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ELON UNIVERSITY | School of Communications

Joining the World of Journals

Welcome to one of the nation's only undergraduate research journals in mass communications.

The website of the Council on Undergraduate Research lists more than 200 undergraduate research journals nationwide (https://www.cur.org/engage/undergraduate/journals/listing/).

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. Dr. Harlen Makemson, professor in the School of Communications, has overseen the publication since fall 2018.

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.

A Celebration of Student Research

I am so proud that Elon University is home to one of the nation's only undergraduate research journals 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.

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

Nearly 30 faculty members in Elon's School of Communications helped to select nine undergraduate research papers for the fall 2021 issue. The papers, primarily written in senior-level courses, are nominated for consideration by faculty mentors, then undergo a double-blind peer review process by the Editorial Board.

Thanks also go to past Associate Dean Kenn Gaither, who reviewed articles to help ensure the quality of the journal, and Tommy Kopetskie, who proofread articles, designed the online publication, and updated the publication's website.

Editor's Note

Evolving modes of storytelling and the continuing impact of COVID-19 on the communications field are common threads that tie together the fall 2021 edition of the Elon Journal.

Student researchers examined storytelling through several different types of media and, collectively, across a wide span of time. The perspectives include a nearly 30-year analysis of how documentary filmmakers present environmental issues (Anita Hallberg), and a study of how Pulitzer-winning feature writers since 1979 have employed the concept of emotionality (Molly Sposato). In a more contemporary vein, authors in this edition explore the ways in which U.S. journalists use narratives to report on animal agriculture and climate change (Cecilia Shelter) or frame their coverage of the recent wild stock market ride of GameStop (Hallie Milstein). This edition also explores storytelling through an advertising lens and the rising use of neuromarketing (Sophia Pescatore).

The ongoing pandemic has forced both media producers and consumers to adapt their habits, a trend also reflected in the articles in this edition. On the consumer side, Isabella Campione uses focus group methodology to gauge the reasons why college students turned to podcasts during the pandemic. On the production side, Halle Brennan explores how two brands used TikTok to communicate during the pandemic, while Hanna Meyers analyzes how prominent pandemic-related video ads used color.

Also featured in this edition is a large-scale survey of NCAA Division I athletic directors and their career needs (Natalie Cummins), the first article from Elon's Sport Management Department to appear in the Elon Journal.

Please enjoy the fine work of our student researchers.

Harlen Makemson
Professor
Editor, Elon Journal

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A Qualitative Case Study on TikTok: The Silver Lining for Brands During the Coronavirus Pandemic

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

Abstract

COVID-19 has profoundly changed the ways we communicate. In times of isolation and online interaction, brands have shown an increased reliance on social media to communicate with large communities. Although social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook are already being used by brands, TikTok offers unique marketing and advertising advantages. TikTok is designed to inspire and entertain with authentic, creative content that is unique to the platform itself. Previous research regarding the impact of the pandemic has largely focused on behavior for preventative health; however, little attention has been given to the impact of a pandemic on consumer behavior relative to social media. This qualitative study aims to better understand how brands on TikTok, including The Washington Post and Gymshark, have each created and promoted content during the coronavirus pandemic. The study will contribute to the wider understanding of how brands and marketers can successfully build meaningful, measurable campaigns.

I. Introduction

COVID-19 has changed the way that communities, families, brands, and influencers alike communicate and connect with each other. In times of isolation and online interaction, brands have shown increased reliance on social media to communicate with large communities. Although social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook are already being used by brands, TikTok displays new unique marketing and advertising advantages. The pandemic has accelerated social media use among U.S. consumers and has also transformed the dynamics of the electronic marketplace by creating social networks of consumers, opinion leaders and field experts. In the literature of consumer behavior during the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, findings indicate that the pandemic is having significant structural impact on consumers' decision-making processes, which, in turn, creates new opportunities for successful campaigns and marketing tactics (Mason et al., 2021).

This qualitative case study aims to better understand how two brands on TikTok have created and promoted communications messages and content during the coronavirus pandemic. This study contributes to the wider understanding of how brands and marketers can successfully use unique platforms such as TikTok to build meaningful, measurable messages.

Keywords: COVID-19, social media, brand storytelling, TikTok
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II. Literature Review

The coronavirus pandemic has brought about a massive shift in the communications field, and there is a clear need for advertisers and agencies to adapt to an environment that has dramatically changed. The Covid-19 pandemic has additionally served as motivation for research and as inspiration for ideas and creation (Mason et al., 2021). This literature review will focus on how social media has contributed to the building and maintenance of brand loyalty, and has allowed for messages to spread, movements to begin, and consumers to build communities of creators.

How the Coronavirus Pandemic Has Shaped Social Media Marketing

Social media is defined as "activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge and opinions using conversational media" (Erdoğmuş & Çiçek, 2012). Social media campaigning requires special attention and strategy building to achieve brand image and loyalty. Researchers are noticing a shift from "trying to sell" to "making campaigns" and sticking with "small acts" since some small campaigns can easily reach many people and accomplish objectives in a very short period of time (Hensel & Deis, 2010).

Engagement with social media advertising is key in explaining how (and which) campaigns resonate with consumers and inspire them to act further. Voorveld et al. (2018) identified four different categories of social media that determine successful campaigns. The first category is relationship, which represents social media platforms that are profile-based and consists mostly of customized messages (i.e., Facebook & LinkedIn). The second category is self-media, which is also profile-based but offers people the chance to manage their own social media communication channels (i.e., Twitter). The third category is creative outlet, which is content-based and allows users to share their interests and creativity (i.e., YouTube and Instagram). The fourth category is collaboration, which is content based but allows people to ask questions, get advice or find the most interesting news and content of the day (Voorveld et al., 2018). While many of the existing social media platforms are siloed across one or two of the several categories of social media, TikTok encompasses all four categories, and it is crucial to understand how brands on TikTok have used the social media space.

It is also important to analyze trends relevant to communicating in times of crisis. Harris (2020) noted that the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated social media use and has also transformed the dynamics of the electronic marketplace by creating social networks of consumers, opinion leaders and field experts. Although social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook are already being used by brands, TikTok displays unique marketing and advertising advantages. Proposing a conceptual framework explaining best practice for marketers to communicate with TikTok users further explains the importance and cruciality of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) communication (Gvili & Levy, 2018).

How Covid-19 Has Prompted Changes in Consumer Behavior

Previous research regarding the impact of the pandemic has largely focused on behavior for preventative health; however, little attention has been given to the impact of the pandemic on consumer behavior relative to social media. Gangadharbatla (2021) found that consumer behavior is contextual, with four contexts that disrupt consumer habits:

1. Changes in social context (i.e., marriage, having children)
2. Changes in technology (i.e., advent of the internet, mobile devices)
3. Changes in rules and regulation
4. Ad-hoc natural disasters (i.e., earthquakes and pandemics)

Gangadharbatla (2021) noted changes in individuals' media consumption habits and indicated that the pandemic is having significant structural impacts on consumers' decision-making processes, which, in turn, creates new opportunities for successful campaigns and marketing tactics. Recent examples are accelerated consumer cord-cutting of cable television and increased preference and reliance on social media (Alalwan, 2018).

Brands can do more than promote a product or service via social media, and consumers have noticed this. Alalwan (2018) indicated that a strong majority of consumers believe that marketers can play a positive role during times of crisis. There is likely to be a greater focus on social media campaigns using emotional appeals, as it was proven to be effective during the pandemic thus far. Taylor (2020) referenced a new notion of "homeinfluencers," being that during lockdowns or increased hours staying at home, social media users might take on an additional importance. Brands must take note of this and cater their campaigns and marketing strategies to the emergence of this new quarantine consumer base. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Boateng & Okoe (2015) found that there is a significant relationship between consumers' attitude towards social media marketing and their behavioral responses, and these responses may be heightened due to considerable environmental factors.

TikTok and Its Burgeoning Popularity

TikTok is one of the most popular video-sharing applications in the world, downloaded more than 2 billion times globally (Kale, 2020). TikTok originally allowed users to create, promote and react to short-form music video content, but now the social media platform offers so much more. Pandemic isolation created a need for people to entertain themselves and connect with others, increasing the app's popularity (Johnson, 2020). The content on the platform is fun, relatable, and presented in an easily digestible format, making it perfect for lockdown viewing. The social media platform has a strong identity - TikTok knows its purpose of helping users share and create unique video content that resonates with others.

Very little research has specifically been done on TikTok. Xu et al. (2019) analyzed the development status of TikTok and provided a new model reference for helping the operation and development of the short video industry. The study found that the content of TikTok is very active, with a lot of activities online and offline, targeting young people with imagination and curiosity. Also, media consumption habits are rapidly changing, with consumers often being no longer satisfied with text and static picture.

III. Methods

This research consisted of a qualitative case study of two brands and their use of TikTok during the coronavirus. A case study is a research approach that is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context. It is an established research design that is used for a specific subject, person, group, place, event, organization, or phenomenon of interest, in its natural real-life context (Crowe, 2011). Case studies can be used to explain, describe or explore events or phenomena in the everyday contexts in which they occur - helping to understand and explain causal links to pathways resulting from a new policy initiative or service development over time.

This type of research methodology helps researchers generate new ideas, illustrate theories, and show how different perspectives may be related to one another. Scholars such as Johnson (2020) and Xu et al. (2019) have adopted this method to analyze videos and to design coding procedures. Moreover, this method is often employed when exploring key characteristics, meanings and implications of a specific case to then generate insights and make recommendations for the future (McCombes, 2020). In this study, a qualitative case study approach was used to describe specific examples of exemplary marketing techniques and campaigns used by brands and marketers.

Two brands were selected to analyze as part of the case study: *The Washington Post* and Gymshark. Both brands were recognized by TikTok as being particularly notable. *The Washington Post* was chosen for its success in creating a relatable, humanizing brand identity and for breaking the reserved barrier that newspapers traditionally have (TikTok, 2020), helping the publication stay relevant during the pandemic. Gymshark's account was studied in this paper because it managed to create a community with heavy reliance on user-generated content from influencers, while staying true to its fitness-forward mission (TikTok, 2020).

A content analysis was completed for the two brands. The content analysis consisted of investigating both visual and textual elements of the TikTok accounts. In the content analysis, the researcher categorized the type of challenge or main idea being communicated and studied the words that were communicated via audio, as well as specific phrases used in captions, hashtags, and comments. Both brands' TikTok accounts were analyzed in terms of follower count, number of likes, TikTok username, tagline, bio, and appearance.

In addition, news articles, blog content, press releases, and other pieces about specific strategy employed by *The Washington Post* and Gymshark were analyzed from a variety of sources (including *Forbes*, *HubSpot*, *The Guardian*, *Poynter*, *Insider*, among others). These documents shed light on what other companies and news outlets have noticed from the two brands, what has differentiated them during the pandemic, and what other brands looking to use the TikTok space can do to best communicate to and resonate with consumers.

IV. Findings & Discussion

Case Study 1: @washingtonpost

The Washington Post had more than 900,000 followers on TikTok and 37.4 million likes as of spring 2021. The newspaper is one of TikTok's earliest brand adopters and creates content that is funny, musical, and embraces some of TikTok's weirdest special effects. Examples of content posted by *The Washington Post* includes news team discussion of *The Bachelorette* instead of the Democratic debates and a comical highlight of a slip up made by Vice President Harris during a prior debate. Posts occasionally infuse news and quotes into the videos (Bump, 2020).

The Washington Post has a team who tailors content to young viewers who want to laugh and be entertained. That team is responsible for talking directly to its specific audience. In an article published by *Poynter*, Dave Jorgenson is highlighted as *The Washington Post's* TikTok guy (Mahadevan, 2020). Before Jorgenson developed *The Washington Post's* TikTok account, he was a Vine native and helped propel the *Independent Journal Review's* Vine account into the hundreds of thousands of followers with clips from the first Democratic primary debate in 2015 (Tenbarge, 2019).

The videos Jorgenson created for the *Independent Journal Review's* Vine account convey personality with bits based on popular memes from the platform. Jorgenson's methodology towards *The Washington Post's* TikTok account links directly with the work he was doing on Vine years prior. Jorgenson stated that *The Post's* TikTok strategy best resembles a metaphor:

> The metaphor that I use is we've been invited to this dinner party by TikTok, TikTok is the host, and TikTok is a really good cook, and they do everything right ...We just got invited, and we don't want to walk into the house and say 'Hey, this is how you cook your steak.' We might bring a bottle of wine and be like 'Hey, we brought this to help make the meal better, and we also have some new jokes you haven't heard' (Tenbarge, 2019).

The Washington Post believes that TikTok could be a funnel for new subscribers - and for news consumers everywhere (Mahadevan, 2020). *The Post's* account is self-aware and slightly cringey, but successful (Nover, 2019). Explaining in an interview why *The Washington Post* is on TikTok, Jorgenson sees TikTok as a lighthearted side project that serves to reinforce the paper's journalistic mission and draw in new readers: "The average subscriber to The Post is well over 40. So this is a really good way to, at the very least, get [younger people] to trust the brand or to know the brand" (Nover, 2019).

To accomplish this, *The Washington Post* shows the newsroom in action. The newspaper uses TikTok as a medium to humanize the people behind the bylines. Drawing inspiration from *The Office*, *The Washington Post* attempts to recreate the tone that Generation Z loves (Nover, 2019).

The main findings taken from analyzing *The Washington Post's* content on TikTok, its online media presence, prior TikTok case studies, and articles written about its infiltration of this social media phenomenon bring about four major tips to other brands and marketers who seek to be successful on TikTok (Neal, 2020):

1. **Share important information.** Becoming a resource for relevant and useful information solidifies your role as a thought leader.

2. **Speak your mind.** According to 5W PR's 2020 Consumer Culture Report, 76 percent of respondents ages 18-34 like it when CEOs of companies speak out on issues they care about. Recent research also shows that 83 percent of Millennials find it important for the companies they buy from to align with their values (Neal, 2020). The Washington Post published a series of videos educating its audience

on the significance of the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Ahmaud Arbery, what privilege is and how it plays into racial injustice, and the measurable steps everyone can take to minimize their roles in systemic racism (Neal, 2020).

3. **Interact with other organizations.** This includes highlights from any competition with other newspapers to increase engagement and collaborations with other organizations, allowing for brands to reach multiple audiences and sway potential new members by displaying a sense of humor and self-awareness.

4. **Have fun.** Self-deprecation, making light of mistakes and diffusing common frustrations using theatrics are some of the ways Jorgenson has connected with younger demographics (Neal, 2020).

As previously stated, Jorgenson is a major contributor to *The Washington Post's* TikTok success. On TikTok, the prestigious newspaper is not trying to impose itself as the traditional, straightforward newspaper it is online and via print. The TikTok content occasionally infuses news and quotes into their videos, but in large part, the posts are pleasant, funny and show users the real people behind the hard journalism.

The Post employees who are showcased on TikTok seem like relatable people. Authenticity is key for young users, and this could potentially result in fans going to *The Washington Post* as a trusted news source when they want to read something written by sources they identify with. Gene Park, audience editor at *The Post*, noted that "... [Tik Tok] and its ilk are definitely a mutant strain of memology that encourage repetition with quick, easy-to-digest narratives ... Part of what Dave does is mix trending TikTok memes with slice-of-life newsroom insight, which gives us the ability to laugh at ourselves while also hinting at the depth of our work" (Mahadevan, 2019).

Jorgenson knows that TikTok has a large, untapped audience of teenagers. *The Washington Post's* main strategy is to highlight the brand and expose teen viewers to a variety of reporters and beats. This served as a chance for *The Post* to cultivate new audiences and new revenue streams in an industry that is constantly searching for both. *The Washington Post* is one of the few news outlets that has successfully mastered TikTok.

The strategy works because being on trend is key to operating on TikTok and many other social networks. This means that brands need to understand standards, trends, inside jokes and other nuances before they post. Otherwise, they run the risk of appearing inauthentic - one of the biggest online errors, and a quick way to lose audience trust. While already an established source of information, using TikTok to share in ways that appeal to younger audiences has created a cult-like following for the newspaper, allowing it to connect with a new segment of its audience, allowing for *The Washington Post* to be one of the largest, and most reputable, TikTok giants. Jorgenson noted: "We're slowly kind of proving to them that their [young users'] perception of *The Washington Post* - wherever they got it from, if it was negative - now they're looking at our TikTok, and they're saying, 'This is not what I expected, but in the best way'" (Tenbarge, 2019).

The Washington Post makes clear that brands can use TikTok to give an unexpected audience a comedic and authentic experience into who they are. The brand took creative risks and had fun in the process - resulting in new subscribers, entertainment for the TikTok community, and a new way to showcase brand identity and mission consistent with its values.

Case Study 2: @gymshark

Gymshark had a total of 2.5 million followers on TikTok and 39.9 million likes in spring 2021. Founded in 2012, United Kingdom-based Gymshark came alive in the age of mobile social media. The brand primarily used influencer marketing to reach its consumers to become a global clothing competitor (MediaKix, 2020). With the top fitness influencers attracting followers in the millions, fitness is exceedingly popular on social media. Gymshark has been collaborating with Instagram influencers since the company's inception, working to create unique, visual language to separate itself from competition.

Gymshark uses a similar strategy on TikTok, partnering with fitness and lifestyle influencers on the platform to further its reach and messaging. Gymshark demonstrates how TikTok users are turning to the application for fitness-related content, with the most popular hashtag (#fitness) generating over 44 billion views globally. The top content categories for fitness-related TikTok videos are workout tips, workout dances, and no-equipment workouts due to the pandemic (RightMetric, 2020). Gymshark publishes an average of 40 videos per month, its top performing video categories including gym/fitness humor, workout challenges and ideas and fitness inspiration (RightMetric, 2020).

Its “66 Days | Change Your Life” challenge on TikTok relied on six influencer accounts in categories spanning health, fitness, lifestyle and dance to help increase Gymshark brand and product awareness, promote the challenge, and create an active, meaningful connection with fans by inviting them to participate in the brand’s challenge (MediaKix, 2020). The social reach targeted 19.8 million fans, increased the engagement rate by 11.11 percent, and allowed for 45.5 million views of its #gymshark66 hashtag.

Gymshark’s reliance on user-generated content, indirectly involving its users in its campaigns, is one of its reasons for success (Kolsquare, 2020). The brand knows who its audience is and produces content with them in mind. The “66 Day | Change Your Life” challenge was evidence that when brands find their niche on a platform and create targeted content that includes relevant influencers, they can achieve high engagement on their posts and increase brand awareness (Media Update, 2020). By reposting content by creating its own hashtag and displaying it in the caption of its publications, Gymshark encourages its community to use it, too. This is how the brand collects sometimes very qualitative content from its customers, thus boosting overall virality of the brand.

Gymshark is a prime example of a retail brand that has chosen to expand its digital marketing strategy on TikTok, posting content that is beneficial to their consumers, like workout videos, challenges, or inspirational fitness journeys. The brand does this with the help of influencers.

For the “66 Day | Change Your Life” challenge, Gymshark employed the help of six major influencer accounts in categories spanning health, fitness, lifestyle and dance. The six influencers included the Wilking Sisters (approximately 1.1 million fans), the Rybka Twins (5.2 million fans), Laurie Elle (2.5 million fans), Twin Melody (6.3 million fans), the Lesotwins (1.2 million fans), and Antonie Lokhorst (3.5 million fans) (Mediakix, 2020). Those influencers conveyed the Gymshark message and challenge on their own personal accounts and platforms for their large followings to see and interact with, thus expanding reach and leading to direct traffic to the Gymshark TikTok account and website.

As a result of that challenge, Gymshark was able to expand its influencer marketing strategy into the growing, short-form video platform, TikTok. The brand’s image and offerings matched up well with TikTok’s format and influencers. The influencers successfully highlighted the brand and its clothing, while also promoting their “66 Day | Change Your Life” challenge (Mediakix, 2020). Gymshark is proof that when a brand uses the strengths of a platform and partners with influencers that align well with their brand, high engagement rates are achievable.

V. Conclusion

As the coronavirus sparked a new environment of campaign culture on TikTok and changed the way brands connect with consumers, this study aimed to understand how brands have successfully used TikTok to their advantage. The motivations of each brand to carry out specific video content and campaigns on this social media platform is relevant to both their personal missions and how they attempt to take creative risks. The brands analyzed in the qualitative case study are notable and highly regarded on TikTok because they both share a balance between having fun, fostering a community, and bringing to light fresh content and perspectives that emotionally resonate with a widespread audience.

This qualitative research was conducted over the course of one semester. That four-month time frame limited the number of campaigns that could be analyzed. As a result, only two campaigns were examined. Future research could consider similar campaigns on TikTok or observe how influencers specifically are communicating successful brand partner messages on the platform, and how corporations and businesses can use this different marketing avenue. In addition, future research could also investigate the consumer perspective on a national or international scale, interviewing consumers of different demographics. This study indicates that brands can successfully use the TikTok space to create unique campaigns, messages, and content to untapped audiences with the right strategy.

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How Podcasts Help College Students Navigate the Turbulence of COVID-19

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic forced many to shift their outlook and adopt new habits and attitudes in response to the "new normal" of everyday life. The following research examined how podcasts have helped undergraduate Gen Z college students navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Conducted through two focus groups, the research explored how COVID-19 has impacted both the listening habits and general attitudes towards podcasts of the student participants. It also identified how the participants perceived the podcast platform changing in the future. Participants were asked to identify and explain why they choose to listen to podcasts. Incorporating the theory of uses and gratifications, the participants' responses were analyzed on the key need or satisfaction they were looking to receive from listening to the podcast platform. As a result of the pandemic's impact, students exhibited an overall increase in their listening habits and positive attitudes regarding the podcast platform.

I. Introduction

With the onset of COVID-19, many people were forced to change their day-to-day routine and habits, including working from home, attending classes virtually, and how they socialized with others. Much of the world was quarantined in their homes for weeks, unsure if life would ever return to normal. College students fled their campuses for safe havens in an effort to control the spread of the contagious disease. Many seniors were unable to attend graduation ceremonies in person, and undergraduates largely shifted to online classes. Students had more free time, finding new hobbies and activities to explore in their homes during the quarantine period. One of those activities was podcast listening. While podcast popularity has been on the rise in recent years, those stuck at home began to use the platform even more during quarantine.

Since 2019, podcast listening has increased from 51% to 55% of the United States population (Winn, 2021). As of April 2021, there were over 2 million podcasts totaling more than 48 million individual episodes. On its own, Apple had more than 500,000 active podcasts in more than 100 languages (Winn, 2021). Many people have searched for an outlet on the topics they are passionate about or want to share with the world, and the podcast platform has provided that.

In response to COVID-19, many turned to podcasts as a way to entertain, educate, and eradicate boredom or loneliness while stuck at home. Many even took the podcast episodes on road trips, as they had to find ways to get out of the house during a time of disconnection with friends and normal routines.

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Since podcasts use solely audio, the platform allows users to listen on their phones while on the go or while performing other tasks such as exercising, cooking, or cleaning. During this time of separation, podcasts created a virtual community where individuals felt more connected.

As the pandemic declined and life slowly returned to normal, many reflected on the activities, hobbies, and perspectives that came out of these unprecedented times. While some went into the pandemic listening to podcasts, others turned to podcasts as a source of comfort and entertainment that carried into their day-to-day lives as the world began to heal. College students have continued their podcast use and have made it part of their daily routine.

This study takes an initial attempt to identify and examine the podcast attitudes and habits of undergraduate college students who were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This was accomplished by conducting two focus groups that analyzed the patterns and behaviors described by the participants regarding COVID-19 and podcasts.

II. Literature Review

Previous research has explored the habits and uses of podcast listeners, and how podcasts can be used as a vehicle for improving the learning experiences of undergraduate and postgraduate students. Research also showed how podcasts act as a bridge for listeners to connect with others around the world to better learn and understand various ideas and concepts. In addition, the theory of uses and gratifications was used in understanding the purposes and motives for why users interact with podcasts. Previous studies incorporating this theory referred to the uses and patterns of other digital platforms.

Over the past few years, there has been strong growth in the creation and listening of podcasts. Podcasts are media files that can be shared through the internet and played on computers and handheld devices (Jham, Duraes, Strassler, & Sensi, 2008). There are a wide variety of podcast subjects that cater to all different backgrounds and interests. Podcast content is created for audiences that want to listen when, where, and how they choose (Jham, Duraes, Strassler, & Sensi, 2008). Typically, podcast creators will define their podcast topic and then post on an established schedule, helping to create a loyal following.

One study found that listeners of podcasts were generally well educated and affluent (McClung & Johnson, 2010). They most commonly download their episodes on a portable device allowing for ease of use. The motivations of listeners ranged from pure entertainment to social aspects, such as talking about shows with others. Some evidence points toward the social factor motivation being a key predictor for listeners' podcast usage (McClung & Johnson, 2010).

While podcasts are useful for just about anyone looking to learn more about a subject, they have also been shown to enhance learning. Podcasts allow teachers to offer an additional resource to what is already being provided in the classroom (Goldman, 2018). Often, podcasts will reference other sources from which they are getting information, encouraging students to seek out these additional sources for further insight (Goldman, 2018).

Since educational podcasts are easily accessible from any portable device, students can listen while performing another activity. A study by Coens, Degryse, Senecaut, Cottyn, & Clarebout (2011) examined the effects of combining a learning task (listening to an educational podcast) with exercise (walking or jogging). The control group in the study solely listened to the podcast without the exercise component, while the experimental group combined both listening to a podcast and exercising. Following the activity, participants were asked to complete a learning test. In result, there was no significant difference in the performance of the two groups. A second study identified that students who sat and listened outperformed the students who were moving. Although this study found no marked difference in the performance, there is additional space for research on the effects of combining exercise and audio learning. But this does not change the fact that podcasts are portable, accessible, and a great learning alternative for students on the go.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The uses and gratifications theory explains how people use media to serve a personal need or satisfaction they are looking to fulfill (Communication Theory, 2018). For example, one study showed that podcast users had five specific motives: find information, interpersonal use, entertainment, convenience, and passing time (McClung & Johnson, 2010). Another study identified categories that aligned closely to those of the previous research, applying the uses and gratifications theory in exploring web use (Ebersole, 2000). Falling under the umbrella of motives, another study showed that social media content plays an important role in helping members of communities understand themselves and feel supported and connected (Fujita, Harrigan, & Soutar, 2018).

A more recent large national survey found podcast users in the United States use the medium for entertainment, information, and audio platform superiority. Audio platform superiority incorporates convenience of use, and variety and uniqueness of content (Wang & Chan-Olmsted, 2020). This study aligns with tenets of the uses and gratifications theory, identifying how the participants interact with the object (podcasts) and the gratifications or fulfillment they receive in return from the act. The motives of the users were found to affect the settings, width, depth, and routine of the users' listening habits (Wang & Chan-Olmsted, 2020).

Researchers have begun examining media use during the COVID-19 pandemic. One study examined Australian students' media use during the early stages of the pandemic to determine whether their media use related to changes in their life satisfaction (Krause, Dimmock, Rebar, & Jackson 2021). Media use included listening to music, playing online games, watching TV or movies, and using social media. The study's results indicated that the participants' overall life satisfaction was positive in association to music listening, and negatively associated with TV, videos, and movies.

The current study is built on previous podcast research but bridges a research gap by analyzing a unique demographic group and their podcast use during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research incorporates a relevant and unprecedented event as the defining angle. Because this topic is not overly researched, this initial in-depth examination on the topic leaves room for deeper exploration and discovery in future studies.

Research Questions

This study will answer the following research questions regarding podcast usage during the COVID-19 pandemic:

RQ1: How has COVID-19 impacted undergraduate college students' podcast listening habits and attitudes?

RQ2: How do undergraduate college students see podcast technology changing over time?

RQ3: Why do Gen Z undergraduate college students choose to listen to podcasts?

This research is significant because it focuses on a specific podcast platform and initially examines how the habits and attitudes towards the medium may have changed, if at all, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Podcasts have been previously studied by scholars, but no research to date has looked at the unique relationship between the pandemic and podcast use among undergraduate college students.

III. Methods

The study used two focus groups to seek insight about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on undergraduate college-aged students' podcast use. The researcher looked for common themes among the participants' comments in constructing the overall findings.

The researcher began by using convenience sampling to reach out to friends, acquaintances, and peers that fit the criteria of an undergraduate college student who currently or previously used or interacted with podcasts. Participants ranged from first-year to fourth-year students. The researcher posted in the class Facebook groups, organization GroupMe messages, and talked to surrounding friends and roommates to gather participants. When collecting potential participants, the researcher informed them that all research would be anonymous and confidential, and nothing would ever be traced back to them. After gathering interested participants, the researcher sent out a short prescreening survey to collect the contact information, schedule availability, and general podcast habit information of the participants.

The study gathered two separate focus groups ranging from four to five participants each. To follow COVID-19 protocol, the focus group sessions were held over Zoom. The researcher again stated that all data collection would be confidential and that participant names would not be used. Participants were notified that they could leave the study at any time and that the study would be available to them at its conclusion. The Zoom session was recorded and transcribed after the conclusion of the meeting for analysis of data.

At the beginning of the meeting, the researcher began with general, basic information about the participants. Then, the researcher asked the participants a sentence completion question as a warm-up technique. All subsequent focus group questions were open-ended. The in-depth questions asked about the general podcast uses and habits among the participants. As the questions continued, participants were asked about the perceptions or thoughts on podcasts overall. Further, the questions tapped into the effects of COVID-19 on podcast listening habits. Participants were asked to compare their pre-COVID and post-COVID podcast listening habits and then asked to dive deeper into where they see the future of podcasts heading.

Once the two focus groups concluded, the researcher transcribed the conversations from the virtual sessions. The recorded sessions were destroyed after the researcher transcribed the data. The researcher thoroughly analyzed the transcripts for common themes, statements, opinions, or ideas relevant to the research questions.

IV. Findings

The study identified several common themes in the prescreening questionnaire around podcast habits and uses. Of the nine participants who submitted the questionnaire, all identified that they had previously or actively listened to podcasts. All of the participants listened to at least one podcast during the quarantine period of COVID-19.

One participant identified that she or he currently listens to two podcast series, while seven participants identified actively listening to three podcast series on rotation. Only one participant identified actively listening to five podcast series. When asked to describe podcast commercials in an open-ended response box, participants replied with words such as annoying, awkward, necessary, strategic, and informative.

Habits, Attitudes, and COVID-19

Regarding the first research question, participants described a few common associations with the word, “podcasts.” Specifically, they described podcasts as interesting, educational, and therapeutic. They related podcasts to the activities of cooking, cleaning, commuting, and exercising. The participants noted common favorite podcast subject areas, such as news and current events, crime, American history, pop culture, global news, lifestyle/self-help, and sports news. Within those categories, a few of the favorite series were The Morning Toast (2018), The Daily (2017), Happier with Gretchen Rubin (2015), The Stuff You Should Know (2008), and The Joe Rogan Experience (2009).

Most participants liked to listen to the newest podcasts of their favorite series but also would go back to past episodes if they found a topic that was relatable or that they wanted to learn more about. Regarding national, global, or pop news, all agreed the specific episode must be timely, and they likely would not find themselves going back to listen to old series of news-related podcasts.

When examining how participants’ podcast listening habits were affected by COVID-19, the most common response was that many had increased their listening frequency. However, a small number of participants expressed that due to their loss of travel and commuting during COVID-19, they were no longer listening to podcasts as much as they previously did or not at all. They turned to other activities to fill their time during quarantine. Multiple participants listened one to two times a week while others varied, often going two weeks in between listening to podcasts. The highest frequency of podcast listening identified by a few participants was five to six times a week. Participants said that exercising, cleaning, cooking, and mindless homework or tasks were when they recalled listening to podcasts the most. Long car rides such as returning to college were when multiple participants noted as the best time to listen.

COVID-19 also impacted the general media consumption habits of the participants. While their podcast use increased, their social media use accelerated at an even faster rate. A few admitted they excessively used platforms such as TikTok and Snapchat, turning to podcasts to feel more productive and use their time more wisely. Participants noted how podcasts distracted them from their social media addiction to form a healthier media consumption habit.

Listening to podcasts helped the participants stay more in touch with current events. As college students, there was common agreement that as they get closer to starting their professional careers, they want to be more informed and in touch with what is happening with the external world. The students identified podcasts related to current events as an easy addition to their day-to-day routine, as they could listen during other ordinary activities. Several participants noted that due to COVID-19, they branched out in the variety of podcasts they listened to so they could try something new.

The Future of Podcasts

Regarding the second question in the study, the participants collectively agreed that they believed podcasts currently have a good reputation, but this may change over time. They believe the educational component makes it superior to listening to the radio or a talk show and consider it a “trendy” up-and-coming activity. One frequent response among the participants was that listening to podcasts adds value and productivity to tedious tasks, resulting in a solid reasoning to continue to incorporate the activity in one’s day-to-day routine for the foreseeable future. When asking the participants about the future of podcasts, some participants felt that the podcast space will become saturated, largely because so many new series have been created during the COVID-19 pandemic. They believe as the space becomes saturated, it may turn into a “radio situation” (too many channels, too many options = loss of interest in the platform). The correlation between podcasts and the “radio situation” is that once there are too many series similar to too many radio stations, listeners lose interest due to the overwhelming number of listening options. A few participants added how there are too many podcast series to choose from within each specialized category they find interesting (Ex. Lifestyle or Daily News), making the podcast space overwhelming to navigate. As a result, some expressed that they may only continue to listen to their favorite series and not make an effort to discover new ones. Some even claimed how they may turn away from podcasts completely due to the oversaturation. Conversely, some respondents agreed that as a result of the effects of COVID-19, podcasts are here to stay because they allow for listeners to connect with others from all over the world.

One participant noted they came across an article stating podcast microphones were selling out during quarantine and that a record number of new series were being created. With many individuals at home looking for new hobbies, there was an influx of people who felt inspired to create their own podcast series to share their perspectives with a larger audience. In contrast to the argument that the podcast market will become oversaturated, one participant countered with the belief that the influx will make podcasts more of a staple. The participant believed more people will incorporate podcast use into their routines to feel inspired and connected to the world around them. The participant also explained how the lack of connection with others experienced during COVID-19 has made people desire more interconnectivity to the world around them, prompting them to find alternative ways to do so, such as listening and interacting with podcasts.

Why Gen Z Listens to Podcasts

In the third and final research question, many of the participants expressed that COVID-19 was a large reason why they currently listen to podcasts. While COVID-19 significantly reduced all human interaction for an indefinite period of time, the participants explained that during a time of loneliness, the podcast community gave them a sense of belonging to something outside of their homes. Multiple participants mentioned the “Toaster” community based on the podcast The Morning Toast (2018), which offered daily live podcasts. Others found podcasts as conversation starter and a way to connect with others, as well as the podcast hosts. The participants felt passionate about what they were learning or hearing from their own favorite series and felt it would provide value to the lives of those around them. One participant described this idea as a “unique community that anonymously consumes a topic of interest which as a result fills a void of loneliness.”

When students seek new podcast series, they most commonly turn to friends or react to word-of-mouth recommendations. This creates common points of interest among the participants and their friends, giving them something to connect over. Participants cited using social media, influencers, YouTube video mentions, other podcasts, or scrolling through iTunes to find podcasts that sparked personal interests.

As previously mentioned, the most common reasons participants listened to podcasts was to learn something new and stay up-to-date on news. This was identified as consistent throughout the pre-COVID to post-COVID eras. Podcasts can be thought-provoking and offer new perspectives on interesting or controversial topics. The participants identified podcasts as a way to help them learn from a variety of individuals from writers to doctors and authors outside of their day-to-day human interactions, especially during the quarantine period of COVID-19. These unique professionals and leaders helped the participants to learn, connect, and expand their horizons outside of their "new normal" COVID-19 daily routine. Participants agreed that this offering provided an extra source of inspiration and education during the COVID-19 pandemic that continuously brought them back to regularly using the audio platform.

V. Discussion

Overall, this initial attempt to understand the attitudes and behaviors regarding college students' podcast attitudes revealed a generally positive view towards the platform. The responses suggested that compared to other audio listening platforms, such as the radio or social media, podcasts are seen as a more productive use of time.

As mentioned previously, one study showed that quarantine and social distancing brought about changes in the ways people interacted with media (Krause, Dimmock, Rebar, & Jackson, 2021). This research found that podcast listening was one way that students changed their media habits. Overall, the students' responses indicated that their podcast listening habits had increased. The podcasts were a positive distraction from other media that was not as educational or entertaining. During a time of disconnect from the external world, the students turned to podcasts to receive news and to feel more in touch with what was happening. Further, the students' opportunity to listen to stimulating professionals or guests from all over the world allowed them to feel reinspired and connected.

One of the findings from this study was that participants felt podcasts are entertaining. This is similar to previous research by McClung & Johnson (2010) that identified entertainment as one of four motives for why people use podcasts to fill a personal need or gain satisfaction. In addition, these results align with past research suggesting that social media content plays an important role in helping members of communities understand themselves and feel supported and connected (Fujita, Harrigan, & Soutar, 2018). Many of the respondents in this study noted how podcast series offer a community that diffuses information on topics they are passionate about and offers support and connection to other listeners. This is especially important to note during the COVID-19 pandemic as many felt more disconnected than ever.

Word of mouth was the most frequently expressed method of learning about new podcasts in this study. This aligns with previous research identifying that podcasts often mention sources where they get their information, which encourages students to investigate these additional sources and gain insight on other topics (Goldman, 2018). The participants in this study noted that they would learn about other podcasts when they were mentioned in their favorite podcast series.

There were a few limitations to this research regarding podcast listening in college students and the impacts of COVID-19. The research did not examine the larger population of college students with a wider range of age and diversity but does go in-depth on the opinions of those who participated. Because the study focused on several students in comparison to the entire population, there may be additional insights based on a larger, more diverse group. Lastly, other methods, such as individual interviews or a survey, may generate additional results, providing further insight into podcast listening habits.

VI. Conclusion

The research provided an initial attempt to understand how COVID-19 impacted undergraduate college students' attitudes and habits around podcasts. Responses indicate that podcasts were used as a resource to educate, a coping tool for boredom, and a source of entertainment. The research revealed that the college student population relied on this platform to fill a need or satisfaction related to a topic or multiple topics that they are passionate about. Many of the responses showed a desire to fill a gap in their lives of community and increase interconnectedness, especially during a time of separation and loneliness. By understanding the uses and habits of this platform in relation to COVID-19, professionals can potentially use the data to better understand how Gen Z consumes media and interacts with this platform and similar platforms. By attempting to understand the way they consume content, the industry can be better prepared in targeting this demographic group and prepare to bring them into this media space.

For future research, one approach would be to examine the attitudes and habits of a larger, more diverse group of undergraduate students to see how their outlook differs from this smaller sample size. Additionally, future work could explore undergraduate college student podcast hosts who have their own series to get a different perspective on their attitudes and uses.

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Career Needs of NCAA Division I Athletic Directors

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Abstract

The Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM) highlights the complexities of work and values, positing we have three career needs (authenticity, balance, and challenge) but their importance differs across gender and career stage. In Division I college athletics, athletic directors (ADs) take on the CEO role, but only 7.5 percent of ADs are women. To better understand the gender discrepancy in this leadership role, this study used the KCM to determine differences in ADs career needs. Through a quantitative survey design, findings suggest ADs, regardless of gender and career stage, prioritized challenge, followed by authenticity then balance. This differs from past studies and may reflect the nature of this demanding, ever-changing CEO position in college sports. It is important athletic departments understand what their ADs value and need in their career to provide appropriate support, which may encourage more women to pursue this leadership position.

I. Introduction

Over the last decade, the way in which we work has changed dramatically, and the demographic makeup of the workforce has shifted. Organizations have had to adapt to remote work, and 40% of Baby Boomers (those born between 1946-1964) have retired (Fry, 2020). Scholars have most often studied careers and career decisions from a traditional perspective, where employees stay in the same organization or career long-term, often seen as the path of least resistance.

More recently, studies have investigated career development from a contemporary perspective, where employees make decisions based on values, relationships, and tend to be more fluid and flexible in nature (Hall, 1996; Mainiero & Gibson, 2018; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005, 2006; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). With individuals' ability to work virtually and with workers from four generations (Baby Boomers, Millennials, Generation X and Generation Z) active in the workplace (Kuligowski, 2021), studying careers from a more contemporary perspective is important. Examples of contemporary career perspectives are *protean careers*, where career success is defined by personal values (Hall, 1996; Hall & Chandler, 2005) and *boundaryless careers* which emphasizes career mobility (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996).

Since research shows the primary reasons employees leave their jobs involve relationship issues at work, boredom and a lack of challenge, meaningfulness of the job, and inability to develop and use skills (Heathfield, 2021), examining careers from a perspective that highlights the complexities of work and values may shed insight into employees' lived experiences. However, protean and boundaryless career perspectives

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lack a focus on how gender may influence career decisions and trajectories. The Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM) does that, created with women in mind, but also introduces career stage as a factor that may influence career decisions.

In early career, it is common for individuals to have challenges in understanding their role, finding their career path, and finding the right organization (Kulkarni, 2016). Challenges at mid-career can include increased responsibility, work-life conflict, and greater pressure to perform because the "professional honeymoon" is over (Austin, n.d.; Golper & Feldman, 2008). Lastly, in late career, rapid changes in career duties, plateauing, burnout, and loss of motivation are seen as challenges (Dyrbye et al., 2013; Rosen & Jerdee, 1992). If these challenges become too great, it can negatively impact employees' production and satisfaction (Dyrbye et al., 2013). While career stage may impact employees career experiences, gender can as well. Research finds men and women respond to the same career and life issues but in a different order (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006).

The KCM is a way to organize career parameters or career needs – defined as personal needs of goals, tasks, and challenges – that one may have during different points in the career. The KCM suggests that over the course of the career span (early, mid, and late), men and women have three career needs: authenticity, balance, and challenge (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006), but the importance of these needs differ based on gender of the employee and career stage.

It may be worth better understanding how gender and career stage within male-dominated professions influence career decisions. An example of such a profession resides within the sport industry, particularly college athletics. In Division I college athletics, across 345 universities, 44 percent of college athletes are women, but only 42.3 percent are head coaches (LaVoi & Boucher, 2020), and only 7.5 percent (26) are athletic directors, with only four leading Power Five programs (Belzer et al., 2021). It has been stated that the lack of women in leadership roles in college athletic departments may be attributed to various reasons: confidence, work-life management, mentorship, and social/cultural issues (Belzer et al., 2021).

Within the context of college athletics, the purpose of this study is to better understand the careers of NCAA D-I athletic directors (ADs) by studying their career needs through a kaleidoscope perspective. Using the ABCs of the KCM, this research also aims to determine if there are any differences in the career needs of ADs across gender and career stage. Further understanding the careers of ADs may paint a clearer picture to the gender discrepancy in this leadership role and offer valuable insight into ways universities can support their ADs during different stages of their career. This research will use feedback from D-I athletic directors (n = 52) in hopes of helping ADs succeed in both work and nonwork domains.

II. Theoretical Framework

The Kaleidoscope Career Model is a way to organize career parameters or career needs (defined as personal needs of goals, tasks, and challenges) that one may have during different points in the career. The KCM suggests that over the course of a career, men and women have three career needs: authenticity, balance, and challenge (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006), but the importance of these needs differ based on gender of the employee and career stage. According to Sullivan and Mainiero (2008), the three career parameters are:

- Authenticity—defined as the being true to oneself amid the constant interplay between personal development and work and nonwork issues;
- Balance—defined as making decisions so that the different aspects of one's life, both work and nonwork, form a coherent whole; and
- Challenge—defined as engaging in activities that permit the individual to demonstrate responsibility, control, and autonomy while learning and growing (p. 35).

Most studies on the KCM focus on women's career experiences as it relates to authenticity, balance, and challenge (August, 2011; Cabrera, 2007; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006; Shaw & Leberman, 2015; Sullivan et al., 2009). Those studies tested the KCM and found career needs for women across different stages of life differed across the career. Women reported valuing challenge in early career, followed by balance, and authenticity, as shown in Figure 1.

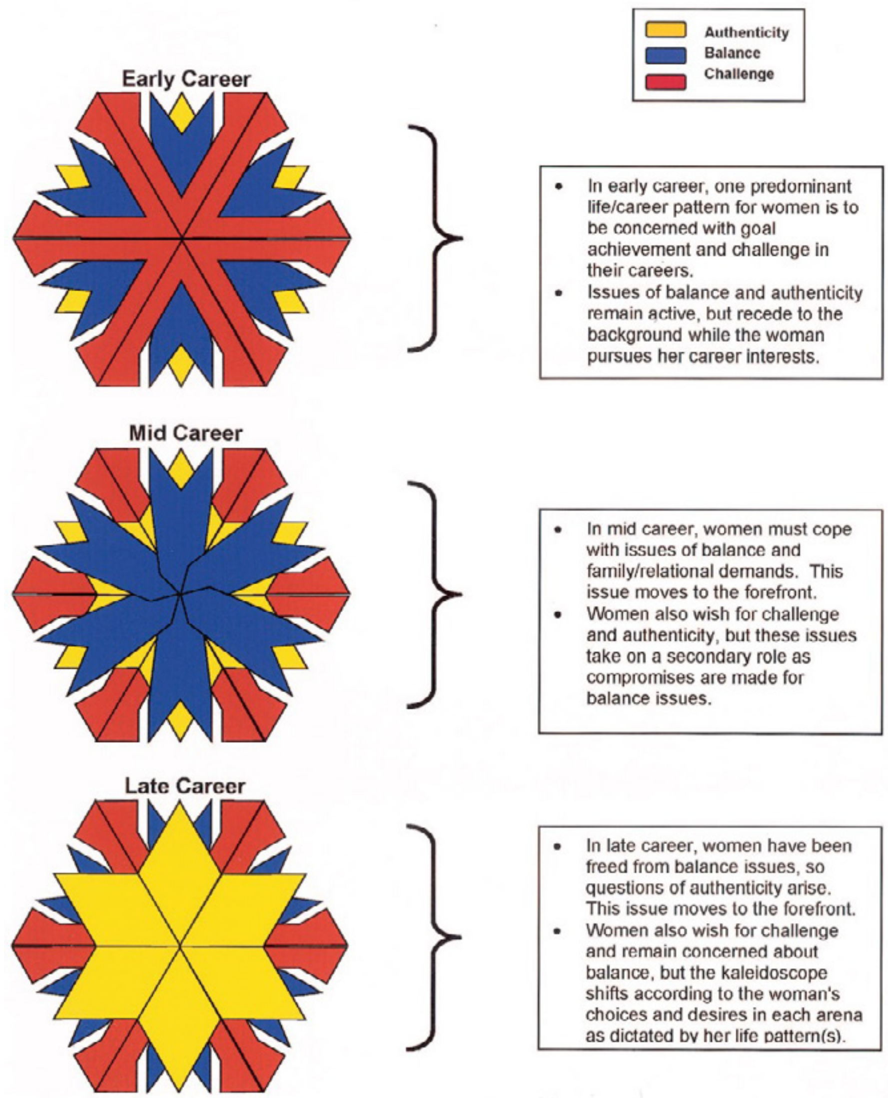

Figure 1: Kaleidoscope Career Model (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005).

KCM Across Career Span

Literature on KCM has examined individual's experiences at one point in time and then compared it to other individual's experiences at different stages in the career. Mainiero and Sullivan (2006) suggested that men generally follow an alpha career pattern and women typically follow a beta career pattern. An alpha career pattern is when a person prioritizes their career as one of the most important things in their life. Beta career patterns are displayed when individuals try to balance their work life with their home and family life, or even put their career second to their non-work life (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2007).

In early career, women focused on finding challenge within their career and were more likely to take on extra responsibility, which may impact their ability to balance other aspects of their life (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008). In the mid-career stage, women were concerned with balance. No matter their relationship status, women worked to balance their work priorities with family priorities. Women in mid-career may be more likely to have children and aging parents, which can bring additional challenges that require attention (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2008). Balance was recognized as strategies for optimizing beneficial connections between work and nonwork, and negative connections between work and nonwork. Similar to Mainiero and Sullivan's study (2006), the notion of balance was still an important aspect that the women were to focus on and accomplish in late career (August, 2011). This was supported by Mainiero and Gibson (2018) who studied unemployed individuals' career needs across gender in midcareer. Results found balance became significantly more important for women in full midcareer but was of lesser importance for men. Challenge remained consistent for men and women, declining in importance over time.

Similarly, Sullivan et al. (2009) used the KCM to study differences in career needs across generations. Baby Boomers are often described as "living to work" and Xers as "working to live." It was found that Generation X valued authenticity and balance higher than Baby Boomers In the late career stage, women desired authenticity in their work. They were focused on being true to themselves and making more personal decisions. In late career, women still strive for challenge within their work, but instead of it being the type of challenge that the women in the early career stages want (more hours, responsibilities these challenges are more personal and individually based on what the women want for themselves (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2008). These differences are more recently exposed by the Millennial generation, where mentorships are available (mid-career internship) and "can be seen as an expression of how millennials think about their careers. They are open to change, new industries, and seek opportunities to be challenged in new ways" (Pollack, 2019, para. 5).

Lastly, in late career, women focused on authenticity, being true to oneself, followed by balance and then challenge (Cabrera, 2007). In August's (2011) research, participants defined authenticity in four ways: taking care of the self, self-acceptance, negotiating end-of-life issues, and finding deeper levels of meaning in work. Overall, at the core, authenticity revolved around the idea of focusing on one's own needs (August, 2011). Lastly, challenge was highlighted in three areas: maintaining or striving for growth, demonstrating competence, and intrinsic interest of work. Research suggests the women in late career have a clear need to maintain challenges in their work in order to promote and strive for growth, proven competence, and intellectual stimulation (August, 2011; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006). As women enter their later career stages, they develop new meanings of each career need, especially for authenticity (August, 2011). Despite the growing research utilizing KCM, there is a dearth of literature on KCM and employees in mid-late career. One professional context that has used KCM to understand career values across the career is within the sport industry where scholars have studied college head coaches (Dabbs et al., 2020; Dabbs & Pastore, 2017) and CEOs (Shaw & Leberman, 2015). This male-dominated industry may be worthy of study to gain a better idea of how the KCM applies to sport professionals and why there are fewer women in leadership roles within sport.

KCM in Sport

In a study on men and women head coaches, it was found that coaches have differing needs across the career (Dabbs & Pastore, 2017). Specifically, in early career, regardless of gender, coaches' prioritized challenge. Fulfilling the challenge career need involved coaches learning and taking on more responsibility. Career needs for coaches shifted once mid-career was reached. In this stage, women had a greater need for balance, while men mainly focus on authenticity. Previous KCM studies support this finding (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006) and the recognize women's struggle with balancing work and family responsibilities. In late career female coaches prioritized authenticity while male coaches focused on balance. A more recent qualitative study in the sport industry highlight coaches' reframing of the kaleidoscope career needs. For example, male and female coaches in mid-career prioritized authenticity. It was found that these coaches define their need to authenticity to include making an impact and coaching becoming more about long-term relationships with athletes, as compared to earlier in the career (Dabbs et al., 2020).

It could be helpful to utilize KCM to study the careers of leaders and decision makers of sport organizations because the result of good leadership is increase in company profits, the outperformance of competitors, and an increase in employee job satisfaction (McKinney, 2020). In college athletic departments, the leaders and decision makers are ADs who "represent a template of the mega-multitasking CEO-model AD that universities have come to covet and compensate in fast-increasing fashion" (Berkowitz & Upton, 2011, para. 2).

College Athletics and Athletic Directors

College athletics can be seen as a major selling point for a university and success in athletics has led to intangible benefits — more national exposure, more admission applications, better quality students and increased alumni donations (Pennington, 2012). For example, Northwestern University saw a 21 percent increase in admissions applications when its football team won the Big Ten Championship (Silverthorne, 2013) and during NCAA March Madness, when 15th-seeded Florida Gulf Coast advanced to the Sweet Sixteen, applications to the campus spiked by 27.5 percent (Glatter, 2017). Due to the ripple affect athletics has across campus, university presidents who hire ADs know that finding and keeping the right person is critical.

The responsibility and career challenges ADs face changes based on the level of competition. The NCAA Division I (D-I) level represents close to 350 college and universities, fields more than 6,000 athletic teams, and provides more than 170,000 student-athletes opportunities to compete in sports each year (NCAA, 2021) and is known to be the most visible level of the NCAA. At the D-I Power 5 Conference level (the top level of college football), ADs are managing athletic budgets that reach into the hundreds of millions of dollars (Belzer, 2015a). It is not uncommon for ADs at a Power Five school to earn a $1 million salary (Bean-Mellinger, 2021).

Additionally, ADs have a long list of job responsibilities ranging from strategic planning, to fundraising, to compliance with NCAA rules, to budget and personnel management. As the leader of the athletics program, ADs are under constant pressure to achieve—both on the field of play and at the bank. Schools are spending more on athletics and ADs have essentially become managers of multifaceted, complex business operations (Belzer, 2015). Today, top-level executives with advanced degrees are representing the AD role within college athletics (Belzer, 2015).

When ADs cannot find this success, their jobs are at stake. According to Wong (2017), D-I athletic directors stay on the job for an average of 6.78 years. ADs can find themselves in difficulties in their career if they cannot effectively perform their duties in hiring and generating revenue. As Belzer (2015) pointed out, “balancing an athletics budget is one thing, insuring that one can do so while simultaneously investing hundreds of millions more into facilities requires a far more advanced ability to manage cash flow” (para. 8). The failure of the AD to execute these pressures have contributed to the high turnover rate.

The top two challenges that ADs face are hiring qualified coaches and fundraising (Hoffman, 2018). At the D-I level, athletic directors are responsible for creating top-level football and basketball programs. These sports are under constant criticism from university administrators, alumni, and donors. There is a pressure for ADs to turn around programs in just two to three years. If this does not happen, coaches are fired, and the AD’s job is at risk (Belzer, 2015). Additionally, when examining the finances of college athletics, studies show that fewer than 24 schools make more money than they spend a year, not including long-term debt (Lopiano, 2017). Athletic directors “always have pressures to raise money. It’s always hard, it’s an important part of the job” (Marcus, 2018, para. 30).

Diversity Among Athletic Directors

Overall, the demographic makeup of athletic directors glaringly lacks diversity, specifically gender diversity. Despite the passage of Title IX close to 50 years ago, the opportunities available for female administrators at top leadership positions like an AD are profoundly lacking (Belzer, 2015b). According to the College Sport Racial and Gender Report Card, women athletic directors at all Division I schools increased from 13.6 percent to 14.3 percent from 2019 to 2020 (Lapchick, 2021). Even though the percentage increased, the same report card graded the gender hiring practices for D-I athletic director positions as an “F” (Lapchick, 2021). Currently, among the 130 athletic directors at the Division I FBS (Football Bowl Subdivision) level, only 12 (9.2%) are women. The disparity exists at this leadership position and the gap is closing at a very slow rate (Lapchick, 2021).

Studies show that having diversity in top management positions is needed to leverage a company’s full potential (Kerby & Burns, 2012). One way that collegiate athletic departments currently address this is through a Senior Woman Administrator. According to the NCAA (2019), “the senior woman administrator is the highest-ranking female in each NCAA athletics department or conference office and the purpose of the SWA designation is to promote meaningful representation of women in the leadership and management of college sports” (para. 1). However, as Whisenant et al. (2002) argues, “the assignment as the SWA segregates women into management or administrative positions that involve only women’s sports. This denies them the power associated with controlling the ‘revenue generating’ sports” (p. 489).

Having women in the top AD role is important for several reasons. First, equity is concerned with fairness, and the lack of fairness here should be clear. Second, it is important to the future of sport that young women see other women in decision-making positions. Third, it has been found that when women are in the AD role, they hire more women coaches and staff. Finally, women have different perspectives and unique skill sets that involve relationship-building through encouragement and nurturing (Whisenant et al., 2002).

Defining Career Stages

When classifying people into different career stages, one of the easiest ways to do it is by age. For example, in one study, subjects were classified into either early, mid, or late career stage based on their age. In this study, the early career stage is defined as 20–34 years of age, the midcareer stage as 35–44, and the late career stage as 45 years and over (Robertson, 2017). Other studies break down career stages by years of experience. For example, early career was defined as within the first 10 years of one's working life, midcareer labeled as working 15-25 years, and late career was defined as the five years before one's projected retirement date (Mainiero & Gibson, 2018). Classifying people into different career stages by age or years of experience may be the simplest way to complete the classification, but there are several complications that come with this technique, especially in the sport management industry.

The early career stage is all about diving in and gaining experience. In the early career stage, people are learning basic work skills that apply to a specific job and learning how to work with others and earn a paycheck. People in the early career stage are most likely earning a minimal paycheck since they are still trying to prove their skill and work their way up in job positions (Ashe-Edmunds, 2019). The early career stage is mainly for younger people who are just getting started with a job that is within their chosen specialty.

The midcareer stage is for people who have been working in their field for a significant amount of time, so they are more familiar with the job and the skills needed, but they are still refining their skills and trying to move their way up in their chosen industry (Robertson, 2017). According to Ashe-Edmunds (2019), people in the mid-career stage may manage others but will still need to execute the strategies of the executive team instead of personal ideas. The mid-career stage can be seen as a very transitional stage since people have developed skills but are not at the level to be able to pursue their personal goals quite yet.

The midcareer stage may be better defined as a "midlife" stage that has three parts: early-mid career stage, mid-career stage, and mid-late career stage (Mainiero & Gibson, 2018). The midlife career stages are important to recognize because it creates a more specific way to categorize people across the career span. For example, according to Robertson's (2017) definition of career stages, an AD that is 45 years old would be considered in the late career stage, but they may just be starting a new position, or just recently been appointed AD. This example would differ greatly from how Mainiero and Gibson (2018) would categorize career stage. In this same example, this AD would be in early midcareer. Career experiences and needs of athletic directors between these two stages could be starkly different, yet technically, the literature has labeled them in the same place in their career. In the sport management world, ADs, on average, are 45.3 years old at time of hire (Wong, 2017). If ADs were classified by age, the majority would probably be considered late career (Robertson, 2017), but if they are just starting this position at an older age, it would probably be more appropriate to place them in a career stage that considers years in the workforce.

The late career stage is generally made of people who have had their job title for many years and have made strides from the lower job positions to higher job positions. Since people in the late career stage have this experience, they may feel less pressure on themselves to prove their skills (Robertson, 2017). People in the late career stages are often older and are seen as highly skilled and very experienced.

To get a more accurate depiction of the relevance of KCM career needs in athletic directors' careers, for the purpose of this study, it is more appropriate to have five distinct career stages. Taking from Mainiero and Gibson (2018) with support from Dabbs et al. (2020), these career stages are defined as: early career (defined as within the first 10 years of one's working life), early midcareer (having worked at least 10–15 years), midcareer (having worked at least 15–25 years), late midcareer (having worked 25-plus years), and late career (within five years before projected retirement date).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to better understand the careers of NCAA D-I ADs by studying their career needs through a kaleidoscope perspective. This research also aims to determine if there are any differences in the career needs of ADs across gender and career stage. Further understanding the careers of ADs may paint a clearer picture to the gender discrepancy in this leadership role and offer valuable insight into ways universities can support their ADs during different stages of their career, in hopes of helping ADs succeed in both work and nonwork domains.

RQ1: What career need best describes D-I ADs?

RQ2: Do career needs differ between D-I ADs across gender?

RQ3: Do career needs differ between D-I ADs across career stage?

III. Methods

In this study, a census was conducted, sampling all ADs working at the NCAA D-I level. A total of N = 343 athletic directors were asked to participate.

The career needs of authenticity, balance, and challenge were measured using a 15-item scale developed by Sullivan et al. (2009). Each career need had five items associated with it. For example, authenticity (5-items: e.g., I want to have an impact and leave my signature on what I accomplish in life), balance (5-items: e.g., my work is meaningless if I cannot take the time to be with my family), and challenge (5-items: e.g., I view setbacks not as “problems” to be overcome, but as “challenges” that require solutions). Respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = does not describe me at all, to 5 = describes very well) that describes the need for authenticity, balance, and challenge. In a previous study (Sullivan et al., 2009), authenticity, balance, and challenge were found reliable with Cronbach alpha to be adequate factors to describe career needs.

Data was collected online through the Qualtrics survey system. A survey instrument of 27 items, where 15 items were related to the career needs of authenticity, balance, and challenge (Sullivan et al., 2009) was used. Demographic variables (i.e., gender, career stage, and age) were also collected.

The College Athletic Directors Online Database (2020), a database with the names and contact information of NCAA D-I ADs was used for the study. Athletic directors were sent a prenotification message in mid-June to alert them that a survey would be coming. Four days later, a survey link with an invitation to participate was e-mailed to all D-I athletic directors. One reminder e-mail was sent two weeks later to those athletic directors who had not completed the survey, and another e-mail was sent out the following fall for a final reminder. At the start of the 2019 academic school year, another reminder email was sent out to unfinished respondents to try and obtain as many responses as possible. After checking the database for multiples of the same address, a total of 343 athletic directors remained in the database. Of those, seven e-mails bounced back because the email was not recognized. After searching for the correct emails, a total of N = 336 e-mails were sent to athletic directors.

To analyze the data, IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistics Version 26 was used. After the survey was closed to the respondents, the data was cleaned. Several surveys were missing responses, so those surveys (n = 24) were omitted in data collection. Once the data was organized and cleaned, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze the data and reveal any statistically significant correlations. More specifically, the MANOVA was used to find statistical significance between the independent variables (between both genders, and among all five career stages) and dependent variables (all three career needs).

IV. Results

All ADs (N = 343) at the D-I level were asked to participate. After e-mail bounce back, the census sample became (N = 336). At the conclusion of the data collection timeframe, athletic directors (n = 76) completed the survey. There were surveys that were omitted due to being incomplete. That left a final sample size (n = 52) with a response rate of 15 percent.

Of the total sample, 35 male ADs and 17 female athletic directors responded. Most respondents were white (84.6%) with an average age of 44. Most ADs were married (80.8%) and had at least one child (89%). The mid-late career stage represented many of the ADs (36.5%) followed by mid-career stage (32.7%), late career stage (19.2%), and early-mid career stage (9.6%).

For research question 1, ADs reported having a need for authenticity, balance, and challenge. Respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = does not describe me at all to 5 = describes very well) that describes the need for authenticity, balance, and challenge. Most ADs regardless of career stage valued challenge (= 4.00; *SD* = 0.78). Male ADs were found to value challenge (m = 4.00; *SD* = 0.74) followed by authenticity (m = 3.03; *SD* = 0.86) and balance (m = 2.92; *SD* = 0.96). Similarly, female ADs also valued challenge (m = 3.99; *SD* = 0.89) followed by authenticity (m = 3.39; *SD* = 0.78) and balance (= 2.66; *SD* = 0.72).

Authenticity, Gender, and Career Stage

Figure 2 shows that both male and female ADs valued authenticity more than balance, but less than challenge (m = 3.16; *SD* = 0.84). For male ADs, the need for authenticity was not as strong as the female ADs' need in the early-mid (m = 2.53; SD = 0.61), mid (m = 3.18; SD = 0.79), and mid-late career (m = 2.97; SD = 0.93) stages, but the male ADs' need for authenticity was greater than the female ADs' need for authenticity in the late career stage (m = 3.13; SD = 0.97). Female ADs valued authenticity the most in the mid-late career stage (m = 3.88; SD = 0.30) and the least in the late career stage (m = 2.60; SD = 1.41).

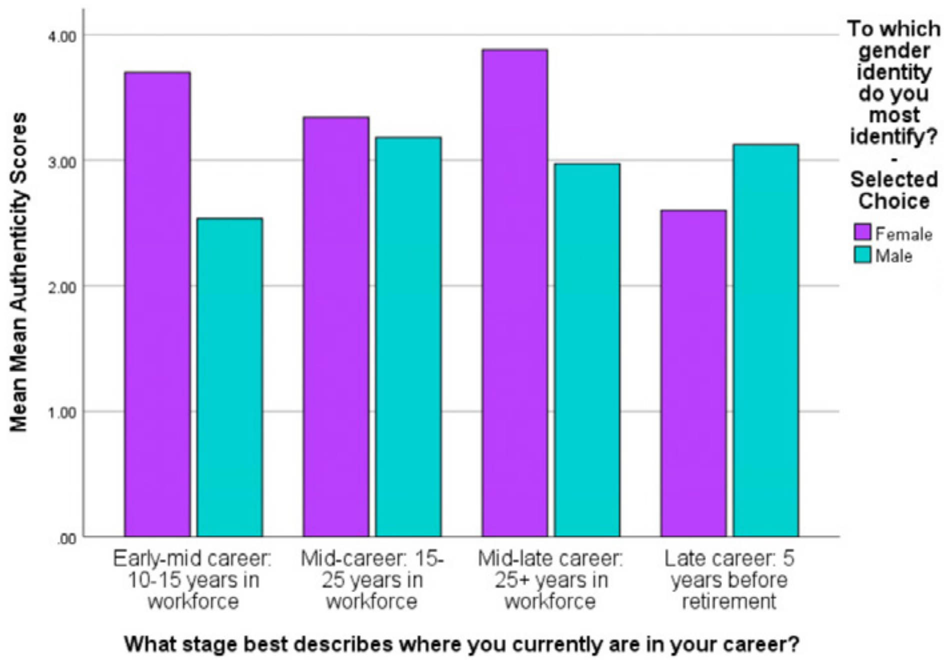

Figure 2: AD's Level of Authenticity Across Career Stages.

In Figure 3, the data shows that balance was the least valued career need for both male and female ADs (μ = 2.84; *SD* = 0.90). In the mid (μ = 2.66; *SD* = 0.91), mid-late (μ = 3.20; *SD* = 0.97), and late career stages (μ = 2.83; *SD* = 0.93), male ADs valued balance more than female ADs, but female ADs valued balance more than male ADs in the early-mid career stage (μ = 2.80; *SD* = 0.28). Overall, the need for balance in both male (μ = 2.92; *SD* = 0.96) and female (μ = 2.66; *SD* = 0.75) ADs' careers was not as strong for the needs of authenticity and challenge.

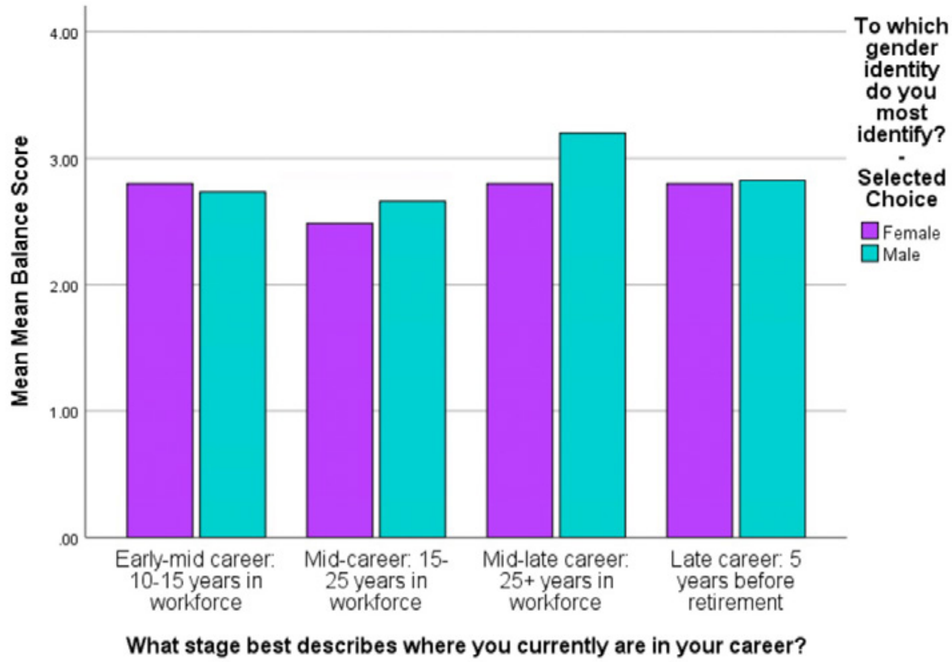

Figure 3: AD's Level of Balance Across Career Stages.

Challenge was the most valued career need for both male and female ADs, as shown in Figure 4, and that is likely due to the demanding nature of the job (μ = 4.03; *SD* = 0.76). Female ADs valued challenge more than male ADs in the early-mid (μ = 4.40; *SD* = 0.28) and mid-late (μ = 4.12; *SD* = 1.15) career stages, and male ADs valued challenge more than female ADs in the mid (μ = 4.20; *SD* = 0.72) and late career stages (= 3.98; *SD* = 0.43). Although the mean value changed between career stages for both male and female ADs, challenge (μ = 4.03; *SD* = 0.76) still had the highest mean out of all the career needs, making challenge a more valued career need than both authenticity (μ = 3.16; *SD* = 0.84) and balance (μ = 2.84; *SD*

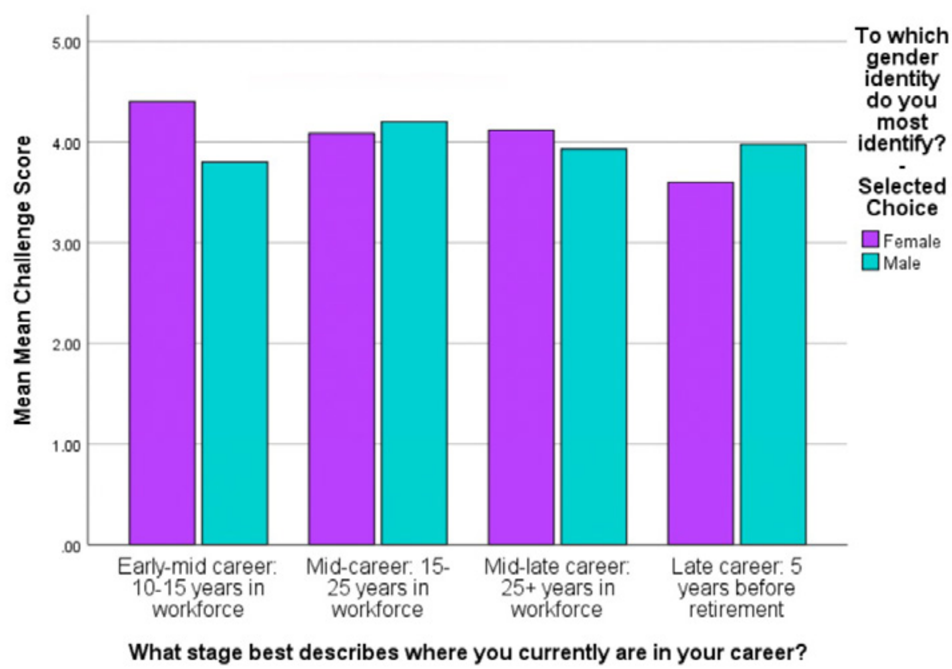

Figure 4: AD's Level of Challenge Across Career Stages.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance

To answer research question 2 and research question 3, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was performed. Results from the MANOVA found no statistically significant interaction effect between career stage and the combined dependent variables (authenticity, balance, and challenge) scores, $F(9, 99.93) = 0.47$, $p = 0.90$; Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.91$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$.

Results from the MANOVA also found no statistically significant interaction between gender of AD and the combined dependent variable (authenticity, balance, and challenge) scores, $F(3, 41) = 0.79$, $p = 0.51$; Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.95$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$. By career stage, the data shows that $p = .939$ for challenge, balance ($p = .353$), and authenticity ($p = .945$). Although none of these scores show statistical significance, they do show that D-I athletic directors had a lower need for balance than authenticity and challenge. = 0.90) for both male and female ADs.

V. Discussion & Conclusion

Overall, the data showed no statistical significance between the career needs of ADs across gender and career stage. These results differed from Mainiero and Sullivan's (2006) original work that found women would value challenge, balance, and then authenticity from the early to late career stages. This study shows that in college athletics, female ADs have a high need for challenge throughout their career with an emphasis on authenticity in the mid-late career stage.

Challenge (m = 4.00; *SD* = 0.78), which characterized ADs who yearn to participate in activities that allow them to demonstrate responsibility, control, and autonomy while learning and growing, had the highest mean for coaches ($n = 52$). Authenticity (m = 3.15; *SD* = 0.85) was the second most valued career need for ADs followed by balance (m = 2.83; *SD* = 0.89). These findings suggest the challenge career need was the most important to athletic directors.

The result that challenge was the most valued career need for athletic directors makes sense after gaining a better understanding of the nature of the job position. The role of being an AD has changed through the years in the sense that people who were retired coaches once were the common choice for the position, but now ADs are people who have a variety of backgrounds (Belzer & Parker, 2017). Colleges and universities are no longer hiring ex-head coaches because several athletic departments have turned into million-dollar businesses, and ADs are the people in charge of managing and maintaining the people, the money, and the image associated with the athletic department and college or university (Berkowitz et al., 2019). It makes sense that athletic directors would value challenge regardless of gender because challenge describes the way an individual desires to partake in work that motivates them, helps them grow and develop their skills, and make progress in their career – whether through skill or other areas of the career (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006). Challenge can mean many different things to each individual – whether it's the need for stimulation, the desire to advance in the field, partake in different experiences, build and enhance a resumé, or find ways to understand and gain new possibilities within current careers, it is clear that athletic directors value these different ways of challenging themselves during their time in the sport industry (Mainiero & Gibson, 2018).

Authenticity and balance are two other career needs that play a role in many industries, including the sport industry. According to the KCM, authenticity refers to the individual's need to have their work connect with their inner values and goals, even if they are different from the values and goals of their work, and balance is a career need that focuses on the individual having quality experiences in both work and family domains (Mainiero & Gibson, 2018). The data showed no significant difference between career stage, gender, and career need in D-I ADs, which goes to show that while challenge had the highest ratings, authenticity and balance were still closely valued.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study faced some limitations, including a small sample size. The study was able to collect data from 15% of the entire D-I AD population (52 respondents out of 336 who received emails). Most of the study aimed to collect data throughout the summer and fall seasons, which are times when athletic directors could be taking a break from work on vacation and then getting overloaded with work as a new academic year starts. A follow-up study may be worthy to conduct and look across NCAA divisions. With more than 1,000 ADs representing all NCAA divisions, the sample size would be larger. Additionally, this quantitative study gives us a general perspective on career needs. However, there is more to learn about how athletic directors cope and manage their careers to meet their career needs. Following Dabbs et al. (2020), it is suggested ADs career development and management may be best understood by taking a qualitative perspective. This may provide a richness in the data that can tell a more complete story for ADs and their careers and would allow some comparisons of head coaches' and athletic directors' experiences, both roles of which effectively serve as CEOs of sport departments.

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The Crisis Communicated: A Study of the Chronology and Content of Environmental Documentaries in the United States, from 1990 to 2019

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Abstract

The immediacy of the climate change crisis demands informative and influential messaging strategies that advance awareness and action. Environmental documentaries aim to meet this demand with rhetorical strategies. A study of the history, industry, and methods of this genre will inform future communicators as they contribute to climate action. This paper sought to understand how environmental documentaries influence audiences, and how the corresponding messaging strategies evolved over the past 30 years. The author used quantitative and sociolinguistic content analyses to examine environmental documentaries produced in the United States from 1990 to 2019. Findings indicate that the genre is driven by small productions with a wide gender gap and limited profit. Chronologically, films shifted from sanitized to intimate perspectives of the environment and narrowed in scope. Films used rhetorical expression to link audiences to their environment.

I. Introduction

Humanity's success or failure to repair the destruction we continue to wage on the environment is not the issue of the next century, or even the next decade. It is the crisis of now. Evidence of climate change and environmental devastation is clear. Yet communication of this reality is mired in denial, disinformation, and dirty politics. Beyond formal education, media is the primary source of environmental information (Cooper, 2018). By educating and motivating audiences, environmental documentaries are integral in shaping public expertise and attitudes (Cooper, 2018; Spoel et al., 2008). Harnessing the power of media to spread information and create change is a skill that environmental documentarians have been practicing for nearly a century. Studying their work provides insight into the efficacy of their strategies, informing current and future environmental communicators as they seek to accomplish the same goals.

This paper examined a content analysis and chronology of environmental documentaries produced in the United States between 1990 and 2019. The chronology collected quantitative industry and production data of 50 documentaries. The sociolinguistic content analysis evaluated six films in-depth, two per decade. The author combined patterns found in the chronology and content analysis to explore how framing, structure, and content of environmental documentaries have evolved over the past 30 years.

Keywords: environment, documentary, communications, climate change, film, rhetoric
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II. Literature Review

To examine any topic, a consensus must be reached on what the topic *is.* What is an environmental documentary? To “document” is to record and reproduce reality in an objectively indexical form. No film, documentary or otherwise, is fully objective. All productions require subjective judgments. Despite this, documentaries are “discourses of consequence” (Mossner, 2014, p. 55) – viewers expect documentaries to educate or impact them. A documentary is distinguished from fiction by a filmmaker’s intent to produce a “creative treatment of actuality” (Kerrigan & Mcintyre, 2010, p. 111).

How narrowly that treatment is construed depends on stylistic approach. “Essentialists” consider documentaries as interpretations of a filmmaker’s reality that are intended to be received as nonfiction, regardless of how selective or distorted that interpretation may be. “Realists” argue that “the purity of a documentary depends on how sparingly the filmmakers inject themselves into the portrayal of reality” (Duvall, 2017, p. 8).

“Environment” is arguably more difficult to define, as the nuance of the concept make a concrete definition challenging. Interpretations range from “in the sense of surroundings” (Williams, 1983, p. 111), to “both a complex natural ecosystem and a socially constructed abstraction” (Duvall, 2017, p. 15), to “the complex of physical, chemical, and biotic factors (such as climate, soil, and living things) that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival” (*Definition of ENVIRONMENT*, n.d.). Every combination of a person’s education, profession, nationality, etc. could determine an individual’s interpretation. Environmental communications, of which documentaries are only a part, meld these definitions together. The environment is not only the web of natural ecosystems; it is also the web of human interactions with those natural ecosystems.

Therefore, a documentary must represent a filmmaker’s interpretation of reality, be intended to be received as nonfiction, and exist on the spectrum of stylistic approaches. A documentary in which purpose, theme, and content are centered on environment is considered an environmental documentary.

Environmental Documentary: History in Context

The rise of environmental documentaries in the United States parallels public opinion of the environment. Early 20th century films emphasized education, natural beauty, and humankind’s superiority over the wild. From Robert Flaherty’s “Nanook of the North” (1922) to Disney’s “True Life Adventures” (1948-1960), filmmakers exposed audiences to an idyllic version of nature. As awareness of environmental concerns spread, so did similar representations in film. Pare Lorentz’s “The Plow that Broke the Plains” (1935) and “The River” (1937) were among the first documentaries to blame humans for environmental problems. “The Sea Around Us” (1953) broke ground with cinema’s first allusions to global warming (Duvall, 2017; Register, 2019).

Growth of the environmental movement in the 1970s and development of cable networks in the 1980s made channels like Discovery and National Geographic a popular means to reach larger audiences (Register, 2019). While television programs, such as “Nova” (1974) and “Frontline” (1981), engaged audiences through awareness and activism, feature films took a different approach. For example, Godfrey Reggio’s “Koyaanisqatsi” (1983) centered on the relationship between nature and civilization and emphasized lyrical, montage cinematography.

As this paper illustrates, environmental documentaries of the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s transcended these historical tendencies in scope, rhetoric, and content. Documentarians are constantly reinventing documentary form to engage audiences, and success of their strategies is crucial to effective climate change communication (Ahn, 2018). These strategies can be interpreted and categorized by scholars using framing theory. Introduced in 1974 by sociologist Erving Goffman, framing theory states that media not only dictates the importance of events, but also contextualizes them within a field of meaning. This framing influences the way audiences view events (Goffman, 1974). Environmental documentaries use strategies such as mode, theme, rhetorical expression to frame environmental issues.

Six Modes of Documentary

Bill Nichols, widely known as the founding scholar of documentary studies, established six “modes” of the genre. Similar to subgenres, modes “define the relationships between the subject matter, the filmmaker, and the viewer, in terms of interaction and stylistic interpretation” (Duvall, 2017, p. 12–13). Throughout the genre's evolution, new modes arose with "the desire to come up with different ways of representing the world" (Nichols, 2001, p. 101).

Poetic Mode. Popular in the 1920s, poetic documentaries value artistic form and content equally and dispense of direct argument entirely. *Everything* is up to a viewer's interpretation. (Nichols, 2001). Hughes categorizes environmental documentaries by the way they represent environmental problems to audiences. Contemplative response are similarly thematically ambivalent (Hughes, 2014).

Expository Mode. The expository mode also took root in the 1920s but remains influential today. These films directly address the audience to advance perspectives or convey knowledge. This mode popularized voice-of-god narration, in which the speaker is heard, but is never seen or connected to the film's contents. This creates the impression of objectivity because the narrator seems otherworldly, therefore incapable of being subjective (Nichols, 2001). Hughes' argumentative response documentaries, which inform and persuade viewers to care about environmental problems, are built on this mode (Hughes, 2014).

Observational Mode. The invention of mobile 16mm cameras and magnetic tape recorders in the 1960s allowed filmmakers to record observations without the hindrance of expensive and immobile technology. The resulting observational mode embodies the idea that a film is a window to the world. The filmmaker is an observer, and the viewers must actively make inferences and determine significance (Nichols, 2001). Observational filmmakers use minimal narration, manipulative editing, and interviews.

Participatory Mode. The participatory mode, also introduced in the 1960s, combines observational footage with subject engagement. The filmmaker could act as a "mentor, critic, interrogator, collaborator, or provocateur" (Nichols, 2001, p. 116). The interactions between the filmmaker and the subjects, and the contents of the film itself, are synonymous.

Reflexive Mode. Originating in the 1980s, reflexive documentaries focus on presentation of an issue rather than the issue itself. Style and editing techniques remind viewers that they are watching a film produced by individuals with their own viewpoints, to evoke critical reflection. These films rely on irony and satire to make arguments and often lose sight of their original message if not structured coherently (Nichols, 2001). While this approach, akin to Hughes' irony response, can provide needed entertainment and engage audiences, the ironic tone could increase confusion and apathy (Hughes, 2014).

Performative Mode. The performative mode, also a newcomer in the 1980s, uses the *production* of the documentary as its focus. A performative documentary may follow a filmmaker as they investigate a crisis or travel a path of self-discovery, giving audiences the sensation of being on a parallel journey (Nichols, 2001). While these documentaries evoke emotional responses, they are inherently subjective.

While these six modes seem distinct, it is rare that a documentary adheres to one mode. A dominant mode gives a film structure, and other modes support that structure. Cooper identifies expository and participatory as most common in environmental documentaries (Cooper, 2018).

Rhetorical Expression

In terms of film, rhetoric is not limited to the linguistic means of argument. Documentarians communicate with all elements available to them – visuals, sound, composition, and editing are all unspoken languages of film. Combined, they create powerful rhetoric vital to shaping audiences' perception of the environment (Aaltonen, 2014; Ahn, 2018).

Neutral and Explicit Argument. Rhetorical form environmental documentaries are structured around argumentation. They address the viewer, make an emotional appeal, and persuade viewers to make choices that have an impact on their lives (Aaltonen, 2014). The argument is either neutral and presented as a natural fact, or explicit and presented as subjective. Neutral arguments often use expository voice-of-god narration, whereas explicit arguments are characteristically direct appeals. Rhetoric editing techniques can support either type of argument. Aaltonen, Duvall, and Hughes identify causal connection editing (combining two images together to "convey a sense of causality, opposition, polarity, resemblance, comparison, analogy, or metaphor") (Aaltonen, 2014, p. 64) as vital for rhetorical argumentation.

Ethos, Pathos, Logos. Duvall and Aaltonen use Aristotle's forms of rhetoric: ethos, pathos, and logos, to further classify the types of arguments made by environmental documentaries. Logos is the argument itself, and the evidence and reasoning that supports it (Duvall, 2017). Pathos is the use of emotional appeal to influence the audience. Ethos is how a film establishes credibility for its arguments, such as the presence of experts (Aaltonen, 2014).

Anthropocentric Synergy. Environmental ethics "rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts" (Leopold, 1949, p. 171). Humankind is historically anthropocentric; we believe we are the most important member in our environment, or community. Intrinsically, we value the environment in and of itself. Instrumentally, it is valuable to us as a resource. Environmental documentaries appeal to viewers' intrinsic and instrumental values by conveying the concept of anthropocentric synergy: Humans are inexplicably intertwined with the ecosystem they live in, and therefore they should care what happens to it. Collins and Duvall identify rhetorical typologies that communicate this idea. Scientific and utilitarian narratives focus on environmental information and appeal to instrumental values (Collins, 2008; Duvall, 2017). Aesthetic frames evoke the spiritual, intrinsic wonder of nature (Duvall, 2017). Value narratives "are validated by deeply held personal beliefs" (Collins, 2008, p. 132), emphasizing both intrinsic and instrumental values.

Conflict and Solutions. How environmental documentaries address blame, conflict and solutions is central to their success. Viewers are likely to respond poorly to direct accusations of culpability, especially since environmental issues tend to be abstract. Indirect implications of blame have the opposite effect. Viewers use ambiguity to escape accountability, decreasing motivation to act. Collins suggests that while attributing blame adds drama, it may detract from the message and minimize common ground between interest groups, viewers, and filmmakers (Collins, 2008). Emphasizing conflict may cause "fear fatigue" in audiences desensitized by apocalyptic narratives (Cortese, 2017).

Solution-centered rhetoric could be an alternative source of audience motivation. Metonymy is the strategy of taking complex and intangible issues, like climate change, and conveying them as tangible problems with concrete solutions, like local pollution (Collins, 2008). This personalization ascribes accountability, but simultaneously builds collaboration.

Synecdoche connects individual action to global success. The filmmakers argue that one person really can make an impact, and this impact is necessary because of the community's culpability (Collins, 2008).

Thematic Categorizations

Duvall layers rhetorical frames with thematic categorizations. He focuses on documentaries that "attempt to express a critical point of view about environmental problems and promote an activist stance in response to them" (Duvall, 2017, p. 3). He examines seven themes: 1) General Environmental History and Concerns, 2) Climate Change, 3) Peak Oil, 4), Pollution and Waste, 5), Food and Water, 6) Animals and Extinction, and 7) Direct Activism and Community (Duvall, 2017). These themes are identified by a film's emphasis, but Duvall notes there is significant overlap between them, and each theme has its own subcategories.

Research Questions

Historical context of the documentary genre, combined with theories of documentary rhetorical expression, mode and theme, provided the framework of research with which the author sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do environmental documentaries attempt to influence audiences?

2. How have the messaging strategies used in environmental documentaries evolved in the past 30 years?

III. Methods

To examine the evolution and thematic patterns of environmental documentaries, this study used two methods. First, a quantitative content analysis, in which data are objectively and systematically coded to describe the "manifest content of communication" (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2017, p. 195), was used to code 50 environmental documentaries produced in the United States between 1990 and 2019. Second, a sociolinguistic content analysis, in which texts are examined "for their relevance, significance, and meaning" (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2017, p. 217), was used to analyze six randomly selected titles from the collected sample.

The author used IMDb (Internet Movie Database) as the population for the quantitative sample. To ensure that variability among the films did not detract from the credibility of the findings, the following parameters were set:

1. The film must be an English documentary between 30-200 minutes.
2. The film's country of origin must be the United States.
3. The premiere date of the film must be between January 1, 1990, and December 31, 2019. While environmental awareness in the United States grew in the 1970s, the genre amassed popularity significantly in the 1990s, where this research will begin.

The author input these parameters into IMDb's Advanced Title Search and sorted the resulting 34,428 films by U.S. box office descending. The first 50 environmental titles were selected and coded by premiere date, length, gross profit, awards, directors, producers, production company, distributors, and theme (See Appendix B for the complete list).

Six titles were randomly selected for sociolinguistic analysis. This analysis integrated the context of the quantitative data into a deeper examination of each film's significance, a comparison to the other films analyzed, and the contents of the film itself. The following questions outlined the analysis:

1. What is the primary theme, mode, and argument style, and how are they evident?
2. What rhetorical strategies are used to appeal to the audience, and how?
3. How is anthropocentric synergy presented?
4. How are solutions, conflict, and fear used, and what emphasis do they receive?
5. What is the content, and how are environmental subjects presented?

IV. Findings

The quantitative analysis examined the 50 highest-grossing environmental documentaries by profit, awards, theme, percentage of films per distributor and production company, and gender of producers and directors.

Quantitative Analysis

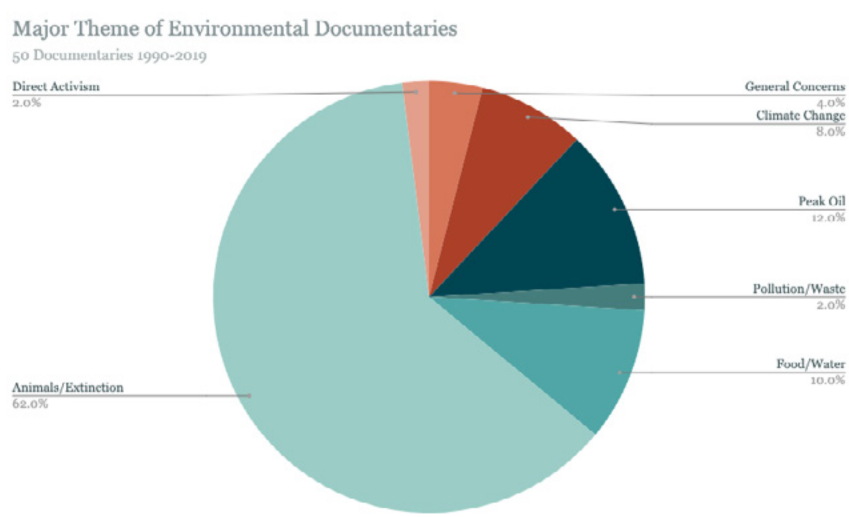

Figure 1. Primary Theme of Environmental Documentaries

Of the 50 films, 62% thematically focused on animals and extinction (Figure 1), followed by peak oil (12 percent) and food/water (10 percent).

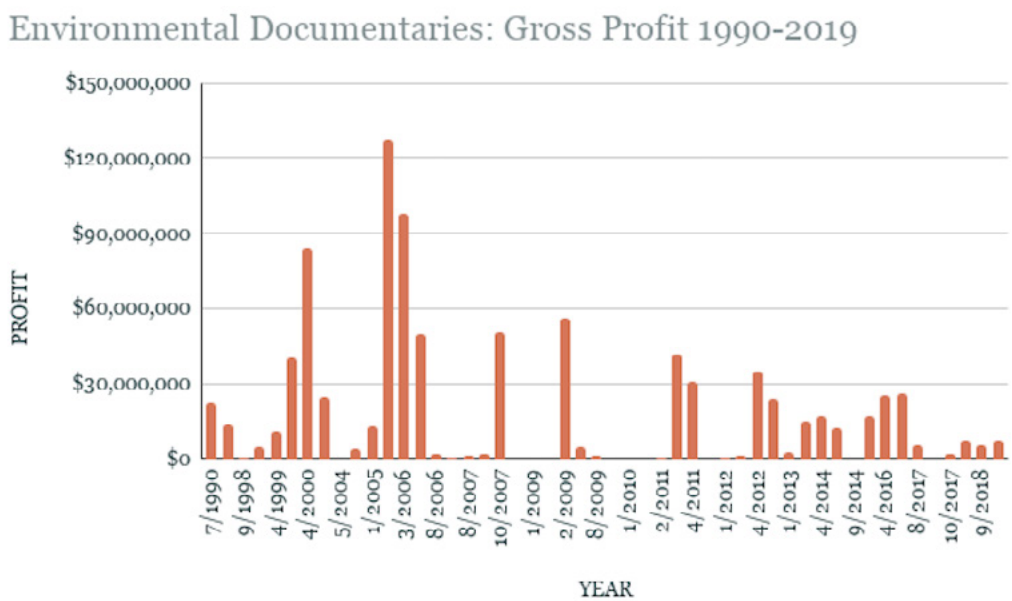

Figure 2. Environmental Documentaries: Gross Profit 1990-2019

Cumulative gross profit appears minimal in comparison to the multi-mullion amounts common in Hollywood blockbusters. It should be noted that profit is cumulative – films produced in the 1990s have had more time to accumulate sales. The number of films being produced is declining, yet the downtrend of profit is slowing. The years 2005 and 2006 proved to be the most profitable analyzed. "March of the Penguins," released in July 2005, has amassed $127,392,590, making it the most profitable environmental documentary in the sample. "Deep Sea" and "An Inconvenient Truth," released in 2006, have earned $98 million and $49 million respectively.

Award nominations and wins grew steadily from 1990 to 2019. The sample included six films from the 1990s, with a total of four awards and nominations, 20 films from the 2000s with a total of 253, and 24 films from the 2010's with a total of 255. The presence of celebrity cast members also increased, from five in the 1990s compared to 14 in the 2010s. These cast are primarily narrators, but some are producers or notable on-screen characters, such as Leonardo Di Caprio in "The 11th Hour" or Al Gore in "An Inconvenient Truth."

Production companies and distributors are diverse, with many independent productions instead of large conglomerates. No singular company produced or distributed more than 14 percent of the 50 films in the sample. In addition, 8% of producers and directors identified are female; disparity is narrowing slowly.

Qualitative Analysis

Six randomly selected titles - "Blue Planet" (1990), "Wolves" (1999), "The 11th Hour" (2007) "The Cove" (2009), "The Last Mountain" (2011), and "The Biggest Little Farm" (2018) - were coded by theme, mode, argument style, and several forms of rhetorical expression in a sociolinguistic analysis.

Table 1. "Blue Planet" (1990)

Using footage from several Shuttle missions, "Blue Planet" (1990) reveals Earth from an all-encompassing, planetary perspective. The film inspires awe for our world, emphasizes the impact we have on it, and demonstrates the precarity of the ecosystem that hangs in the balance.

Primary Mode	*Expository* Voice of God narration. No interviews. A few other sound bites.
Primary Theme	*Climate Change*
Argument Style	*Neutral* No persuasive rhetoric - observational, factual tone.
Ethos	Subtle. No need to emphasize the credibility of scientific evidence.
Pathos	Scenes of destruction. Tied to the intrinsic value of the Earth as our home.
Logos:	Ties our ability to survive to the health of the Earth's support systems:
Anthropocentric Synergy	• Intrinsic: The Earth is our only home. It's vital to our continued existence. We are destroying it. • Instrumental: Value of resources we are taking for granted, such as clean air, limitless water supplies, continued bountiful harvests.
Solutions	No, but overall positive messaging: *"The Earth we inherited can again be a garden, beautiful and bountiful"* (Narrator 0:37:58)
Fear/Conflict	Humans are blamed for the destruction of Earth. Slash and burn agriculture, industrial pollution, electricity, and water usage.

Table 2. "Wolves" (1999)

The most elusive predator in North America is shown close-up in "Wolves" (1999). Following the re-introduction of a wolf pack into the mountains of Idaho, this film attempts to reshape misconceptions and hold humans responsible for their eradication.

Primary Mode	*Expository* Voice of God narration.
Primary Theme	*Animals and Extinction*
Argument Style	*Neutral* Based on the biology and science of the wolf species.
Ethos	Subtle. No need to affirm the credibility of scientific fact. Attempts to stay politically neutral.
Pathos	• Close-up shots of familial habits (puppies and mothers) anthropomorphize wolves, appealing to our romantic/idyllic view of nature. • This undermines the ecological view of wolves as creatures to respect and give a wide breadth. • Intertwines persecution and treatment of wolves with persecution and treatment of Native Americans.
Logos:	Tied to the instrumental value of wolves in a greater ecosystem.
Anthropocentric Synergy	• Intrinsic: Attempts to break down the myths about "the big bad wolf" - reform wolf as valuable intrinsically as a majestic and beautiful creature. Uses anthropomorphization to reshape American perception of the creature. • Instrumental: Wolves cause a trophic cascade in Yellowstone, balancing elk populations, and restoring ecosystem balance.
Solutions	Yes, but not the main emphasis. Focuses on the importance of education and educational programs on influencing public opinion towards conservation and away from old myths.
Fear/Conflict	No.

Table 3. “The 11th Hour” (2007)

Starring Leonardo DiCaprio, “The 11th Hour” (2007) visualizes the state of global environmental problems, including climate change, pollution, and waste. Interviews with over 50 activists, scientists, and politicians provide causes, impacts, and solutions to the imminent crisis.

Primary Mode	*Expository*
Primary Theme	*General Environmental History and Concerns* Attempts to cover too many things. Emphasizes that every ecosystem service used to support life is deteriorating and we are the cause.
Argument Style	*Explicit*
Ethos	• Credibility is essential. Over 50 scientists, activists, politicians, psychologists, and cultural leaders dictate the film. • Use of scientific jargon and technical language leads to a lack of connection. No personal stories.
Pathos	Culpability and shame. Attempts to connect to the audience by pointing out how things will impact them. Fossil fuels (causal connection editing) to acid rain and asthma rates.
Logos:	Presents a logical argument to multiple perspectives: people who care about money - nature’s externalities. Animals - extinction. Kids’ health - toxic chemicals are poisoning water, food, and soil. Politics - corruption of fossil fuel industries and public utilities.
Anthropocentric Synergy	• Intrinsic: Not emphasized • Instrumental: Heavy emphasis on how Earth’s destruction will negatively impact us.
Solutions	The last third is devoted to technological solutions, but few are presented as a way for audiences to immediately help.
Fear/Conflict	Blames corporate globalization, individual action, and greed.

Table 4. "The Cove" (2009)

Styled like an action film, "The Cove" (2009) follows former dolphin trainer Ric O'Barry, director Louie Psihoyos, and a team of filmmakers, and free divers on a mission to free dolphins from certain death in a hidden cove in Taiji, Japan. They face formidable obstacles and uncover corruption, greed, and disinformation that transcends far beyond the waters of the cove.

Primary Mode	*Participatory/Performative* The audience is watching the documentary being produced.
Primary Theme	*Animals and Extinction, Food and Water.*
Argument Style	*Explicit* Investigative - like a Hollywood action blockbuster.
Ethos	• Ric O' Barry's background builds credibility. • Surfers, scientists, scuba divers - production team introduced, and credibility explicitly stated. • "Save the Whales" movement - described as background, proves that past movements like this have been successful.
Pathos	• Dolphins saving humans. Anthropomorphizing dolphins - relating them to human intelligence, communication, and emotion. (the more you relate to something, the more you are likely to care about what happens to it). • The most vulnerable in human society (infants, pregnant mothers) are the most vulnerable to the mercury levels in dolphin meat. • Extreme use of graphic footage of dolphins being slaughtered.
Logos:	• While the major emphasis is on the intrinsic value of dolphins, the setup of blame against the Japanese government leads the audience to logical conclusions.
Anthropocentric Synergy	• Intrinsic: See Pathos - the dolphins are like humans. • Instrumental: Not emphasized.
Solutions	• Direct links to where you can donate/volunteer • Instant gratification at the end: a few people getting arrested, no more dolphin meat in school lunches. • *"Unless you stop it" in the end credits, followed by donation links.* • *"All social change comes from the passion of individuals"* (Ric O'Barry 0:22:00)
Fear/Conflict	• Blame and conflict are heavily emphasized. • -Major environmental NGOs have done nothing to stop the killings. • Government corruption - Japanese government pays for other countries to vote on their whaling proposals.

Table 5. "The Last Mountain" (2011)

The last standing mountain in the Appalachians is being blasted apart by a mining corporation, and the shockwaves are felt across the country in "The Last Mountain" (2011). With Bobby Kennedy Jr. at the forefront, a small mining town in West Virginia fights the destruction of the environment, and their lives.

Primary Mode	*Expository*
Primary Theme	*Direct Activism and Community, Pollution and Waste*
Argument Style	*Explicit*
Ethos	Ethos is established either in a person's proximity to the problem (coal miners, activists who grew up in the towns) or in the credentials and positions of those interviewed
Pathos	Personal health implications - brain tumors, well water, coal dust, flooding.
Logos:	Micro-Macro structure: what is happening in this small town, followed by how it impacts a broader population (brain tumors in a small WV town vs. millions of people getting their water from the same place. • We all get electricity from coal.
Anthropocentric Synergy	• Intrinsic: The value of a home. • Instrumental: The entire country gets its energy from coal.
Solutions	• Only film among the six to mention eco-activism tactics such as civil disobedience. Tree sitting, nonviolent protests, disrupting coal's ability to work. • Using public awareness and media to solve problems. • *"I called the school board. Didn't get much reaction out of them. I called the health department. Didn't get much reaction out of them. So, I called Channel 4 News."* (Ed Wiley 0:34:05) • Windmill farm proposed as a viable solution. Shows evidence of success in other towns.
Fear/Conflict	Heavy emphasis on blame and conflict. • Against Massey Coal, Don Blankenship, Joe Manchin, the DEP • Uses immediate evidence to contradict claims from opposing interests.

Table 6. The Biggest Little Farm (2018)

"The Biggest Little Farm" (2018) follows John and Molly Chester through 8 years of their journey to create a farm in complete coexistence with nature. John, a wildlife documentarian, films their naivety, successes, and failures in the face of the daunting task, all in the context of a beautiful, natural ecosystem that appears from their new form of farming.

Primary Mode	*Performative* The journey itself is the focus.
Primary Theme	*Food and Water*
Argument Style	*Neutral/Explicit* – Minimal interviews. The narration is subjective in terms of their lives but interwoven with environmental facts. They are arguing for their form of farming as a sustainable solution.
Ethos	Establishes that John and Molly have no idea how to farm. General audience can connect to their successes and failures.
Pathos	Tied to John and Molly's emotions. The stress of issues on the farm, the pain of Alan's death, and the joy of watching baby animals and the blooming growth of nature.
Logos:	Regenerative and monoculture agriculture are compared to show the benefits of regenerative and negatives of monoculture. After a long drought, a massive rainfall wipes out the topsoil in surrounding farms - except theirs.
Anthropocentric Synergy	• Intrinsic and instrumental values are seamless. The film is centered around nature's powerful cycles and our place among them. • *"We were never alone. Not for a second. And if the whole thing from the beginning was to live in harmony with nature. Well, we made it this far with a comfortable level of disharmony. The ecosystem of our entire planet works the same way. And when I look at it like that, it's perfect."* (John 1:28:00)
Solutions	A narrow, intimate story focuses on individual solutions and journeys toward sustainability.
Fear/Conflict	Veers away from blame and conflict. Conflict is framed around solutions.

V. Discussion

This research examined how environmental documentaries endeavor to influence audiences, and how the corresponding messaging strategies evolved in the past 30 years. Quantitative data provided insight into the genre's industry, which established context for a deeper assessment of rhetorical strategies. Industry data revealed several trends. As the environmental documentary genre amassed popularity and standing, films accrued more award nominations and wins, credited more celebrities in either cast or crew, and produced several blockbuster titles that reached wide audiences. In terms of gender disparity, the genre is making slow progress. Production and distribution are driven by small, individual companies. While IMAX and Disney are larger presences, no company is close to a majority. This may be a factor in the low cumulative profit, with an average of $17,753,051.

The sociolinguistic analysis of six films uncovered four key trends. First, anthropocentric synergy emerged as the main rhetorical strategy. "Blue Planet" (portrayed humankind as dominating the Earth, and therefore responsible for it. "Wolves" and "The Biggest Little Farm" positioned humans as a single, yet integral and impactful, element of a larger ecosystem. This idea of anthropocentric synergy, that humans should care about the environment because the environment is intrinsically and instrumentally valuable to them (Collins, 2008; Duvall, 2017), dictated the way the films conveyed their overall message. Aristotle's ethos, pathos, logos were the driving rhetorical means filmmakers used to appeal to intrinsic and instrumental values (Aaltonen, 2014).

Second, each film used rhetorical and cinematic strategies to convey a "macro to micro" perspective. To relate environmental problems with a planet-wide impact to audiences, the six films visually and rhetorically connected individuals and their values to broader environmental problems, similar to metonymy (Collins, 2008). "The Last Mountain" connected the coal-induced health conditions in a small West Virginian town (micro) to the East Coast, and then to the entire country (macro), by emphasizing America's dependence on coal for energy. They include a computer-animated sequence, in which the water near a coal plant in West Virginia is visually traced across the country. The film connects the audience to the events in the film by demonstrating anthropocentric synergy in this micro-macro format. All of humanity is linked to this environmental problem in West Virginia.

Third, the films shifted from sanitized, idyllic perspectives of the environment in the 1990s to deeply intimate and realistic perspectives in the 2010s. This shift embodies the idea that everything must be bigger, better, more gruesome, or more unique than the last to be worth anything. In "Wolves," footage of wolves focuses on the puppies and mothers. While there are a few predator-prey scenes, they are not emphasized. This tame perspective is underscored by the fact that the wolves in the film are, in fact, tame. The producers contracted a wildlife casting agency to obtain the close-up imagery. In contrast, "The Cove" used graphic footage of dolphin murders to stress the cruelty and corruption by the Japanese government and inculcate emotions and action from the audience. This pattern parallels a transition from traditional expository formats with neutral argument, toward experimental modes with explicit argument.

Fourth, the scope of the films shifted from broad, Earth-wide stories to narrow, local stories. "Blue Planet" (1990) revealed a new perspective, with a spaceship acting as the camera. The content and cinematography encompassed the entire planet. "Wolves" centered on one species within one ecosystem. "The 11th Hour" reverted to a planetary scope. "The Cove" narrowed its view, with a specific location and population of a singular species. "The Last Mountain" told a story of one issue in one place, regarding one population. "The Biggest Little Farm" went even narrower, centering on one family using one farm to create an ecosystem.

VI. Conclusion

This study collected a sample of 50 films to conduct an examination of production data, with a subsequent sociolinguistic content analysis of six randomly selected films. This sample is only a fraction of environmental documentaries and is not representative of the genre. The author used IMDb to collect data, which is not a comprehensive resource especially with smaller productions. The process of selecting films undoubtedly missed titles with more subtle environmental themes not identified in plot synopses or trailers. The six films selected for sociolinguistic analysis revealed trends that, given a larger sample, could be unrepresentative.

This research used a broad scope to define environmental documentaries. Future research could narrow that scope, to a single theme, mode, or production size to contextualize the genre. As the thematic data conveyed, certain environmental topics are more popular than others – but why? Psychological research on audience response to environmental messaging is scant (Cooper, 2018). Understanding how and why viewers react to climate change communication strategies is equally crucial to increasing its effectiveness as understanding the strategies themselves.

Environmental documentaries are a vital tool in educating and motivating public audiences to recognize climate change and environmental destruction for what they are: a crisis of now.

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Appendix

Release	Film	Profit	Wins	Nom	Director(s)	Producer(s)	Prod. Comp.	Distributor	Top Cast
	1990s								
7/13/1990	***Blue Planet***	$22,800,000			Ben Burtt	Graeme Ferguson	IMAX Space Ltd	IMAX	
5/8/1998	***Africa's Elephant Kingdom***	$13,485,455		1	Michael Caulfield	Michael Caulfield	Discovery Channel Pictures	IMAX	Avery Brooks
9/3/1998	***Alaska: Spirit of the Wild***	$553,541	2	1	George Casey	George Casey, Paul Novros	Alaska Film Partners Ltd	Houston Museum of Natural History	Charlton Heston
3/1/1999	***Wolves***	$4,811,282			David Douglas	Goulan Amarsy, Pietro L. Serapiglia	West Eagle Productions	E-Realbiz.com	Robbie Robertson
4/30/1999	***Island of the Sharks***	$10,658,505	2		Howard Hall	Michelle Hall	Howard Hall Productions	IMAX	Linda Hunt
10/27/1999	***Galapagos***	$40,059,028			David Clark, Al Giddings	David Clark, Al Giddings	IMAX	Warner Home Video	Kenneth Branagh
	2000s								
Release	***Film***	**Profit**	**Wins**	**Nom**	**Director(s)**	**Producer(s)**	**Prod. Comp.**	**Distributor**	**Top Cast**
4/14/2000	***Dolphins***	$84,400,000		3	Greg MacGillivray	Alec Lorimore, Greg MacGillivray	MacGillivray Freeman Films	MacGillivray Freeman Films	Pierce Brosnan
2/14/2003	***Coral Reef Adventure***	$24,600,000	2	3	Greg MacGillivray	Alec Lorimore, Greg MacGillivray	Blake and Associates	Dreamscape Media	Liam Neeson
5/30/2004	***The Future of Food***	$81,280	2		Deborah Koons Garcia	Catherine Lynn Butlet, Deborah Koons Garcia	Lily Films	Cinema Libre Studio	
1/24/2005	***Grizzly Man***	$4,064,179	21	17	Werner Herzog	Erik Nelson	Lions Gate Films	Lions Gate Films	
1/28/2005	***Aliens of the Deep***	$12,775,590			James Cameron, Steven Quale	James Cameron, Cary Granat, Andrew Wight	Buena Vista Pictures	Buena Vista Pictures	Maritza Briksiak
7/22/2005	***March of the Penguins***	$127,392,693	22	15	Luc Jacquet	Jean-Christopher Barret, Yves Darandeau, Christophe Lioud, Emmanuel Priou	National Geographic Films	Wild Bunch	Romane Bohringer, Charles Berlin, Jules Sitruk

3/3/2006	***Deep Sea***	$98,230,905	2		Howard Hall	Michelle Hall, Toni Myers	Warner Bros	Warner Bros	Johnny Depp, Kate Winslet
6/30/2006	***An Inconvenient Truth***	$49,782,012	33	11	Davis Guggenheim	Laurie David, Lawrence Bender, Scott Burns	Lawrence Bender Productions	Paramount Vantage	
8/4/2006	***Who Killed the Electric Car***	$1,764,304		4	Chris Paine	Jessie Deeter	Plinyminor	Traction Media	Martin Sheen, Robert Goulet, Bart Gold
3/30/2007	***Dinosaurs Alive***	$638,461		1	David Clark, Bayley Silleck	David Clark	Giant Screen Films	Giant Screen Films	Michael Douglas
8/17/2007	***The 11th Hour***	$985,207		3	Leila Conners Peterson, Nadia Conners	Leonardo DiCaprio, Leila Conners Peterson, Chuck Castleberry, Brien Gerber	Appian Way	Warner Independent Pictures	Billy West? Al Gore!
8/17/2007	***Arctic Tale***	$1,864,636	1	1	Adam Ravetch, Sarah Robertson	Kattie Evans, Adam Leipzig, Chris Miller, Keenan Smart	Visionbox Pictures	Paramount Vantage	Queen Latifah, Katrina Agate, Zaine Ali
10/5/2007	***Sea Monsters: A Prehistoric Adventure***	$50,652,463	3		Sean MacLeod Phillips	Jini Durr, Lisa Truitt	National Geographic Films	Disneynature	
1/20/2008	***Flow: For Love of Water***	$142,469	1	1	Irena Salina, Dan Berger	Steven Starr	Steven Starr Productions	Celluloid Dreams	
1/16/2009	***No Impact Man: The Documentary***	$116,329	1		Laura Gabbert, Justin Schein	Laura Gabbert, Eden Wurmfeld	Eden Wurmfeld Films	Oscilloscope	
1/18/2009	***Crude: The Real Price of Oil***	$185,881	15	2	Joe Berlinger	Joe Berlinger, Michael Bonfiglio	Entendre Films	First Run Features	
2/13/2009	***Under the Sea 3D***	$55,902,624		2	Howard Hall	Michele Hall, Toni Myers	Warner Bros	IMAX	Jim Carrey
7/31/2009	***Food Inc.***	$4,606,199	7	20	Robert Kenner	Robert Kenner, Elise Pearlstein	Magnolia Pictures	Magnolia Pictures	
8/7/2009	***The Cove***	$1,187,434	39	18	Louie Psihoyos	Jim Clark, Fisher Stevens, Dala DuPre Pesman	Diamond Docs	The Works International	
11/18/2009	***Fields of Fuel***	$32,265	1	2	Joshua Tickell	Daniel Assael, Darius Fisher, Laura Martorella, Gregory McClatchy	Blue Water Entertainment	Little Film Company	

	2010s								
Release	***Film***	**Profit**	**Wins**	**Nom**	**Director(s)**	**Producer(s)**	**Prod. Comp.**	**Distributor**	**Top Cast**
1/2010	***GasLand***	$49,428	9	7	Josh Fox	Trish Adlesic, Josh Fox, Molly Grandour, Don Guarnieri	International WOW Company	Cinema Management Group	Nellie McKay
1/2011	***The Last Mountain***	$122,961	3	1	Bill Haney	Clara Bingham, Eric Grunebaum, Bill Haney, Laura Longsworth	Massachusetts Documentary Productions	Submarine Entertainment	
2/18/2011	***The Last Lions***	$635,325	5		Dereck Joubert	Beverly Joubert, Dereck Joubert, Chris Miller, Lisa Truitt	National Geographic Films	Virgil Films & Entertainment	
4/8/2011	***Born to Be Wild***	$41,644,475	2		David Lickley	Drew Fellman	Imax Filmed Entertainment	Warner Bros	Morgan Freeman, Chris Fries
4/22/2011	***African Cats***	$30,857,747		3	Alastair Fothergill, Keith Scholey	Keith Scholey, Alix Tidmarsh	Disneynature	Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures	Samuel L. Jackson, Patrick Stewart
4/22/2011	***Revenge of the Electric Car***	$151,272	1	3	Chris Paine	Jessie Deeter, Michelle Kaffko, Dana Moreau, P.G. Morgan	Papercut Films	The Film Collaborative	
1/22/2012	***A Place at the Table***	$231,378	1	2	Lori Silverbush, Kristi Jacobson	Julie Goldman, Ryan Harrington, Kristi Jacobson, Lori Silverbush	Motto Pictures	Submarine Entertainment	
1/23/2012	***Chasing Ice***	$1,358,668	9	4	Jeff Orlowski	Jerry Aronson, Paula DuPre Pesman, Jeff Orlowski	Exposure	Submarine Deluxe	
4/30/2012	***Chimpanzee***	$34,823,764		2	Alastair Fothergill, Mark Linfield	Alastair Fothergill, Mark Linfield, Alix Tidmarsh	Great Ape Productions	Disneynature	Tim Allen
4/30/2012	***To the Arctic 3D***	$23,695,388	1	1	Greg MacGillivray	Greg MacGillivray, Shaun MacGillivray	IMAX	IMAX	Meryl Streep

1/19/2013	***Blackfish***	$2,303,417	6	39	Gabriela Cowperthwaite	Gabriela Cowperthwaite, Manny Oteyza	CNN Films	Magnolia Pictures	Robert Carradine
11/27/2013	***Journey to the South Pacific***	$14,994,876		1	Stephen Judson, Greg MacGillivray	Mark Krenzien, Shaun MacGillivray	MacGillivray Freeman Films	IMAX	Cate Blanchett
4/4/2014	***Island of Lemurs: Madagascar***	$16,860,855		2	David Douglas	Drew Fellman, Diane Roberts	IMAX	IMAX	Morgan Freeman
4/18/2014	***Bears***	$12,316,745		2	Alastair Fothergill, Keith Scholey, Adam Chapman	Adam Chapman, Keith Sholey	Disneynature	Disneynature	John C. Reilly
9/12/2014	***Pump!***	$89,787			Joshua Tickell, Rebecca Harrell Tickell	Eyal Aronoff, Darius Fisher, Yossie Hollander, Edu Sallouti	Big Picture Ranch	13 Films	
4/17/2015	***Monkey Kingdom***	$16,839,663	2	1	Alastair Fothergill, Mark Linfield	Alastair Fothergill, Mark Linfield, Kristina Reed	Silverback Films	Disneynature	Tina Fey
4/21/2016	***Born in China***	$25,081,168		3	Chuan Lu	Amy Bailey, Phil Chapman, Roy Conli, Brian Leith, Yongfeng Su	Disneynature	The Walt Disney Company	John Krasinski, Claire Keim, Xun Zhou
4/29/2016	***A Beautiful Planet***	$25,730,120	1	1	Toni Myers	Judy Caroll, Toni Myers	IMAX	IMAX	Jennifer Lawrence
8/4/2017	***An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power***	$5,433,926	6	16	Bonni Cohen, Jon Shenk	Richard Berge, Sara Dosa, Jeff Skoll, Diane Weyermann	Actual Films	Paramount Pictures	Narendra Modi
9/2/2017	***Eating Animals***	$153,993			Christopher Dillon Quinn	Sandra Keats, Natalie Portman, Christopher Dillon Quinn, Jonathon Safran Foer	Big Star Pictures	IFC Films	
10/5/2017	***Jane***	$1,921,221	37	37	Brett Morgen	Bryan Burk, Tony Gerber, Brett Morgen, James Smith	National Geographic Studios	Cinetic Media	

4/6/2018	***Pandas***	$7,635,778	1	1	David Douglas, Drew Fellman	Drew Fellman, Donald Kushner, Michael McDermott, Steve Ransohoff	IMAX	Warner Bros	
9/1/2018	***The Biggest Little Farm***	$5,248,412	15	28	John Chester	John Chester, Sandra Keats	Diamond Docs	The Exchange	
4/17/2019	***Penguins***	$7,699,452	1	1	Alastair Fothergill, Jeff Wilson, Mark Linfield	Ray Conli, Alastair Fothergill, Keith Scholey, Jeff Wilson	Disneynature	Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures	Ed Helms

Use and Influence of Color in Video Advertising Campaigns at the Start of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Color is one of the most powerful visual elements due to its psychological ability to influence people's perceptions, emotions, and behaviors as understood through the theoretical framework of associative learning. The marketing and advertising industry has long recognized this as a strategy, but little research has examined this at work during the COVID-19 pandemic, which suddenly forced companies to shift their focus toward fighting the pandemic while reimagining and adjusting to a new consumer culture. This study performed a content analysis to investigate the use of color in video-based advertisements during the first four months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, companies' advertising messages were primarily related to mental health and staying home during the lockdown period, and the high presence of the colors blue, yellow, and white in the imagery and textual elements of the videos suggest a shared feeling of hope among companies and consumers who look forward to restoring normalcy one day in the future.

I. Introduction

An individual takes less than 90 seconds to form an impression about a person or product, with colors driving 62 to 90 percent of that product consideration (Gopikrshna & Kumar, 2015, as cited in Khattak et al., 2018). Color is one of the most powerful visual elements due to its psychological ability to influence people's perceptions, emotions, and behaviors based on the association and context of each color (Amsteus et al., 2015; Khattak et al., 2018).

The marketing and advertising industry has long recognized the use and influence of color as a strategy: Every creative decision — even something so seemingly simple like selecting colors — about a brand, advertisement, or other image can affect both the brand itself and the user experience, including consumer behavior and product effectiveness and success (Amsteus et al., 2015; Bytyçi, 2020; Khattak et al., 2018). For example, gray-colored packaging design enhances the perceived quality of the product for those living in the United States, but for those in China and Japan, the same packaging color would make the product appear cheaper (Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999, as cited in Khattak et al., 2018). Companies also consider color psychology when building their visual identities, aligning the meanings of the colors they choose with the core values they believe best represent their brands. And advertisers often select colors that

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reflect or elevate the intended messages of the campaigns in order to maximize the ads' potential for success among its targeted consumers (Bytyçi, 2020).

Dozens of studies have examined the influence of color in marketing and advertising, but there is little research so far that observes this at work — or not — during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was first declared a global pandemic in March 2020 (Ducharme, 2020). At the start of the pandemic, companies and consumers were forced to adjust the way they work and live, and that also included rethinking consumer culture. Companies suddenly switched up their marketing messages and wrote a number of ad campaigns that discouraged consumers from continuing their usual kinds of engagement with their brands. That being said, it is possible that because the marketing campaigns at the start of the pandemic were all relatively similar in terms of the messages conveyed, the colors selected for those campaigns may have been similar too — almost as if the pandemic has created a colored "filter" on the marketer/consumer experience.

This study observes and analyzes the use of color in video-based advertising campaigns during the first four months of the COVID-19 pandemic. The article includes a review of literature about associative learning theory as a framework for understanding color, the strategic use of color in marketing and advertising, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and consequential lockdown on marketing and advertising.

II. Literature Review

To better understand the use and influence of color in video advertising campaigns, this paper examines literature using the associative learning theoretical framework. Multiple studies have applied the theory of associative learning to explain how color can influence people's perceptions, preferences, and behaviors (Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999, as cited in Amsteus et al., 2015). Associative learning is the process whereby an individual forms a connection between systematically paired stimuli (Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999).

Over time, as consumers interact with a brand or product, they learn to associate the brand or product with its colors. Often, color is being used to visually distinguish between competitors, as was the case with Coca-Cola and Pepsi (Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999; Labrecque & Milne, 2012). Both companies included the color red in their branding identities since many consumers normally associate the color red with soft drinks, but Pepsi decided to drop red from its palette, prioritizing the color blue instead in order to make the brand more recognizable next to Coca-Cola (Cooper, 1996, as cited in Labrecque & Milne, 2012; Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999). As a result, when consumers recognize those colors in other contexts, they sometimes find themselves naming the colors by their learned associations — "Coca-Cola red" and "Pepsi blue" (Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999; Khattak et al., 2018).

Color Associations and Meanings

There is no universal set of color associations because people perceive and interpret colors differently, resulting in different learned associations. It is important for companies to be highly aware of their target audiences because different colors can evoke different meanings and associations depending on not only the contexts but also the consumers experiencing the colors (Amsteus et al., 2015; Aslam, 2006; Bytyçi, 2020; Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999; Khattak et al., 2018; Sliburyte & Skeryte, 2014).

Previous studies have examined how consumers in different cultures have different color associations (Aslam, 2006). For example, blue is the primary corporate color in the United States, but in East Asian countries, the primary corporate color is red (Schmitt & Pan, 1994, as cited in Aslam, 2006). Even within a single culture, colors have different associations in different contexts (Aslam, 2006). The color black is considered a symbol of death, grief, and mourning in Western countries, but those same countries also perceive black-colored products as being expensive, luxurious, or high in quality (Amsteus et al., 2015; Aslam, 2006; Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999; Labrecque & Milne, 2012; Sliburyte & Skeryte, 2014). Yellow is a friendly, joyful color to some, but to others, it is associated with greed, jealousy, and even infidelity (Aslam, 2006; Hupka et al., 1997; Mohebbi, 2014).

Gender has also been found to affect people's color perceptions (Amsteus et al., 2015; Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999; Khattak et al., 2018; Sliburyte & Skeryte, 2014). In some countries, the color pink is normally associated with femininity, but in certain contexts, pink-colored products can be attractive to men and affect their purchasing intentions (Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999; Mohebbi, 2014).

Color Psychology in Marketing and Advertising

Companies have long recognized the use and influence of color as a strategy. The learned associations consumers form about companies and their products or services depend heavily on the context. One such context is advertising, and studies have shown that the type of advertising medium can affect consumers' color perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (Amsteus et al., 2015; Aslam, 2006; Bytyçi, 2020; Cyr et al., 2010; Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999; Khattak et al., 2018; Labrecque & Milne, 2012; Labrecque et al., 2013; Madden et al., 2000; Mohebbi, 2014; Sliburyte & Skeryte, 2014).

Much of the existing research has examined the use of color in print-based advertising contexts. Gorn et al. (1997), who aimed to identify a framework for strategically selecting colors that would elicit more favorable attitudes toward a brand and its corresponding advertisement, exposed participants to print-based magazine ads and found that colors with higher levels of chroma (saturation) and value (lightness/darkness) tend to influence feelings of excitement and relaxation, respectively, and subsequently influence favorable attitudes toward the ad and brand. Amsteus et al. (2015) examined consumers' contextual dependence or lack thereof on their associations for blue and black by exposing participants to printed pictures of blue- and black-colored toothpaste packaging designs, and the researchers found that consumers' associations tend to differ from otherwise-universal color associations in specific contexts.

Additional research has explored the use of color in online advertising contexts. Colors selected for use in web-based design and other online marketing communications can affect consumers' perceptions and associations as well as consumers' trust and satisfaction toward the online content (Cyr et al., 2010; Goi, 2012). For example, while the color yellow may elicit feelings of happiness and positive energy, it can become overwhelming to the eye if overused (Goi, 2012). Labrecque and Milne (2012) performed all four of their experiments using computer screens, which maximized the hue effect and made the colors in question appear more vibrant, but this also meant their results applied exclusively to online media, not print. That being said, they found that color can dictate brand personality and subsequently affect consumers' purchase intentions (Labrecque & Milne, 2012).

Little research has empirically studied the strategic use of color in video-based advertising, but industry professionals speculate that color associations can also be applied in video-based ads and in turn guide consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors about the ads and corresponding brands (Gotter, 2018). According to Bytyçi (2020), advertisers often select colors that reflect or elevate the intended messages of the campaigns in order to maximize the ads' potential for success among its targeted consumers, so it is possible that this is also the case in video-based advertising (p. 43).

Impact of COVID-19 on Marketing and Advertising

While many studies have examined the use and influence of color and its applications in marketing and advertising, few have analyzed this in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was first declared a global pandemic in March 2020 (Ducharme, 2020). Consumers' risk perceptions and attitudes, value consciousness, and materialistic personality characteristics have previously been found to affect consumer behavior during times of crisis (Mehta et al., 2020). At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world entered a strict lockdown, and companies and consumers were forced to adjust the way they work and live, which included reimagining consumer culture (Hoekstra & Leeflang, 2020). Buying habits saw a shift in priorities, with consumers seeking mostly basic needs, such as hygiene, cleaning, and other essential products, and scaling back on luxuries and other non-essential needs (Accenture, 2020, as cited in Mehta et al., 2020). E-commerce on official websites, mobile sites, and social media also significantly increased in popularity as consumers who did not engage heavily in online shopping prior to the pandemic suddenly became "ambassadors" of digital consumerism (Hoekstra & Leeflang, 2020; Mehta et al., 2020).

While company employees are also consumers in their own personal ways, their professional habits also changed significantly when the COVID-19 lockdown began. Companies suddenly shifted their focus to cause-related marketing and other corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, writing a number of public service announcements and advertising campaigns that expressed commitment to fighting COVID-19 and discouraged consumers from continuing their usual kinds of engagement with their brands (Hoekstra &

Leeflang, 2020). And consumers expected this kind of response from their favorite brands — roughly two-thirds of consumers in a poll said companies' pandemic responses would strongly affect future purchasing intentions, and about a third of the respondents also reported that they had already abandoned a brand because they believed the brand had responded inappropriately (Rogers, 2020, as cited in Kirk & Rifkin, 2020).

A common element of CSR is the emotional appeal (Kirk & Rifkin, 2020; Taylor, 2020). Nelson-Field et al. (2013) found that videos that elicit high arousal emotions are more likely to go viral. CSR initiatives that acknowledge awareness of, echo, or appeal to their targeted consumers' emotions as affected by the COVID-19 pandemic may have been a common advertising strategy (Kirk & Rifkin, 2020; Taylor, 2020). If many companies adopted similar CSR approaches at the start of the pandemic, then it is possible that they also selected similar colors to convey similar marketing messages in their advertisements — whether they realized it or not (Bytyçi, 2020).

III. Methods

This study aims to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are the main advertising messages in video advertisements produced during the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2: Are there patterns between the COVID-19 themed advertising messages and the colors used in the imagery of the video advertisements?

RQ3: Are there patterns between the COVID-19 themed advertising messages and the colors used in the textual elements of the video advertisements?

To investigate the use of color in the imagery and textual elements of the COVID-19 themed video advertisements, the researcher conducted a quantitative content analysis. The researcher watched and coded ten companies' video advertisements that were uploaded to YouTube between March 18, 2020, and July 30, 2020. The videos were purposively sampled for analysis using multiple industry professionals' online articles that recognized, in their opinions, the best, most memorable, and/or most successful video advertising campaigns at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (Bilir, 2020; Fermoselle, 2020; The Tribe, 2020; Wyld, 2020). The ten videos were sampled from those articles based on a variety of criteria, including the date when each video was published, how many views each video received. videos that were named in multiple online articles, and the researcher's own perceptions of each of the companies' industry status and popularity. A list of the videos is in Appendix 1.

Before beginning the official data collection procedure, the researcher watched each video once to collect ten full-color thumbnails per video. All screenshots were captured using a 13-inch 2016 MacBook Pro laptop computer. The variables observed and analyzed while watching the ten video advertisements were the COVID-19 advertising message, color(s) in video imagery, and color(s) in text. Additional variables recorded for reference but not analyzed included official brand colors and video length.

COVID-19 Advertising Message

To answer RQ1, the researcher assigned a coding category for "COVID-19 Advertising Message," which was defined as the primary call(s) to action as determined by written text, voiceover, and/or speaking characters. The categories included Safety ("Social Distancing," "Stay Home"), Compliance ("Wash Hands," "Wear Masks"), Concern for Situation ("Family & Relationships," "Gratitude for Frontline Workers," "Mental Health"), and Next Steps ("New Normal"). The subcategories were initially based on the researcher's own personal recollections of common or significant marketing messages that surfaced during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, and then the researcher adapted the list based on a survey capturing consumer participants' preferred advertising messages during the pandemic (Ives, 2020). This variable was measured on audiovisual cues from written text, voiceover, and/or speaking characters and was coded as the total number of appearances of each COVID-19 advertising message in each video (0 = not present; n = total number of appearances). The message(s) that appeared most frequently per video were declared the "main" advertising messages.

Color(s) in Video Imagery

To answer RQ2, the researcher assigned a coding category for “Color(s) in Video Imagery,” which included subcategories for 11 colors: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Purple, Pink, Brown, Black, Gray, and White (see Appendix 2). The subcategories chosen for this study were adapted from previous research, which often manipulated colors through experimentation to understand how different colors affect consumer perceptions and behaviors (Amsteus et al., 2015; Cyr et al., 2010; Gorn et al., 1997; Hupka et al., 1997; Labrecque & Milne, 2012; Madden et al., 2000). The 11 colors in the previous research were referred to by their simplified hues. The variable was defined as the color(s) most present in the video footage. This variable was measured by visually observing the color schemes of each individual shot, which was defined as a single clip of video footage without any edited cuts. If a shot featured one or more human subjects, skin color was coded only if the subjects took up a significant portion of the frame and clearly reflected a certain color. The colors of the company logos as they appeared in the video advertisements were not coded as part of the content analysis. This variable was coded as the total number of appearances of each color throughout each video (0 = not present; n = total number of appearances), which ultimately revealed which colors, if any, were most commonly and/or heavily used in the sampled COVID-19 video advertising campaigns.

Color(s) in Text

To answer RQ3, the researcher assigned a coding category for “Color(s) in Text,” which included subcategories for the same 11 colors assigned to the “Color(s) in Video Imagery” coding category: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Purple, Pink, Brown, Black, Gray, and White. The variable was defined as the color(s) used in any textual elements as well as the color(s) of the non-video background on which the text was placed. Text color, when displayed on top of video imagery, was coded and calculated separately from its corresponding imagery color(s), while non-imagery background colors were included in the frequency calculations for the textual content analysis. The colors of the text in the company logos as they appeared in the video advertisements were not coded as part of the content analysis. This variable was measured and coded as the total number of appearances of each color throughout each video (0 = not present; n = total number of appearances), and each text-background color pair was recorded separately for additional analysis.

Official Brand Colors

The variable “Official Brand Colors” was defined as the main colors each company uses as part of its visual identity. Companies’ official brand colors were determined by locating each company’s brand and style guide, which is a manual that explains a brand’s visual identity (including logo and colors), tone of voice, and other methods of communication and expressive messaging. If a company’s brand guide was not located online as public information, then the researcher determined the official brand colors using each company’s primary logo and official website. The information for this variable was recorded in a separate table for additional analysis. This variable was recorded for reference because of the possibility that a company may have opted to use its own brand colors as the main color scheme of its video advertisement.

Video Length

The variable “Video Length” was defined as the total time duration of each video advertisement and measured in seconds. The duration of each YouTube video was declared the video length, and the variable was then coded in terms of three time ranges (less than 30 seconds; 31-60 seconds; more than 61 seconds), with 0 for false and 1 for true. This variable was recorded for reference because longer videos have more time to include more shots and thus use each color more often, which could potentially skew color frequencies higher than those of the shorter videos and consequently affect the results.

Data Analysis

Following completion of the coding procedure, the frequencies of each coding category were calculated and reported. To answer RQ1, the frequencies for each of the categories of the variable “COVID-19 Advertising Message” were calculated and reported for each video advertisement, and the higher frequencies were declared the “main” advertising messages of each video ad. The total frequencies for the coding categories were also calculated, reported, and compared with one another, and the higher frequencies were declared the “main” advertising messages of the entire sample.

To answer RQ2, the frequencies for each of the categories of the variable "Color(s) in Video Imagery" were calculated and reported for each video advertisement, and the higher frequencies were declared the "main" colors used in the video imagery of each video ad. The total frequencies for the coding categories were also calculated, reported, and compared with one another, and the higher frequencies were declared the "main" colors used in the video imagery of the entire sample. These frequencies were also compared with the frequencies for the variable "COVID-19 Advertising Message" in order to identify any patterns in the results. Additionally, these frequencies were compared with the information for the variable "Official Brand Colors" to identify any overlaps in the results.

To answer RQ3, the frequencies for each of the categories of the variable "Color(s) in Text" were calculated and reported for each video advertisement, and the higher frequencies were declared the "main" colors used in the textual elements of each video ad. The total frequencies for the coding categories were also calculated, reported, and compared with one another, and the higher frequencies were declared the "main" colors used in the textual elements of the entire sample. These frequencies were also compared with the frequencies for the variable "COVID-19 Advertising Message" in order to identify any patterns in the results. Additionally, these frequencies were compared with the information recorded about text-background color pairs in each video ad to identify any patterns in the results.

III. Findings

RQ1. Main COVID-19 Advertising Messages

After completing the coding procedure, the messages Social Distancing, Wash Hands, and Wear Masks were not present in any of the videos in the sample. Out of all 10 videos, 14 messages were related to Mental Health, followed by Stay Home (n=11), New Normal (n=8), Family & Relationships (n=6), and Gratitude for Frontline Workers (n=6). Based on the reported frequencies (see Figure 1), Mental Health and Stay Home were declared the main COVID-19 advertising messages.

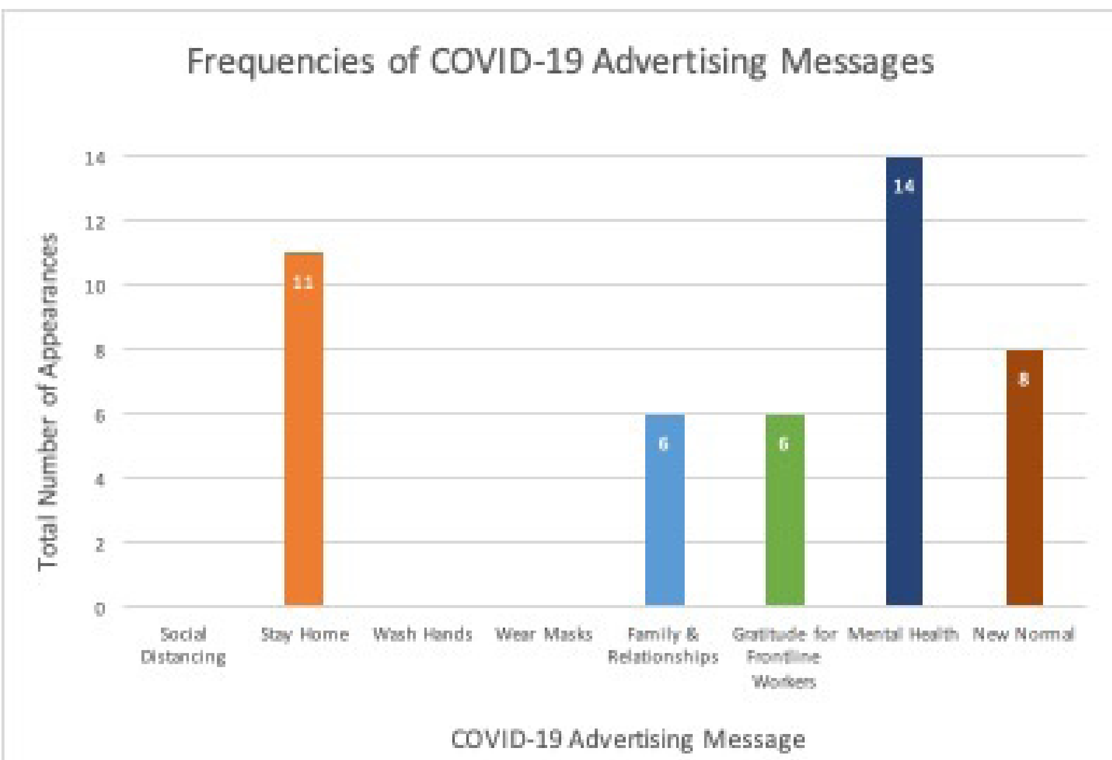

Figure 1. Frequencies of COVID-19 advertising messages.

RQ2. Patterns Between COVID-19 Advertising Messages and Colors Used in Video Imagery

The researcher watched each video a second time and visually assessed the color schemes of every individual shot, which was defined as a single clip of video footage without any edited cuts. After completing the coding procedure, the color with the most appearances throughout all 10 videos was blue (n=110), followed by gray (n=80), yellow (n=71), and white (n=62). The colors that were least present were purple (n=1), orange (n=4), pink (n=5), and brown (n=5). The colors blue, gray, and white appeared at least once in all 10 videos; the color black appeared at least once in nine out of 10 videos; and the color red appeared at least once in eight out of 10 videos. These frequencies are reflected in Figure 2, which shows the presence of the coded colors within each video.

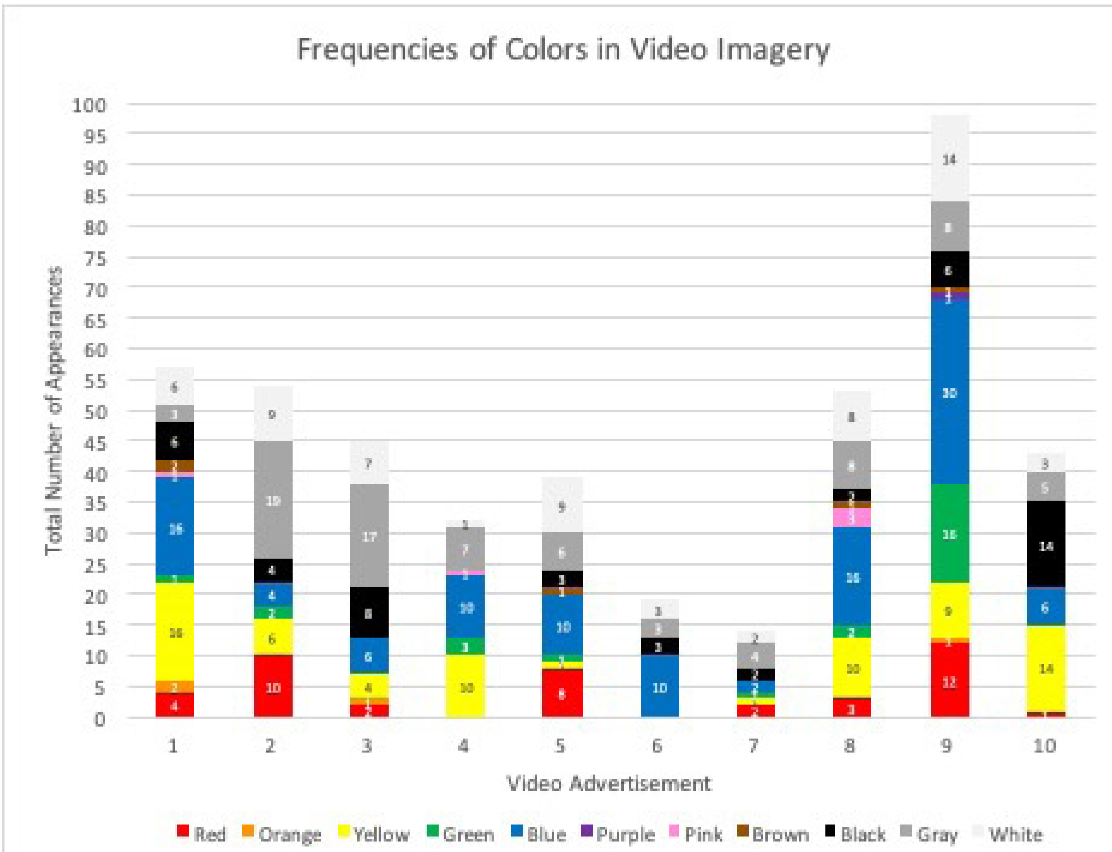

Figure 2. Frequencies of colors in video imagery.

Following the analysis of the colors used in the video imagery, the researcher looked for patterns in the data by comparing each of the videos' main COVID-19 advertising messages to the main colors used in the video imagery (see Table 1). Blue was most present in three of the four videos with Mental Health as the main COVID-19 advertising message(s). Blue and yellow were also most present in two of the three videos with Stay Home as the main message. The researcher also compared the color results to the companies' official brand colors just in case a company simply used their own colors for the color scheme of the video. In Table 1, companies' primary colors within their color palettes have been listed in all caps. Out of the three videos with Mental Health as the main COVID-19 advertising message(s) and blue as the most present color, only one of the three companies (IKEA) uses blue as part of its official palette. Out of the two videos with Stay Home as the main message and yellow as the most present color, one of the companies (Porsche AG) uses yellow as part of its official palette. While the color gray was most present in three out of 10 videos, the videos had three different main COVID-19 advertising messages.

Table 1. Main COVID-19 Advertising Messages and Video Imagery Colors by Brand

Brand Name	Main COVID-19 Advertising Message(s)	Main Color(s) Used in Video Imagery	Official Brand Colors (Primary Color All-Caps)
Apple Inc.	Family & Relationships (n=1), Mental Health (n=1)	Yellow (n=16), Blue (n=16)	GRAY, Black, White
The Boston Globe	Mental Health (n=4)	Gray (n=19)	Black, White (accents: Red, Blue)
Budweiser	Gratitude for Frontline Workers (n=4)	Gray (n=17)	RED, White
Domino's Pizza	Stay Home (n=6)	Yellow (n=10), Blue (n=10)	RED, BLUE, White
Dove	Gratitude for Frontline Workers (n=1)	Blue (n=10)	BLUE, White
Honda Motor Company	Stay Home (n=2)	Blue (n=10)	RED, Black, White
Hyundai Motor Company	New Normal (n=2)	Gray (n=4)	BLUE, Black, White
IKEA	Mental Health (n=5)	Blue (n=16)	BLUE, YELLOW, White
Nike Inc.	Mental Health (n=4), New Normal (n=4)	Blue (n=30)	BLACK, White
Porsche AG	Stay Home (n=1)	Yellow (n=14), Black (n=14)	RED, YELLOW, BLACK

RQ3. Patterns Between COVID-19 Advertising Messages and Colors Used in Text

To answer the third research question, the researcher visually assessed the colors used in every textual element as well as the colors of the non-imagery background on which the text was placed (see Figure 3). All 10 videos used the color white at least once in the textual elements, with nine of the 10 videos using white written text in at least one shot. Four out of the 10 videos placed the white text on a black non-imagery background at least once, and two out of the 10 videos placed the white text on a black-colored imagery background in at least one shot.

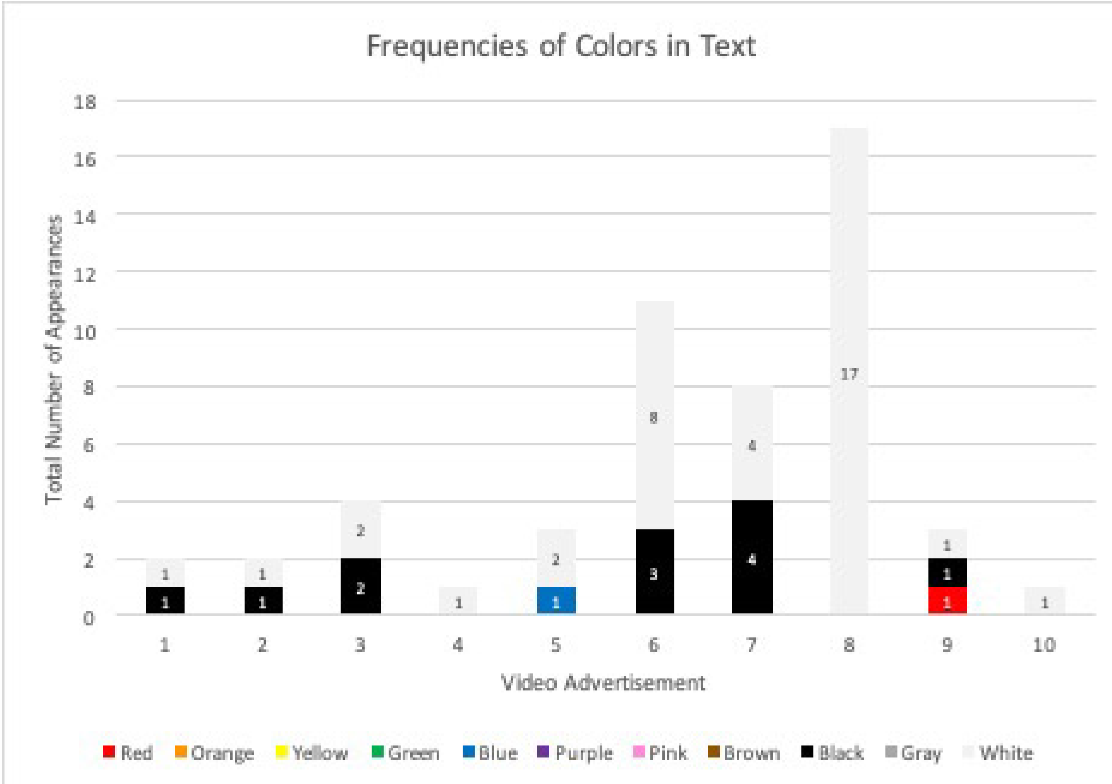

Figure 3. Frequencies of colors in text.

IV. Discussion

This study analyzed 10 video advertisements that had been uploaded to YouTube during the first four months of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to identify any patterns between the main advertising messages and the colors used. The results of the content analysis first revealed that the main COVID-19 advertising messages were Mental Health and Stay Home. In the imagery-based color analysis, the study revealed that blue was most present in three of the four videos with Mental Health as the main advertising message(s), while yellow was most present in two of the three videos with Stay Home as the main message. And in the text-based color analysis, the study revealed that nine out of 10 videos used white written text in at least one shot.

RQ1. Main COVID-19 Advertising Messages

Out of the 10 videos analyzed, the COVID-19 advertising messages that appeared most frequently were Mental Health and Stay Home. The message Mental Health appeared 14 times across four out of 10 videos, and the message Stay Home appeared 11 times across five out of 10 videos. In contrast, the messages Social Distancing, Wash Hands, and Wear Masks were not present at all.

The greater presence of the messages Mental Health and Stay Home align with findings from the survey capturing consumer participants' preferred advertising messages during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ives, 2020). More than 45% of polled consumers said they were more likely to engage with a brand if its advertisement was about how the company's products and services would help improve buyers' wellbeing, and the same percentage reportedly would do the same if the ad specifically prioritized mental or physical health (Ives, 2020). However, that same survey found that only 8% of polled consumers preferred advertisements that told viewers to stay home (Ives, 2020). Given the survey's data collection period of March 28-29, 2020, it is possible that during that time, consumers were still adjusting to and in denial about the sudden move into lockdown, so perhaps consumers did not necessarily want to be told to stay home because it only made the pandemic feel more real.

The absence of advertising messages related to Social Distancing, Wash Hands, and Wear Masks was surprising given the widespread panic during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. While some of the videos in this study portrayed actors and other figures wearing masks, these “appearances” were not coded because the actors did not speak and because there was no accompanying written text or voiceovers explicitly presenting the message.

RQ2. Patterns Between COVID-19 Advertising Messages and Colors Used in Video Imagery

Out of the 10 videos analyzed, the color blue was most present in three of the four videos with Mental Health as the main advertising message(s): Apple Inc.’s “Creativity Goes On,” IKEA Spain’s “I Stay Home,” and Nike Inc.’s “You Can’t Stop Us.” Additionally, both blue and the color yellow were most present in two of the three videos with Stay Home as the main message: Domino’s Pizza Saudi Arabia’s “We Deliver to Your Doorstep,” Honda Motor Company’s “#StayHome,” and Porsche AG Poland’s “Ease Temptation.”

According to Bytyçi (2020), advertisers often select colors that reflect or elevate the intended messages of the campaigns in order to maximize the ads’ potential for success among its targeted consumers. Because the videos analyzed in this study had international audiences, the researcher interpreted these message-color patterns using an extensive list of empirically supported color associations with the goal of near-total audience consideration, accounting for demographic, cultural, and other contextual differences.

Based on the known associations for the color blue, it is possible that the three companies whose videos contained blue as the most present color and Mental Health as the main COVID-19 advertising message may have been echoing and appealing to consumers’ feelings of depression — or at the very least, a general decline in mental health. Given that nearly half of polled consumers said they would engage with companies whose advertisements specifically prioritized mental or physical health and that 34% would engage with empathetic ads, this could be because consumers were looking to feel a sense of community from the validation that others shared similar feelings despite being isolated during the lockdown period (Ives, 2020).

Based on the known associations for the color yellow, it is possible that the two companies whose videos contained yellow as the most present color and Stay Home as the main COVID-19 advertising message may have been expressing feelings of optimism. While only 8% of polled consumers preferred advertisements that told viewers to stay home, 39% said they would engage with optimistic ads (Ives, 2020). This could be because staying at home and following shelter-in-place and other lockdown rules was considered a means of staying safe and an attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19.

What was most telling was that out of the combined six companies whose videos contained blue and yellow as the most present colors and Mental Health and Stay Home as the main COVID-19 advertising messages, there was one shared color association: hope. This is likely what resulted from intersecting empathy with optimism — while validating consumers’ feelings about the pandemic, advertisers encouraged consumers to stay positive while staying home and to look toward the future.

The low presence of the colors purple, orange, pink, and brown could have also been intentional based on the known color associations. While it is likely that these 10 companies may have prioritized the emphasis of certain advertising messages through the use of related colors, the companies may have also been consciously or subconsciously avoiding the emphasis of certain messages they believed were irrelevant, inappropriate, or obsolete at the time (Ives, 2020). Based on the known associations for the color purple, it is likely that companies may have simply deemed this color irrelevant to the messages being advertised to viewers. Perhaps companies avoided using the color orange so they would not risk appearing over-enthusiastic, which could be seen by some as insensitive. Similarly, companies may have avoided using the color pink because they did not feel very happy about living and working through a global pandemic. And companies may have opted to use the color black instead of brown to reflect the serious tone of the video advertisements.

RQ3. Patterns Between COVID-19 Advertising Messages and Colors Used in Text

The textual analysis of the study found that all 10 videos used the color white at least once in textual elements and/or non-imagery backgrounds, and nine out of 10 videos used white written text in at least one shot.

Based on the known associations for the color white, it is possible that these 10 companies were emphasizing the importance of cleanliness or following health-based protocol as a means of reducing the spread of COVID-19. While none of the videos analyzed contained any explicitly stated messages related to Wash Hands or Wear Masks, the textual use of the color white may have still implied such messages.

But like the colors blue and yellow, white can also symbolize feelings of hope. By coloring the advertising messages white, these companies were likely echoing the empathetic blues and the optimistic yellows, encouraging their consumers to look forward to better days and a cleaner, post-pandemic world.

VI. Conclusion

This study performed a quantitative content analysis to observe the use and influence of color in video advertisements during the first four months of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results found that the main COVID-19 advertising messages were Mental Health and Stay Home, with the colors blue and yellow being most present among the video imagery and the color white being most present among the textual elements. Using the theoretical framework of associative learning, these findings suggest a shared feeling of hope as companies and consumers await the end of the pandemic and long for a restored sense of normalcy.

There are a number of limitations to this study that offer opportunities for future research. First, the researcher was the sole coder. Including multiple coders would have reduced subjectivity, and it is also possible that different interpretations could have led to different coding results. Second, only 10 video advertisements were selected for analysis, so this study could be replicated using a much larger sample in order to further legitimize the generalizability of the results. Third, the researcher coded the presence of colors according to their simplified hues as they literally appeared and therefore did not account for the nuances of colors. Previous research has shown that changing the saturation or value of a color can affect the learned association, so this study could be replicated using more specific coding categories to more closely analyze the colors used in the video advertisements (Gorn et al., 1997). And fourth, this study did not include additional research about the potential influence of typography on consumer perceptions. While this study focused primarily on color use, it is possible that the typefaces selected for the textual elements could have affected how the colors were perceived and interpreted.

Future research could investigate if the patterns between COVID-19 advertising messages and colors used vary based on the specific industry or product/service. Perhaps certain types of companies used different colors to send different COVID-19 related messages. Additionally, since this study focused solely on video advertisements from the first four months of the COVID-19 pandemic, future research could examine if and/or how the colors changed over the course of the pandemic.

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Appendix 1: Sample information

Company	Campaign/ Video Name	Country	Date Uploaded to YouTube	Video Length	Video URL
Apple Inc.	“Creativity goes on”	USA	April 15, 2020 (campaign published before this day)	1:37	https://youtu.be/BbCe_5kSmxI
The Boston Globe	“Boston is still running”	USA	April 17, 2020	1:00	https://youtu.be/eyBP2SlwW8U
Budweiser	“#OneTeam”	Argentina	March 29, 2020 (campaign published March 25)	1:17	https://youtu.be/-Y1ZpEikZ5U
Domino’s Pizza Inc.	“We deliver to your doorstep”	Saudi Arabia	March 30, 2020	0:45	https://youtu.be/U03IDkxXnGk
Dove*	“Courage is beautiful”	USA/ Canada	April 5, 2020 (but published earlier by USA)	0:48	https://youtu.be/csIerE0578w
Honda Motor Company	“#StayHome”	United Arab Emirates	April 9, 2020	0:35	https://youtu.be/GArsyiaJHxc
Hyundai Motor Company	“When we get out”	Spain	April 24, 2020	0:47	https://youtu.be/LUEIZReD214
IKEA	“Your house has something to tell you”	Spain	March 18, 2020	0:30	https://youtu.be/VaMQe0RO5PM
IKEA**	“I Stay Home”	USA (English translation)	March 24, 2020	0:30	https://youtu.be/IHCD5dz2l8s
Nike Inc.	“You can’t stop us”	USA	July 30, 2020	1:30	https://youtu.be/WA4dDs0T7sM
Porsche AG***	“Let it not be tempting”	Poland	June 17, 2020	0:30	https://youtu.be/jJmREmjDizI
Porsche AG	“Ease temptation. Stay home.”	USA (English translation)	April 14, 2020	0:30	https://youtu.be/MTqdGoksceM

* Dove USA was the original creator of the video advertisement, but the video uploaded by Dove Canada was used to complete the content analysis and to capture the screenshots. Therefore, only the video by Dove Canada is cited in the References section.

** IKEA Spain was the original creator of the video advertisement, and the original video was used to complete the video imagery portion (RQ2) of the content analysis. The English translation of the video ad was used to complete the COVID-19 advertising message and textual portions (RQ1, RQ3) of the content analysis. The screenshots included in the study were captured from IKEA Spain's original video.

*** Porsche AG Poland was the original creator of the video advertisement, and the original video was used to complete the video imagery portion (RQ2) of the content analysis. The English translation of the video ad was used to complete the COVID-19 advertising message and textual portions (RQ1, RQ3) of the content analysis. The screenshots included in the study were captured from the English translation of Porsche AG Poland's video. Both videos are cited in the References section.

Appendix 2: Table of color associations

Color	**Associated Meanings**	**References**
Red	· Ambition · Anger · Arousal · Excitement · Extroversion · Fear · Intense · Jealousy · Love/Lust · Luck (East Asia) · Masculine · Warning/Danger	Aslam, 2006 Goi, 2012 Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999 Hupka et al., 1997 Khattak et al., 2018 Labrecque & Milne, 2012 Madden et al., 2000 Mohebbi, 2014 Sliburyte & Skeryte, 2014
Orange	· Ambition · Arousal · Cheap/Inexpensive · Creativity · Energetic · Enthusiasm · Warmth	Cyr et al., 2010 Goi, 2012 Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999 Khattak et al., 2018 Madden et al., 2000 Mohebbi, 2014
Yellow	· Cheerful · Energetic · Envy · Extroversion · Friendly · Happiness · Hope · Infidelity (Latin) · Jealousy · Joy · Optimism · Warmth	Aslam, 2006 Goi, 2012 Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999 Khattak et al., 2018 Labrecque & Milne, 2012 Madden et al., 2000 Mohebbi, 2014 Sliburyte & Skeryte, 2014

Green	· Adventure (Korea) · Calming · Envy · Generosity · Good taste (USA) · Growth · Luck · Nature · Optimism · Reliable · Safety · Wealth	Aslam, 2006 Goi, 2012 Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999 Khattak et al., 2018 Madden et al., 2000 Mohebbi, 2014
Blue	· Calming · Cold · Competence · Corporate (USA) · Depression · High quality · Hope · Intelligence · Masculine · Nighttime · Sociability · Trustworthy · Truthfulness	Amsteus et al., 2015 Aslam, 2006 Cyr et al., 2010 Goi, 2012 Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999 Khattak et al., 2018 Labrecque & Milne, 2012 Madden et al., 2000 Mohebbi, 2014 Sliburyte & Skeryte, 2014
Purple	· Authority/Power (USA) · Envy (Poland) · Expensive (East Asia) · Nobility · Sophisticated	Aslam, 2006 Goi, 2012 Hupka et al., 1997 Khattak et al., 2018 Labrecque & Milne, 2012 Madden et al., 2000 Mohebbi, 2014
Pink	· Calming · Feminine · Gratitude · Happiness · Innocence · Love/Romance · Playful · Sincerity · Youth	Aslam, 2006 Goi, 2012 Khattak et al., 2018 Labrecque & Milne, 2012 Mohebbi, 2014
Brown	· Confident · Dependable · Poverty · Reliability · Serious	Goi, 2012 Khattak et al., 2018 Labrecque & Milne, 2012 Madden et al., 2000 Mohebbi, 2014
Black	· Anger · Depression · Elegant · Evil · Expensive · Fear · Grief · Power · Sadness · Serious · Sophisticated · Trustworthy · Unity	Amsteus et al., 2015 Aslam, 2006 Goi, 2012 Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999 Hupka et al., 1997 Khattak et al., 2018 Madden et al., 2000 Mohebbi, 2014 Sliburyte & Skeryte, 2014

Gray	• Boredom • Conservative • Expensive (USA) • Serious • Traditional	Goi, 2012 Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999 Khattak et al., 2018 Mohebbi, 2014
White	• Cleanliness/Sterility • Death/Mourning (East Asia) • Happiness • High quality • Hope • Innocence • Peace • Purity • Sincerity • Youth	Aslam, 2006 Goi, 2012 Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999 Khattak et al., 2018 Labrecque & Milne, 2012 Madden et al., 2000 Mohebbi, 2014 Sliburyte & Skeryte, 2014

Conflict Framing in News Coverage of the 2021 GameStop Stock Saga

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an undergraduate senior capstone course in communications

Abstract

This research seeks to determine bias within coverage of the January 2021 GameStop incident during which small investors inflated the company's stock as an act protesting Wall Street, effectively causing short sellers to lose billions of dollars. In pursuit of this goal, this study uses conflict framing theory to conduct a content analysis of three major news sources: The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal*, and* Bloomberg*. Findings from this study show that* The Wall Street Journal's *coverage favors investors while* Bloomberg *favors Wall Street, and* The New York Times *does not have a clear leaning. Additionally, this research concludes that the presence of conflict frames does not suggest bias and a lack of conflict frames does not suggest neutrality. These findings have implications for how audiences perceive the events, potentially reflecting organizational bias or institutional bias relating to the societal role of business news.*

I. Introduction

In January 2021, GameStop stock rose 8000% over the previous six months, boosted through an effort that began on Reddit to undermine hedge fund investors who were short selling the company and essentially betting against GameStop's success. As stock prices rose rapidly thanks to small-shareholder social media efforts, Wall Street investors lost billions of dollars (Ingram & Bayly, 2021).

Many have understood this as a new-school act of protest in which civilians intentionally subverted Wall Street firms, most notably Melvin Capital. This act of rebellion is in response to sentiments that lucrative investment opportunities are inaccessible to the public, and is likely connected with discontent that Wall Street generally has been financially successful during the Covid-19 pandemic while much of the country has seen economic crisis. While some participants may not have had such deep motivations, spurred instead by the immediate financial opportunity presented, the event has sparked discussion both among the public and in Congress about how the stock market functions and who is given advantage, including questions of market manipulation (Ingram & Bayly, 2021).

This study examines the news coverage of this event, focusing on how publications frame and contextualize this incident and its players, perhaps showing favor for one side or another. This project is a content analysis focusing on coverage from *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Bloomberg*.

Keywords: business news, stocks, content analysis, Wall Street, framing
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It draws on framing theory to analyze for preferential treatment in leads and headlines, and the presence of keywords within the article. This project is informed by existing scholarly conversations about news content production and idea dissemination in connection to business-related current events.

II. Literature Review

Extensive literature exists discussing the framing of events in news media. This literature review will consider studies that focus on the influences of news coverage and its effects, including theory about story and conflict framing. This will culminate in a discussion of the significance of business news and other coverage of relevance to the 2021 GameStop stock.

Notably, news does not exist in a vacuum and research has shown that, unavoidably, many factors and considerations go into the production of news coverage. The coverage produced then has the power to shape the perceptions of its consumers on a given topic. One must look to the source of the news output to determine its influences—who is involved, and where its production and publication is occurring. For example, research has shown that *The Wall Street Journal*'s front-page political coverage increased after it was purchased by Rupert Murdoch in 2007, indicating that news organizations' coverage reflects biases and institutional motivations (Archer & Clinton, 2018). Additionally, the relationships between journalists and the stories' subjects will influence coverage. Social factors such as proximity and political relationships have been shown to affect coverage when dealing with entities like companies (Castelló, 2010). Cultural norms may also impact decisions that journalists make in order to convey news to effectively inform target audiences (Uribe, 2020). Thereafter, because news consumption is often how people learn about current events, the coverage and its inherent influences may be reflected in the consumer's perception and opinion of the circumstances covered (Barker & Lawrence, 2006; Han & Federico, 2018).

Framing theory provides one way to analyze how news is covered, considering that news can affect public perception. This theory suggests that the way that stories are organized and the words used to contextualize and explain subject matter can create a framing effect, spreading a specific interpretation of events to its audiences (Uribe, 2020). Framing theory has been used in many studies to examine the causes and effects of news coverage. Furthermore, the framing of conflict news, when there are two or more opposing parties, can be particularly polarizing. Conflict news framing is apparent in stories covering politics when there are salient competitors. Additionally, conflict news frames can have polarizing effects on audiences by causing them to align with one of the conflicting parties or enhancing perceptions of social identity (Han & Federico, 2018). This effect may be especially prevalent if the news being circulated is overtly one-sided as many Americans believe U.S. news to be (Glynn & Huge, 2014).

These implications apply to business news as well. Research has shown that framing using metaphors representing negative emotions can invoke or increase anxiety and fear in consumers (Ho, 2016). Additionally, the tone of the content, and perceived uncertainty in the state of the economy in news coverage can impact consumers' perceptions (Damstra, 2019). The amount of business coverage may also impact economic consciousness. Research has shown that in Dutch news, there is increased economic coverage during times of economic downturn, and less coverage during times of economic recovery or growth. This reveals the potential for a depreciative effect of the media on public perception of the economy based on the frequency of coverage (Damstra & Boukes, 2019).

Furthermore, business news has been found to include conflict framing particularly when in connection to breaking news. For example, coverage of Occupy Wall Street could frame the movement negatively, positively, or neutrally (Xu, 2013). In addition, American news media has acted as watchdogs against big business. One instance of this is the condemning news coverage of the New York Stock Exchange during a case when they attempted a power-grab (Mitchell, 2010). Understanding the power of business news to impact audience perception, previous literature has studied the framing of business-related news coverage such as the actions of the New York Stock Exchange and the Occupy Wall Street movement.

Moreover, having established that business news coverage can be contentious and contain conflict frames, these stories then can have effects that extend further than audience perception; business news coverage may affect business itself. This is because consumers react to business news by updating their financial investments and/or business pursuits, including those of business and financial professionals. For instance, stock market and economic news have been described as having a "Reciprocal [Relationship]" in research that examines how business news influences business decisions and vice versa, in a cycle (Strauss, Vliegenthart, & Verhoeven, 2018, p. 1054). Media also heavily influences the reactions of the stock market, especially when coverage focuses on consumer-oriented issues in addition to a financial focus (Strycharz, Strauß, & Trilling, 2018). The performance of financial firms may also be affected by news media attention. Further research has found that media attention to financial firms has a negative impact on their performance because events that land a business in the news tend to be negative in nature (Van der Meer & Vliegenthart, 2018). Overall, business news framing will impact not only consumer perceptions, but their business-related actions thereafter.

In summary, scholars have established that many factors shape the production of the news, which may then affect the audience's understanding of current events and associated opinions. Polarizing results may be especially apparent from works that can be analyzed as containing conflict frames. Business news is no exception. This research seeks to examine the factors surrounding coverage of the January 2021 GameStop stock incident.

III. Methods

This research adds to existing literature by providing a case study of one incident that combines business news framing with the conceptualization of conflict frames: the GameStop stock incident that came to fruition and made national headlines in January 2021. This study seeks to use framing theory to understand the potential biases portrayed in media coverage of this event, acknowledging the significance of news framing on audience perception. As such, this study's research questions are as follows:

RQ1: Does news coverage of the 2021 GameStop stock incident from *The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal,* and *Bloomberg* contain conflict frames?

RQ2: If the answer is yes to RQ1, what frames are used?

RQ3: Does news coverage of the 2021 GameStop stock incident from *The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal,* and *Bloomberg* appear to reflect preference for either small investors or large investment institutions?

In pursuit of these questions, this study analyzes a limited convenience sample of 10 articles from *The New York Times,* 10 articles from *The Wall Street Journal,* and 10 articles from *Bloomberg*. These organizations have been chosen because they are all popular news publications based in New York City, physically adjacent to the hedge funds involved, and have varying reputations and target audiences. All of the articles used are related to the GameStop stock incident—either covering the events as they occurred or later reflection, explanation, or contextualization. Articles were chosen based on subject matter (relating to this incident and including the keyword "GameStop" in the headline or tagline). Articles selected are from January 2021 through February 2021 and are from sections such as "Business," "Economy," and "News," and not designated as opinion or op-ed pieces. The sample size is limited to 10 articles per organization due to some publications having much more coverage than others on this subject. For instance, because *Bloomberg* caters to large audiences in the financial sector, they published dozens of articles meeting the previous criteria and delving into minute specifics that their financially minded audiences may be interested in, while the general public is not. Therein, the 30 articles have been selected at the researcher's discretion accounting for factors such as length, relevance, and that they are intelligible without a master's degrees in business, from an array of authors with each publication to create a comparable sample for qualitative analysis.

Analysis was conducted on the text within the article, including the headline, tagline, and captions if applicable, but not including other multimedia content such as photos, videos, advertisements, or links. This study codes based on the presence of framing devices in the form of keywords. This methodology is based on that of Kaibin Xu who identifies six words that indicate marginalized opinions in news coverage of the Occupy Wall Street movement. Xu notes that the appearance of the term "public disapproval" is the most evident of negative bias, followed by the terms "negative impact," "show," "ineffective," and "lawlessness" (Xu, 2013, p. 2427).

Adjusted for the GameStop event, this project codes based on the appearance of the words "craziness" (or any synonym of this including "frenzy" or "mania") and "manipulation" in the article when referencing the trading that took place and/or the investors. These terms are understood to reflect negative feelings toward investors and their actions in this case. Articles are also coded based on the word "win" or variations of such including "success" and "beat," and also variations of the word "lose," taking note of which party the author is referring to. Lastly, articles are coded based on the presence of the term "war" to describe the scenario, or equivalent terms that indicate rivalry, such as "vs."/ "versus," "army," and "enemy." While these terms do not indicate preference one way or the other, they are understood to declare conflict. Moreover, the content analysis identifies which party (investors or institutions) is made the protagonist of the story, as accentuated by the framing of the lead and headline.

This analysis investigates apparent favor toward protest participants or financial institutions. In pursuit of this, this study seeks to identify and analyze trends reflected in each publication's use of framing devices in the sampled articles. This study's methodology takes inspiration from previous studies on framing theory in the news and can be repeated in the future to study news coverage of other events.

IV. Findings

Overall, this content analysis identified 358 conflict frames among the 30 articles across three news organizations. *The Wall Street Journal* contains the most conflict framing devices (39.9%), closely followed by *The New York Times* (36.6%), then *Bloomberg* (23.5%). The following provides a quantitative breakdown of the results by focusing on each frame examined.

A. Craziness and manipulation

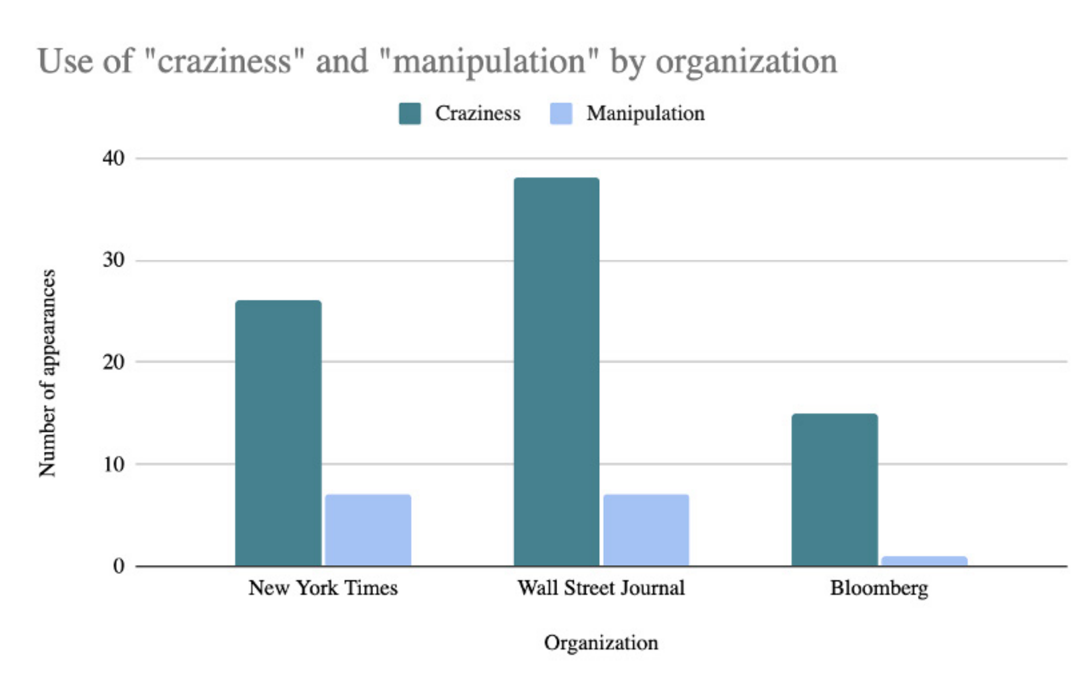

Figure 1.

The appearance of any conjugation of the word “crazy” to describe the GameStop incident is understood to reflect a negative perception of the event, likely falling onto those who created the ordeal: the small investors. Synonyms such as “frenzy,” “madness,” and “mania” are also included within this category. The word “manipulation” in reference to this event also likely reflects negative perception of the event and those responsible. It is understood to imply illegal and/or immoral activity. This word is less commonly used than synonyms for craziness. As shown in Figure 1, *The Wall Street Journal* is the most likely to describe this scenario as being crazy or frenzied and is tied with *The New York Times* for most appearances of the word “manipulation” in coverage of this event. In both cases, *Bloomberg* is found to be least likely to use either framing device.

B. Winners and losers

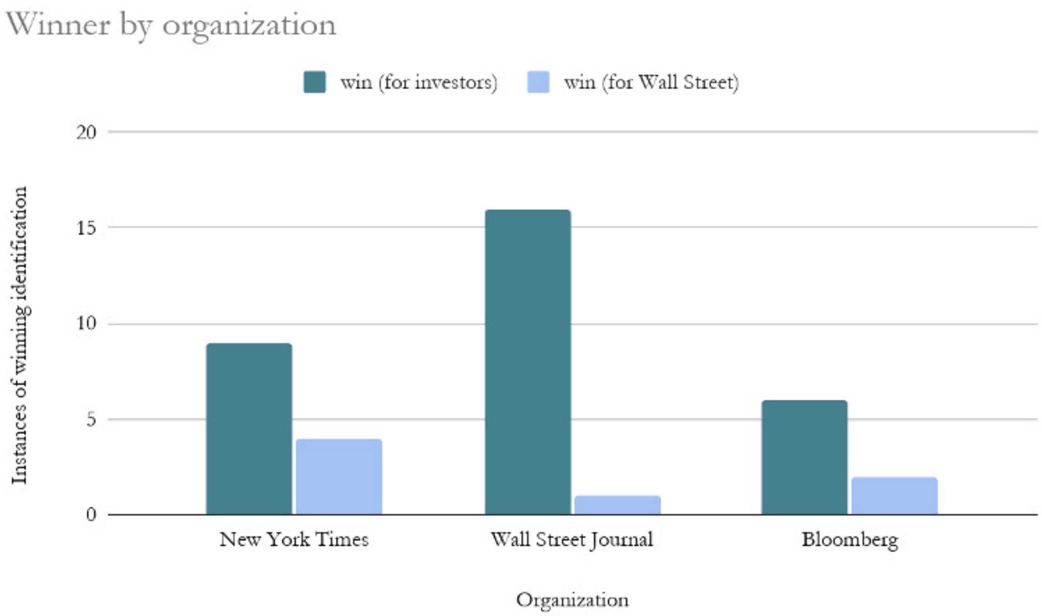

Figure 2.

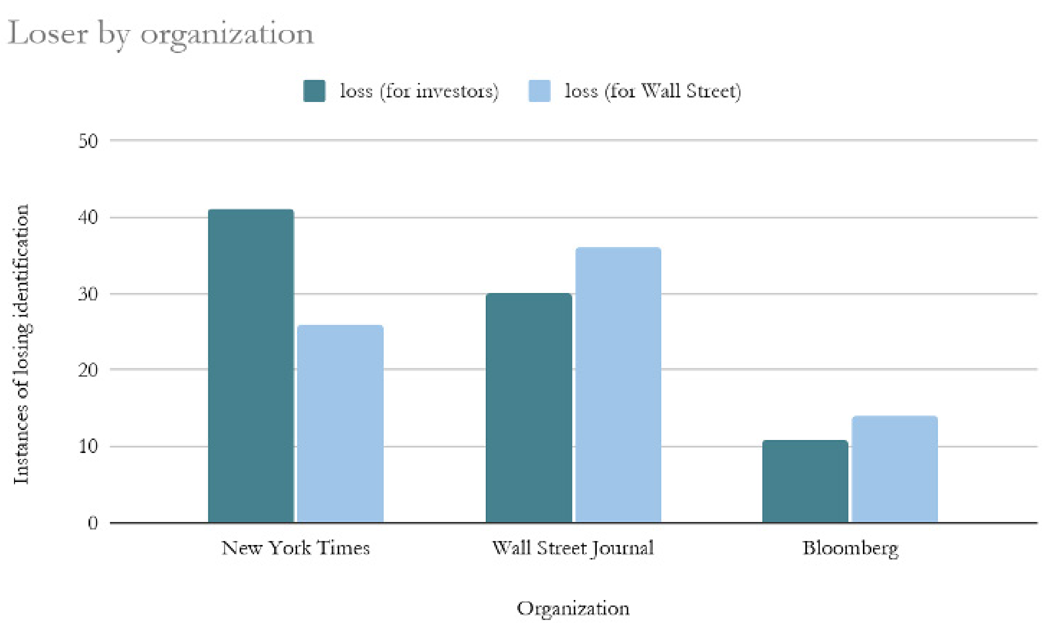

Figure 3.

Here, the articles from each organization are coded for terms which blatantly suggest a winner and loser within this conflict—either investors or hedge funds. Accepted terms for winning identification include variations of “win,” “beat,” and “success.” Likewise, accepted terms for losing identification include variations of “lose” or “loss,” and “hurt.” While terms for winning identification are mostly used to describe groups of people, language of loss is also commonly employed to describe the groups’ monetary deficit. Figures 2 and 3 respectively represent the number of instances in which winner and loser terminology are used, compared by organization and which party the articles refer to.

This research finds that *The Wall Street Journal* is most likely to refer to investors as winners and least likely to refer to Wall Street as winning. *The New York Times* is most likely of the three organizations to refer to Wall Street and/or hedge funds as the winners. Moreover, *The New York Times* uses the most language of loss, followed by *The Wall Street Journal*. Whereas *The New York Times* refers to loss more often when talking about investors, *The Wall Street Journal* does so most often when referring to Wall Street. Overall, *Bloomberg* is least likely to use language of winning or losing in their coverage of the GameStop stock incident.

The most prominent framing device used is the word “loss.” Accounting for 44.1% of conflict frames found, this word and its synonyms are employed to describe both monetary loss and the position of people or groups. The emphasis on this frame suggests a focus on not only a losing side, but also on the money involved in this saga.

C. Protagonists

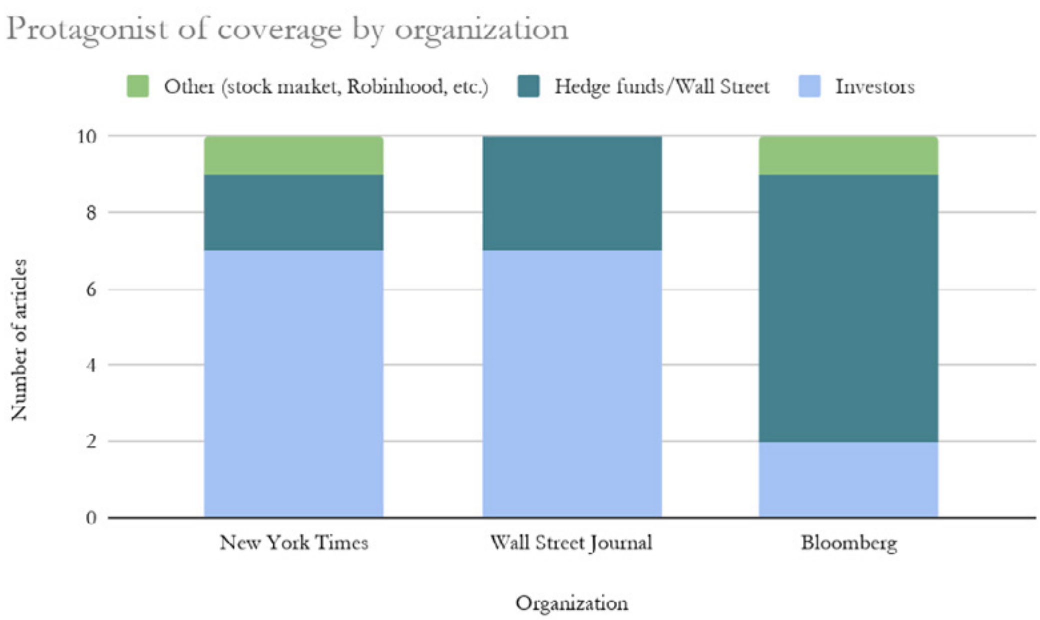

Figure 4.

This section is coded based on which party is placed as the main character in the article, usually indicated by who the actor is in the headline and/or lead. The findings in Figure 4 show that both *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* place investors as the protagonist of their coverage while *Bloomberg* is more likely to place hedge funds and/or Wall Street as the main characters. It is unclear whether designation of a protagonist should be understood to reflect favor or simply that the organization is writing towards their readership.

D. Words of war

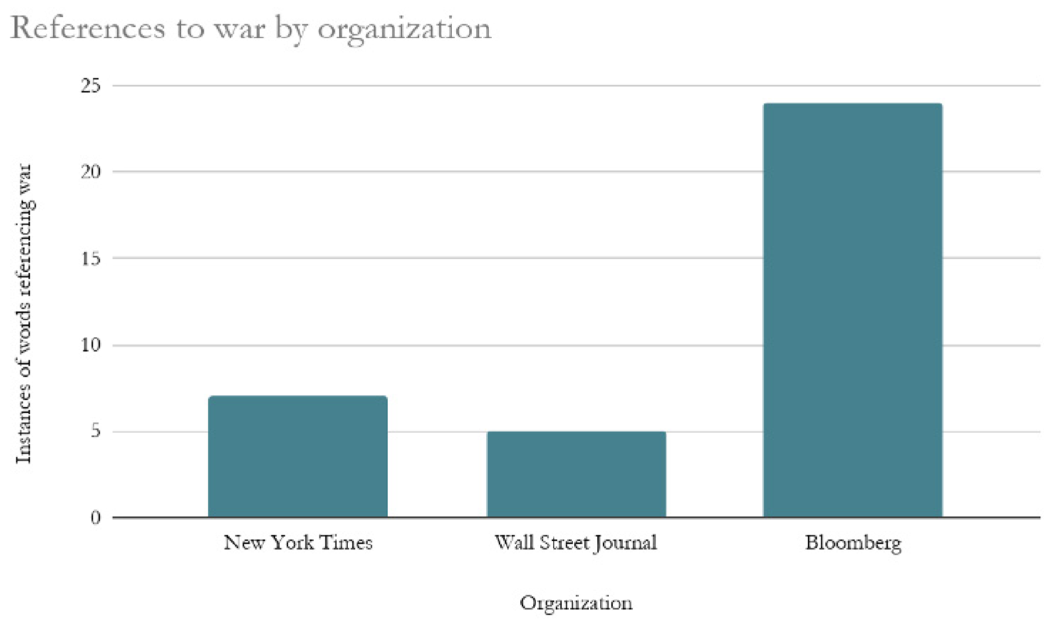

Figure 5.

While this category does not reflect favor one way or another, the appearance of warring words such as "war," "battle," "enemy," "feud," and "versus" frame this event to be one of opposing parties. As shown by the results in Figure 5, *Bloomberg* is most likely to use these words reflecting rivalry by a significant margin.

V. Discussion

The goal of this research is to examine if news coverage of the GameStop stock saga contains conflict framing, which frames are used, and if the presence of these frames reflects organizations' favor for one side of the conflict. In the case that this study examines, the coverage broke through the boundaries of business news and became a cultural phenomenon, often understood as a form of protest in which small investors took a stand against Wall Street short sellers. Furthermore, this research relies on the understanding that news coverage is created by humans and therefore includes many influences and is never completely objective as though reported in a bubble. Literature on this topic agrees that such motivators will be reflected in the news coverage, resulting in framing devices that can affect reader understanding.

Responding to this study's research questions, coverage of this event by *The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal,* and *Bloomberg* are all found to contain conflict frames (RQ1). All the framing criteria described in the methodology are found at varying frequencies. These frames include the presence of keywords such as "craziness" and "manipulation" which reflect poorly on the investors and their actions throughout this saga, mentions of winners and losers, and instances in which syntax is used that suggests war or enemy sides within this story. Additionally, this study also finds that different articles chose varying players as their main character (RQ2). This central figure is designated as the actor whom the story is framed around. Moreover, there is no overwhelming bias toward one side of the conflict—neither the investors nor hedge funds (RQ3).

The following will break down the trends observed by organization; however, while the frames may be analyzed for tendencies that may reflect organizational bias, framing is not found to be salient across articles within the same organization. Therefore, while organizational factors are in play, the individuals involved in the stories' creation still impacted the output.

A. The New York Times

As shown in Figures 1 through 5, *The New York Times* often places between *The Wall Street Journal* and *Bloomberg*. Likewise, this organization contains the median number of conflict frames with 131 out of the 358 found. Breaking down these results, *The New York Times* frames most of their coverage around small investors. They are also more likely to refer to investors as both winners and losers. *The New York Times* also has a high rate of using words referencing craziness and manipulation which are understood to reflect poorly on investors. As such, while *The New York Times* is found to contain conflict frames, this study concludes no clear bias in their coverage.

B. The Wall Street Journal

This organization contains the most conflict frames overall (with 143 out of 358 total frames) and in many categories shown in Figures 1 through 5. *The Wall Street Journal* is most likely out of the three organizations to reference craziness, wins for small investors, and losses for Wall Street. They are also more likely to frame coverage around the investors as protagonists. Although they use the least words of war, this research concludes that *The Wall Street Journal* presents a tendency to cover investors more favorably than Wall Street actors. The influences of this are unclear, as are the potential consequences of this bias. Additionally, this bias is not reflected in every single article, but overall, for the 10 articles examined, the frames point towards investors.

C. Bloomberg

Of the three organizations, *Bloomberg* is found to have the lowest number of conflict frames, with only 84. Despite this low number, the trends observed differ greatly from *The Wall Street Journal* and even *The New York Time*s. *Bloomberg* is least likely to use framing devices referencing craziness, manipulation, loss, and winning but they are also much more likely to use words of war. Examples of warring words in *Bloomberg* are particularly fierce, including verbs such as "bludgeons" and references to investors as an "army."

Lastly, *Bloomberg*'s coverage overwhelmingly places Wall Street and hedge funds as the main characters in the story. However, as previously mentioned, it is unclear whether this designation of a protagonist should be understood to reflect favor or simply that the organization is writing towards its readership. *Bloomberg* is a popular source of news for hedge funds and alternative Wall Street management firms that use *Bloomberg* platforms for trading. It is also important to note that *Bloomberg*'s coverage is more targeted and narrower than that of *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal,* and that *Bloomberg* was following GameStop stock before it became popular with the other organizations. This is likely another result of their target audience being Wall Street insiders who may be more invested in this story and the status of the stock than the general public.

Overall, despite lower numbers of conflict frames which might seem to reflect neutrality, *Bloomberg*'s coverage appears to favor Wall Street within the context of this event. This is likely influenced by the organization's target audience on Wall Street, though the effects of this bias are unclear.

Beyond the individual results for each publication, this study's findings hold implications for broader business coverage. Relying on such metrics as the stock market as indicators for the country's economic wellbeing may be understood by some as one-sided. Business journalism institutions have been criticized for sticking to the "status quo" for this discourse that prioritizes the wealthiest members of the population and does not question the system in which events such as short sellings are made possible (Usher, 2017, p. 370). This, once again, questions the intended versus actual societal role of business news media.

VI. Conclusion

This study examines the presence of conflict frames within coverage of the January 2021 GameStop stock saga from *The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal,* and *Bloomberg*. This event can be understood as a form of virtual protest in which small investors rose up to counter Wall Street short sellers. Thus, having indeed found conflict frames, this research provides insight on the biases of these organizations standing with either party in this conflict.

This content analysis concludes *The Wall Street Journal* favors investors, while *Bloomberg* favors Wall Street. Meanwhile, *The New York Times* does not appear to have a clear sway. This study also suggests that the presence of conflict frames does not suggest bias, and a lack of conflict frames does not suggest neutrality. This is observed in how *Bloomberg* contains the least conflict frames but holds the most bias for Wall Street.

This study's limitations include the inability to determine concretely what influences both the organizations and the individuals reporting the news. Additionally, this study is limited to 10 articles per organization. For *The New York Times*, this seems to be a significant amount of its coverage, but for *Bloomberg*, this is only the tip of the iceberg. The article selection is also limited to coverage of this event specifically, rather than articles focusing on the larger implications of this event or related articles about topics such as the Robinhood trading platform. Future research could analyze other instances of conflict between Wall Street and individual actors in the news.

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Picking or Tricking Your Brain? The Extent of Neuromarketing Awareness and the Perception of This Marketing Field

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Abstract

Since the development of neuromarketing, there has been a wealth of research conducted aimed at defining the practice, analyzing its potential, and testing the effectiveness of its methods. This research explores the common consumer awareness of the fast-growing field of neuromarketing and perceptions of this practice in terms of comfortability, ethics, and future implications. This was accomplished through a quantitative survey, including several open-ended responses. The results found that a majority of the respondents were unaware of neuromarketing. Once made aware, the results were mixed regarding the perception and level of comfort with the practice. While the highest number of respondents maintained that they were comfortable, there were a notable number of respondents who were neutral or uncomfortable. The research suggested that although neuromarketing was perceived as an impediment on one's free will, the practice was still deemed ethical to the majority of respondents.

I. Introduction

Human emotions, thoughts, and actions are the direct products of neural activity in the brain. For marketers, neurobiology can reduce the uncertainty of marketing efforts that intend to understand consumer behavior. The field of neuromarketing, sometimes referred to as consumer neuroscience, studies the brain to predict and potentially even manipulate consumer behavior and decision-making. More specifically in this research, neuromarketing is defined as the scientific study of a consumer's neurological and physiological responses to advertisements, products, and/or branding. These responses allow researchers to gain insight into consumer motivations, preferences, and decisions which can help marketers formulate more effective advertisements and product development to inspire an unconscious "buy button" in a consumer's brain.

The neurological methods of neuromarketing research are most often done through functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) and electroencephalogram (EEG). Researchers use fMRI to measure changes in brain activity to learn why consumers make certain decisions and which part of the brain is telling them to do so. An EEG is also used to measure changes in brain activity, however, due to the less extensive (and less expensive) technology used to administer an EEG, it is difficult to determine the exact locations

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that this activity occurs. While this is a clear hindrance to marketers, an EEG is sometimes favored due to the dramatic difference in price of these methods.

The physiological methods of neuromarketing research consist of eye tracking, facial-expression coding, heart rate, and several other physiological responses a consumer has when making decisions. Eye tracking can measure attention (via fixation points) and arousal (via pupil dilation). Facial-expression coding (movement of muscles in the face) can measure emotional responses. Heart rate can measure arousal (Harrell, 2019). These are often favored as the tools for measuring the physiological responses based on brain activity as they tend to be more affordable and easier to use.

Perhaps one of the most famous brands known to have implemented neuromarketing research into product development is Campbell Soup Company. For several years, Campbell's researchers studied changes in skin moisture, heart rate, breathing, and posture to learn how consumers react to images from soup bowls to logo design (Brat, 2010). The researchers found that warmth and other positive attributes people associated with Campbell's soup at home evaporated when they faced store shelves (Brat, 2010). They found that Campbell's large logo at the top of shelf displays in stores drew more attention than necessary – the logo's bright red background made all varieties of soup seem to blend together. In interviews, participants also said the soup pictured on the can and shelf labels did not appear warm, resulting in an addition of steam rising from the bowl of soup (Brat, 2010). Shown below is a final comparison of the updated cans and the reasoning behind each change Campbell Soup Company made, which were all inspired by neuromarketing research.

Figure 1. Campbell Soup Company changes

Many researchers have explored the birth of neuromarketing, dissected the methods, and even conducted ethical debates regarding the invasiveness of this practice. Others have studied the effectiveness of this marketing practice through both explorative and implemented research. This research explores the common consumer awareness around neuromarketing and the perception of the comfort, ethics, and implications of this marketing research practice.

II. Literature Review

Since the original development of neuromarketing in 2007, there has been a wealth of research conducted aimed at defining the practice, analyzing its potential, and testing the effectiveness of its methods. Research has also been a space for fostering ethical debates. While there has been a considerable amount of research done in the realm of neuromarketing, there have been no researchers who have looked at consumers' general perceptions of the practice.

The Birth of Neuromarketing

In 2007, one of the first academic papers to mention the term "neuromarketing" was published and defined this new marketing communication field as the "application of neuroscientific methods to analyze and understand human behaviour in relation to markets and marketing exchanges" (Lee et al., 2007, p. 200). Since then, there has been an explosion of neuromarketing research conducted, ranging from simply defining the concept, employing different methods of neuromarketing, and reviewing the ethical implications of employing a technique that attempts to remove free will from the human decision-making process. In 2017, two members of the aforementioned author team reflected on the last decade of research in the field of neuromarketing and how it is no longer unusual to see individual studies appearing in the marketing literature that use neuroscientific methods (Lee et al., 2017). While the core definition remained relatively the same, the research into this field grew immensely over a decade.

Common Methods and Practice

A 2008 study recorded electrodermal activity (EDA), a psychophysiological response that is used as a measurement to detect differences in a brand's "emotional selling proposition" (Gakhal & Senior, 2008, p. 331). The EDA measurements were recorded from participants who were shown four different advertisements containing the same target product with different models (famous/non-famous and attractive/average looking). The results of this research were a surprise, showing that average-looking famous models produced higher EDA than attractive famous models (Gakhal & Senior, 2008).

Shortly after, perhaps the most famous neuromarketing study was conducted, using a simple blog post. The "You Look Where They Look" post by James Breeze showed the positive effect that a strategically positioned face image can have on the way that a person consumes content. Breeze conducted the experiment using eye-tracking technology, another method that falls under the umbrella of neuromarketing, to determine if faces can be used to guide a person's attention to key content (Breeze, 2014). The below images show the results from this study, presenting the success that developed from his hypothesis of using strategically positioned imagery.

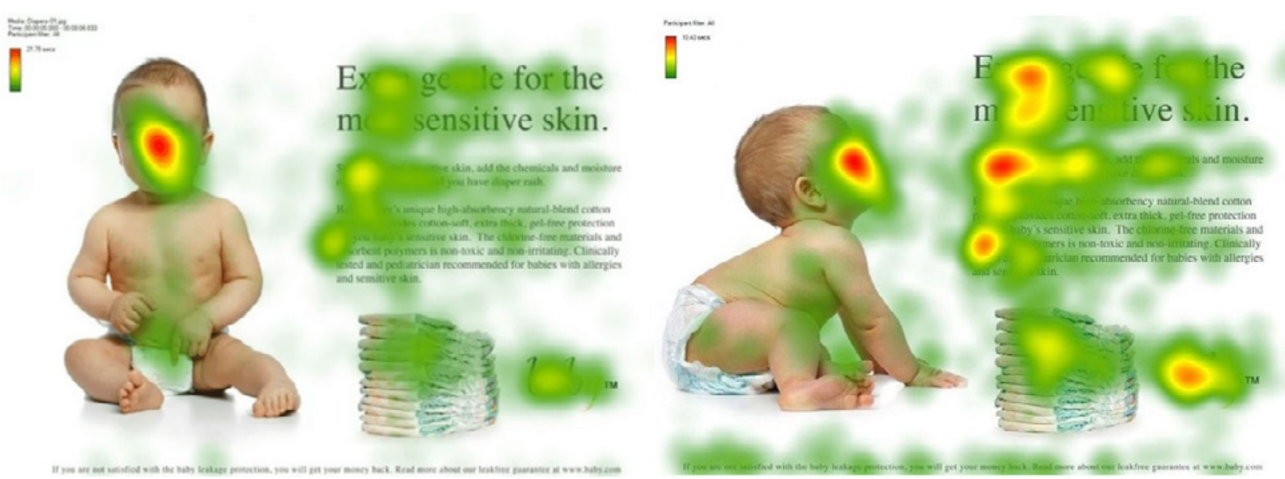

Figure 2. "You Look Where They Look" post

Subliminal advertising is also an effective method of neuromarketing research. As A/B testing conducted by Hsu and Chen (2020) has shown, subliminal advertising is significantly influential to a consumer's selection of a hotel, even if just a smiling face emoji is added to what is otherwise the same video.

EEGs are another popular, and the most common, method of neuromarketing research, informing marketers of typical consumer preferences based on brain activity. Golnar-Nik et al. (2019) looked into the power of using EEG data for finding brain regions that distinguish between preferences. The researchers were able to determine that adding a background color to an advertisement had a negative impact on the interest of liking (Golnar-Nik et al., 2019). The researchers concluded that EEGs could predict consumer decision-making with relatively high accuracy, which begged the question of the ethicality of implementing these results in order to insert what many call a “subconscious buy button” in the minds of common consumers.

Ethical Debates

The most commonly perceived ethical issue is, “the fear that neuromarketing may render consumers’ choices completely predictable” (Stanton et al., 2017, p. 803). This is due to the specific neuroscientific methods of fMRI and EEG, as they have been most successful in predicting individuals’ choices and final purchase decisions. For example, Knutson et al. (2007) demonstrated that brain activity could predict a consumer’s choice (for food goods) above and beyond self-reported information regarding preferences. Therefore, if neuroscientific methods can look into consumers’ minds and extract information that the consumers themselves do not consciously know, it is argued that neuromarketing provides a tool that can identify consumer choices even before they make them.

Another ethical concern is that although the participants of past neuromarketing studies have consented to research participation, most of these consumers have not consented to having a subconscious “buy button” that can manipulate their free will. From a scientific standpoint, as noted by Madan (2010), neuromarketing is nowhere near being able to allow researchers to design a marketing campaign so addictive that it completely overrides an individual’s free will. However, concern remains over even just a small degree of potential consumer manipulation.

Automatic Conceptual Channel

Introduced by James Potter in *On Media Violence*, the automatic perceptual channel relates to elements which are perceived and processed in an unconscious manner – a concept directly related to the purpose of using neuromarketing research. This channel resides above the threshold of human sensory perception but below the threshold of conscious awareness (Potter, 1999). In this channel, perceptual flow continues until an interruption stops the exposure or “bumps” the person’s perceptual processing into the next higher channel of attention (Potter, 1999). Neuromarketing research aims to target the automatic perceptual channel, leading consumers into making unconscious decisions without being “bumped” into the threshold of conscious awareness.

While there has been a great deal of research done regarding the field of neuromarketing, there have been no studies that directly ask consumers about the essential premise of neuromarketing, which is to subconsciously make decisions for consumers, thus impeding on free will. This research will provide insight on the average consumers’ stance on being marketed to on a neuro-level.

Research Questions

This study focused on the following questions in order to determine the general awareness of neuromarketing, the comfortability consumers feel regarding the implementation of this research, and the perceived ethicality behind inspiring a “buy button” in the unconscious minds of nonconsenting individuals.

RQ1: To what extent are consumers aware of neuromarketing?

RQ2: Once aware of the practice, how do consumers perceive neuromarketing?

RQ3: Is it perceived as ethical to employ what was learned from consenting individuals on nonconsenting individuals?

This research will provide information to both consumers and marketers regarding the use of more advanced market research. While past research has proven beneficial to marketing goals, consumer awareness may actually have the opposite effect, driving consumers away from brands that implement these strategies. Furthermore, the results of this study may have implications for future marketing policy and advanced market research implementation.

III. Methods

The researcher conducted survey research, which included multiple-choice questions and several open-ended responses. The questions were developed by the researcher based on knowledge gained from previous studies. To encourage completion, the survey was brief, asking only the most meaningful questions to provide answers to the research questions. The survey was created using Survey Monkey, distributed through social media, and was classified as a convenience sample. Prior to beginning the survey, participants were notified that their answers were confidential and anonymous and that they may back out of the survey at any point. Participants then consented to the survey electronically and filled it out. Prior to the survey's distribution, the researcher obtained Institutional Review Board approval.

The survey was available for five days and yielded 30 responses. The only identifying information gathered from participants was age, selected from the following ranges: 18-22, 23-30, 31-39, 40+. This was to determine if there was any deviation in response themes among different age groups for any of the questions. Participants were asked questions related to their awareness of neuromarketing, their comfort with this market research practice, and their perceptions of the ethics and free will regarding the implementation of neuromarketing research results. Participants who were not aware of what the term "neuromarketing" meant were informed prior to completing the remainder of the survey. These questions each were initially framed as yes/no, with either an additional open-ended explanation of their answer, or a follow-up question on a 7-point Likert Scale. The scale related to one's comfort with this market research practice ranged from *extremely uncomfortable* to *extremely comfortable*, with a *neutral* option also provided.

Quantitative data was analyzed with Survey Monkey and converted to percentages for discussion purposes. Open-ended answers were analyzed qualitatively for positive, negative, or neutral tone about the practice of neuromarketing. They were also analyzed for sentiments related to the motives behind polar answers.

IV. Findings

Of the 30 respondents, 70% did not know the meaning of neuromarketing. More specifically, 80% of college students and 66.67% of 40+ year old adults did not know the meaning of the term. This result was not unexpected, as participants may not have studied the concept or do not work in the field of marketing or communications. To account for this, a brief explanation of neuromarketing practices was provided next so participants were still able to complete the survey.

The question regarding one's comfortability with neuromarketing was measured on a 7-point Likert Scale. ranging from extremely uncomfortable to extremely comfortable. Of the 30 participants, 40% responded that they are comfortable with the practice, 33.33% felt neutral, and 26.67% felt uncomfortable. Notably, no participants felt extremely comfortable or extremely uncomfortable.

Impediment on Free Will

Participants were asked whether they felt that the practice and implementation of neuromarketing research influenced "a degree" of their free will. Just over half of respondents (56.67%) answered that they do believe neuromarketing influences a degree of their free will.

The question regarding free will also included an open-ended response asking participants to elaborate on their polar answer. Some of the responses deeming that their free will is not influenced to a degree cited that, "marketers are simply doing their jobs," and, "the final decision to purchase a service or product sits with the consumer." Other respondents were even more insistent in their free will stating, "I don't believe any form of targeting or marketing actually influences free will," and, "I make decisions on purchases or services based off need and desire, not just because it is presented to me."

Some of those that who did believe that neuromarketing influenced their free will included comments such as, "if the neuromarketing is effective, I believe that the point of this is to influence the given audience to make a certain product more appealing," and, "by understanding what makes the brain want to buy something, marketers can create advertisements that will almost guarantee that response of buying something." Again, there were more insistent answers in this firm belief such as one respondent stating, "it is unjust to use someone's subconscious behavior and influence them to make a purchase or do something."

Ethics

The final question of the survey inquired regarding the ethicality of neuromarketing according to one's own personal definition of ethics. Most respondents (66.67%) deemed it was an ethical practice while 33.33% did not believe so.

This question also included an open-ended response asking participants to elaborate. Some of those that claimed the practice was unethical included comments stating, "I think it can be unethical depending on how intensely it is used and to what end," and, "it should be clear that data is being collected by the company for privacy reasons." These and several other responses highlighted issues with invasiveness and subconscious targeting, even when the actual research is done on consenting individuals.

Some of those that claimed the practice was ethical referred to the actual research being done on consenting participants and that neuromarketing is just another advancement in marketing strategies. Others responded a bit more in-depth explaining, "we live in a consumer world and a degree of influence over what we buy is to be expected," and, "I feel as though I still have freedom and choice in my product selections - even if the advertising around it has been thoroughly researched and intends to 'push' me to buy." The additional responses that deemed the practice ethical emphasized that they still felt that decision-making was still ultimately up to the consumer, no matter how much the marketing practice might entice them.

V. Discussion & Conclusion

It was expected that neuromarketing would not be a well-known concept among participants. Based on responses, it could be assumed that those familiar with the term were those who were well-versed in the marketing and communications field. The open-ended responses from those that who were familiar with the term contained information taken from a marketing standpoint, alluding to the fact that those participants work or study in the field. Those who work in the marketing realm are likely to be less susceptible to marketing tactics, being able to easily identify when they are being targeted and knowing the research that is done for optimized marketing. Those who do not work in the industry are often more uncomfortable with knowing how much time, research, and targeting goes into marketing and advertising, as shown through the mentioned responses that came from respondents that were unaware of neuromarketing.

In terms of comfortability, those older than age 22 were more insistent that they are not influenced by this type of marketing. This is possibly due to their brand loyalty that has resulted from years of purchasing. Of those that are 40-plus years old, none of the respondents were uncomfortable with neuromarketing. The comments these respondents left were more insistent that they are insusceptible to marketing, with one specifically stating that they are, "old enough to know that you can't always believe what you read and can also tell if I'm being manipulated." With these responses, they ignored the fact that neuromarketing studies and targets subconscious brain activity and physiological responses in order to go around the barriers that consumers have consciously put up to defend against traditional marketing.

When analyzing the influence of one's free will, there was a wider range of responses than just *yes* or *no.* For example, several respondents that chose *no* explained that they are still swayed or persuaded more than they would have been to certain products that are marketed effectively. This collective sentiment is summed up by a respondent that stated, "I still feel as though I have free will. My choices may be swayed based on imagery, but this seems subjective to me - everything influences something else. I still have the choice to buy or not buy." The same idea of there being a wider range of responses than just *yes* or *no* was also apparent in the responses that decided that neuromarketing does influence a degree of free will. Some respondents held the same view that they are being swayed or persuaded but did see this as an influence on their degree of free will. Of those that held this sentiment, one respondent's explanation generally sums up their responses:

> To a certain degree, yes. I think that neuromarketing is a different approach to advertising, and an effective one at that, but I think all advertisements are meant to help you make a decision. Marketing in itself is used to influence the choices that non-brand loyal consumers make in order to get new customers. In my opinion, the purpose of marketing in general is to influence a person's free will and make them more likely to purchase a certain product, and I think neuromarketing is a more effective way of doing so.

The most thought-provoking differences in responses came from the question of ethics. Of the respondents that admitted that neuromarketing made them uncomfortable, 25% still claimed that it was ethical. More in-depth, 15% also said that their free will was influenced to a degree, but still agreed that the practice was ethical. These respondents claimed that an impediment on free will was still deemed as an ethical practice. One of the respondents made note-worthy comments, highlighting other marketing tactics that are, in their eyes, less ethical than neuromarketing:

> Neuromarketing, while uncomfortable, is ethical in the way that it does not stray too far from what companies are already doing to inspire that "buy button." Corporations think of different ways to appeal to different markets all the time, and to me, the practice of neuromarketing is more or less a company doing research in order to gain a potential customer. This practice seems more ethical than companies using an individual's search history or listening to conversations in order to formulate the types of advertisements that are shown to them. That "big brother" method of marketing, while uncomfortable to most, is still widely accepted as the status quo.

The mention of other more seemingly invasive and often debated marketing tactics provided an interesting viewpoint. Instead of simply addressing ethics in terms of neuromarketing itself, this respondent used a comparison in their judgment.

Another noteworthy comment made by a respondent stressed a bigger issue with neuromarketing – that companies will not refrain from doing so if it benefits their success. This respondent commented, "It's not ethical, but I don't believe that will deter any company from using it. Without neuromarketing being general knowledge, it is taking advantage of the subconscious and its impact on a person's spending." This was an insightful point to be brought up, especially given that companies have pushed the limits of ethicality in the past with incidents such as Facebook's sharing of data with Cambridge Analytica and third parties which put users on high alert for privacy in 2018. While this dealt with social-networking privacy, the privacy of one's mind is a whole other, and more personal, matter.

Limitations and Future Research

A limitation to this research was allowing respondents to gauge ethics based on their own personal definition of ethics. One's own definition of ethics is subjective, resulting for some variability in responses. While this was considered when constructing the survey, it was difficult to set a general definition of ethics since the topic is one that has been heavily debated.

Finally, the number of participants was a limitation for this research. A larger sample size would have yielded a more even distribution of age ranges allowing the research to be better generalized to a population.

One future research possibility could include examining the dangers of growth within the neuromarketing field, such as nanomarketing, and the repercussions this might have on brands from consumers that are aware of these practices. Mileti et al. (2016) reported that nanotechnologies have succeeded in miniaturizing complex tools into nanodevices in order to obtain results in real time as opposed to a laboratory setting. This presents huge potential for growth in the field of marketing, allowing researchers to conduct noninvasive and nonintrusive experiments, monitor consumer mental processes in real time, and avoid several other limitations to neuromarketing research.

Another option for further research is to conduct a survey of exclusively college students. As previously mentioned, most of those that were older age 22 were more insistent on the fact that they are not influenced by this type of marketing, which is perhaps due to their brand loyalty that has resulted from years of purchasing. While college students are likely to purchase the same brands they find at home, they are also more receptive to new products than the older age groups, allowing for more objective results.

Most respondents to this survey were unaware of neuromarketing. Once made aware, there were mixed results regarding the perception and comfort with the practice. While the highest number of respondents maintained that they were comfortable, there were a notable number of respondents that were neutral or uncomfortable. The most interesting outcome of this research was learning that although neuromarketing is generally perceived as an impediment on a degree of one's free will, the practice was still deemed ethical to most respondents.

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Exploring Climate Narratives: The Link Between Animal Agriculture and Climate Change in U.S. Media

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Abstract

Animal agriculture is a major contributor to climate change, producing greenhouse emissions roughly equivalent to those of the transportation sector. As meat consumption is on the rise, so are the negative environmental impacts of livestock production. In August 2019, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published the Special Report on Climate Change and Land, emphasizing the need to cut back on livestock emissions and recommending options for adaptation. Despite scientific evidence and the urgency of the issue, media coverage and public awareness on the topic remain low. This study analyzes coverage from five major U.S. newspapers using quantitative and qualitative content analysis to uncover prominent narratives on the topic. From the publication of the IPCC report on August 8, 2019 to August 8, 2020, only 32 relevant articles were identified, indicating media coverage on the topic is low. After coding for narrative components in each article, including initiating impacts, responsible actors and solutions, four narratives were identified: We need to change the way we eat, eating meat is perfectly ethical, business solutions, and humanity has a range of options.

I. Introduction

An increasingly urgent topic is how to best adapt to climate change (Harcourt et al., 2020). In August 2019, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published the Special Report on Climate Change and Land, emphasizing the urgency to act and detailing land-related response options for adaptation and mitigation. One of these options is to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from livestock production. It is estimated that animal agriculture represents 14.5% of all human-induced emissions, roughly equivalent to emissions from the global transport sector (Kristiansen et al., 2020). As global meat consumption is expected to grow more than 70% by 2050, the impact of animal agriculture on the environment will increase (FAO, 2011). While many people are aware of GHG emissions from the transport and energy sectors, an awareness gap exists when it comes to livestock's role in climate change (Kristiansen et al., 2020; Wellesley et al., 2015). Additionally, despite the abundance of research, reports, and suggested policy options regarding animal agriculture's impact on the climate, there has been little, if any, policy implementation at the national or international level (Kristiansen et al., 2020).

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The wider public is not informed by directly consuming scientific data and information on climate change. Rather, it is beliefs, values, media framing, and narratives that shape public understanding on the topic, and motivate or demotivate climate action (Hinkel et al., 2020; Mosca, 2020). Media coverage on the link between animal agriculture and climate change can contribute to public awareness, and can support related adaptations (Lee et al., 2012). However, little is known about how the media covers this connection (Kristiansen et al., 2020). As evidence between animal agriculture and anthropogenic climate change grows, a deeper understanding of the media's role in portraying the linkage is necessary (Lee et al., 2012). This study seeks to explore U.S. media coverage of the connection between animal agriculture and climate change and identify prominent narratives on the topic.

II. Literature Review

Previous scholarship related to animal agriculture and climate change, media news coverage, and narrative theory are relevant to the current study.

Greenhouse gas emissions are released along the chain of animal agriculture and involve various responsible actors. Many processes are involved, from crop production, the conversion of land for pastures, and emissions from the digestive processes of animals, to the heating and cooling of farm buildings, the processing of animal products, and the transportation of products to the consumer (Wellesley et al., 2015). Because plant-based foods emit far less greenhouse gas than animal products, one solution that is commonly emphasized is a shift to plant-based diets (Kristiansen et al., 2020). In fact, dietary change is said to have transformative potential to deliver environmental benefits on a scale not achievable by producers (Poore & Nemecek, 2018). This is especially relevant in wealthy countries like the U.S., where meat consumption per capita is triple the global average (Poore & Nemecek, 2018). While dietary change is a realistic and effective option, widespread behavior change will be difficult to achieve given the narrow timeframe remaining to mitigate global warming (Poore & Nemecek, 2018). Kristiansen et al. (2020) note that aside from individual dietary change, we need to focus on issues like food waste and improvements in agricultural management and technologies, as well as government intervention.

Media Coverage

Public understanding of climate change is greatly influenced by its depictions in the news media (Almiron & Zoppeddu, 2014). The more attention the media gives to an issue, the more likely it is to seem important to an audience, giving the amount of attention an issue gets an "agenda-setting" effect on audience members (Kristiansen et al., 2020). How often an issue is mentioned also affects people's perception of risks and has influence in setting the political agenda (Harcourt et al., 2020). Research shows that animal agriculture's contribution to climate change hasn't been featured strongly in U.S. media coverage, thus contributing to low public awareness (Kevany, 2019; Kristiansen, 2020).

In addition to transmitting the importance of a topic to audiences, traditional media are trusted by the public to produce and transform its meaning (Kristiansen et al., 2020). Newspapers select what topics to include or omit and what elements of the story to focus the reader's attention on, making them more than an objective reiteration of facts (Entman, 1993; Harcourt et al., 2020).

Narrative Theory

Through the process of continually focusing on certain topics, specific narratives emerge as the most truthful to how society views itself and eventually are seen as the social norm and "preferable way forward" on an issue (Harcourt et al., 2020). The term "narrative" refers to structures of knowledge and storied ways of knowing (Paschen & Ison, 2014). A narrative model that is particularly relevant to the study of climate adaptation and communication is the archetypal narrative model of problem resolution. In this model, the narrative arc is created through the identification of a problem, a description of individuals or groups responding in some way, and a final resolution (Harcourt et al., 2020). This is relevant to traditional approaches of adaptation communication, in which information is presented in a form that typically identifies climate-related impacts causing disruptions, identifies responsible actors, and then offers a response to resolve or minimize the effects (Harcourt et al., 2020).

Narrative theory argues that stories not only convey knowledge but also create ways of knowing by using storytelling to debate and make decisions about how complex social issues should be responded to (Coulter et al., 2019). The theory suggests that human experiences, perceptions, and values are organized through "culturally specific plots and archetypal narrative structures," and that using storytelling to recount an experience promotes learning through "the reflective reworking and developing of knowledge content" (Paschen & Ison, 2014, p. 1086). It is important to note that narrative theory doesn't consider narratives to be stories that relay facts and truths. Narrative theory focuses more on social, historical, and cultural interpretations of the world, and on the diversity of voices and worldviews represented through narratives (Paschen & Ison, 2014). In the social sciences, narratives are described as "constructed nonfiction" (Mosca, 2020).

How we "story" our relationship to the environment determines how we understand and engage with adaptation (Coulter et al., 2019). Narrative theory helps us to look at how climate information and adaptation policies are strategically framed or "storied," and the effects this has on stakeholder acceptance and engagement (Paschen & Ison, 2014). In their ability to create a more understandable, "life-like" format out of complex scientific data, narratives and storytelling are useful to climate communication (Paschen & Ison, 2014). Narratives also give significance to interdependent events and actions, which may otherwise seem meaningless with no obvious connection (Bushell et al., 2017). Though narratives may frame an issue a certain way, they are differentiated from frames through their relationship to time (Bushell et al., 2017). Compared to frames, which highlight certain information and make it more salient in a text, narratives are thought by some to be more useful in studying climate communication because they explain why events are unfolding over time and what people can do to make sure they unfold a certain way in the future (Bushell et al., 2017; Entman, 1993).

It is important to note that different social actors tell different stories about climate adaptation, and portray central characters involved in climate change in varying ways, whether as heroes, victims, or villains (Bushell et al., 2017). These differing stories and ways of interpretation by diverse audiences can foster confusion and uncertainty about climate change, making arguments for adaptation less convincing (Bushell et al., 2017). Coulter et al. (2019) points out the importance of moving beyond the dominating scientific sphere of climate adaptation discussions to learn from less mainstream knowledge systems, such as Indigenous perspectives.

Research Questions

RQ1: What volume of coverage does the impact of animal agriculture on climate change receive?

RQ2: What are the most prominent narratives in US newspapers about the link between animal agriculture and climate change?

III. Methods

This study relies on content analysis to address how the link between animal agriculture and climate change is presented in U.S. media. Content analysis involves evaluating and systematically categorizing elements of media messages. It is especially useful in its ability to sort large amounts of material into smaller categories to make analysis more manageable (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2017).

The study's data was collected from online news articles published by *The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Los Angeles Times, USA Today and The Washington Post.* These organizations were chosen because they are among the most popular newspapers in the United States and represent a variety of political leanings. *The New York Times, The Washington Post,* and *Los Angeles Times* are considered to be left-leaning, while *The Wall Street Journal* is considered right-leaning and *USA Today* is seen as moderate (Boston University, 2021; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2006).

The sample comprises 32 online news stories from the five organizations published over a year, from August 8, 2019 to August 8, 2020. The start date was chosen as it is the publication date for the Special IPCC Report on Climate Change and Land, which provides recommendations for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from livestock production, such as changes to agricultural systems and dietary changes (IPCC, 2019).

This content analysis focused on articles that discuss livestock and animal agriculture and that make a connection to climate impacts. Stories were found combining the keywords “climate change” and “animal agriculture,” “climate change” and “livestock,” or “climate change” and “meat,” using a full text search on the Proquest database of each organization. Once the search was narrowed, 32 relevant articles were found across all five newspapers.

The study used both quantitative and qualitative content analysis. Quantitative data was collected by counting the number of stories covering the impact of animal agriculture on climate change that appeared on each platform, as well as narrative components including the number of different causes, responsible actors, and solutions. The researcher followed a systematic process, using a coding sheet to record the news organization, headline, date, narrative components, and additional notes. At the conclusion of coding, trends and themes were identified and comparatively analyzed to identify narratives.

IV. Findings

While the study originally intended to find about three articles per month for each news organization, the volume of coverage was lower than expected. Articles that only mentioned the connection of animal agriculture and climate change in one sentence were excluded because those with a stronger focus on the subject are more likely to leave a lasting impression on the reader. Once searches were filtered to exclude irrelevant articles, 35 articles remained. Overall, coverage was the highest in August (n=11) following the publication of the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land. For the rest of the year, coverage dropped significantly, with most months featuring fewer than three articles on the subject.

Out of the five organizations, The New York Times had the highest volume of coverage with 16 total articles. After September, The New York Times consistently had one relevant article per month, until June and July where it had zero coverage. The rest of the organizations went months without publishing an article on the subject. The Washington Post had the second highest volume of coverage, with eight total articles. Both the Los Angeles Times and USA Today had four total articles, and The Wall Street Journal had three. The higher volume of coverage in both The New York Times and The Washington Post may relate to the fact that these are considered left-leaning newspapers, and that climate change in general is seen as a “left-wing” issue more of interest to readers of left-leaning publications (Kristiansen et al., 2020). Additionally, the decrease in articles following January 2020 corresponds with an overall drop in climate-coverage as coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic was prioritized (Lyytimäki et al., 2020).

Initiating Impacts

Initiating impacts were coded based on what the articles identified as the impacts animal agriculture has on climate change. Multiple impacts could be coded per article. Most articles mentioned animal agriculture impacting climate change in general or having environmental impacts in general. While some of these articles also identified more specific impacts, many did not go into detail on specific impacts. The next most identified impact was that of deforestation as a result of land being cleared for livestock pastures, which was identified in 34% of articles. The threat to food security and water supply was mentioned in 20% of articles, and extreme weather events were mentioned in 14% of articles. Indirect impacts related to animal agriculture’s exacerbation of climate change were rarely mentioned, such as economic impacts, or disruptions to public transportation, which was mentioned in one article.

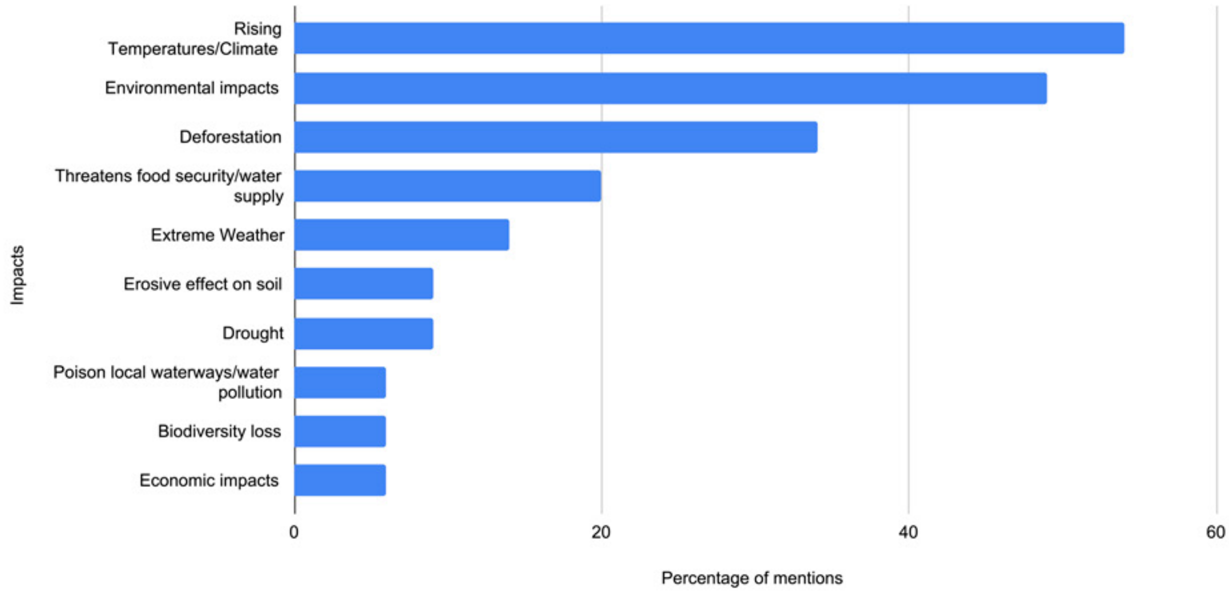

Figure 1

Responsible Actors

Responsible actors include anyone with agency in the impact of animal agriculture on climate change. Several broad sectors were identified and coded for after analyzing the articles. Businesses refers to named companies, such as Tyson and Cargill who produce animal products. Consumers refer to those who buy and consume animal products, and any mention of human diets being responsible for climate change. Any general mention of the meat industry or the food production system was coded for as Food Producers. Governments include mention of any government or political actors who make decisions, debate, pass or enforce legislation that impact the issue. Farmers includes any mention of farmers or the farming sector in general, while Industrial Farms refer to the specific mention of large-scale industrial or factory farming. A large portion of articles didn't explicitly attribute farmers or industrial farming to the cause of climate change, rather attributing the cause to agriculture or livestock in general. While it can be assumed that farmers are involved in agriculture and livestock maintenance, these attributions were not coded for because no specific actor was mentioned.

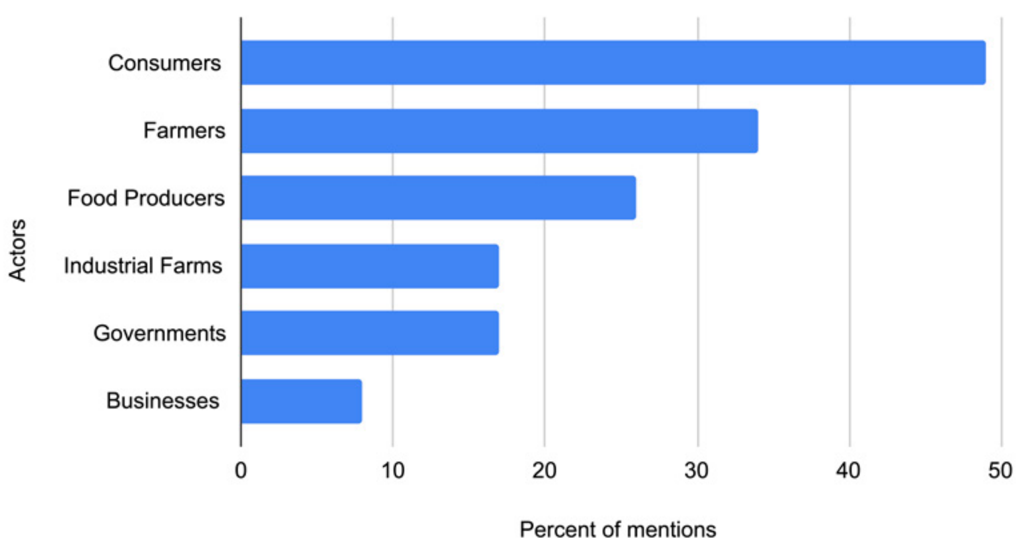

Figure 2

Consumers were by far the most mentioned, more than twice as much as most other actors. This result corresponds with previous research on the subject (Kristiansen et al., 2020). The diets of individuals and the appetite for meat were commonly referred to as causes of climate change. As noted in research by Kristiansen et al. (2020), it is interesting that consumers are blamed for climate change significantly more than governments, businesses, and industrial farms. It is recognized that despite the size of their emissions, large food and fertilizer companies still do not attract the same attention or criticism as do fuel and gas companies like Shell or BP (Kristiansen et al., 2020). It is also interesting that industrial, factory farms were not always mentioned when farmers were identified as responsible, and that they were mentioned significantly less than farmers in general.

Solutions

While analyzing the articles, 23 specific solutions were identified. These were then sorted into six broad categories. The most mentioned solutions included improvements to agricultural practices. Improvements to agricultural practices includes mentions of animal breeding and feeding modifications, planting trees, or halting deforestation, regenerative farming, new crop varieties, having fewer cattle/livestock, raising livestock on pastures, and the general mention of "improved agricultural practices." The second most mentioned solutions related to consumer behavior. This includes any mention of reducing meat/dairy consumption, eating a plant-based diet or more plant-based foods, going vegetarian or vegan, and reducing food waste. Similar to responsible actors, consumers are heavily called on to solve the issue. While agricultural practices are the most mentioned solution, this may be because there are more individual solutions related to agriculture than there are related to consumer behavior. Not only are consumers and farmers more likely to be blamed for the issue, but they are also called on to solve it significantly more than governments and businesses.

After consumer behavior, the next most mentioned solutions related to alternative protein. This includes the production of plant-based meat alternatives, like Beyond and Impossible burgers, as well as mention of insect farming and eating insects for protein. The behavior of the meat-industry is another category of solutions, including the production of sustainable meat, the reduction of food waste from production, and sustainability commitments, such as Tyson's "Coalition for Global Protein" which requires members to meet goals on environmental conservation. The Marketing category includes mentions of making sustainable food more appealing to consumers, whether it be making it taste more like meat or giving it an appealing description on the menu. Finally, the Regulations category, which was the least mentioned, includes any sort of government regulations, policies, or incentives. Solutions that were only mentioned once, but are still important, include having stronger leadership, and drawing from indigenous knowledge of land stewardship.

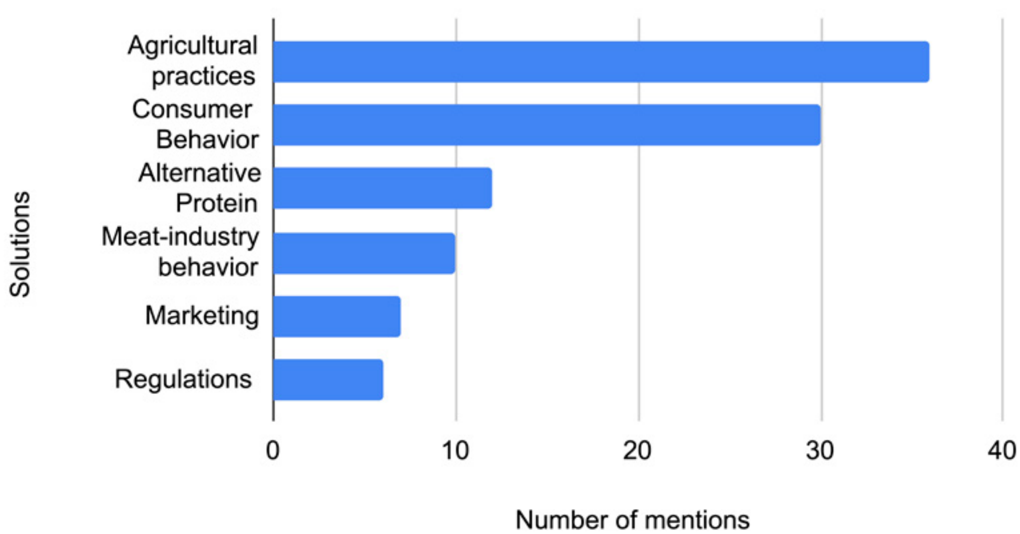

Figure 3

Narratives

Through analysis of the most discussed impacts, responsible actors, and solutions, three primary narratives were identified, each of which had several prominent themes and frames.

We need to change the way we eat

A large portion of the articles focused on the recommendation that we need to change the way we eat. These articles typically responded to the general environmental impacts of animal agriculture, portraying consumers as the actors responsible for climate change and identifying consumer behavior as a primary solution. This narrative is focused on human diets and on consumers being an agent for change. Examples of putting the blame on consumers include statements such as, "We can't seem to curb our meat appetite even knowing that huge swaths of the Amazon forest continue to be cut down to make room for more cattle to feed the demand for beef," and "The food choices we make have helped drive the climate crisis." Consumer responsibility for solving the issue is seen in arguments such as, "We cannot protect our environment while continuing to eat meat regularly," "your lunch plate, and the choices you make about what goes on it, may just help save the planet," and "eating fewer [cattle] is one of the most powerful steps an individual can take toward protecting the planet." Other articles are even more critical with statements such as, "we should feel embarrassed and uncomfortable that people are going gaga for a mass-manufactured chicken sandwich."

The recommended solutions typically included eating less meat, such as a recommendation by the World Resource Institute for Americans to limit their red meat consumption to the equivalent of 1.5 burgers per week, as well as generally eating more plant-based, sustainable diets. Other recommendations include eating a bug-rich diet or limiting our food waste.

In articles emphasizing the need to eat less meat, a common theme was the discussion of making plant-based meat and sustainable food more appealing to satisfy the consumer who is responsible for the issue. The need for a plant-based meat that "satisfies meat cravings" is commonly emphasized. One article details the importance of "changing menu layouts, using appetizing language ... offering tastings and embracing other science-baked innovations to make the sustainable-food option attractive to diners." In another article, the founder of Beyond Meat notes that he knew "the typical veggie burger wasn't going to cut it" and details his commitment to making plant-based burgers "palatable to the mainstream" and "good enough to make anyone forget they weren't eating meat." An article about eating insects for protein notes that "many Americans may perceive bugs as revolting. But when sampled in familiar, delicious dishes, views often change."

Another common way the "eat less meat" recommendation was framed was through defense over criticism of plant-based meat and vegan diets. These articles defended the need to change the way we eat by calling out those who are critical of the recommendation. This includes defense against claims that plant-based meats are highly processed and unhealthy, with articles arguing that plant-based meat is "nothing compared with the E. coli or salmonella poisoning you can get from regular meat" and emphasizing the environmental costs to eating cows. Another article, titled "Stop Mocking Vegans" points out that it is widely acceptable to make fun of vegans and argues that we should pay them more respect because vegans are "irrefutably on the right side of history."

Eating meat is perfectly ethical

While a primary narrative among the articles was a need to change the way we eat, a sort of counter-narrative emerged in many articles that were critical of this recommendation. These articles made claims that red meat is "vilified," that it is not bad for climate change, that vegetarianism is just a form of "virtue signaling" or that you don't need to change your diet if you eat sustainable meat. Being "shamed" for eating meat was commonly referenced in these articles. For example, "we've all been steak-shamed before," "instead of shaming people for eating hamburgers, let's ramp up agricultural R&D," and "don't let vegetarian environmentalists shame you for eating meat." These articles typically criticized the recommendation to eat less meat, arguing that vegetarian and vegan diets aren't that effective at fighting climate change, that "vegetarianism is not the environmental solution it's sold as." The narrative argues that meat production is a minor contributor to our greenhouse gas levels, one article takes the blame off the U.S. noting that "in other countries it may have a higher impact." Other articles are less critical of the "eat less meat" recommendation but are still skeptical. One article notes that until people are truly ready to reduce dairy consumption or the consumption of higher-end beef cuts like steak, "it seems unlikely that any of the changes with respect to ground beef will make a significant environmental difference in the near future."

The solutions these articles recommend instead of eating less meat include investing more in agricultural research and development to improve agricultural practices, sharing our advancements with other countries, and eating "humanely raised and less environmentally destructive meat." The articles emphasize that you can still eat meat while protecting and improving the environment.

Business solutions

A portion of the articles were focused on business solutions from different actors. These articles responded to various environmental impacts and typically focused on ways specific actors are attempting to mitigate or solve these impacts. The articles in this narrative feature one specific actor/sector and a specific business or technological solution. They are less focused on the consumer's responsibility. These articles include features on meat and food producers such as Tyson and Nestle, restaurants like Burger King, farmers, and alternative protein companies, who aren't responsible actors but are still posing business solutions. One article emphasizes this need for "the whole industry, from farmers, meat suppliers, and other brands" to come together and collectively reduce emissions.

Several articles focus on farmers and their solutions or technologies that could help farmers reduce emissions. For example, articles mention farmers using biodigesters to turn cow manure into natural gas. Other articles mention changing cow diets by adding foods like seaweed or lemon grass that would result in cows producing less methane.

Multiple articles focused on major food producers and their efforts to address environmental impacts. One article features Tyson Foods, the world's second largest processor of chicken, beef, and pork. Tyson has been criticized for having a "supersized climate footprint" and for dumping more toxic waste into the nation's water than any other agribusiness, but the article emphasizes its new commitment to sustainability (Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy, 2017; Rumpler, 2016). The article for The Wall Street Journal details Tyson's new "Coalition for Global Protein" which aims to align meat and protein companies around a common set of goals to reduce their environmental impacts. It is noted in the article that consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable brands. Another article quotes a spokeswoman from Tyson saying their plant-based chicken nuggets are "really about the business opportunity." Another article features Nestle, the world's largest food company. Nestle has been criticized for draining public water supplies and reselling it as bottled water and for being one of the worst polluters of plastic (Walker, 2015; Wheeler, 2019). The article mentions Nestle's commitment to the environment and identifies Nestle's new vegan cheeseburger as its "entry into the veggie burger arms race." This article also points out that consumers base buying decisions on whether they believe brands are kind to the environment.

Plant-based meat companies were commonly featured, as were insect farms and companies. Challenges faced by these companies are frequently focused on. For example, one article notes that a challenge to Beyond Meat and Impossible Foods is "the meat industry's deep pockets." One article notes that Impossible Foods has struggled making the transition from start-up to major company. Another article focuses on the challenges the two companies face trying to enter the Chinese market, noting that China presents a set of "political and cultural hurdles" and referring to the regulatory process as daunting and complex. Regulatory hurdles are also a challenge to the insect protein industry as one article notes they have "hampered its growth in Europe and the United States." Despite the challenges, the profitability of these solutions is commonly highlighted. "The companies are looking to make inroads in a potentially even more profitable market," one article explains about Beyond Meat and Impossible Foods. "Ralphs said the Beyond Burger became the chain's No. 1 packaged patty, with sales through the end of September up more than 40% over last year," notes another article which also points out the company's founder has a worth of "close to $400 million" and quotes him saying "I have no problem with what I am doing within capitalism."

Humanity has a range of options

Rather than focusing on specific solutions like eating less meat or on specific actors, a large portion of the articles told a more holistic story. These articles typically focused on the IPCC Special Report, detailing the variety of causes, solutions and actors involved. These articles were balanced in their coverage of different actors and solutions. A common theme among these articles was emphasizing that we have a range of solutions. "Humanity has a surprising range of options," one article states. "There are many opportunities to create win-wins in the ways we use the land," "there are a myriad of ways to achieve this," other articles stress. These articles are careful not to emphasize one solution over the other, often noting that the eat less meat recommendation is not the only solution, without discounting its importance as other articles did. There is a recognition that eating less meat isn't plausible for everyone because animal protein is "vital nourishment for a hungry child" and important for "millions of people in places where protein is scarce," and that it is an important part of people's cultural heritage. However, these articles don't argue that eating less meat isn't effective.

This narrative calls on everyone to be a part of the solution, noting that "cooperation is key" and that humanity must "take every available action, at all levels of society." There is also a sense of urgency in this narrative, with many articles stressing that we need to implement solutions and act now, that "there are high returns for early action" and that "we don't have any time left." Similar to other narratives, challenges to the solutions are highlighted. Articles recognize that solving these issues is complicated and that certain solutions have the potential to "complicate the picture," by putting more demand on land and increasing food prices. There is a call to "think about things that would help us avoid these tradeoffs."

V. Discussion

Based on the volume of coverage from August 2019 to August 2020, it is clear that the link between animal agriculture and climate change is not featured strongly in media. Over the course of the year, only 32 relevant articles were identified across five major news organizations, roughly a third of which were published within the month following the publication of the IPCC report. One explanation for inadequate coverage in popular news organizations' main outlets is that the topic is being covered in more niche markets, such as reporting from environmental nonprofits. Kristiansen et al. (2020) suggest that low coverage on the topic could relate to the belief that dietary change and changes to the farming sector are harder to sell to the public than changes to the energy and transport sectors. Kevany (2019) points out that close ties between U.S. agribusiness interests and politics could play a role in low coverage. Both Kristiansen et al. (2020) and Kevany (2019) note newsroom bias may influence coverage as well, as animal proteins are a part of most people's daily food routine and there is an unwillingness to change those habits. Research shows only 6 percent of Americans say they eat mostly vegan or vegetarian (Funk & Kennedy, 2016). The underreporting of livestock's impact on climate change is likely a contributing factor to low public awareness on the issue.

In the narrative analysis, the most mentioned impacts were rising temperatures and "environmental impacts" in general. Other commonly mentioned impacts were deforestation and threats to food and water supplies. Compared to other studies on adaptation narratives, where narratives were initiated by specific impacts like flooding or extreme weather, the narratives identified in this study did not respond to any one specific impact, instead focusing more on the general fact that animal agriculture creates environmental impacts and leads to global warming. While these broad impacts do pose serious long-term threats to humanity, research shows that people are more influenced by direct experience and immediate demands rather than vicarious experiences or abstract data. Moser (2009) points out that temporally and spatially distant climate impacts are easily overshadowed by immediate physical needs, professional demands, economic necessities, and social obligations. Aside from one mention of threats to public transportation, and the mention of extreme weather or threats to food security, newspapers rarely mentioned impacts that were of a direct or immediate threat to people. This reinforces the idea that people see climate change as an ambiguous, ignorable problem (Kluger, 2018; Moser, 2009).

Even though climate impacts were not portrayed as directly or immediately threatening to people, consumers were still commonly called upon to solve the issue and were identified as being the main contributors to it. As mentioned in the literature review, dietary change is said to have the potential to deliver environmental benefits on a scale not achievable by producers. However, previous research has noted the need for media discussion to restore the balance of available solutions away from solely the individual consumer (Kristiansen et al., 2020). Climate change communications is often criticized for its "individualization" of environmental issues and solutions, promoting individual behavior change rather than socio-economic practices and political engagement (Harcourt et al., 2020; Kristiansen et al., 2020). Focusing too much on consuming our way out of environmental problems ignores the need to question institutions, and work collectively to promote change (Kristiansen et al., 2020; Soneryd & Uggla, 2015). Sbicca (2018) questions whether we can really challenge the systemic issues plaguing our food systems by relying on initiatives of consumer choice. Compared to other narratives which focus heavily on consumers or on business solutions, the "range of options" narrative portrays a balance of responsible actors and solutions and emphasizes the urgency of the issue.

VI. Conclusion

This study sought to identify the volume of media coverage on the link between animal agriculture and climate change, and to undercover prominent narratives on the topic by identifying initiating impacts, responsible actors, and proposed solutions. The results show that there was very low coverage on the issue, which may be a contributing factor in low public awareness. Consumers were mentioned the most as being responsible for the issue, typically in regard to eating meat, while the responsibility of governments and corporations was far less frequently mentioned. Similarly, consumer behavior was among the most mentioned solutions, second to improvements in agricultural practices. Based on these findings, "we need to change the way we eat" was the first narrative identified. In relation to this was a counter narrative arguing that "eating meat is perfectly ethical" and can even protect the environment. The fact that there is no one agreed upon story may cause confusion about climate change and may ultimately make arguments for adaptation sound less convincing, as noted by Bushell et al. (2017).

The narratives identified imply that consumers play a large role in animal agriculture's impact on climate change. These results are consistent with research that suggests dietary change is one of the most influential solutions to the issue. They are also consistent with research noting that there is a trend towards an individualization of environmental responses, which allows the public to ignore much-needed systemic change.

When it comes to climate adaptation, a necessity to move beyond the scientific sphere and learn from less mainstream knowledge systems is noted in the scholarly literature. The articles from this study suggest though that "less mainstream" sources of knowledge are rarely, if at all, drawn upon in climate communications. Rather, information was typically sourced from scientists or from businesses, like the owners of Beyond Meat or Tyson. Drawing from other sources of knowledge has the potential to introduce new and valuable perspectives, such as those from Indigenous people who are known for their flexibility and creativity in responding to environmental challenges (Petzold et al., 2020; United Nations, 2021).

It is important to note several limitations of this study. One major limitation was the small sample size of articles. Future research could examine several years' worth of coverage and include additional news organizations in the analysis. It would also be valuable to extend the analysis to countries outside the U.S. Additionally, newspaper coverage only provides a partial view of discourse on the topic, and it would be interesting to examine how other organizations and institutions communicate the issue. It would also be valuable to conduct qualitative research interviewing journalists on the obstacles to reporting on animal agriculture and climate change, or interviewing people on their responses to these narratives and information.

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Understanding the Strategic Ritual of Emotionality in Feature Journalism: A Case Study of Pulitzer Prize-Winning Articles

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Abstract

Objectivity and emotionality have long been viewed as opposing forces in the field of journalism. While journalists follow a strategic ritual of objectivity, this paper uses the theory of the strategic ritual of emotionality and argues that the two can, and should, be understood as concepts that can work together throughout feature journalism. This article uses the Pulitzer Prize as a marker of "cultural capital" of journalistic lore and analyzes the winning feature articles through the strategic ritual of objectivity in conjunction with the strategic ritual of emotionality (Tuchman, 1972, p. 134). This research attempts to answer how, and in what ways, journalists use these two rituals to create affect in feature writing.

I. Introduction

Objectivity is defined as the "lack of favoritism toward one side or another, freedom of bias" (*Definition of OBJECTIVITY*, n.d.). In 1972, Gaye Tuchman introduced the idea of objectivity as a "strategic ritual" in journalism. In her writing, she notes objectivity for journalists as "a bulwark between themselves and critics," arguing that "newspapermen" use objectivity to avoid being criticized for potentially controversial presentations of facts (p. 130). The strategic ritual of objectivity has been mobilized across all fields of journalism as a consistent and safe professional norm that protects the journalist. Historically, publications and journalists have relied on objectivity as a means of meeting deadlines and avoiding libel suits, some argue (Tuchman, 1972). However, the idea of objectivity in journalism is still central today to journalistic conceptions of professionalism and the truth.

However, as journalism and related research has evolved, so have the strategies journalists use to convey a message. In 2013, Karin Wahl-Jorgensen put emotionality into conversation with Tuchman's strategic ritual of objectivity. Wahl-Jorgensen argued that there is also a strategic ritual of emotionality that can be consistently seen throughout the field. In her study, she looked at a variety of Pulitzer winning articles across all categories of journalism from 1995-2011, finding that most of the pieces she analyzed relied heavily

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on “emotional story-telling” (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013a, p. 129).

While both objectivity and emotionality are crucial concepts to consider across all aspects of journalism, this article will focus on one category in particular: feature writing. Feature journalism typically refers to longer-form journalism that covers a niche or complex topic in-depth (Roberts, 2016). Unlike journalists who cover hard news, feature journalists often use creative tactics to explore topics in a compelling way. For feature journalism to be successful, however, it must intrigue, captivate, and move an audience. To do so, the journalist must evoke emotion in the reader. So how does the journalist move an audience to evoke emotion, while maintaining objectivity in feature journalism? To explore this question, the following research will analyze the pieces that have won a Pulitzer Prize in the features category in the four decades it has existed and much like Wahl-Jorgensen (2013) did in her study, examine how emotionality is used as a strategic ritual by journalists in *conjunction* with objectivity (p. 129).

II. Literature Review

Ideas of journalistic objectivity and emotionality have inspired scholars to weigh the strengths and limitations of both these journalistic rituals, questioning whether they can be used in tandem. Ultimately, the discussion suggests that these two practices do not need to be mutually exclusive. The following review of the existing literature about objectivity and emotionality in journalism will further explain them both and put these concepts in conversation with one another.

What is Objectivity?

Sociologist Gaye Tuchman, known for her influence on journalistic research with her 1972 article, *Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen’s Notions of Objectivity*, outlines three factors that help a journalist define an objective fact: form, content, and interorganizational relationships (Tuchman, 1972). She explains that form is the way in which a story is told, while content is what the story is about. Interorganizational relationships in this context can be understood as “two separate entities to produce something of greater value” (*Forms of Interorganizational Relations*, n.d.). She uses these factors to show that the best way for a journalist to “claim objectivity” is by citing procedures that show the formal elements of a newspaper (Tuchman, 1972). She argues that journalists must be able to invoke some sort of objectivity to accurately write about the existing social reality.

Tuchman then introduces the idea of rituals. She notes a ritual for the purposes of her article as a “routine procedure” where adherence is “frequently compulsive” (p. 661). So, a journalist must follow a ritual of objectivity for their work to be deemed acceptable by both the public and professionals in the journalism field. Tuchman notes that because of this, journalists practice these rituals almost as an “anticipatory defense mechanism” to criticism of bias (Tuchman, 1972, p. 661). In doing so, these rituals become performance strategies; hence, the strategic ritual of objectivity.

However, Tuchman’s research does not address the challenges that come with adhering to a single ritual of objectivity in journalistic practices. Leo Bowman (2006) notes that studies like Tuchman’s are “based on an examination of the final product, completed newspaper accounts, rather than on the processes through which such accounts were created” (p. 628-43). Because of this, he argues these examinations of objectivity in a final product fail to show evidence of “journalistic judgement” that can come about through analyzing how journalists *do* objectivity. In other words, Tuchman’s strategic ritual of objectivity fails to account for *how* a journalist adheres to objectivity in the field, and how objectivity itself must adapt to various subject matters. Today’s world of journalism operates on “a somewhat more complicated set of epistemological assumptions, yet the premise of outsourcing emotional labor persists” where a single adherence to the strategic ritual of objectivity can become trapping (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013a, p. 130).

What Does Emotionality Look Like in Journalism?

While objectivity is implicit to journalism, as the field has grown and changed, scholars have challenged the perspective that objectivity is the *only* strategic ritual journalists follow. In 2013, Wahl-Jorgensen brought the concept of emotionality into the conversation around strategic rituals. In looking at Pulitzer Prize-winning articles from 1995-2011 across all categories, Wahl-Jorgensen examined the ideals of emotionality in journalism through a content analysis and found that the analyzed stories relied heavily on emotion in their story telling (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013a). She suggests that "there is an institutionalized and systematic practice of journalists narrating and infusing their reporting with emotion, which means that journalistic storytelling, despite its allegiance to the ideal of objectivity, is also profoundly emotional" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013a, p. 130). It is crucial to understand that Wahl-Jorgensen is separating the two ideals for different purposes. She notes that the ideal of objectivity, like Tuchman says is "central to journalistic lore" while the strategic ritual of emotionality "constitutes a form of tacit knowledge" that is crucial to the socialization processes of journalism (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013a, p. 130).

Wahl-Jorgensen argues that the strategic ritual of emotionality does not mean journalists should express their *own* emotions, but rather rely on an outsourcing of emotional labor to non-journalists so that they can objectively methodize the way emotions are presented (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013). The strategic ritual of emotionality explores how emotions can be built into a narrative using various methods such as emotive language, creating dramatic tension, and detailed descriptions to create an affective force of emotion (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013). While Tuchman suggests that validation for evidence (proving objectivity) comes when journalists use quotes as a source of fact, Wahl-Jorgenson found in her study that only 6.2 percent of all feature stories were based on direct or indirect quotes (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013). With this, Wahl-Jorgenson argued that these feature stories relied on an "alternative epistemology" to the strategic ritual of objectivity by resting on the idea that "the epistemic authority of the excellent journalist can be taken for granted, so that the power of the narrative and the feelings described in it and evoked through it speak for themselves, without having to rely on key aspects of the strategic ritual of objectivity" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013a, p. 130).

How Objectivity and Emotionality Can Coexist

Wahl-Jorgensen argued that objectivity and emotionality can - and should - exist *together* in journalism, noting that the strategic ritual of emotionality is not to be used on its own in journalistic practices, but alongside that of objectivity. And while it is also important that objectivity is recognized and adhered to, it must be done so without trapping journalists in its ideologies.

Empathy, defined as "the ability to understand and share feelings of another," is a crucial linking factor in preventing this (*Empathy*, n.d.). Antje Glück pointed to empathy as a means of discussing emotionality in journalism, and the ways in which it is crucial to understand: "Empathy can be a mediator between the prevalent self-understanding of journalism practitioners as 'messenger of reality' and journalists reflecting about emotions; between the ideal of detached passionless reporting and a 'strategic ritual of emotionality' " (Glück, 2016, p. 894). Glück makes a clear separation between empathy and its related concepts (such as sympathy, compassion and primitive empathy) by distinguishing empathy as a means of adaptation and emotional processing in the journalistic processes, rather than *personal* distress or emotional contagion – which would contaminate objectivity" (p. 895).

Emotionality cannot be obtained without some element of empathy. Empathy, for the purposes of this article, can be thought of as the connecting link between emotionality and objectivity. With empathy, a journalist can both understand and authoritatively relay their subjects' emotions *objectively* in a story. For a journalist covering stock markets and data-heavy pieces, employing empathy will likely not be as a crucial in their journalistic practices. However, feature pieces, which often put their subject into cultural context, benefit from empathy. A case study of the multi-faceted emotionality journalists must navigate when reporting on stories of genocide found that journalists need empathy to manage the emotional labor of covering heavy topics. In focusing on reporters covering the 1990s genocide in Rwanda and Srebrenica, Caitlin Knight (2020) found that journalists managed their emotions in three main ways: professionalism, process, and emotional silencing.

Knight (2020) discusses this difficult balance of emotionality and professionalism that the reporters had to maintain, saying their emotionality "was not completely silenced" during their reporting, raising the question if it even should be (p. 22). She argues there is an "inherent emotionality associated with reporting in extraordinary situations," meaning emotionality and professionalism (in this case objectivity) must be cooperative (Knight, 2020, p. 22). During the reporting process, empathy is needed for a journalist to appropriately adapt their objective practices across various subject matter. Further, when a journalist goes to write the story, practicing emotionality must also include an ethic of solidarity alongside empathy.

In a case study of the *San Francisco Homeless Project,* Anita Varma analyzed 325 articles and conducted nine interviews with journalists who wrote for the project. Her findings are based on the distinction between empathy and solidarity when humanizing a marginalized community. She argues that "while both empathy and solidarity encourage concern for marginalized communities, the logic of empathy constrains this concern to worthy or exceptional individuals, whereas solidarity techniques expand the scope of concern to the entire affected community," (Varma, 2020, p. 1706). This refers to the ways in which these stories are portrayed to audiences, and for a journalist to do this properly, they first need empathy in their practices – as Knight discusses. Varma found that a common thread among the journalists she interviewed was that they didn't have specific strategies of humanizing techniques; instead, they attributed their approaches to being "obvious," "intuitive," or "natural" (Varma, 2020, p. 1719). According to Knight's research, Knight would attribute this to the journalists having highly developed empathetic strategies to help maintain professionalism (Knight, 2020). So, while the two have slightly differing research topics, their findings complement each other in discussing the complexities of evoking emotion objectively as a feature writer.

Building Affective Force

In 2012, Eli Sanders won the Pulitzer Prize in feature journalism for his story "The Bravest Woman in Seattle" (*Feature Writing*, n.d.). The article contains graphic and tragic details of a near-death attack on two women in their home in Seattle. Ronnie Agnew, a four-time Pulitzer Prize judge, praised Sanders for his ability to let the story read like a work of fiction with his ability to *show* not *tell* in saying the reader can "draw her own conclusions about whether the convicted man got what he deserved" given the outsourced facts presented. (*Narrative Gold*, n.d.) In another comment, Amy Ellis Nutt (winner of the 2011 Pulitzer for feature writing), said of Sanders' piece:

> The tension in the story comes as much from what is not said as what is. Instead of detailing every grim act, we get the reactions to the survivor's descriptions of those acts – from the bailiff, the court reporter, the prosecutor, even another reporter. By the end, we are reminded that violence is not ordinary, nor are the victims of violence (*Narrative Gold*, 2012).

The crucial point here being that Sanders was able to present the *facts* and emotion of the story not by specifically listing them, but by writing in such a way that allowed the details and characters to speak for themselves, building affective force.

Building an affective force allows objectivity to be a vehicle for emotionality – letting the facts and quotes gradually create intimacy and emotion within the reader. Growing changes in the media have pushed people to become more personally and emotionally engaged with the world around them, meaning journalists need to grow and adapt in the way they present stories to their audiences (Beckett & Deuze, 2016, p.1). Practicing objectivity in this environment "isn't by insisting that the authorities know best – let alone journalistic authorities. It will be about linking news to emotion: connecting with communities, creative constructive journalism that deploys positive psychology and linking up with the culture of sharing on social networks" (Beckett & Deuze, 2016, p. 4). In other words, it will be about building an affective force. As emotion continues to be mobilized throughout the field, scholars are witnessing new storytelling styles and formats incorporating both substance and affect (Beckett & Deuze, 2016, p.4), which this study will analyze.

III. Methods

This research will attempt to gain insight on how feature journalists use emotion as a strategic ritual in their journalistic practices to build affective force. Using inductive thematic analysis, this research explores and identifies patterns in which emotionality and objectivity work together to create a construction of meaning in feature articles (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013a, p. 135). Specifically, this article will use the Pulitzer Prize, as it is a marker of "cultural capital in the journalistic field" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013a, p. 129).

Cultural capital is a means of distinction or identification as related to power or influence, and prizes like the Pulitzer began as a way of awarding or identifying the inherent value to exceptional written works. Winning a Pulitzer in the field of journalism gives the journalist inherently more status (Hood, 2014). Feature articles became its own category of the Pulitzer Prize in 1979. This article will look at every Pulitzer Prize-winning feature article from 1979 through 2020 to examine the emotionality of each story in the context of objectivity. While discourse analysis is helpful in coding something inherently subjective like emotionality, it is less helpful in understanding where emotionality lies in the context of objectivity. Further, using thematic analysis, a macro-level approach, this research will analyze more broadly the ways in which emotionality and objectivity work together as strategic rituals in Pulitzer-Prize winning feature articles.

In analyzing the narrative texts at the macro-level, this article will attempt to answer:

RQ1: In what ways do these award-winning journalists use strategic rituals of emotionality to create the appropriate affective force?

RQ2: How do these strategic rituals of emotionality work in conjunction with objectivity?

IV. Findings

This study examines the strategic rituals of emotionality through all 41 years of winning articles in this category. Using a macro-level thematic analysis was effective in developing three main patterns to identify and further understand the ways in which objectivity and emotionality can work together. The winning journalists generally used three major strategies to build an affective force: outsourcing, humanizing repetition, and contextual contrast. It also found the article topic to be a strong determining factor in the ways these strategies were used in conjunction with objectivity to build emotionality.

Outsourcing

The most versatile strategic ritual used to build emotionality while maintaining objectivity across all subjects was outsourcing. Journalists outsource when they refer to non-journalists for support in the presentation of emotions. Non-journalists can be understood as sources who fit two qualifications: They are authorized to express emotions in public, and their emotions can be authoritatively described by the journalist without involving themselves. Through outsourcing, journalists can then present emotions in an objective way. To do so effectively, journalists deliberately choose what information and quotes from subjects surrounding the heart of the story to include. Outsourcing can fill in any holes that the journalist or main subject may not have been able to objectively detail themselves—thus building emotionality and enhancing the reader's investment.

While outsourcing appeared in all the articles, regardless of subject matter, journalists used it most often when writing in first person or when detailing accounts of death and tragedy. In 1983, Nan C. Robertson won the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing with her personal account of having toxic shock syndrome. In telling her story, Robertson relied heavily on outsourcing information from family, doctors, and friends to objectively use personal details to educate readers about this rare disease. To build an affective force of emotion, she began the story using quotes and recollections from her family members who were with her when it happened. For example, Robertson outsources a quote from her brother-in-law, where he describes what he saw at the hospital, a scene of people "scurrying around and telephoning, calling for help, because they knew they had something they couldn't handle, that they weren't familiar with…" (Robertson, 1982, p.1).

Later, as the article closes, Robertson has invited the reader into the most intimate moments of her battle against toxic shock syndrome through outsourcing. The reader can understand how difficult her situation is through another outsourced quote from one of her rehabilitation doctors who describes how human beings divide into two groups: survivors and "those who would rather take 50 pills and just slip under" (Robertson, 1982, p.15). With the inclusion of this quote from her doctor, Robertson can contextualize the gravity of her fight to survive against toxic shock syndrome from the perspective of a professional. Outsourcing in this article also allows Robertson to tell the story of toxic shock syndrome, not her own life. She draws upon other characters to build an affective force of emotion, maintaining her own journalistic objectivity, while her experience becomes merely a chronological map that guides the story.

Outsourcing also proved to be consistently effective in building affective force in stories of loss. "The Umpire's Sons" tells the story of a baseball umpire who lost his son to a genetic disease that damages the membrane insulating the nerves cells of the brain. At the same time, his second son was suffering from the same deadly disease. In writing the feature, Lisa Pollak did not reconstruct a scene detailing how the umpire cried when he learned of the diagnosis of his son, or how hard it was to learn that twice. Instead, she relied on outsourcing from surrounding characters to paint the picture. In one example, Pollak outsources perspective from Dr. Hugo Moser, the specialist who worked with the umpire's family:

> Years later, Moser would still remember how the umpire cried. How he sobbed, inconsolable. How he held the doctor's hand and begged him to say it wasn't true, that he wasn't going to lose both sons, not John, not Michael, too (*Lisa Pollak of The Baltimore Sun*, 1982).

Because emotions like grief can be subjective from person to person, outsourcing this quote from a second perspective contextualizes the umpire's personal emotion to the reader, creating emotionality.

However, outsourcing cannot be done accurately and effectively without the strategic ritual of objectivity in mind. For example, the winning article in 2000 details the separation of blacks and whites in Gee's Bend, Alabama. In a story where the subject matter can be polarizing to readers, outsourcing would contaminate objectivity - regardless of what it does for the emotionality of the story - if it does not account for all possible perspectives. Instead, the journalist uses tactics like humanizing repetition and contextual contrast more prominently to build emotionality.

Humanizing Repetitions

When used in media, repetition is understood as a recurring action or event, with or without agency (Repetition, n.d.) For the purposes of this paper, *humanization* can be understood as the "agency" of the repetition to build an affective force of emotionality in feature writing. The term "agency" should be thought of in the context of objectivity and emotionality as strategic rituals working together. In other words, repetition becomes the strategic ritual of emotionality for objectively humanizing an unfamiliar subject or concept to readers.

Humanizing repetition was found in this study to be most common in the form of short, declarative sentences in features about a niche way of life, or as time stamps, most commonly in features about medical issues. The 1986 Pulitzer for feature writing went to John Camp for his article "Life on the Land: An American Farm Family" (*Life on the Land*, 1986). Camp spent an entire year immersed in the life of a farm family in Minnesota during the worst agricultural crisis since the Great Depression. In detailing their daily life, the struggles of farming, and the risks of building a life in the business of agriculture, Camp was able to build an affective force by repeating short, declarative sentences throughout the article. In the fifth part of the six-part series, Camp evokes the risk and reward feeling of farming in the reader through repetition:

> Wednesday was dry again. Humid, but no rain. Thursday was the same. Friday, two days ago, he picked the end rows of the bean fields. We got the field open, but the beans are still wet," Sago said by phone late Friday. "*If the weather holds*, we might get in Sunday. We hate to work Sunday, but *if the weather holds*...." *If the weather holds*, the Bensons are out there this minute, bringing in the big cash crop. It'll be a good one. *If the weather holds* (Life on the Land, 1986).

Camp's use of repetition allows the reader to understand how important, yet unpredictable the weather is to these farmers. The agency of humanization with this repetition brings the reader into this intimate battle of hope and fear, and a lack of control that comes with farming. It also creates a mantra of sorts, contextualizing how ever-present the thought of weather is in the brain of a farmer.

The 1981 feature winner, "Death of a Playmate," by Teresa Carpenter (which replaced Janet Cooke's revoked award), details the killing of Hugh Hefner's playmate Dorothy Stratten – shot and killed by her husband at the time, Paul Snider. As Carpenter details Snider's background, she writes that he "would kill himself, he once told a girl, before he went to jail" (*Death of a Playmate*, 2016). Twelve pages later, as Carpenter describes Stratten's murder and Snider's suicide, she writes that "the blast, instead of driving him backwards, whipped him forward over the length of the gun. *He had always said he would rather die than go to jail"* (*Death of a Playmate*, 2016). Carpenter is using the objective fact of Snider's statement to build an affective force of emotion toward Snider's actions. It allows her to not only tell the story of Stratten's death, but also show the layers of complexity in her killer's suicide that would otherwise not be as relevant or compelling.

The use of repetitive time stamps was also used in the first-ever Pulitzer Prize for feature writing, Jon D. Franklin's "Mrs. Kelly's Monster" in 1979 (*Feature Writing*, n.d.). Franklin won for his detailed account of a brain surgeon working on an almost impossible tumor. His story builds an affective force of emotion by using the humanizing agency of repeated time stamps which allow the reader to feel the suspense as if watching it happen. He begins his story by humanizing the surgeon in writing:

> In the cold hours of a winter morning Dr. Thomas Barbee Ducker, chief brain surgeon at the University of Maryland Hospital, rises before dawn. His wife serves him waffles but no coffee. Coffee makes his hands shake. In downtown Baltimore, on the 12th floor of University Hospital, Edna Kelly's husband tells her goodbye. For 57 years Mrs. Kelly shared her skull with the monster: No more. Today she is frightened but determined. It is 6:30 a.m. … As Dr. Ducker leaves for work, Mrs. Ducker hands him a paper bag containing a peanut butter sandwich, a banana and two fig newtons. (*Mrs. Kelly's Monster*, n.d.)

With the time stamp beginning the story, the reader is immediately put into the scene. Franklin's descriptions of the peanut butter sandwich and coffee humanize the surgeon. As the story continues, Franklin concludes with a deliberate strategy of repeating these two things. The time stamps allow the reader to understand how quickly the surgeon must think and react, but it also allows the reader to feel the emotional depth of how in just one minute the procedure could become deadly. After ten pages that describe every movement and moment of the surgery, Franklin concludes the article in the same way the surgery ended: abruptly, with the words "It is 1:43, and it's over. Dr. Ducker bites, grimly into his sandwich. The monster won" (*Mrs. Kelly's Monster*, 1979). Franklin uses the objective time stamps to build an affective force of emotion by contextualizing the surgery, and its outcome to the reader.

Contextual Contrast

Contextual contrast also builds an affective force of emotionality. Journalists introduce contextual contrast by putting something that might otherwise be a foreign concept, or unrelatable to general audiences, into context by using contrasting examples. Alice Steinbach's 1985 winning article titled "A boy of unusual vision," built an affective force of empathy for a 10-year-old blind boy named Calvin, describing that "he can do everything the rest of his class can do. Except see," (*A Boy of Unusual Vision*, 1985). Steinbach builds affect by starting with the context of Calvin's age and lifestyle: *He can do everything the rest of his class can do,* and then contrasting the context with Calvin's reality: *Except see.* It should be noted here that Steinbach also used this phrase in humanizing repetition throughout the article, using both strategic rituals of emotionality. Similarly, in 1996, Rick Bragg won the Pulitzer for feature writing for his series of stories on contemporary America. One of the stories told the tale of the man who caught murderer Susan Smith. He uses a similar strategy of contextual contrast, but by outsourcing a quote from the man saying "Susan Smith is smart in every area … except life," (*Rick Bragg of The New York Times*, 1996).

In another example, Isabel Wilkerson's winning article in 1994 was a profile on a fourth grader from Chicago. Nicholas, a 10-year-old, had an incredibly difficult home life, and has had to act as a father to his siblings. Wilkerson brings the reader into this reality using contextual contrast to describe Nicholas as "is all boy – squirming in line, sliding down banisters, shirt-tail out, shoes untied, dreaming of becoming a fireman so he can save people" who nonetheless has "the stiff slog of a worried father behind on rent," (*Isabel Wilkerson of The New York Times*, 1994). With this quickly worded contrast, Wilkerson allows the reader to form this image of Nicholas, evoking a level of empathy for him.

In 2011, Amy Ellis Nutt's winning article "The Wreck of the Lady Mary" told the story of a mysterious sunken fishing boat accident that killed six men (*Feature Writing*, n.d.) As she details the story, she uses contextual contrast to evoke the rarity and tragedy of this, explaining that "on today's oceans, endangered whales have more protection than fisherman, though the scores are killed each year,"(*Amy Ellis Nutt of The Star-Ledger, Newark, NJ*, 2011). With this contrast between fisherman deaths and whale deaths, Nutt contextualizes the risks in which fisherman take every day. In Robertson's article "Toxic Shock" (1983), she uses a similar strategy by showing what *did* happened to her and contrasting it with what *could* have happened: "At first, the Rockford doctors thought they would have to amputate my right leg and the toes on my left foot. Because of my treatment, my legs were saved. But the dry gangrene on eight fingers persisted. The end joints of my fingers were amputated," (Robertson, 1982). In writing about potentially losing her entire leg and foot, Robertson puts the severity of toxic shock syndrome into context for the reader. In contrasting it with "because of my treatment, my legs were saved…" Robertson is simultaneously evoking the fear and relief she felt in dealing with the syndrome (Robertson, 1982). Like both outsourcing and humanizing repetition, contextual contrast shows emotionality and objectivity working in duality throughout the journalistic process.

IV. Conclusion

This study found that while the strategic ritual of objectivity is central to journalistic lore, it is not mutually exclusive to the strategic ritual of emotionality. Specifically for feature writing, this study demonstrates that both objectivity and emotionality can, and should, work together as strategic rituals to successfully build an affective force of emotion. The Pulitzer-winning journalists studied in this article did this through methods of outsourcing, humanizing repetition, and contextual contrast. It should also be noted that the Pulitzer Prize sample does not reflect the broad diversity of written works throughout the entire field of journalism, but it helps the understanding of how objectivity and emotionality work together in a general context of the field (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013).

As the scholars noted have also made clear, the mobilization of affect is not possible without empathy, solidarity, or emotional labor of journalists to both maintain objectivity while remaining relevant to an emotionally networked culture. In the context of feature writing specifically, this is increasingly important if journalists are to accurately contextualize different cultures and voices. Kristen Cook, a now retired feature writer of 26 years for the Arizona Daily Star, wrote about her career in feature writing upon her retirement and the importance it holds:

> It's a huge responsibility to be trusted to tell someone's story. When you write a feature, you're invited in. You hear dark secrets, great joys. You laugh with strangers, cry with them. A few hours later, you're friends. And the feature stories that come from these interviews are just what people need – more than ever – after wading through headline after headline of gloom and doom. Fluff? No, it's the writing equivalent of a warm blanket, a steaming cup of cocoa that soothes as the storm rages outside (*A Feature Writer's Poignant Farewell*, 2017).

Through the lens of other scholars, Cook's comment begs the question: How does a journalist allow themselves to be "invited in" and tell an accurate story without emotional labor and empathy? And further, how can a journalist be objective on the page if they are not telling a story accurately? They cannot. So, what does a feature writer have to do to tell a story accurately? Convey the realistic emotion of the subject. Objectivity and emotionality are not, and should not, be mutually exclusive in feature writing.

For the purposes of this paper, this can be referred to as the affective force of feature writing. Through the method of outsourcing emotions, humanizing repetitions, and contextual contrast, journalists do not discuss their own emotions in their feature stories, but rather build an "affective force of their stories from the experience, accounts and retold histories of sources and subjects," (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013b, p. 307). Using the strategic rituals of objectivity and emotionality in tandem creates the affective force elemental to a successful feature story.

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