of the reason for this could be the fact that it is easier for important plot points from *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* to be spoiled than it is for a movie with a completely new storyline. Therefore, going to the theater to view the movie as soon as possible eliminates the chance of spoilers.

Additionally, as the theory of collective spectatorship suggests, people enjoy watching films together whether they are aware of it or not. Movies with an intense and loyal fandom like *Star Wars* tend to develop a strong sense of community among viewers, meaning audiences want to experience the excitement of these movies with others in the moment, rather than waiting to watch them on streaming services at home.

Superhero movies are also driving current audiences to movie theaters, a trend which *Captain America* screenwriter Stephen McFeely says is because it is "a genre that you can do well now given the world of computers and perhaps it's also just a time in the sun. You went to the movies in the '50s and '60s you went to a western. So at this point, you're going to a superhero movie. It's taking over that same black hat, white hat myth-making surface" (Romano, 2015). Additionally, since superhero movies are based on old comic books, they also have a pre-existing fan base and community with which to watch the films. Therefore, similar to the *Star Wars* franchise, people tend to watch these films in a community setting.

Opening weekend box office numbers suggest that social media has an effect on movie theater attendance. For movies released in the past six years, the percent of total revenue generated during the opening weekend box is much higher than for movies of the past. This would imply that audiences are attending movies during the opening weekend after hearing about the release ahead of time, very likely through social media. Conversely, movies such as *Star Wars* and *Jaws* became popular by word of mouth after their release because there were fewer media outlets through which to promote them.

This study has a number of limitations. Additional box office numbers were needed, since most movies before the 1980s did not have opening weekend numbers reported. Some films also had limited release weekends before the actual release date, which were omitted from the study. Additionally, the "cinematic firsts" category was defined largely by groundbreaking technical aspects, not for innovative storylines or novel narrative structures. Future researchers may also want to utilize social media analytics in order to determine a deeper evidence-based correlation between social media usage and movie theater attendance.

VI. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine some of the factors still drawing audiences to movie theaters despite the increase in streaming service technology. It also sought to identify the differences between popular box office films of all time in comparison to top box office films in the past six years in order to further understand how audience preferences have changed.

The compilation of top box office film data showed that recent popular movies were very different from the top movies of all time. Today's audiences are most interested in viewing superhero movies, or remakes of old films. In the past, audiences went to the movie theater to view films that were considered "groundbreaking," but audiences now appear to want films that already have a large fan base established, such as *Star Wars* and *Jurassic World*. Audiences do not want to hear spoilers about films where they know the characters and plot well, so viewing it in the movie theater is a useful way to remain part of the conversation in real time.

When considering the theory of collective spectatorship, movie theaters also elicit a sense of community that people want to experience whether they realize it or not. *Star Wars* has a large, dedicated fanbase (so much so that people will dress up for the premieres), thereby making it a movie people want to view with their fellow fans. This is not as easy to do from one's living room, and by the time the movie is released to streaming services, the hype and excitement surrounding the movie's release will have already died down.

The movies chosen for this study only comprise a small portion of the top box office movies of all time, so further research could be done with a more extensive list of movies over a longer time period. However, the preliminary conclusions drawn from this study indicate that in order for movie theaters to remain successful in the future, they need to brand themselves as an experience rather than just another medium to view movies.

Acknowledgements

The author is thankful to Lorraine Ahearn, former professor at Elon University, for her supervision and advice, without which the article could not be published. The author also appreciates numerous reviewers who have helped revise this article.

References

- Anderson, C. (n.d.). What is VOD technology? Retrieved March 2, 2018, from <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/vod-technology-14311.html>
- Armellini, G., & Villanueva, J. (2011). Adding social media to the marketing mix. *IESE Insight*, 9(9), 29–36.
- Chen, Y.-M., Liu, H.-H., & Chiu, Y.-C. (2017). Customer benefits and value creation in streaming services marketing: a managerial cognitive capability approach. *Psychology & Marketing*, 34(12), 1101–1108.
- Chuu, S. L. H., Chang, J. C., & Zaichowsky, J. L. (2009). Exploring art film audiences: A marketing analysis. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 15(1/2), 212–228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10496490902835688>
- De Luca, T. (2016). Slow time, visible cinema: Duration, experience, and spectatorship. *Cinema Journal*, 56(1), 23–42.
- Dirks, T. (2016). Background: Gone With The Wind (1939). Retrieved April 19, 2018, from <http://www.filmsite.org/gone.html>
- Dixon, W. W., & Foster, G. A. (2013). *A short history of film*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Gajanan, M. (2018, February 14). Oscars 2018: Here's who has won the most Academy Awards ever. *Time*. Retrieved April 19, 2018, from <http://time.com/5148660/who-has-won-the-most-oscars/>
- Gomery, D. (1992). *Shared pleasures: A history of movie presentation in the United States*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Gone With the Wind: The essentials. (n.d.). Retrieved April 19, 2018, from <http://www.tcm.com/this-month/article/136724/0/Gone-With-the-Wind-The-Essentials.html>
- Haidee, W. (2016). Introduction: Entering the movie theater. *Film History*, 28(3), v–xi.
-

- Hanich, J. (2014). Watching a film with others: towards a theory of collective spectatorship. *Screen*, 55(3), 338–359. <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/hju026>
- Hansen, M. (2009). *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American silent film*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/elon-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3300189>
- Johnson, M. L. (2014). The well-lighted theater or the semi-darkened room? Transparency, opacity and participation in the institution of cinema. *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 12(2), 199–212. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17460654.2014.925248>
- Johnson, Z. (2017, December 21). 20 fun facts about Snow White on its 80th anniversary. Retrieved April 19, 2018, from <http://www.eonline.com/news/901665/20-fun-facts-about-snow-white-and-the-seven-dwarfs-on-its-80th-anniversary>
- Kim, S. H., Park, N., & Park, S. H. (2013). Exploring the effects of online word of mouth and expert reviews on theatrical movies' box office success. *Journal of Media Economics*, 26(2), 98–114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08997764.2013.785551>
- Lang, B., & Lang, B. (2017, March 27). The reckoning: Why the movie business is in big trouble. *Variety*. Retrieved March 14, 2018, from <http://variety.com/2017/film/features/movie-business-changing-consumer-demand-studios-exhibitors-1202016699/>
- Luckett, M. (2013). *Cinema and community: Progressivism, exhibition, and film culture in Chicago, 1907-1917*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.
- Mark, H. (2017, November 2). "Wonder Woman" is officially the highest-grossing superhero origin film. *Forbes*. Retrieved March 14, 2018, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/markhughes/2017/11/02/wonder-woman-is-officially-the-highest-grossing-superhero-origin-film/#686bb51cebd9>
- Matrix, S. (2014). The Netflix effect: Teens, binge watching, and on-demand digital media trends. *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures* 6(1), 119-138. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/553418>
- Mayne, J. (2002). *Cinema and Spectatorship*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- McNary, D. (2017, December 26). 2017 U.S. box office to fall to three-year low. *Variety*. Retrieved March 4, 2018, from <http://variety.com/2017/film/news/2017-u-s-box-office-three-year-low-1202648824/>
- Number of movie tickets sold in the United States and Canada from 2001 to 2017 (in millions). In *Statista - The Statistics Portal*. Retrieved June 21, 2018, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/187076/tickets-sold-at-the-north-american-box-office-since-2001/>
- Pearson, B. (2017, November 10). Netflix's Mudbound is getting a theatrical release. Retrieved March 2, 2018, from <http://www.slashfilm.com/netflixs-mudbound-theatrical-release/>
- Pine, B. J., II, & Gilmore, J. H. (1998, July 1). Welcome to the experience economy. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved March 3, 2018, from <https://hbr.org/1998/07/welcome-to-the-experience-economy>
- Rainie, L. (2017, September 13). About 6 in 10 young adults in U.S. primarily use online streaming to watch TV. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved March 1, 2018, from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/13/about-6-in-10-young-adults-in-u-s-primarily-use-online-streaming-to-watch-tv/>
- Ramírez-Sánchez, R. (2008). Marginalization from within: Expanding co-cultural theory through the experience of the Afro Punk. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 19(2), 89–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646170801990896>
- Romano, N. (2015, January 15). Why superhero movies are popular right now, according to superhero screenwriters. Retrieved April 19, 2018, from <https://www.cinemablend.com/new/Why-Superhero-Movies-Popular-Right-Now-According-Superhero-Screenwriters-69189.html>
- Share of consumers who have a subscription to an on-demand video service in the United States in 2017. In *Statista - The Statistics Portal*. Retrieved June 21, 2018, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/318778/subscription-based-video-streaming-services-usage-usa/>
-

- Silver, J., & McDonnell, J. (2007). Are movie theaters doomed? Do exhibitors see the big picture as theaters lose their competitive advantage? *Business Horizons*, 50(6), 491–501. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2007.07.004>
- Steele, L., James, R., Burrows, R., Mantell, D. L. & Bromham, J. (2015). The consumption of on-demand. *Journal of Promotional Communications*, 3(1), 219-24.
- Sundbo, J., & Darmer, P. (2008). *Creating Experiences in the Experience Economy*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Tefertiller, A. (2017). Moviegoing in the Netflix age: Gratifications, planned behavior, and theatrical attendance. *Communication & Society*, 30(4), 27–44. <https://doi.org/10.15581/003.30.3.27-44>
- Tratner, M. (2008). *Crowd scenes: Movies and mass politics*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press.
- Tryon, C. (2009). *Reinventing cinema: Movies in the age of media convergence*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Vary, A. B. (2018, February 19). The historic success of “Black Panther” should change Hollywood forever. Retrieved March 14, 2018, from <https://www.buzzfeed.com/adambvary/black-panther-box-office>
- Xiaoge Hu, Xigen Li, & Nelson, R. A. (2005). The World Wide Web as a vehicle for advertising movies to college students: An exploratory study. *Journal of Website Promotion*, 1(3), 115–122. <https://doi.org/10.1300/J238v01n03-09>
-