STATUS SYMBOL: A CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE PERCEIVED CONTROL OF SOCIAL MEDIA FEEDS OF EMERGING ADULTS

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PURPOSE & FOCUS

This campaign plan intends to increase perceived control among emerging adults' social media feeds. This study will focus on preventative and self-monitoring measures users can apply to their own social networks.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

SWOT ANALYSIS: PERCEIVED CONTROL CAMPAIGN

RESEARCHER PERCIEVED STRENGTHS • Increased knowledge of tools and functions • More likelihood of relevant content • With knowledge, users have the capability to mute, ignore, or block unwanted posters or harassers • May make users feel less reluctant about using social media more regularly • Personalized nature makes it more relevant to reluctant users	**RESEARCHER PERCIEVED WEAKNESSES** • Instructional content may come off as dry or preachy • Computer-mediated communication can be unreliable and malfunction-prone • Time investment required for knowledge and maintenance is high • Doing nothing is easier • Privacy precautions may seem to drastic to be personally relevant
RESEARCHER PERCIEVED OPPORTUNITIES • May make reluctant users feel they are part of a community • May give users privacy knowledge • May make users more open to posting more frequently or reaching out to others • May give users increased sense of self efficacy	**RESEARCHER PERCIEVED THREATS** • Constant change of Facebook interface may make instructional materials irrelevant • Misconceptions that feedback and privacy options are not genuinely helpful • Mean or abusive behavior might still occur despite preventative measures

BACKGROUND

Motivators for Social Media Usage

Research has found a wide variety of motivators for why people use social media. This section will briefly summarize relevant scholarly findings on social media usage.

Scholars have been interested in motivators for social media and Internet usage since the early two-thousands. LaRose, Mastro and Eastin (2001) applied social-cognitive theory to Internet usage to explain Internet habits among college students. Their findings largely confirmed that using the Internet can be seen as a social-cognitive process and that "Internet self-efficacy and perceived addiction explained considerable additional variance in usage" (p. 406). These findings suggested that a user's perceived ability and familiarity with the Internet would affect one's frequency of use.

Ellison, Steinfeld, and Lampe (2007) social networking sites "allow individuals to present themselves, articulate their social networks, and establish or maintain connections with others" (p. 1143). Their survey of college students found that "Facebook appears to play an important role in the process by which students form and maintain social capital" (p. 1161). The researchers found that "participants overwhelmingly used Facebook to keep in touch with old friends and to maintain or intensify relationships characterized by some form of offline connection such as dormitory proximity or a shared class" (p. 1162). These findings suggest that social networking may play a part in building and maintaining offline networking contacts and relationships.

Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, and Zickuhr (2010) found that with social networking sites' increased popularity with adults, "a smaller proportion of teens in mid-2009 were sending daily messages to friends via SNS, or sending bulletins, group messages or private messages on the

sites" (p. 2). These findings suggest that as more populations gain access to social networking services, the needs and habits of existing users, such as teens and emerging adults, will likely shift in response. Smith (2011) found that 71 percent of adults 18 to 29 cite staying in touch with current friends to be "a 'major reason' for their use of social networking sites" (p. 3). Smith also found that only 9 percent of users surveyed used social networking sites "to make entirely new friends" (p. 4). These findings suggest that campaigns centered on social networking use among emerging adults should account for shifting usage habits and preferences. While early Internet users frequently cited the Internet as a way to make new connections, modern users implement social networking sites for preexisting relationships.

Through their descriptive research, Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) acknowledged that although social media presents unique opportunities for users, it also creates its' fair share of potential drawbacks. They said "while it enables the detailed following of friends half-way around the world, it can foster a society where we don't know the names of our own next-door neighbors" (p. 67). This statement articulates the dichotomy of social media usage: while it may enable users to maintain and foster offline relationships, social networking allows the opportunity for computer-mediated communication to supersede or even completely replace a user's real-world interaction. Social networking behaviors have the potential to transform and alter social dynamics in irrevocable ways, making them both a potential asset and a potential curse for users.

Potential Consequences of Social Media Usage

The increasingly close-knit, relationship-based nature of social networking sites among emerging adults has to potential to manifest in unwanted or harassing behaviors. This section will briefly summarize relevant findings on online harassment.

Researchers found that the legal system had little to no reprieve for victims of online harassment. Established laws, such as the Zeran doctrine, immunize internet service providers from liability for any defamation or emotional damages their services may cause (Bartow 2009). It often falls on the users to protect themselves from such events, either by moderating and deleting comments, or in more amplified harassment events, using reputation-protection software from private companies (Bartow 2009). Kim (2009) said section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996 "places responsibility for content directly—and exclusively—upon those who create it" (p. 997). Barr and Lugus (2011) stressed the need for legislation reform, particularly for protection of students on college campuses. All scholars agreed that such aggressive online behavior would escalate if not thoroughly addressed.

Later research also described the factors and preferences that could lead someone to participate in online harassment. Yang (2012) conducted a survey of adolescent online gamers and found that "preferences for [violent games] were indirectly associated with cyberbullying via aggressive behavior" (p.243) suggesting that a predilection for aggressive behavior could lead someone to be more likely to engage in online harassment.

Other research sought to describe the perpetrators and victims of online harassment. The research of Kowalski and Limber (2007), found that among the surveyed middle school students, "perpetrators indicated that they electronically bullied another student at school most frequently, followed by a friend and strangers" (p. S26). These findings suggested that bullying took place primarily among friends and peers, and that harassing actions towards strangers were less prevalent.

Research also sought to describe the effects of harassment on victims. A later survey of New Hampshire college students (Kennedy and Taylor, 2010) coded students' self-reported

online victimization incidents into three categories: harassing behavior, threatening behavior, and stalking behavior. Some participants reported that their online victimization incidents had caused fear-related stress, led them to change contact information, or in a rare instance, quit their job and move out of the area completely.

In addition to prior scholarly research, past online harassment campaigns, such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' stopbullying.gov and the International Catholic Child Bureau's "Stop harassment on the Internet" campaign, have focused on cyberbullying among children and teens. The decency laws put in place to protect children from unwanted exposure to explicit or distressing content make it more legally actionable to report instances of online abuse or harassment. These campaigns encourage parents and adults to report instances of cyberbullying to online service providers and law enforcement.

Plans of action are less clear for emerging adults. Internet service providers and college administrators currently hold no liability for damages caused by online harassment. The burden of responsibility for monitoring and dealing with online harassment will fall to individual users until law or legislation says otherwise. This information helped focus the campaign on educating emerging adults about self-policing and preventative measures, which will give them the tools to defend against and de-escalate potential crises. Since no legislative protection exists for the demographic, this campaign will address that lack of legislative basis.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Proposed Target Audience

The proposed target audience includes social media friends on the researcher's Facebook and Twitter accounts between the ages of 18-26.

Primary Research

Research shows that emerging adults use social networking sites to keep in touch with people and maintain preexisting relationships (Smith, 2011), and that due to this demographic's newfound status as an adult, they are not provided the same protections from abuse or harmful content as minors (Bartow 2009; Kim 2009). Prior research also shows that online harassment activities are more likely to occur predominantly between friends and peers (Kowalski and Limber, 2007), so limiting the target audience to members of the researcher's own social network would decrease scope and increase efficiency of the campaign.

To develop initial campaign themes, this researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with five voluntary participants, two females and three males, within the researcher's Facebook and Twitter friends. The researcher used ten open-ended questions about social media habits and occurrences to guide each interview session (Appendix). Two interviews were face-to-face, while the other three were computer-mediated. All interview responses were recorded by the researcher on the open-ended question form. Demographic characteristics were not recorded on the form out of consideration to the interviewee's anonymity. Since each participant was within the researcher's social network, recording these demographic details could inadvertently make them identifiable to others.

Once all interviews were recorded, the researcher compiled responses and formed general themes from these responses. These themes were used to construct three general profiles for the target demographic: female social media users, male social media users, and general themes across male and female social media users.

Female Users

Three common themes emerged from female social media users surveyed. All female respondents used Facebook, but only to keep up with only people were doing. Length of Facebook usage depended on the situation, but they usually logged on to perform a quick check, as opposed to a deep dive. Female respondents also said they felt social media can blow both public and personal events out of proportion.

Male Users

Three common themes emerged from male social media users surveyed. All male respondents used Facebook sparingly. All male respondents reported that they rarely posted and rarely commented. All male respondents said they consider it strange when people post extremely frequently on social media

Both Male and Female Users

` Three common themes emerged from male and female social media users surveyed. Respondents widely criticized Facebook for its bloat, ad clutter, and tendency to suggest posts that weren't relevant to them. Respondents said that they tended to hide, delete, or ignore posts that were spammy, offensive or mean-spirited. The majority of respondents had deactivated

Facebook once, but came back because of its usefulness. One respondent characterized the service as being to annoying to stay on, but too useful to leave.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Main Campaign Goal

The main campaign goal is to increase perceived control of social media feeds within social media users aged 18-26 and within the researcher's own social networks by providing useful and relevant information on Facebook, respondents' dominant social media platform.

Behavior Objective

The behavioral objective for this campaign is for users to engage in self-monitoring and preventative strategies on their Facebook feeds.

Knowledge Objective

The knowledge objective for this campaign is for users to know security measures, monitoring strategies, and preventative actions they can take to preserve the integrity and relevance of their Facebook feeds.

Belief Objective

The belief objective for this campaign is for users to believe that they can take simple actions to maintain the control and relevance of their Facebook feed. Users need to believe that they have control over what appears on their social media and that steps they take to report bad behavior are helpful and acknowledged.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical framework for perspective making and perspective taking as defined by Boland Jr. and Tenkasi (1995) informed the development of campaign objectives. Boland Jr. and Tenkasi (1995) examined perspective making and taking within communities of knowledge,

making it relevant to this campaign. “Perspective making is the process whereby a community of knowing develops and strengthens its own knowledge domain and practices” (Boland Jr. and Tenkasi, p. 356). Boland Jr. and Tenkasi said narrative is important to the process of perspective making. According to Boland Jr. and Tenkasi (1995), perspective taking is “where distinctive individual knowledge is exchanged, evaluated, and integrated with that of others in the organization” (p.358). This theoretical concept helped the researcher formulate objectives centered on spreading knowledge and information derived from the campaign. Notably, both perspective making and perspective taking are made possible “only through speaking and acting in a community” (p.359). In a campaign where most respondents have reported passive or inactive social media behaviors, these strategies would be ideal to stimulate action.

Integrating the theoretical frameworks for perspective making and perspective taking would make it easier to integrate these theories within a narrative-based campaign. As the researcher’s social network could be considered a community of knowledge, the theoretical framework presented by Boland Jr. and Tenkasi (1997) proved highly relevant to the formulation of the campaign plan.

FACTORS INFLUENCING ADOPTION OF THE BEHAVIOR

Percieved Barriers

- Lack of knowledge of Facebook's interface, organization and features
- Time cost to engage in preventative and self monitoring actions
- Facebook ad clutter and bloat gets in the way of genuinely useful features
- Most information does not seem relevant
- Delayed response and gratification from active measures

Percieved Benefits

- Cuts down on content considered annoying or mean
- Knowledge of Facebook algorithm enables users to tailor relevant content through their actions
- Decreases likelihood of victimization in the future
- Encourages active participation
- Users feel they have more agency

Perceived Competition

- Doing nothing
- Engaging in preexisting passive behaviors
- Moving to another social media service
- Not actively engaging with social media
- Leaving social media altogether
- Relying on face-to-face interactions
- Relying on other communication mediums instead

Perceived Influential Others

- Relevant celebrities (Jennifer Lawrence, etc.)
- Relevant content creators (Buzzfeed, etc.)
- Peers that are active on social media
- Peers that are inactive or absent from social media
- Social media evangelists
- Family
- User-generated content, as opposed to organization-generated content

POSITIONING STATEMENT

We want the target audience to see de-cluttering and prioritizing their social network through feedback and privacy options as a set of small, manageable daily tasks that can improve their experiences on social networking sites.

This campaign's direction acknowledges that the target audience's relationship to social networking sites is changing and that they feel that Facebook's current configuration does not give them perceived control over what displays on their feed. On the same token, users admit being overwhelmed or unsure of how to use the tools provided sometimes. While Facebook itself attempts to educate users on how to use features, the interface and text can make them sound too simplistic or condescending to be perceived as relevant to the target demographic. This campaign aims to address this by adopting a humorous, no-nonsense tone. As the target population is in the researcher's own social network, using this tone will make instruction seem more personable and relatable.

The decision to emphasize humor and affability was based heavily off Boland Jr. and Tenkasi's (1995) research on perspective making and perspective taking. Social network sites are increasingly a way for emerging adults to maintain and foster relationships between preexisting contacts. In this way, Facebook itself is a community of knowledge. Perspective making and perspective taking are ideal for this campaign because they require active participation and become possible "only through speaking and acting in a community" (p.359). By communicating with the target demographic through personalized and humorous techniques, this campaign hopes to dispel user reluctance to utilize features of social networking sites and help them to become a more active member of the community- a community they already care about.

MARKETING MIX STRATEGIES

Product

- **Core Product**: Knowledge of how to use content feedback and privacy features of Facebook to create a less cluttered and more controlled experience.
- **Actual Product:** Increased activity and protection on social networking sites
- **Augmented Product:** In order to create more personable communication, the researcher will utilize other communication channels to informally communicate with the target demographic with social media tools they indicate they use, including Twitter, Tumblr, LinkedIn, etc. This method will be used as a supplement to the more structured, scheduled materials posted on Facebook and will allow participants to receive more one-on-one advice as needed,

Price

Major costs relating to the campaign include the effort necessary to acquire knowledge about Facebook tools and features and the time costs of implementing those tools and features on a daily basis. The target demographic is in a perceived period of transition, either through continuing education or an entry-level job, so their perceived amount of spare time that they would be willing to allocate is low.

Incentives include more timely and efficient communication with friends and family members they are close to and a decrease in perceived social media clutter.

Disincentives include the misconceptions that users already know how to use all the features and that their monitoring and reporting behaviors do not make an impact.

Place

As stated previously, this campaign will take place primarily on Facebook. However, to remind users to engage in behaviors associated with the campaign, the researcher will extend it to other social networks and communication services users have indicated they frequent, such as Twitter, Tumblr, and Reddit as needed to engage in one-on-one informal interactions with respondents.

Promotion

Key message: Cut out the bloat on your Facebook feed by adjusting your settings and giving feedback. (While this campaign is control-centered, the researcher elected to use "bloat" to avoid negative self-connotation users may experience due to a perceived lack of control. Framing user control as more of a systemic problem eliminates these negative associations.)

Messenger: The researcher, primarily.

Slogan: Cut the crap.

Outputs:

In order to encourage and foster participation, as per Boland Jr. and Tenkasi's (1995) research on perspective-taking, each post will include a call to action. Participants will be

directed to “Like” if they find the post helpful and comment or message if they have a question.

- Graphics—including step-by step walkthroughs utilizing screenshots and text—and relevant infographics
- Text –based Facebook posts containing summaries of relevant information and any relevant links
- One-on-one computer-mediated informal communication, including texts, Facebook messages, Twitter messages, Tumblr asks, etc.

Communication channels: Social networking sites used by the target demographic and related messaging applications.

PLAN FOR MONITORING & EVALUATION

I. Inputs (Table in Microsoft Word)

   a. Does the post include text, graphics, or screenshots?

      i. Does the post include any combination of the three?

II. Outputs (Table in Microsoft Word)

   a. How many likes did the post receive?

   b. How many comments did the post receive?

   c. Did users message the researcher with additional questions after the post?

III. Outcomes

   a. Post-test interview with open-ended questions (Appendix, approximately one day after posting period). Open-ended questions will allow for user input beyond a simple yes or no.

IV. Impact

   a. Post-test interview with open-ended questions (Appendix, approximately one day after posting period)

BUDGET

Since this campaign takes place primarily on the researcher's own social network and contacts, the researcher opted out of paid promotional efforts in favor of more research-guided, self-directed efforts. The researcher will use his own graphic design software in order to compose campaign materials, so the major costs of this campaign will be time invested, as indicated below.

I. Additional Research Time
   a. Facebook policies (organizational stance on user privacy/ security/ user control)
      i. 1 to 2 hours/ day
   b. Facebook tools (user-level tools to monitor and control social media feed)
      i. 1 to 2 hours/ day
   c. Giving advice to participants through other social media channels (text message, Twitter, Tumblr, etc.)
      i. 1 to 2 hours/ day

II. Marketing Plan Implementation Time
   a. Making screenshots in Windows 7
      i. 30 minutes/ day
   b. Creating graphics in Adobe Illustrator CC 2014
      i. 1 to 2 hours/ day
   c. Creating and queuing posts within Facebook
      i. 15 to 30 minutes/ day
   d. Creating custom participant lists within Facebook
      i. 30 minutes to 1 hour

e. Responding to participants within Facebook

i. 30 to 45 minutes

III. Monitoring/ Evaluation Time

a. Administering post-test questions

i. 15 to 30 minutes per interview

PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

(Note: All actions will be researcher directed.)

1. One day before the five- day posting period, the researcher will organize 10 Facebook participants into two groups of five through custom Facebook lists.

2. One day before the five-day posting period, he researcher will develop rough templates for ten mixed-media posts in Microsoft Word, allowing for both structure and content flexibility.

3. The researcher will organize a posting schedule around five general themes, one theme for each day of the posting period.

4. Using Facebook custom lists, the researcher will post simultaneously to the experimental and control groups. The experimental group will receive a call to action in the Facebook post, while the control group will not. This posting period will have two Facebook posts a day for five days.

5. During the posting period, the researcher will monitor Facebook activity no less than three times a day to record likes, comments, and messages.

6. One day after the posting period has passed, the researcher ask participants open-ended questions about the pilot test. Participants can indicate they would rather not respond.

PILOT TESTING METHODS AND RESULTS

Methods

1. The researcher sent a reminder message to participants on December 2nd, approximately one day before the five-day posting period began (Appendix B). This reminder message maintained the no-nonsense, informal tone used throughout the rest of the campaign and gave those who volunteered an opportunity to opt out of the pilot testing period if they felt uncomfortable. All ten original voluntary participants were retained for the duration of the five-day posting period.

2. The researcher split the 10 participants into two groups of five using Facebook's custom lists. Both groups would receive the same 10 Facebook postings. The experimental group would have a call to action included with each post, while the control group would not. Activity in these groups would be measured by the number of Facebook likes, comments, and one-on-one questions sent to the researcher during the posting period.

3. From December 3rd to December 7th, the researcher made two Facebook posts a day over five days to both experimental and control groups. During this time, the researcher took the following structural steps:

- Due to Facebook's post structure, the researcher compiled all pilot test posts in Tumblr before embedding them into Facebook as a hyperlink. Compiling posts in Tumblr allowed the researcher to use both text and image in the same posting.
- Screenshots were exported using the Windows 7 Snipping Tool and saved in the researcher's Dropbox. These images were then embedded directly into the accompanying Tumblr post to correspond with the instructional text.

- The researcher created graphics in Adobe Illustrator CC 2014 and saved them as high-quality JPEG files. These images were then embedded directly into the accompanying Tumblr post as needed to correspond with the instructional text.

4. From December 3rd to December 7th, the researcher made two Facebook posts a day over five days. During this time, the researcher took the following steps to adapt to the pilot testing environment:

- Although the researcher structured the pilot test to adapt to participant response, the absence of response from Facebook users led the researcher to organize daily posts into general, researcher-determined themes.
- Posts with abstracted representational graphics proved popular with Tumblr users, so the researched adapted thematic posts to contain more image-based elements.
- Due to the lack of response from Facebook users, the post-test survey consisted of questions over the visibility of Facebook posts and user experience during the posting period, as opposed to the lengthier questionnaire that was originally planned (Appendix A).

5. After the posting period concluded, the researcher asked participants approximately how many posts they saw and what factors contributed or detracted from their visibility. Four of the ten participants were not available for comment. The remaining six responses were categorized into broad themes and included in the results section below (Table 1.1).

Results

As indicated in the Methods section above, results for pilot testing were almost entirely incongruous with the researcher's original hypothesis. The 10 Facebook participants gave no feedback on campaign posts. Participants cited three broad factors as detrimental to post visibility and engagement, as shown in the table below:

Table 1.1
Facebook Post Visibility and Detrimental Factors According to Respondents (N=6)

Respondent	No. of Visible Facebook Posts	Detrimental Factors Cited
1	0	Posts did not rank highly on News Feed
2	4	Averse to liking or commenting
3	4	Averse to liking or commenting
4	0	Limited access to Facebook during posting period
5	0	Posts did not rank highly on News Feed
6	3	Averse to liking or commenting

Since all posts were created through the researcher's Tumblr account, the researcher was also able to monitor campaign-related Tumblr activity from December 3rd to December 7th. During the posting period, the researcher received three separate Tumblr "likes" from three different users on campaign posts. One campaign post was also *reblogged*, or reposted to the user's own Tumblr account.

Implications/Improvements

These results are restricted to a very narrow group of social media users and should not be extrapolated to the general population. As demonstrated by the pilot testing period, this campaign needs to implement many improvements in order to be effective and viable in the future. Based on the findings above, the following assumptions about campaign content can be made:

- In the future, this campaign should focus more on presenting information and less on the personal link between the campaign researcher and the participant. Any passive social media feedback, such as Tumblr likes or reblogs, came from social media users without a personal connection to the researcher.
- Future campaign efforts should also focus less on active engagement. There was no activity from either the experimental or control group, regardless of whether a call to action was included in the accompanying Facebook post. These findings, coupled with participant averseness to liking or commenting indicates that encouraging active campaign participation via Facebook is not an efficient or viable option within the target demographic.

Based on user response and passive engagement, the following assumptions about campaign structure can be made:

- Future campaign efforts should include additional research time to closely examine social media post structure. Although this campaign was centered on Facebook users, all of the user response within the posting period came from Tumblr. This could be attributed to any number of factors. Tumblr is a social media service designed for longer posts that

incorporate multimedia, which immediately makes campaign content more instantly visible and appealing to Tumblr users. Facebook, on the other hand, does not have a way to incorporate multiple mediums into a single posting. Presenting campaign posts as embedded hyperlinks may have severely impacted post visibility on Facebook's news feed, and the extra step of clicking through the hyperlink may have discouraged Facebook participants from engaging.

- Campaign timing should be carefully planned and considered before taking any further steps. Many Facebook respondents indicated that posts weren't visible due to Facebook's algorithm. Factors such as proximity to the holidays and finals week may have factored into perceived post visibility.

In conclusion, although pilot testing procedures and results did not go as originally planned, they produced valuable findings and improvements to content and structure that should be applied to the campaign plan as it moves forward. Although significant restructuring and refocusing efforts are required, this pilot testing period showed that the campaign idea was not completely unsalvageable. Although participants indicated they found campaign information relevant prior to testing, the timing and delivery mechanism of the campaign were far from ideal, creating detrimental factors that may have prevented posts from being visible.

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APPENDIX A

CODEBOOK

1. What social media platforms do you use regularly?	
2. How long are you usually on them per session?	
3. What do you use these platforms for?	
4. What frustrates you about them?	
5. How do you deal with other people (comments/ likes/ etc) on these platforms?	
6. What do you do if someone posts something spammy/ annoying/ mean?	
7. Do you feel like you generally know how to use everything on these platforms?	
8. What do you think needs fixing?	
9. What's the weirdest thing that's happened on your social media feed(s)?	

10. Have you ever considered leaving social media? Why or why not?	

APPENDIX B

Reminder Message Sent to Participants Before Posting Period

Hi, all! If you're seeing this message, it means I've talked to you about my final campaigns project and you were willing to participate. So thanks!

(If you don't remember this conversation at all, I totally understand. It's been a LONG year for all of us.)

Basically, I'm going to be posting things about cleaning up and managing your Facebook feed over the next five days. I'm going to try hard to make it A, not boring and B, actually relevant to you, so I would love your feedback.

If this isn't something you're interested in or it's something you're uncomfortable with, please feel free to let me know. I'll be sure to keep any findings I include in the final paper completely anonymous. I care about your well-being more than any school project. Otherwise, buckle up! It should be a fun five days!