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## Engaging audiences: an analysis of social media usage in advertising

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ENGAGING AUDIENCES:  
AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE IN ADVERTISING

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Mass Communication

in

The Manship School of Mass Communication

by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The growing usage of social media indicates a potentially effective new platform for advertisers. However, little academic research examines how advertisers use these platforms for marketing and communications. This study sought to provide an analysis of current commercial social media usage by conducting interviews at a digital creative agency and full-service agency, in addition to conducting a statewide online survey of advertising professionals.

Results indicated that advertisers use social media differently than they do traditional forms of advertising media. In the current digital media environment, advertisers must provide value or an added benefit to the consumer to gain their attention. Furthermore, companies should view social media platforms as long-term investments and, in doing so, invest time and resources to developing and sustaining them. Finally, whether or not a brand chooses to participate in social media, every company should understand these networks and use them for their researching capabilities. The results of this study not only provide background on social media usage in advertising, but also provide valuable insight for current practitioners and help reduce the academician-practitioner gap.

## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

With advances in technology and the growth in digital media usage (Cheong and Morrison, 2008), advertisers are seeking new ways to reach consumers. Numerous studies indicate an increase in social network usage (Goldsborough, 2009). While teenagers were primarily the first users of social networks, a growing population of 25 to 34-year-olds and white-collar professionals now also use them (Kim, 2008). The growth of these demographics more generally demonstrates the growing applicability of social networks to everyday life.

Cooke and Buckley (2008) predicted Web 2.0 and the Internet would be the marketing tactics of the future. In their theoretical essay, the authors identified several trends regarding the growing use of online social networks. The increase in the open source movement through shared intellectual property, the emergence of Web 2.0, and an increase in the number of online social networks and consumer-generated content have contributed to the overall growth of online social networking.

Web 2.0, a term first developed by Tim O'Reilly (2005), involves online activities in which the user contributes to content creation. Examples of Web 2.0 include Napster, Wikipedia, blogging and pricing online advertisements by cost per click. The interactive nature of these platforms set them apart from their Web 1.0 counterparts, such as mp3.com, Britannica Online, personal web pages, and pricing online advertisements by page views that do not incorporate the user in their functioning. Social media are another example of one of the many platforms included under the umbrella of Web 2.0.

Social media are commonly associated with social networks. boyd and Ellison (2007) define social networks as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they

share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (p.1). We will use this definition to set the foundation for understanding social media and the way users interact with these platforms. A few of the most popular social networking sites include the following: MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, and YouTube.

MySpace- One of the first widely accepted social networks, MySpace brands itself as “A Place for Friends” (<http://www.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=misc.aboutus>). Users create personalized profiles with pictures, interests, and favorite songs, and invite others to join their personal network. MySpace users access the site to search for music, old classmates, or new friends, creating a personal online community. Despite its initial growth in popularity, MySpace usage is in decline, remaining relevant to younger teens, minorities, and those interested in the music industry.

Facebook- Facebook is one of the most popular social networks, recently passing Yahoo to become the second most visited site in the US (<http://www.bizjournals.com/sanjose/stories/2010/02/15/daily69.html>). Launched in 2004, Facebook currently reaches over 200 million active users (<http://www.facebook.com/advertising/?src=pf>). Operating with a similar structure as MySpace, Facebook users create a personalized profile with pictures and ‘friend’ others. Facebook also created numerous applications that users can add to their profile, such as character fan pages, jokes of the day, or trivia and quizzes. A live news feed on the user’s home page features what the users’ friends are doing, as well as news and advertising from other various sources.

Twitter- Acting as a live news feed, Twitter allows users to continuously update their profile with a new line of text. Originating in 2006, Twitter is a real time short-messaging

system (<http://twitter.com/about#about>). Twitter asks, “What are you doing?” and gives users 140 characters to reply. Users can follow other Twitter users to see what they are doing or search for topics to see a list of what all Twitter users are tweeting. The ability to search in real time has provided a valuable tool for advertisers and researchers when seeking to understand how the public feels about an issue.

LinkedIn- With over 48 million users, LinkedIn is a professional social network (<http://press.linkedin.com/about>). This network allows you to connect with colleagues, clients, and potential employers to accomplish professional goals. Users create a public profile, can send and receive professional recommendations, and join groups with those of similar interests.

Flickr- This online photo management program allows users to store and share content while also organizing mass amounts of photos and videos (<http://www.flickr.com/tour/>). Flickr users can upload, edit, organize, and share photos. Through the creation of a profile, users can keep in touch with family and friends through their digital photos. In addition, many use this service as a web-hosting database for pictures for their website or personal blog.

YouTube- YouTube is the number one website for videos (<http://www.youtube.com/advertise>). Allowing users to watch videos or create their own, the database contains numerous videos on any topic. While the site began with user-generated content, it now offers numerous types of videos including commercial videos.

Advertisers spent over \$2 billion on social media advertising in 2009; predictions indicate that they may be spending almost \$3.5 billion by 2013 (eMarketer, 2009). However, despite this increase in consumer usage and advertiser spending, existing research about social networks remains mostly exploratory. Academic studies indicate growing numbers of social networking sites, as well as an increase in commercial usage of these platforms (Cooke and Buckley, 2008;



Kuhn & Burns, 2008). While businesses purchase online advertising and create social networking profiles to brand themselves, many researchers believe executives still do not understand how to effectively integrate social media into their advertising strategy (Kuhn & Burns, 2008; Verna, 2007).

According to an article published by *eMarketer* on social networking activities of US companies ( $n = 500$ ), 31% of company CEOs were on Facebook, 29% used social networking tools to manage or build their brand, 14% of company CEOs were on Twitter, and 13% posted corporate videos on YouTube (Delloite, 2009). This survey demonstrates some of the new ways businesses can utilize social media platforms for advertising and promotional purposes beyond traditional online banner advertisements. Each effort represents companies' desire to not only gain awareness, but also interact with consumers on a deeper, more personal level.

Studying social media is especially important because consumers interact with these platforms differently than traditional media. Social media encompass an inherent shift of informational power from the advertiser to the consumer, in which consumers decide which content to ignore and which to pass along to others in their network. Many consider this sharing of online content as powerful as word of mouth marketing.

However, with this shift of power, the old understanding of how advertising works may be changing. Therefore, this research will examine social media in relation to traditional advertising theory. Not only will this study help academics understand the goals and beliefs of advertising practitioners, but it will also examine the extent to which social media are affecting the industry and academic understanding of advertising.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study will provide new insight into how and why advertising practitioners use social media for marketing and communications purposes. To better understand advertisers' strategic motivations, I will review two advertising theories. The first theory, Lavidge and Steiner's hierarchy of effects advertising model (1961), comes from advertising literature on how advertising works. This literature review will first explore the hierarchy's potential to predict consumer purchase decisions and its application to social media as an advertising medium. Next, I will examine existing research on a more modern advertising theory, Taylor's Six-Segment Strategy Wheel (1999). This theory explores a contemporary understanding of consumer motivations and creates a practical model for advertising practitioners to develop message strategies. Finally, I will review the academician-practitioner gap (Nyilasy and Reid, 2007) and discuss existing literature concerning advertising through social media.

#### **Hierarchy of Effects**

The hierarchy of effects sets the foundation for the exploration of consumer thought-processes and is one of the main theories used to explain how we believe advertising works. Lavidge and Steiner (1961) introduced the hierarchy of effects in their theoretical essay exploring the influences on consumer decision-making. This theory, which acts as a consumer model of advertising, introduced the concept that advertising can be a long-term process, countering the prevailing opinion that all advertising should incite immediate action from the consumer to be successful.

The six steps of the hierarchy include awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction, and purchase. The researchers recognized that individuals travel through the steps at differing speeds depending on the level of involvement with the product and individual

motivation, among other factors. They believed understanding the consumer's decision-making process allowed advertisers to construct more persuasive messages.

The hierarchy of effects theory evolved from the basic AIDA model, another consumer decision-making model with the steps of action, interest, desire, and action. Most researchers attribute the AIDA model to E. St. Elmo Lewis, who created it as a personal selling model in the early 1900s (Strong, 1925). The AIDA model became one of the first major advertising theories to address the consumer's decision-making process in response to advertising. The cognitive, affective, and conative psychology model also influenced Lavidge and Steiner's (1961) creation of the hierarchy. This psychology model described the behavioral dimensions of decision-making, suggesting individuals first think, then feel, and finally act when influenced by stimuli.

During the 1960s, numerous other models emerged under similar influences as Lavidge and Steiner's (1961) hierarchy of effects. The creation of new models showed advertising researchers' growing interest in the cognitive processes of consumers, mirroring psychological and behavioral advances at the time. Colley (1961) developed the DAGMAR model, which stands for defining advertising goals for measured advertising results. The DAGMAR model focused on the four steps of awareness, comprehension, conviction, and action. Similarly, Wolfe, Brown, and Thompson (1962) created a five-step hierarchy, including awareness, acceptance, preference, intention to buy, and provocation of sale. While the hierarchies contained varying numbers of steps and names, all of the models followed the basic AIDA model.

Although not the first consumer decision-making model, Lavidge and Steiner's (1961) hierarchy of effects proved to be one of the most influential. The researchers' attempt to understand the cognitive processes of the consumer demonstrated a desire to incorporate

scientific methods into the industry. The hierarchy of effects significantly influenced advertising literature for many decades after its creation.

Several researchers have recently used the hierarchy of effects theory as a background for their advertising research. Vakratsas and Ambler (1999) studied over 250 journal articles that examined how advertising affects consumers and the hierarchies associated with the consumer decision-making process. Through a taxonomy of the studies, the authors classified the research into seven models of how advertising works: market response, cognitive information, pure effect, persuasive hierarchy, low involvement hierarchy, integrative, and hierarchy-free. Within the persuasive hierarchy category, the researchers included all models following the cognition, affect, and behavior model, including the AIDA model, the hierarchy of effects theory, and the innovation-adoption model (Rogers, 1962).

In the persuasive hierarchy category, Vakratsas and Ambler (1999) found five main areas of research that stemmed from the original models. These areas of research included the following: brand attitude formation; ad likeability and attitude toward the ad; the effects of message repetition on awareness, recall, and attitude formation; attitude-behavior consistency; and the sequence of intermediate effects. The majority of the persuasive hierarchy research contained an analysis of the effectiveness of the hierarchy models or of the individual steps within the hierarchies.

Through their analysis of these hierarchies, Vakratsas and Ambler (1999) developed several conclusions. First, emotions, as well as past beliefs, affect a person's attitude toward a brand. Second, ad likeability and brand preference are highly correlated. Third, advertisers can maintain recall and attitudes using a series of slightly different advertisements within a product campaign. Next, attitude and behavior correlations range from zero to .30, indicating low

predictability. Finally, no single hierarchy explains consumer behavior. This study's conclusion that the hierarchy of effects did not apply to all consumers was only one of many to question Lavidge and Steiner's (1961) hierarchy of effects.

Before Vakratsas and Ambler's (1999) study, many researchers also criticized the hierarchy of effects. Wicker (1969) found through a review of research that a very low correlation actually existed between attitude and overt behavior. Due to the low correlation, he urged social scientists to be more empirical when measuring these variables. He provided several suggestions for future research topics, such as the relationship between verbal behavior and overt behavior, and an analysis of socially-significant attitudes, which he found did not always correlate to behavior. Overall, he noted a need for more research concerning the connection between attitudes and behaviors.

Two studies directly examined the link between attitude and behavior in regards to the hierarchy of effects (Batra and Vanhonacker, 1986; Zinkhan and Fornell, 1989); however, results were inconclusive. Zinkhan and Fornell (1989) conducted an experiment with print ads in both high and low involvement situations. While they found the hierarchy of effects to be mildly predictive of behavior, they created a new model that included indirect and direct effects. The researchers believed their modified version of the hierarchy produced results that were more predictable.

### Applications of the Hierarchy

Numerous industries adapted the hierarchy of effects theory into their research, such as models for contest participation, movie marketing, health campaign promotion, and new media usage. Ward and Hill (1991) created a model describing the causes and consequences of promotional game participation based on the hierarchy of effects theory. Using the stages of

cognition, affect, and behavior, Ward and Hill's (1991) model showed how personal characteristics, (e.g., demographics, personality, beliefs, past experiences with promotional games) influenced the individual's extrinsic and intrinsic desire to participate.

Building on the hierarchy of effects, Smith (1993) investigated the effect of product trial on the consumer decision-making process by examining the effect of mediating positive and negative reactions to product trials. Using an experimental design, Smith (1993) manipulated the information source, the information sequence, and the favorability of the trial. Results indicated advertising reduced the effect of a negative product trial, especially when the advertising appeared before the product trial. However, when the negative product trial occurred before exposure to advertising, cognitive evaluations resulted, causing a more negative attitude. In addition, the effect of the ad had less of an effect on brand attitude if seen after product trial. Using the hierarchy of effects as the basis for consumer decision-making, Smith (1993) concluded that product trial influenced the stages of liking and preference.

Applying the hierarchy to the movie industry, Zufryden (1996) developed a model that described the process consumers go through when choosing a film to attend. The marketing planning model explained the effects of advertising on overall box office revenue. The model involved three stages: advertising increased awareness of a new film; awareness affected intent to see the film; and intent to see a new film affected purchase of movie tickets and overall box office revenue. Other variables also influenced the process, including word of mouth, advertising saturation, memory decay, film characteristics, and distribution level and timing of film.

In a more recent study, Adams (2006) created the communicator-based hierarchy of effects using Lavidge and Steiner's (1961) theory. The study hoped to create a quantitative

method to design a hierarchy of brand loyalty. Using 206 website managers and their niche newspaper websites as the sample, the exploratory study sought to find efficient ways to create brand loyalty for the newspaper sites. The communicator-based hierarchy demonstrated the steps an online marketer went through to incite awareness through brand loyalty to create loyal customers. Ultimately, Adams (2006) found respondents were more interested in short-term goals, such as increasing revenue, as opposed to long-term goals, such as gaining brand loyalty. The potential significance of the model, however, demonstrates a need for future researchers to apply the hierarchy of effects to other populations and industries.

### Criticism and Limitations of the Hierarchy

Most criticism of the hierarchy of effects theory involved limitations of measurement techniques. Even before Lavidge and Steiner (1961) introduced the hierarchy of effects, Mindak (1956) criticized the AIDA model, suggesting the ineffectiveness of the individual stages. In his theoretical essay, he disapproved of advertisers' emphasis on action. He proposed that messages can incite awareness yet cause a negative reaction, further invalidating the remaining stages of the model.

Palda (1966) reviewed the past research using the hierarchy of effects and found limitations with the methods of testing the stages of the hierarchy that potentially skewed the results. Researchers also measured preference for an ad through a comparison with a non-brand ad, which logically ranks lower in the mind of a consumer. In addition, the hierarchy of effects did not account for impulse purchases.

Weilbacher (2001) conducted another major analysis of the hierarchy of effects' validity. In his theoretical essay, he investigated why he believed the hierarchy was not an effective means to measure advertising effectiveness and how this theory was not applicable to the real

world. He stated that current marketers use the hierarchy of effects because researchers have been using it for over 100 years. Weilbacher found four major problems with the hierarchy of effects: the theory only applies to advertising; it uses research with little understanding of human cognition; it assumes similar responses to various types of advertising; and manufactured scales are the only measure of its validity. According to Weilbacher, the measurement scales were not reliable. He also pointed out that the hierarchy did not explain the effect of multiple products on an individual.

Despite such criticism, the hierarchy of effects became the foundation for several research topics within advertising. Additionally, its theoretical implications provide a greater understanding of mass communication. By analyzing consumer thought processes, the hierarchy of effects uses psychological models of learning and human cognition to examine the effects of advertising on individuals. Because the hierarchy of effects deals with a basic understanding of human cognition, the implications and applications of the theory are plentiful for effects research. In the same way, the hierarchy of effects' contribution to advertising is apparent through the numerous models and studies that developed from Lavidge and Steiner's (1961) theory.

#### The Modern Hierarchy of Effects

Many question if the hierarchy of effects still applies to modern culture. With advances in technology and the increase of media availability and clutter, consumers live in a vastly different world than when the hierarchy of effects originated. In fact, according to Briggs and Stuart (2006), "the Internet is completely reshaping consumers' media habits and buying preferences and has been nothing short of the catalyst for the reorientation of marketing" (p. 10).



Emphasizing the importance of measurement, these researchers analyzed the marketing efforts of over 30 top companies including Ford, Johnson & Johnson, McDonalds, Proctor & Gamble, and Volkswagon. Their research methodology, reviewed by the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF), included use of experiments, online surveys, and telephone surveys where online surveys were not applicable. Their goal was to create a method to quickly measure campaign effectiveness and return on investment (ROI).

The study's results found a different consumer culture than depicted in traditional advertising theory. While many advertising theories rely on active processing of the message, Briggs and Stuart (2006) found consumers mostly engage in low attention processing. However, this is not necessarily harmful because, despite low attention, the message can still affect attitudes and behavior. In an updated version of the hierarchy, the researchers emphasized the importance of creating meaningful messages in the early stages of the hierarchy because, "causing a change in the perception of the brand ... is part of the chain of events that leads to sales" (p. 141).

Overall, Briggs and Stuart (2006) applied this consumer model of advertising to the modern consumer. They stressed the need to create clear, straightforward messaging because the progression of consumers through the hierarchy is not definite and the consumer is constantly faced with advertising clutter, especially online. With the vast number of messages consumers receive daily, advertisers must carefully construct their messages if they want their advertising to result in purchases. While emerging media channels, such as social networks, may allow advertisers the opportunity to reach consumers in new ways, the effectiveness of these new message vehicles has yet to be determined.

## **Six-Segment Strategy Wheel**

A more recent consumer theory used by advertisers, Taylor's six-segment strategy wheel explains consumer motivations for making different types of purchase decisions (1999). This strategy wheel combined research from Carey's (1975) strategy wheel, Kotler's (1965) consumer response theories, and Vaughn's (1980) FCB grid. The six-segment strategy wheel helped bridge existing research on how advertising works with modern consumer behavior research.

Carey (1975) introduced the first communication strategy wheel, which consisted of two segments: a transmission view and a ritual view. These two segments represented the rational and emotional communication approaches. In this wheel, the transmission approach described the functional, informational side of communication, whereas the ritual approach described the emotional, dramatic side of communication.

Another influential body of work stemmed from four of Kotler's (1965) consumer response theories. The first theory, the Marshallian Economic Model, described rational, economic-based purchase decisions. The Pavlovian Learning Model described consumers' needs or motives for a purchase. In this model, Kotler (1965) believed that advertising acted as a cue that could elicit a response, or a purchase from consumers. His next theory, the Freudian Psychoanalytic Model, identified the symbolic motivations consumers received from product messages, and the Veblenian Social-Psychological Model asserted that outside social influences, such as the culture or reference groups of an individual, influence consumer purchase decisions.

While Kotler's (1965) research was a major breakthrough in consumer behavior, another significant contribution to consumer behavior literature came from Richard Vaughn of the Foote, Cone, and Belding advertising agency. First introduced in 1980, the FCB grid helped convert academic literature into a more practical application for advertising practitioners. This grid

highlighted the finding that thinking moderates some behaviors while emotions moderate others. The FCB grid had four quadrants designed to help advertisers create strategies for the products found within each quadrant: informative, affective, habitual, and satisfaction. Practical in nature, this grid helped advertisers consider different motivators for products.

Based on economic and informational needs, quadrant one was the high involvement, thinking informative quadrant. Products in this category, such as cars or home furnishings, followed the traditional LEARN-FEEL-DO decision sequence. Quadrant two, the affective quadrant, represented those purchases based on high involvement and emotions. These purchase decisions were related to a person's self-esteem or ego, such as jewelry or fashion. Based on low involvement, thinking decisions, quadrant three, the habitual quadrant, represented those purchases that were routine, such as food or household items. Vaughn (1980) felt advertisers should seek to create habit-forming purchase tendencies for these items. Finally, quadrant four represented low involvement, feeling products. This self-satisfaction quadrant consisted of items such as beer, cigarettes, and candy. Cumulatively, the four quadrants of the FCB grid helped advertisers match products with specific messaging strategies to create effective advertising.

While the FCB grid was a useful resource for advertising practitioners, it had limitations. With the intention to improve the FCB grid and address its criticisms, Taylor introduced the six-segment strategy wheel in 1999. Also incorporating Carey's (1975) strategy wheel, Taylor (1999) presented his six-segment model as existing within two views, the transmission and ritual. Similar to the FCB grid presented by Vaughn (1980), Taylor (1999) displayed more important decisions, both rational and emotional, at the top of the wheel and less important decisions at the bottom of the wheel. The first segment on the ritual side of the wheel, known as ego, represented the idea of the Freudian psychoanalytic model from Kotler (1965). This segment

acknowledged that some purchase decisions resulted from individuals' need to express their identity and link certain product attributes to their identity.

Taylor derived the second segment, the social segment, from Kotler's (1965) Veblenian social-psychological model, which acknowledged that some consumers make product purchases with the intention of gaining social approval and acceptance. Next, segment three, known as the sensory segment, described the motivations for purchasing low involvement, feeling products that stimulate the five senses: taste, sight, hearing, touch, or smell. Taylor believed these purchase decisions were encouraged through message appeals for "pleasurable moments."

The second half of Taylor's six-segment strategy wheel represented Carey's (1975) transmission view, which focused on thinking purchases. Segment four, the routine segment, represented ideas from Kotler's (1965) Pavlovian Learning Model. This segment represented low involvement, thinking purchases that usually resulted in habitual purchases based on previous experience. Segment five, acute need, acknowledged consumers' need for information but also their scarcity of time. Taylor felt these purchase decisions relied on the availability and familiarity of product options.

Finally, segment six, the rational segment, resulted from Kotler's (1965) Marshallian Economic Model. For these purchase decisions, consumers needed high amounts of information, and their decisions were economic-based and rational. All together, these six segments made up Taylor's strategy wheel, which admittedly does not account for all purchase decisions. However, this model effectively combined the existing literature about message strategy into a single, workable model that professionals could easily incorporate into advertising practice.

The Six-Segment Strategy Wheel (Taylor, 1999) is important because it attempts to modernize the traditional consumer model of the hierarchy of effects, while also providing a

practical tool for advertising practitioners. By explaining the different processes consumers can go through before making a purchase, the model helps advertising practitioners generate message strategies based on consumer motivations. In essence, this model represents a combined model representing how academics and advertising practitioners believe advertising works.

This theory is especially important to this study, which seeks to understand the opinions and strategies of advertising practitioners when using social media for marketing and communications. After examining their perceptions, I can then determine if practitioners adhere to traditional advertising theory when creating social media messages. However, by specifically studying advertising practitioners, I also address the growing knowledge gap between advertising practitioners and academics. By leveraging advertising practitioners' expert opinion on social media, I hope to provide insight into practitioners' beliefs and behaviors, further addressing the academician-practitioner gap.

### **Academician- Practitioner Gap**

Many academics believe it is important to study advertising practitioners to exchange advertising knowledge and better the field (Ottesen and Gronhaug, 2004). This exchange is especially important because many studies indicate there is a gap between the knowledge of academics and practitioners; Hunt (2002) first described this divide as the "academician-practitioner gap." She believed the gap in knowledge results from a lack of communication between practitioners and academics.

To better understand this issue, Nyilasy and Reid (2007) created a comprehensive analysis of existing literature on the academician-practitioner gap and identified five main problems researchers believe cause this gap. First, there is a problem of knowledge dissemination; there are not adequate channels of communication to share empirical knowledge

with practitioners. Next, the academic knowledge content and form is problematic in that it may not be applicable to practitioners' jobs. Some researchers blame academic journals' complex language and jargon as potential barriers for practitioners (Ottesen and Gronhaug, 2004).

Researchers believe an additional problem exists because of academic organizational structures that require academics to frequently publish work. This demand often results in research that may not be beneficial for practitioners (Nyilasy and Reid, 2007). Furthermore, some believe applied marketing research destroys the quality of the field because there is less emphasis on creating basic theoretical knowledge.

The final problem involves practitioners' ambivalence toward the use of available academic knowledge. McKenzie, Wright, Ball and Baron (2002) researched a sample of advertising practitioners ( $n = 47$ ) and found that none of the practitioners read academic journals. With most research indicating that most practitioners do not use available research, there is a further increase in the knowledge gap between academics and practitioners.

These five problems provide a basis for understanding why the academician-practitioner gap exists. However, in their analysis, Nyilasy and Reid (2007) believe current literature does not provide a complete explanation and mostly blames academics. Additionally, "when practitioners are mentioned, they are conceptualized as empty vessels (and very leaky ones at that) to be filled with academic wisdom" (Nyilasy and Reid, 2007, p. 437). The researchers believe much of the existing research lacks theoretical and empirical support. Therefore, they present a new approach to understanding the gap known as "practitioner knowledge autonomy."

This new approach states that practitioners have their own set of theories and assumptions that regulate their marketing efforts. Because practitioners actively test their theories daily in a real-world setting, they are privy to knowledge that academics cannot acquire.

Therefore, the authors believe it is vital for academics and practitioners to understand this knowledge. According to Nyilasy and Reid (2007), “To the benefit of all, research on what practitioners think about the workings of advertising will allow us to compare and contrast practitioner perspectives with academic ones, thus allowing us to understand the academician–practitioner gap on an even deeper level” (p. 442).

Building on those findings, Nyilasy and Reid (2009) began to research advertising practitioners. Conducting in-depth interviews with advertisers, the researchers analyzed how these professionals believed advertising works. Using the grounded theory approach, they found evidence for autonomous practitioner knowledge schemas. Two main practitioner theories emerged: a “break-through and engage,” which was close to hierarchy-free advertising models and a “mutation of effects,” which resembled the persuasion knowledge model by Friestad and Wright (1994). Furthermore, they found the following:

“Creativity is identified as the singularly most important factor in effectiveness, and agency professionals resisted any other regularities that may curtail creativity and result in formulaic advertising. Practitioners also emphasized the importance of defining boundary conditions when making claims about how advertising works, and identified strategic campaign objectives, product category, medium used, and historical time period as key domains to consider” (Nyilasy and Reid, 2009, p. 1).

They concluded with a call for additional research of advertising practitioners. Specifically, they felt future research should examine practitioners’ theories, meta-theories and pragmatic use of theory in advertising. One new area of advertising is the use of social media for marketing and communications. This relatively new tactic provides an opportunity to analyze advertisers’ use of these platforms. Therefore, this study will further expand research on the academician-practitioner gap by examining pragmatic uses of practitioners’ autonomous

knowledge of the effectiveness of social media. The next section will introduce existing literature concerning social media and advertising.

## **Social Media**

Social networks are an increasingly powerful force in mediated communication. However, research conducted to date has been primarily exploratory. Goldsborough (2009) examined several media trends that the JWT advertising agency reported in its annual forecast. One of the foremost conclusions is the predicted decline of e-mail usage, which JWT attributes to younger people's preference for text messaging and communicating through social networks. In addition, the agency cites the increasing number of social networking sites, introduction of professional social networking sites such as LinkedIn, and increase in micro-blogging using programs such as Twitter.

The evolution of social networks allows for personalized interactions between advertisers and consumers. Although social networks were first adopted by teenagers, a growing population of 25- to 34-year-olds and white-collar professionals use them, which demonstrates the applicability of social networks to everyday life (Kim 2008). This growing trend has vast implications for advertisers and executives. However, without adequate knowledge of the effectiveness of these platforms, advertisers lose chances to create valuable interactions with consumers.

Existing research concerning social networks remains mostly exploratory and focuses on impression management, friendship performance, networks and network structure, online/offline connections, and privacy issues (boyd and Ellison, 2007). Little research has directly examined the applicability of social media for advertising purposes. This area of advertising research



requires further examination to understand the effectiveness of social media programs on consumers.

Daugherty, Eastin, and Bright (2008) investigated consumers' motivations for creating social media sites such as MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, and Twitter. Implementing an exploratory study with an online survey, the researchers analyzed user attitudes in regard to user-generated content (UGC). The authors define UGC for the purposes of their experiment as, "media content created or produced by the general public rather than by paid professionals and primarily distributed on the Internet" (Daugherty, Eastin, and Bright, 2008, p. 2). Results indicated consumers increased the amount of social media usage as their attitudes toward social media improved.

Implications of the study suggest that advertisers should place special interest in creating positive interactions between consumers and social networks to improve attitudes toward the media. With a positive attitude, consumers will be more likely to interact with the social media platform and create their own content within the site. Such highly involved interactions between users and the company will ideally create positive brand experiences and feelings toward the brand.

With the advances in Internet capabilities and social networking sites, Internet users engage in more consumer-to-consumer content sharing. This development has led to the creation of personalized content recommendations through sites. Applying information overload and uses and gratifications theory, Liang, Lai, and Ku (2006) suggested personalized content services increase user satisfaction when employed appropriately. They suggested providing content recommendations when users need specific information, as opposed to when consumers look at general websites.

Businesses are already creating profiles and branding their products on social media sites in an effort to reach consumers (Kuhn & Burns, 2008). Within MySpace, Kuhn and Burns (2008) found brands present advertising, multimedia content, and other features to allow consumer interactions with their brand. Many companies also connect offline and online promotions through these branded profiles, including exclusive online promotional offers to increase profile traffic.

### Social Media and eWOM

Social media differ from traditional media because they operate by connecting individuals. This creation of additional communication channels allows for the sharing of content within established online networks, allowing messages to spread quickly in a word of mouth fashion. Social networks' ability to foster communication makes them unique platforms for marketing and communications, especially with increasing levels of online clutter.

Social media foster the exchange of word of mouth messages by creating a virtual community for consumers to interact with each other (Goldenburg, Libai, and Muller, 2001). This environment creates social relationships "when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace" (Rheingold, 1993, p. 5). Advertisers have the opportunity to use electronic word of mouth (eWOM) to their advantage to increase the reach and persuasiveness of their messages.

To understand the effectiveness of eWOM, Trusov, Bucklin, and Pauwels (2009) compared eWOM to traditional marketing vehicles when examining efforts to increase the number of users on a social networking site. Overall, they found that eWOM was more effective, having larger and longer effects than traditional marketing. This study created a clear example of ways to quantify eWOM efforts; the researchers tracked eWOM through the online

record of outgoing eWOM messages. This technique to measure online advertising efforts could prove useful to marketers.

Credibility is also a critical factor in the analysis of eWOM and a major issue for online advertisers. While many researchers are beginning to examine the credibility of social networks and blogs (Yeo Jung and Windels, 2008), more research is needed to understand how the relationships formed and managed on social networks are perceived by the user. In the future, advertisers must focus on social media's trustworthiness to determine the most effective ways to communicate with consumers.

While eWOM can be more clearly traced online, there is no clear methodology to analyze the content on social media. However, one study attempted to create a methodology to study the social media platform, Facebook. Casteleyn, Mottart, and Rutten (2009) created a method to convert Facebook data into useable market research using the "dramatic pentad" theory (Burke, 1945). This critical technique called dramatism emphasized the role of guilt in human communication; the researchers used this theory to analyze the motivations of users' interactions in Facebook. Their proposed technique involved selecting an artifact, like a specific Facebook Group, and monitoring the Facebook posts on the wall of that group. Posts could include text, pictures, or videos. Next, one must label the following items: agent, act, agency, scene, and purpose. In their study, the agent was group members, the act was the reason for the group creation, and the agency was the way the act was performed, or the specific comments about the group. The wall of the group was the scene.

Finally, one had to determine the purpose of the posting. According to Casteleyn, Mottart, and Rutten (2009), "Purpose is what moves us to a particular act in a particular situation, whereas motive is the larger explanation of that same act. We could purchase a new

Tommy Hilfiger jacket because the one that we had is torn (a purpose), but it could also be interpreted as us buying only designer clothing (a motive) (p. 444).” To create a useable understanding of the comments, ratios of relationships among the terms must be determined, such as scene–act ratio or agent–purpose ratio. These ratios help describe what was going on in the Facebook group and new areas where additional marketing research was needed.

While this study attempted to create a method to gather useable data from social media, there is still much dispute over how to advertise on the Internet. Some claim traditional advertising methods are still applicable to web advertisements (Gallagher, Foster, & Parsons, 2001). In their experimental study, Gallagher, Foster, and Parsons (2001) found that online ads were just as effective as print ads. However, social media present a new interactive platform on the Internet. These digital communities create new situations to exchange commercial messages that vastly differ from traditional text or banner advertisements. How users interact within these communities and respond to advertising messages has yet to be determined.

Whether using social networks as an awareness tactic or a way to build customer relationships, advertisers need to know which tactics are the most effective. By contributing to the limited research available, researchers can examine and understand the value of social networks for advertising. I hope to provide an analysis of how advertisers believe we should use social media as an advertising tool. Understanding if messages on social media platforms work as described in traditional advertising theory will increase social media research and have positive implications for both academics and practitioners. Additionally, through my direct analysis of advertising practitioners, this research will further address the academician-practitioner gap.

## **Research Questions**

Advertising practitioners have a great deal of knowledge about the effectiveness of social media advertising through their active implementation of these platforms. What they do and why they do these things are important for academics to uncover. Their methods can provide new testable variables and expand academic knowledge of advertising. This study, therefore, has the potential to increase knowledge in both advertising practice and theory, further addressing Nyilasy and Reid's (2009) call for research.

With little previous academic research on advertisers' usage of social media, I intend to create a descriptive analysis of current advertising practitioners' practices and perceptions of social media. To do this, I will examine the following questions:

**RQ1:** How do advertising professionals use social media for marketing and communications?

**RQ2:** How do advertising practitioners believe consumers respond to advertising messages in social media?

**RQ3:** How are social media effective when used for advertising?

## CHAPTER 3 METHOD

Social media create new opportunities for advertisers to reach consumers. However, without proper research, it is unknown how consumers will interact with social media and how advertisers should use them for marketing and communications. Because advertising practitioners have firsthand experience with social media and consumers, I chose to focus my research on advertising practitioners.

### **Qualitative Research**

To analyze social media usage within the advertising industry, I first used two qualitative methods to conduct an in-depth investigation of a digital creative agency: participant observation and semi-structured interviews (Altheide, 1987). Through the combination of these two methods, I recorded employees' actions, thoughts, and beliefs (Kemp, 2001). The participant observation at the digital agency also created the opportunity to record actions the employees were unaware of or did not find significant enough to mention in the interviews.

I conducted the first part of the research at a small digital creative agency in New York. As a temporary employee at the agency, I conducted a participant observation for nine consecutive weeks and interviewed 12 employees. This digital agency represented some of the most innovative technologies and practices within the advertising industry, making *Advertising Age's* Agency A-List in 2009 ([http://adage.com/agencya-list09/article?article\\_id=141697](http://adage.com/agencya-list09/article?article_id=141697)). Founded in 2000, this agency included less than 50 employees and focused on digital projects. Work on projects varied by client but included strategy, design, and back-end development. Examples of services included user experience design, content strategy, and micro-site development. This agency received proposals via sub-contracts from full-service agencies and direct work from brands.

Using a similar method, Schor (2004) effectively conducted a participant observation and interviews to investigate how marketers advertise to children. She chose this method because it allowed flexibility in the interview process, which was necessary given that there was little previous research on the subject. Schor observed an advertising agency by attending presentations, meeting with executives, and maintaining a diary of observations. Interviews ranged from one to five hours. This study, like her study, required flexibility to be able to change the questions and variables analyzed. However, unlike Schor (2004), I was a temporary employee at the agency throughout the participant observation. As one of the staff, I could familiarize myself with the interviewees and allow them to be more at ease. As part of the participant observation, I also attended client meetings, presentations, and brainstorming sessions.

The semi-structured interview method allowed for flexibility when investigating the following four themes: 1) what are social media; 2) how do advertisers commonly use them; 3) how should advertisers use them; 4) the future role of social media in advertising (Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto, 2008). The semi-structured method was also appropriate because it allowed the flexibility for new topics to emerge (Kvale, 1996). To maintain confidentiality of client work, the results do not include the names of specific companies (Shuter, 1975).

While results may not be generalizable to all advertising agencies, this research provides an opportunity to study the newest practices within the advertising field concerning social media, thus providing valuable information to increase the understanding of social media usage within advertising. Recorded diaries included observations of when advertisers suggested the use of social media, the types of social media used, and how social media interacted with other campaign tactics. The interviews utilized a purposive sample, including agency employees at all

experience levels and departments (see Appendix B). Interviews at the digital agency ranged from 25 – 45 minutes and were on a one-to-one basis with the interviewer and respondent. All data was transcribed and recorded by a digital recorder. The process of the interviews involved a skeleton of broad questions, and respondents could stray from the interview structure to discuss other relevant topics.

Additionally, I conducted five semi-structured interviews at a full-service advertising agency in Louisiana using the same questions and approach as the initial interviews at the digital agency. This full-service agency offered services in strategic marketing, public relations, media placement, creative services, social media, interactive design, and programming. Operating for over 14 years, the agency had two other offices in the southeastern region. With mostly regional clients, this agency represented one of the top agencies in the southeastern area, earning numerous awards for past work.

Ranging from 15 – 25 minutes, interviews consisted of top executives and digital media experts and were on a one-to-one basis with the interviewer and respondent. I transcribed and recorded all data using a digital recorder. Agency employees represented top executives and employees knowledgeable about digital and social media (see Appendix B).

Throughout the interview process at both agencies, I had to modify some questions based on the responses of the employees. For example, I removed the initial question, “How are other agencies using social media?” because it became repetitive with the earlier question asking how they used social media. I later added, “How do you believe advertising is changing, if at all, since the growth of social media?” Respondents commented on and gave examples of the specific social media networks based on their experience and knowledge of social media. The full interview involved seven main questions (see Appendix A).



The coding of the participant observation and interview notes used the grounded theory technique (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). This method creates theoretical perspectives from the accumulation of individual occurrences (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory was appropriate because there was little background information about the topic, and the data collected had the potential to produce unexpected results. To analyze the data, I first generated categories through open coding and then further divided data into additional categories through axial coding. Finally, using selective coding, I finalized the categories, finding dominant themes and creating a storyline of related concepts.

### **Online Survey**

While the digital creative agency and full-service agency represented some of the most innovative marketing and communications practices in the industry, it is important to note that I spoke with agency employees who use and promote social media in their job. For the sake of their business sustainability, employees would most likely agree that these platforms were successful. Therefore, to ensure a measure of validity for this research, it is important to counter those research findings with the observations and beliefs of the general advertising industry.

Therefore, I conducted a statewide online survey of American Advertising Federation members in Louisiana. Chapter presidents distributed the survey link by email to their membership twice over a one-month period. The survey consisted of 21 questions (see Appendix C). Using a series of usage questions adapted from Sweetser, Porter, Chung, & Eunseong (2008), the survey measured personal and corporate social media usage rates and reasons for usage. These questions included hourly usage of various social media from zero to 40 or more hours a week, as well as the length of time the individual and their company have used social media. Two questions rated external and internal company uses of social media on a

5-point scale from “Never” to “Very Often.” External uses included communications generated for clients if the respondent was an agency or for specific product/service campaigns if the respondent was a company. Internal uses included all communications generated for branding the respondents’ specific company.

To gauge attitudes about social media, I adapted questions from Sweetser, Porter, Chung, & Eunseong (2008) and added new questions to create eight close-ended and two open-ended questions. The close-ended questions used a 5-point Likert scale from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” The survey also measured demographic information including job position and years in the industry.

## **CHAPTER 4 RESULTS**

### **Sample**

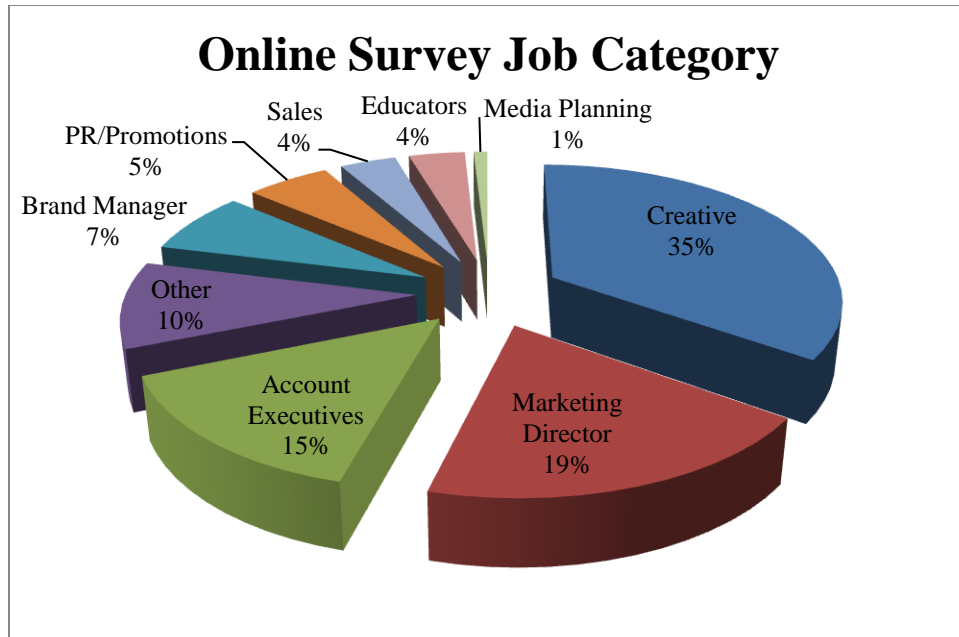
#### Interview Samples

The sample from the digital creative agency consisted of twelve individuals, ages 23-44; 60 percent were male. Respondents represented all levels of employees and disciplines within the agency (see Appendix B). The sample from the full-service agency consisted of five individuals, ages 24- 37; 60 percent were male. Respondents represented top executives and employees knowledgeable about digital and social media (see Appendix B).

#### Survey Sample

With a 19.6% response rate, survey respondents from each chapter within the state received the online survey link if they had a valid email address on their chapter's email list. This response rate is similar to other Web surveys (Porter & Whitcomb, 2003) and those surveying advertising practitioners (Pashupati & Kendrick, 2008). The sample included 109 members of the American Advertising Federation from all chapters in Louisiana. The respondents represented a wide range of job positions with 34.9% working in the creative department, 19.3% being Marketing Directors, 14.7% being Account Executives, 10.1% classified as Other, 7.3% being Brand Managers, 5.5% working in Public Relations/Promotions, 3.7% working in Sales, 3.7% being Educators, and 0.9% working in Media Planning. I added the categories Sales, Educators, and Media Planning after the completion of the survey based on responses from the Other category.

Of the survey respondents, 59.6% were female and 40.4% were male. Additionally, based on the age categories of the survey, 1.8% were 18-24, 41.3% were 25-34, 20.2% were 35-44, 22.9% were 45-54, and 13.8% were over 55.



The survey revealed a large Caucasian representation with 91.7% of respondents indicating they were Caucasian. Of the remaining respondents, 2.8% were African-American, 1.8% were Asian/Asian-American, 1.8% were Native American, 0.9% were Hispanic, and 0.9% classified themselves as “Other.”

### Analysis of Qualitative Findings

This research sought to examine the current advertising environment to understand how advertisers have incorporated social media platforms into their work. The results from the grounded theory analysis provided a foundation for understanding this topic. Due to the nature of the grounded theory method, research conclusions resulted directly from the data without any preconceived notions. After analyzing the qualitative data from the digital and full-service agencies, several main themes emerged.

#### “It is Doing Something More Than Speaking at You”

With increasing amounts of material and advertising clutter online, most respondents felt social media had to fill a unique role for the consumer to be effective message platforms. For the

digital respondents, this involved the idea of using social media to provide value to the user. Providing value meant that social media should not be a direct promotional vehicle; rather, advertisers should find a way to create social media that provide a function or benefit to the user while incorporating the brand.

This strategy shows a clear shift in ideology from the traditional advertising push model, in which advertisers control which messages they choose to “push” at the consumer. In the new digital age, respondents indicated a more “pull” style model that focused on uncovering the motivations of consumers and pulling them into the message. By providing value or some benefit to the consumer through social media, the message draws the consumer in; its effectiveness is much more reliant on the consumer. As one employee explained, “If [social media] is done effectively, it’s doing something more than speaking at you. It’s entertaining you and probably providing some sort of value in your life, which typically goes beyond just being memorable or making you smile or laugh” (Copywriter).

One example of providing value through social media was an alcohol branded Facebook application, also accessible on a mobile phone, that helped the user decide which bar to visit based on customizable options. In this application, the consumer could choose his city, who he was with, the day of week, and his mood. The branded application then suggested venues, providing a value to the consumer, while also suggesting cocktails made with the sponsoring liquor at each of these venues. The blend of value and promotion demonstrates how the application can provide some benefit for the consumer while also functioning as a promotional tool.

With so much online content available for consumers, respondents felt it was especially important for advertisers to distinguish their message from the rest using this value exchange

principle. “Part of it is how you engage people with media and attach desired behaviors to that existing social space with media that complements it in some way” (CEO). Furthermore, with so much competition for the consumer’s attention, respondents indicated a strong desire to understand consumers and please them. “Many [brands] expect users to care about the brand, but in reality it’s the opposite. The brand must care about what’s important to the user” (Producer). The need to uncover new creative uses of social media was also a recurring idea that emphasized the need for brands to be authentic and credible online entities.

For the full-service respondents, the need to understand the consumer involved the idea of relevance, both of the social media platform to the consumer and to the brand. “Where social media work best are where there is an intersection of brand interests and user interests. Those are where meaningful conversations occur” (Director of Digital). This emphasis on effectively matching social media platforms with the brand emerged as an important criterion for commercial social media usage. “Where [companies] venture and how they do it is completely dependent on what kinds of products they represent, their business goals, their tolerance for transparency, and tolerance for negative conversation”(CEO).

One example given from the full-service agency involved the creation of a branded peanut butter social page within a social network. With health-conscious moms in mind, this site would encourage the uploading and sharing of healthy recipes using the branded peanut butter. By leveraging user-generated content, this site would effectively aggregate useful information into one online area, providing the value of information and a decrease in search time for moms looking for meals their children will enjoy. Not only does this connect users, a benefit of social media, but it also incorporates the branded product into the value provided in hopes that when moms make the meals, they will choose that brand of peanut butter.

### “Social Media Allow You to Create a Semblance of a Relationship”

In addition to discussing how to use social media, respondents commonly mentioned attributes of social media that distinguish them from traditional media. Social media's power to spread information immediately and exponentially due to its direct network of users allows for one-to-one, many-to-one, and many-to-many models of communications, further enabling connections that create unique relationships between users and brands. These are powerful connections because they mirror the word of mouth marketing approach of spreading messages through trusted sources. Both groups of interviewees referenced the personalized nature of social media and the new opportunities offered to strengthen a brand's relationship with consumers. They discussed this information based on firsthand accounts of results from social media campaigns.

Respondents indicated that consumers used social media for peer-to-peer communication and in communal ways. “[Social media] do interesting stuff in culture because it changes patterns of how messages spread. If there's something that's relevant to you, it opens more channels for more brands to spread to more people” (Senior Content Strategist). The increased number of channels refers to an increase in ways consumers can spread a message through their social networks. With the consumer choosing which messages to pass on, the effectiveness of an advertising message relies more on the consumer than ever before, further explaining advertisers' above mentioned desire to understand the consumer. The act of sharing within a community setting was one of the key qualities of social media users that respondents voiced in their interviews. For advertisers, this sharing was extremely valuable. “It's effective because it's word of mouth marketing” (Director of Digital).

Respondents also indicated the opportunity to build relationships with consumers in these personalized environments. “[Social media] allow you to create a semblance of a relationship, create some likeability. Feelings of ‘I like these people; they listen to me; I feel heard,’ are invaluable for those times when you will inevitably fail. If you have transactions out there that you are invested in, it gives you some permission to fail. It gives people a chance to forgive and give a second chance, which is gold” (President).

One computer company created a strong consumer base when they launched a social platform in Twitter where consumers could give feedback about how they would improve their products. Using these suggestions, the company implemented the suggested changes, further strengthening brand image and brand loyalty. Because social media allow for an exchange between the consumer and the brand, they are powerful branding tools that can build consumer relationships in ways most other media cannot.

As opposed to traditional push-style messaging, many respondents compared communication within social media as a conversation with consumers. Respondents discussed the importance of understanding the nature of social media as a permission-based platform. “Social media’s great strength is that it’s an invitation platform. I seek out Facebook; I participate in Twitter. When consumers give you permission to speak in that space, it is an invitation on behalf of the consumer to speak to me” (President).

Respondents also felt that consumers want brands to become more personal and transparent just as they are more transparent with their personal information in social media. They felt the openness of the brand led to greater consumer trust. “It’s a great way of creating trust in your brand and ownership of your brand rather than just the desire to buy and use it. When you’re trying to generate a fan base and get people talking, it’s good to use social media”



(Senior Content Strategist). As another respondent noted, “Advertising used to be all one way messaging. But with social media, when used properly, you feel you have a hand in what’s being said” (Copywriter). This shift toward interaction and honesty has the potential to change not only messages, but also advertisers. “Making things more public will be the biggest cultural change... [social media] are revealing more about ourselves” (Strategy Intern).

#### “The Conversation Goes On Whether You’re a Part of It or Not”

Regardless of whether advertisers chose to participate in social media, many emphasized the importance of this growing area of online activity to advertising and marketing. “Every client needs to look at where they stand in popular social spaces and understand what the conversation looks like around their brand because it goes on whether they’re a part of it or not and so taking ownership of that, or taking at least a sense of understanding, is essential” (CEO). Most agreed that social media were not a passing fad and would be an important part of consumers’ lives, if they were not already.

Another point many emphasized was the need to devote time and resources to creating a social media strategy. Respondents felt it was important to recognize social media presence as long-standing marketing assets that require time and monetary resources. “Everyone wants to be a part of a social network without knowing why and what you’re going to derive from it. It’s just a buzzword; it feels like a box to check off on a media plan” (Executive VP of Client Engagement). Respondents believed this approach of treating social media as a novelty, which was common in the industry, led to failure.

Moreover, many respondents reported that social media are often tools better suited for listening to the consumer rather than talking at the consumer. “Platforms are for listening and not for advertising. They’re about learning about your consumers” (Executive VP of Client

Engagement). Many respondents emphasized the unique research opportunities available within social media due to their ability to aggregate and archive consumer opinion.

In terms of research opportunities, each social platform offers different data depending on the types of people who use them and actively exchange content within them. Overall, they provide unique search opportunities to conduct market research on one's brand, competitors, target consumer, or product/service category. For example, Twitter provides the most updated archive of what people are saying at that moment, which advertisers can access by simply entering a search term within the platform. Similarly, one can search YouTube to see if consumers are creating videos about a brand, if competitors have videos on the site, or to locate any negative publicity about a product or company. Additionally, Facebook offers similar search tactics; however, in Facebook, one can examine the profiles of users who are fans of a product or competitor to gain insightful consumer demographic and psychographic information.

As one respondent from the full-service agency explained, "I use social media the most for insight and research. They are a fantastic way to get a handle on what people really think about something. It is more honest and it is up to the minute information... If you need to be on top of how people are behaving, what they're talking about, you have to be on there because that's where the conversations are happening" (Account Supervisor). Furthermore, many discussed the amount of valuable consumer data available through social media. "It's not just about having a conversation but engaging and getting your own data. The most valuable thing from [social media] sites is the amount of data on people" (Account Supervisor).

#### "That's Good ROI"

In addition to research, social media have several other beneficial characteristics that separate them from traditional media. Social media are more just than communication channels;

if used in ways that engage consumers and provide value, they can also generate positive online metrics such as increasing a brand's search engine optimization (SEO) and presence on the Internet. Respondents explained that social networks act as brand extensions of the website on the Internet. Each picture on Flickr, tweet on Twitter, and action on Facebook provides an additional search query result that online users can click. These provide more opportunities to drive online users to a brand's website.

As one respondent explained, "[Social media] give an open line of communication to [consumers] and, as long as I don't disrespect that gift, I can speak to them as much or as often as I want with no scale cost. It allows you to stay in front of them in a low cost way. For every person you can get to go to your Facebook page that is one less person to send direct mail. That's a good ROI [return on investment]" (President).

While both agencies emphasized the same benefits of social media, respondents from the full-service agency focused more on the applicability of these benefits. One of the most frequent themes among full-service respondents involved using social media for customer service and crisis communication. "It's a wonderful place to build brand perception, build brand relationships, customer service, etc." (President). Many felt social media were also a great way to directly reach consumers with messages at a low cost. As another respondent noted, "[Social media] are good media to give an apology without the [traditional] media cutting and chopping what is said; it's direct." (Public Relations Account Executive).

#### Agency v. Client

Throughout the interviews and observations from the participant observation, many reported that some brands and clients were not accepting of the new principles for using social media. "From the client side, one of their biggest fears is letting go of the message. Once they

truly engage in social media, they have to be transparent” (Copywriter). Respondents indicated that transparency was a crucial requirement for successful social media campaigns. “Often clients expect to control the message, have it curated and still get users excited about something that really doesn’t have a point” (Producer).

One example of this misperception was a breakfast food company that attempted to engage consumers in social media using highly curated, non-transparent messaging. The company wanted to appeal to a broad audience; therefore, they did not want to be transparent or develop a personality on this medium in case that may repel certain consumers. After creating a Twitter account, the company began tweeting general, disconnected messages often on topics non-related to their products. Because they did not provide some value or messaging that incited consumer participation, the Twitter account resulted in a collection of silly messages and no followers. When the company could not generate followers of their account, they abandoned their Twitter efforts.

The misunderstanding of how to use social media and the unrealistic expectations of social media often caused conflict between the client and the digital creative agency. The conflict between agency and client appeared to stem from the inherent differences of social media from traditional media, specifically the shift of control from the advertiser to the user; the need for transparency; and the increasingly personal nature of social content. In meetings with clients and brainstorming sessions, many agency employees often displayed frustration from the client’s desire for social media but unwillingness to let the public contribute to the content of the site. In addition, many clients wanted to treat social media like traditional media using a direct push-style message and were not receptive of the agency’s recommendation against this approach.

One example of such a client was a clothing store that created a Facebook page to extend the reach of their brand. However, rather than creating new content for this platform or engaging users, the company simply posted their television commercial ads on the site. This provided no motivation for consumers to visit the site. Had the company made the effort to create new games or blog posts to interact with consumers and get their feedback, this page would have been more successful.

Other frustrations stemmed from the misunderstanding of what social media are and what they can accomplish for the brand. Many times the agency received proposals with a list of requests; at the bottom of the list, the company listed “widget.” Because a widget can equal anything from a smart phone application to a Facebook game, this ambiguous request created issues for the agency when trying to respond to the request. It also demonstrated the client’s lack of knowledge about social media applications.

Many clients also had unrealistic expectations about the effectiveness of social media platforms. An example of this conflict was a client who requested the creation a micro-site community for weather. The client believed this branded site would replace the normal weather-seeking routines of online users simply because they created it. Tension resulted when the agency suggested to the client that they re-think their strategy and create a site where online users already go.

#### “A Shift in the Way We Think About and Use Media”

As social media growth increases, many industry leaders predict that social media will drastically change the advertising industry. However, the respondents from this study did not seem to agree. “I don’t think the messages are changing that much. [Consumers] are having the same conversations that they have always been having; they’re just having them in a different

medium” (Director of Digital). As another respondent stated, “They are just a channel, like any other channel. They’re a channel that encompasses a wide variety of digital platforms primarily designed to allow human beings to have conversations and share information as though they were sitting across the table” (President).

Overall, respondents did not feel that social media changed the industry; rather they caused advertisers to re-think the message and success metrics. “[Social media] is not a new type of media but a shift in the way we think about and use media. It requires a shift in the advertising model, which says getting your message in front of people is a success. Now you need people to engage with or show some investment in your message or idea” (Senior Content Strategist).

An example of this change can take many forms. Traditional media operating under the push-style model measured success as the number of people who viewed an advertisement. However, digital advertising and social media marketing demands more than just page views. With immense competition for attention and advertising clutter online, measuring success often involves the consumer interacting with a message in ways that are more active, such as playing a game, clicking through an ad, or making a direct purchase. With expectations of success this high, advertisers must construct their messages more carefully to ensure consumers will notice their content.

### **Online Survey**

To provide a measure of validity when examining the perceptions of digital and social media experts, I also analyzed responses from a statewide online survey to better understand the industry’s usage of social media. When asked, “How long has your company been using social media?” 33% have used social media for over a year, 24% have used it for six months to one

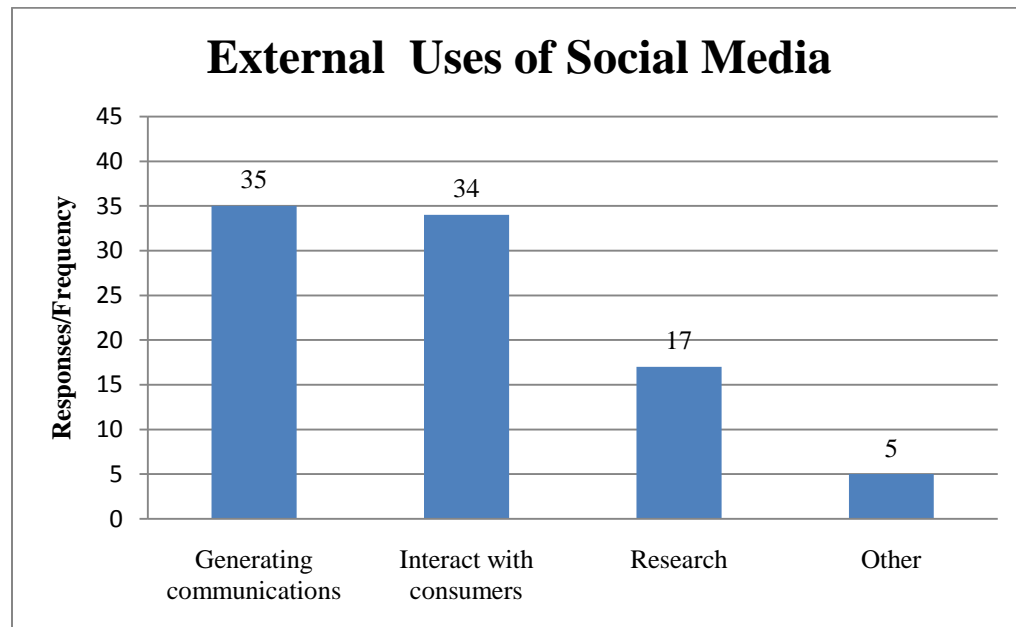
year, 19% have used it up to six months, and 24% do not use it at all. Furthermore, attitudes toward social media were measured by eight questions adapted from Sweetser, Porter, Chung, & Eunseong (2008). I combined answers for “strongly agree” and “agree” and answers for “strongly disagree and disagree.” For “Social media are a common advertising platform,” 76.5% agreed. For “Social media are a passing fad,” 79.8% disagreed.

The remaining attitude questions had varying results. For “Social media make it easier to reach consumers,” 63% agreed, 22.7% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 14.3% disagreed. For “Social media allow me to control the message,” 57.1% agreed, 21.8% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 21% disagreed. Finally, when asked if they thought most advertisers used social media to keep up with competition, 47.1% agreed, 35.3% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 17.7% disagreed.

I also examined the responses to the survey questions, “What purpose(s) has your company used social media for a client/campaign?” and “What purpose(s) has your company used social media for your company?” To analyze these questions, I combined the responses of “very often” and “often.” Respondents could choose more than one reason for usage. These two questions characterized external and internal company uses of social media.

External usage represented communications for specific product campaigns or client campaigns. For external usage, on a scale of “Very Often” (5) to “Never” (1), generating communications for their company or clients ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ) and interacting with consumers ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) were the two most prevalent uses of social media (See Figure 1). Other reasons included research ( $M = 2.13$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ) and other ( $M = 1.16$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ). Internal usage represented communications for company branding. For internal usage, on a scale of “Very Often” (5) to “Never” (1), communicating with the industry ( $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ) and

generating new business ( $M = 2.46$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ) were the two most prevalent uses of social media (See Figure 2). Other reasons included research ( $M = 2.22$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ), employee screening ( $M = 1.76$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ), and other ( $M = 1.22$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ).



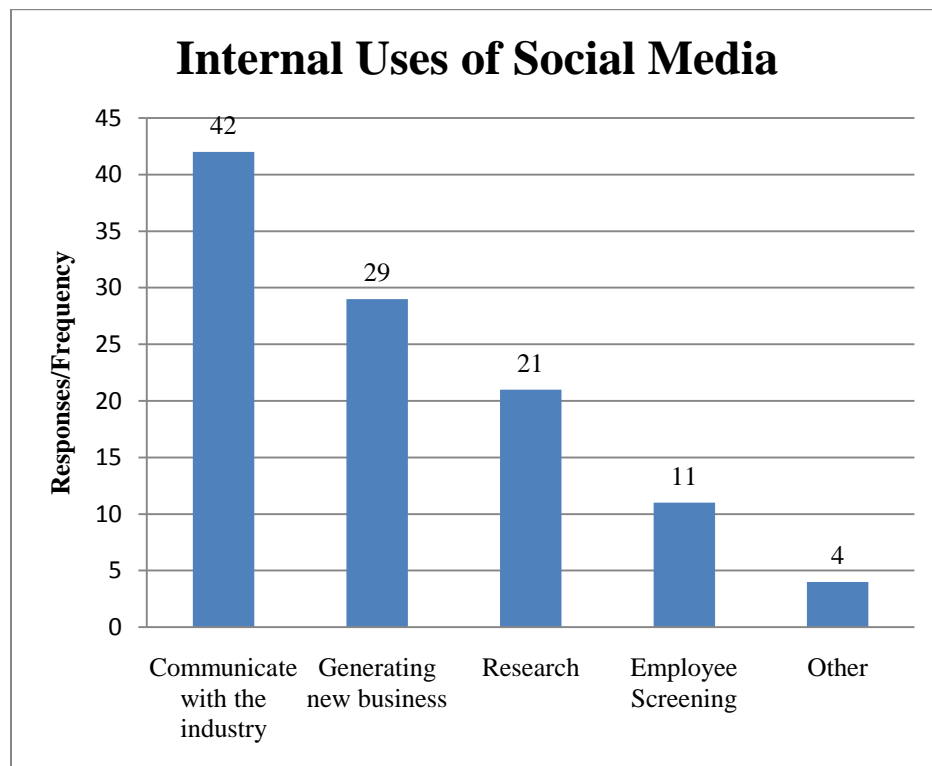
**Figure 1. External Uses of Social Media**

In response to the question “What purpose(s) has your company used social media for a client/campaign?”

Taken as a whole, the results from the survey indicated less industry-wide usage of social media compared to perceptions of industry-wide usage from the respondents at the digital and full-service agencies. Regardless of universal usage rates, advertisers appear to be using social media for the same general purposes. However, the online survey also indicated that many advertisers are still unsure about their effectiveness. When asked to rate the statement, “Consumers are more responsive to messages in social media versus traditional media,” 40.3% agreed, 38.7% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 21% disagreed. The variability of responses indicated an uncertainty about the consumer responsiveness to social media that may be



connected with their uncertainty of how to effectively integrate social media platforms into advertising and marketing campaigns.



**Figure 2. Internal Uses of Social Media**

In response to the question “What purpose(s) has your company used social media for your company?”

In addition to responses from the full-service agency, the online survey included an open-ended question asking, “When are social media most effectively used?” According to the survey respondents, the most effective use of social media was for direct, personal communication. Furthermore, respondents found it an effective awareness tool that should be part of an integrated campaign. Other effective uses included research, fast and immediate messaging, customer service, and responding to customer feedback. While most respondents appeared to agree about what constitutes effective social media usage, 16% of respondents to this question indicated that they did not know or were unsure.

## **CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION**

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results of this study, advertisers use social media differently than traditional forms of advertising media. Due to social media's unique characteristics and increasing amounts of clutter online, advertisers must concentrate more on the interests and needs of consumers to gain their attention. With increasing ways for consumers to interact with advertising content or avoid it, social media marketers and communicators must strategize more than ever to engage their consumers.

One of the main findings from this study highlights the strong interest in the consumer. While advertisers have always focused on the consumer, in the current digital media environment, advertisers must provide value or an added benefit to consumers to gain their attention. Understanding the ways consumers interact in social media and creating seamless messages that not only fit into the media environment but also encourage users to pass them along is the biggest obstacle for social media marketers. While there are examples of successful social media, such as the alcohol branded application that allows consumers to customize their plans, many brands are failing. Advertisers are desperate to understand what creates these successes and if they can mirror the success of others.

Social media are unlike traditional television or radio advertisements in that there is not a formula for success. Yet, according to respondents, there are common principles of effective social media marketing. Respondents reported that allocating resources and creating a long-term strategy for these platforms was important for effective social media usage. While this seems obvious, many companies are not taking social media platforms seriously enough to effectively utilize them.

Based on the findings, respondents felt companies must first evaluate their appropriateness in this environment based on their brand and target audience. This appropriateness depends on if consumers are in these social spaces and if the brand possesses attributes that can seamlessly integrate with the specific social platform. Part of identifying if one's brand is conducive to social media depends on understanding the nature of social media. While each platform has its own culture, most operate by providing a location for online users to meet to express common interests. Furthermore, respondents reported that most consumers are not receptive to advertisers pushing their way into the conversation. By understanding that marketing may not be welcome for the most part in these platforms, advertisers can better position themselves to operate on a permission-based approach while seeking to help consumers further their interests by providing value.

Whether or not a brand chooses to participate in social media, every brand should understand these networks and use them for their researching capabilities. Social media provide an extremely valuable opportunity to research consumers and discover their honest opinions, preferences, and expectations of a brand or product category. The ability to congregate consumers and archive their thoughts is a characteristic that sets social media apart from traditional media. Their search capabilities further make them valuable market research tools. Advertisers should maintain a working knowledge of social media because these platforms are constantly changing and evolving. The next new social platform could be relevant to one's brand.

Therefore, for advertising agencies to influence online users, they need to focus on the consumer rather than the client. As evidenced in the interviews, this re-focusing on the consumers, rather than the client, and emphasis on understanding the social platforms they exist

in has resulted in tension between the agency and client. This tension results from the knowledge gap between those who understand social media and those who do not. It appears the agencies are developing an expertise, while clients are still unfamiliar with these new platforms.

Analysis comparing the responses of the digital creative agency and the full-service agency also yielded interesting findings. Overall, the digital creative agency focused on abstract values of social media and the need to find the “big idea.” The most recurring topics included providing value, being authentic and credible, being transparent, and engaging consumers. On the other hand, respondents from the full-service agency focused on concrete uses of social media, such as using social media for customer service, crisis communication, hosting capabilities and citing their high return on investment. These provide tangible uses of social media that can help others begin to understand the ways social media can function within an integrated campaign.

I believe these distinctions result from the inherent differences of a digital creative agency, which focuses on digital products, and a full-service agency, which has additional media channels and resources available for clients. The opportunity to compare these responses creates a richer understanding of social media usage because it incorporates the viewpoints of communicators functioning in different roles. It also displays the diversity of players within the advertising industry creating a clearer picture of how the industry is responding to the growth of social media.

The differences between the digital creative agency and the full-service agency, however, were minute compared to the differences between the interviews and the statewide online survey of advertising practitioners. Whereas the respondents from the digital creative agency and full-service agency mostly discussed the same topics, the online survey painted a different picture

about the perceptions of advertisers as a whole. This distinction indicates a clear separation of the understanding of social media between top advertising agencies and the rest of the industry.

While the two agencies provided insight into effective social media usage, the online survey better described the current industry environment. It is apparent that advertising professionals are experimenting with social media for marketing purposes; 70 percent claimed to use social media in their job. Yet, their attitudes about the effectiveness of social media varied, indicating most practitioners are still exploring how that may be.

Practitioners varied in opinion on if social media allows one to control the message, if social media allows them to more easily reach consumers, if social media are used to keep up with competition, and if consumers are more responsive to messages in social media versus traditional media. These statements indicate an uncertainty about the effectiveness of social media that most likely results from the newness of social media usage in advertising. As advertisers continue to experiment with social media for marketing and communications, I believe their attitudes about consumers' responsiveness and its overall effectiveness will begin to mirror those of top advertising agencies.

### Social Media and Advertising Theory

In addition to describing the current advertising environment, this study sought to negotiate the influence of social media on advertising theory. With a shift in informational power from the advertiser to the consumer, the traditional advertising theories may not be applicable to the digital consumer. To better understand this issue, I presented the earlier theoretical conclusions of the hierarchy of effects (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961) and the six-segment strategy wheel (Taylor, 1999).

The hierarchy of effects (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961) introduced advertising as a long-term process, in which consumers must go through stages before their final intent to purchase. Application of this theory found that emotions and past beliefs affect attitude toward the brand, and advertisement likeability is highly correlated with brand preference (Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999). Further interpretations of this theory after the creation of the Internet stated that most advertisements receive low attention processing; the researchers emphasized the importance of building meaningful messages in the early stages of the hierarchy to engage consumers (Briggs and Stuart, 2006).

Based on the results of this study, advertisers do not believe social media have changed the process consumers go through to make product decisions. Therefore, they believe that as a consumer model, the hierarchy still applies to consumers who engage with social media. However, many indicated that achieving consumer response at each level has become more challenging since the creation of social media. According to respondents, the difference arises in the way consumers interact in these platforms. Respondents described social media as community-oriented sites that enable the sharing of content. Furthermore, “[Creating branded messages in] social media are when you create some space or communication forum leveraging the power of crowds to talk to each other through an engine the brand sets up”(Senior Content Strategist).

Although the brand still decides which messages to provide, the consumer gets to decide which to pass along, thereby controlling the reach and influence of the advertisement. Because of this shift in power, the advertiser must work harder to become relevant and “shareable” to online consumers. While social media allow consumers to interact with advertising in different ways, respondents felt the principles of advertising still apply through the stages of awareness,

knowledge, liking, preference, conviction, and purchase. Based on these perceptions, social media influence the hierarchy of effects by allowing online users more control over whether they choose to become aware of the brand, interact with the brand, and thus build an affinity to the brand.

While advertisers must work harder to gain consumer attention, the new opportunities to build relationships with consumers in social media allow advertisers to capitalize on their gained attention and convert their attention into profit. In the modern consumer culture, sharing content can often be more valuable than a purchase. By sharing, the consumer is conveying positive word of mouth, trust, and liking toward a brand, feelings that lead to greater brand equity and loyalty.

Furthermore, social media provide an opportunity to create a relationship beyond the simple awareness that most traditional media offer. Ideally, a consumer can go through all the stages of the hierarchy from awareness to purchase in a social network. For example, a branded flower company created a profile page in Facebook and provided valuable content to share with users. In addition to providing information, the page allowed for direct purchases. In effect, this social page provided value, could be shared with friends, and allowed immediate purchase capabilities, providing the potential for consumers to go through all of the stages in the hierarchy of effects. Based on this example, it is important to focus on creating meaningful, relevant messaging in the early stages of awareness and preference to draw consumers in (Briggs and Stuart, 2006). Once consumers are interested, respondents felt the site should produce some value or benefit for the consumer to engage them and lead them through the remaining stages of the hierarchy.

Next, I examined Taylor's six-segment strategy wheel (1999), a modern consumer decision-making model that described various consumer motivations for making purchases. However, just as previously stated, if social media are changing anything, they are changing the way consumers choose to ignore or interact with online advertising messages. Based on this assumption, social media will not change consumer motivations but will give consumers an additional channel to express themselves.

When analyzing the six-segment strategy wheel, social media seem especially applicable to the ego and social segments of the wheel, as online profiles become more personal (Taylor, 1999). Brands that represent these segments have the opportunity to capitalize on the nature of social media by existing where consumers are and allowing them to affiliate themselves with those brands. However, regardless of potential applicability, each brand must evaluate their appropriateness and the value they provide to these platforms if they hope to be effective.

Generating messages that are worthy enough to gain the consumer's attention is a task advertisers and marketers have always strived for and, with social media, this task is even more important. In terms of the future, I believe social media will have positive effects on advertising. Re-shifting the focus to the consumer and the message will make strides toward improving the reputation of the industry as a whole.

Based on this analysis, respondents believed the basic consumer models of advertising still apply; it is the application of the models by advertisers that is different. "[Social media] is just a word that has been invented; it encapsulates certain trends and anything online right now that people are focused on. They are new constructs facilitated by technology that people are throwing old words around to label them. Social media is almost redundant because media is just communication- it's social once people are consuming it" (Minister of Technology).



## **Practical Implications**

Not only do the results of this study provide background on social media usage in advertising, but it also provides valuable insight for current practitioners and helps reduce the academician-practitioner gap (Nyilasy and Reid, 2007). Specifically, understanding the culture of social media platforms and the need to provide value to social media users can lead to more effective advertising campaigns; it can also contribute to positively influencing the current perceptions of online advertising.

There are several lessons that clients and agencies can take away from this study. Clients must allow agencies to be experts. Because companies cannot devote the needed resources to analyzing social media as intently as agencies, they must be more open to agencies' suggestions because agencies have more experience interacting in social media platforms. Obviously, clients should not simply defer to anything the agency presents, but until clients can increase their knowledge about the effectiveness of these platforms, they must learn to trust the expertise of those who have.

In addition, almost all respondents agreed that social media are not for every brand. However, this does not negate their value as research tools. Social media possess the ability to gather public data on consumers that can help companies define consumer groups, industry problems, competitors, and new market opportunities. A basic understanding of these platforms will become crucial in the future.

As new technologies emerge, advertisers must push the boundaries of implementation and remain open to using social media differently than traditional media. While social media share some commonalities with traditional media, the environment and overall nature of social media make them a unique vehicle for advertising. As a new channel of communication,

advertisers must find ways to leverage social media's value and match that value with consumer needs.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

While the research presented several insights into social media usage, some limitations existed. First, research was conducted at one digital agency and one full-service agency. While these agencies represented some of the best practices within the industry, their responses cannot be generalized to the entire industry or even to other digital and full-service agencies.

Furthermore, only five interviews were conducted at the full-service agency based on limited time and availability of employees. Future research should conduct interviews at other similar agencies to create a well-rounded perspective of how digital and full-service agencies feel about social media usage by incorporating a greater number of full-service respondents.

Recommendations for future research include using quantitative methods to more empirically measure attitudes of advertising practitioners toward social media usage for marketing and communications. Additionally, this study only represents the advertiser side of the issue. Further investigations into consumer attitudes toward social media usage for marketing and communications could compliment this study. Advertising practitioners and academics could also benefit from an experimental study concerning the effectiveness of social media marketing on brand preference and intent to purchase.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Define social media.

When do you suggest social media as an effective advertising tactic for clients?

How do you believe advertising is changing, if at all, since the growth of social media?

Overall, what are the most effective ways to use social media? Specific examples of when it was effective and not effective? Why?

- Facebook
- MySpace
- Vimeo/YouTube
- Twitter
- Flickr

Why do you believe social media are effective?

What trends of social media do you notice?

What are your predictions for social media in the future?



## **APPENDIX B**

### **LIST OF INTERVIEWEES**

#### **Digital Agency**

Position: Strategy Intern

Date: June 3, 2009

Length: 29 minutes

Position: Producer

Date: June 8, 2009

Length: 26 minutes

Position: Associate Technical Director

Date: June 11, 2009

Length: 34 minutes

Position: Strategy Intern

Date: June 15, 2009

Length: 23 minutes

Position: Copywriter

Date: June 15, 2009

Length: 29 minutes

Position: Senior Content Strategist

Date: June 26, 2009

Length: 38 minutes

Position: Minister of Technology

Date: July 15, 2009

Length: 22 minutes

Position: Art Director

Date: July 17, 2009

Length: 43 minutes

Position: VP of Production

Date: July 17, 2009

Length: 25 minutes

Position: CEO/founder of agency

Date: July 17, 2009

Length: 24 minutes

Position: Executive VP of Client Engagement  
Date: July 17, 2009  
Length: 25 minutes

Position: Art Director  
Date: July 21, 2009  
Length: 20 minutes

**Full-service Agency**

Position: Account Supervisor  
Date: October 1, 2009  
Length: 17 minutes

Position: Director of Digital  
Date: October 1, 2009  
Length: 15 minutes

Position: PR Account Executive  
Date: October 1, 2009  
Length: 17 minutes

Position: President  
Date: October 1, 2009  
Length: 22 minutes

Position: Social Media Strategist  
Date: October 1, 2009  
Length: 20 minutes

## **APPENDIX C**

### **SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

The purpose of this study is to examine advertising practitioner's usage of social media. The data will be collected through an online survey. This survey should take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Your responses will remain confidential and will not be traceable to you. No personally identifiable data will be collected. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may change your mind and close your browser at any point. The results of the data may be published; however, no names or identifying information will be included in the final document.

If you have any questions after the study is completed, please feel free to e-mail me at emabryl@tigers.lsu.edu. If you have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, you may contact Robert C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board, at (225) 578-8692.

**Would you like to continue? y/n**

#### **Part I: Social Media Usage**

The following questions measure your use of social media in your practice of advertising.

**1. How often do you use the following for personal usage:**

Facebook  
MySpace  
LinkedIn  
Vimeo  
YouTube  
Twitter  
Flickr  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

0 hours per week  
5 hours or less  
6-10 hours per week  
11-20 hours per week  
21-30 hours per week  
31-40 hours per week  
40+ hours per week

**2. How often do you utilize the following social media for professional advertising/marketing/communications purposes?**

Facebook  
MySpace  
LinkedIn  
Vimeo  
YouTube  
Twitter  
Flickr

Other\_\_\_\_\_

0 hours per week

5 hours or less

6-10 hours per week

11-20 hours per week

21-30 hours per week

31-40 hours per week

40+ hours per week

3. How long have you been using social media?

Don't use social media

Less than 1 month

1-6 months

6 months-1 year

1 year +

4. How long has your company been using social media?

Don't use social media

Less than 1 month

1-6 months

6 months-1 year

1 year +

5. What purpose(s) has your company used social media for a client/campaign?

Generating marketing/communications for client/campaign

Interacting directly with consumers

Research

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Never

Rarely

Occasionally

Often

Very Often

6. What purpose(s) has your company used social media for your company?

Interacting directly with consumers

Generating new business

Communicating with the industry

Employee screening

Research

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Never

Rarely

Occasionally  
Often  
Very Often

## **Part II: Role of Social Media in Advertising**

The following questions will measure your beliefs about the use of social media in advertising.

1. Social media are a commonly used advertising/communications platform.

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

2. I have used social media to keep up with consumer and industry trends.

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

3. Consumers are more responsive to messages in social media versus traditional communications.

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

4. I use social media to maintain an online presence.

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

5. Social media are a passing fad.

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

6. Most advertisers use social media to keep up with their competition.

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral

Agree  
Strongly Agree

7. Social media eliminate intermediaries, making it easier for me to reach consumers.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly Agree

8. Social media allows me to control the message.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly Agree

9. How are social media most effectively used? \_\_\_\_\_(open ended)

10. How are social media ineffectively used? \_\_\_\_\_(open ended)

### **Part III: Demographic Information**

**1. Age?** 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55+

**2. Gender?** Male/female

**3. Which of the following best describes your present affiliation in advertising?**

Agency, Sole practitioner, Client-side, Not-for-profit, Government, Education, Other \_\_\_\_\_

**4. What is your position?** Creative, Account Planning, Account Executive, Media Planning/Buying, PR/Promotions, Marketing Director, Brand Manager, Other\_\_\_\_\_

**5. How long have you worked in the advertising industry?** \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Ethnicity?** African American, Asian/Asian American, Caucasian, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific Islander

**7. Please submit your email address if you would like to receive the results of this study:**

\_\_\_\_\_

## **VITA**

Emily Mabry was born in Metairie, Louisiana, in 1986. She earned her Bachelor of Science from the E.J. Ourso College of Business in 2008, with a concentration in marketing. While attaining her bachelor's degree, Emily worked as a marketing team leader at LSU University Recreation, where she handled the promotions and public relations of recreational programs, as well as managed several special events. She continued this job professionally until she began her master's degree in the fall of 2008.

During her master's degree, Emily interned at a premier digital agency in Brooklyn, New York, further strengthening her interest in new media and inspiring the work of her thesis. Upon the completion of her master's degree, Emily plans to pursue a career in advertising. Her research interests include advertising effectiveness and new media.