YOU TUBE AND YOU:
USING CYBERNETICS TO OPTIMIZE SELF-PROMOTION ON YOUTUBE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores self-promotion on YouTube. YouTube is a popular video sharing website specifically tailored for easy use and global connection. If a video is posted with the right combination of elements, it can become an instant phenomenon overnight. The ability to reach millions of people worldwide so quickly makes YouTube an advertising powerhouse. The most advantageous component of the video sharing site is that it is free to use. Anyone from any income level or background with video making capabilities can produce and post videos. In this day and age with built-in cameras on laptops and desktops, most members of society have producer potential. All skill sets from professional to novice are in contention with each other for the next smash hit. The question is, once the video is uploaded, how can it become an instant hit on YouTube? The cybernetic tradition is a theory that offers insight into how to manipulate systems for optimal use. This thesis used cybernetics to identify one element of the YouTube video uploading process to understand how to better manage the site for self-promotion. There are several components that factor into a successful video. However, this research isolated one variable, the thumbnail, to study as a possible influence for increasing the number of video views.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Importance of the Study

Technology, while flawed, has propelled the progression of modern day society. Technology has changed the way people live. Not only has it changed the pace of human life, but it has also changed the way they process information. People today are no longer patient, nor do they have to be. The introduction of the Internet provided instant access to the world. Adding web browsers to mobile devices provided instant on-the-go information to the modern man. The invention of Skype provided instant video chat and YouTube provided instant video self-promotion. Furthermore, all of these applications can now be used with mobile devices, laptops, tablets, e-readers, many MP3 players, and even a few televisions. Information is everywhere and constantly being updated. The problem now is information overload. In this digital age it is advantageous for communication professionals to know how to navigate the murky waters of message building. Since society is being bombarded with trivial information every minute, it is important to know how to tailor a message for specific consumers. The study conducted focused on how to find and engage with the intended audience with minimal effort. This study is specifically designed for finding effective ways to utilize YouTube as a promotional vehicle.

Statement of the problem

There is limited information on utilizing video sharing websites as a marketing tool, despite their continual growth in popularity (Feed Company 2008). Cybernetics offers a systematic approach for how to better use these applications for promotion. After Facebook and MySpace, YouTube is the third most popular social networking site
With YouTube, like other social media sites, users can friend other members and communicate with tools such as comment-boxes, messages, and activity feed subscriptions (Yoganarasimhan, 2012). Target marketing on YouTube can specifically benefit from using the communication models of the cybernetic tradition. The target market for this thesis is a combination of triathletes, swimmers, runners, bikers, or anyone looking to improve their skills in these activities. Millions of videos are uploaded to YouTube, and millions of people watch those videos. With all the traffic that YouTube sees it is difficult to make a video standout. Think of YouTube as a lottery and each video uploaded as a ticket number, every video has a chance at winning but only a select few can claim the prize. However, if a person is successful at getting a large number of views there are great payoffs that lead to other opportunities. Also, just like the lottery people have different methods to better their winning potential. Some lottery players swear by letting the machines choose their lucky numbers, others think it is statistically better to play the same numbers every time they buy a ticket. For YouTube everyone has a different purpose for their video and also different ways to obtain more hits. More and more organizations are turning to this outlet for advertising. In 2012 more than 3 billion viewers watched advertisements on YouTube each week (Dorai-Raj, Kellar, Pashkevich, & Zigmond, 2012). It has low cost and high gains. Cybernetics is a potential path to a mathematical way on how to better use YouTube to broadcast ideas to the world. This study was designed to use impactful image thumbnails to get more views on one designated YouTube video.

**Definition of Terms**

Shannon and Weaver Communication Model (figure 1): It is a model that explains the communication process in systems (Shannon & Weaver, 1949).
Technology Acceptance Model (figure 2): This is a model aimed at describing the association between people’s perception of technology and use of it (Davis, 1989).

Cybernetic Theory: It is the theory that seeks to correct errors within various systems. More specifically cybernetics seeks to design systems for self-regulation. (Weiner, 1967).

YouTube: Popular video-sharing website.

Hits: This is the plural word for several singular views of a video.

Keywords: Specific search words to link to a product, merchandise, service, image, video, etc. (Chan, 2011).

Image Thumbnail: Picture that is shown to represent the video on the search results page.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

The research of this thesis is outlined in five chapters. The second chapter discusses how the theoretical basis used to answer the research question relates to the context of the study. This section will explain the framework of the cybernetic tradition and how it can be instrumental for obtaining more YouTube video views. Chapter Three describes the experimental methodology for the study. The goal was to have one video receive significantly more hits than another. The scope of the study will describe the parameters of the project and why the method chosen is ideal for the desired outcome.

Chapter Four reports the results of chapter three’s experiment design. This section includes a brief project description, summary of compiled information, and data analysis. The final chapter is an overview of the entire study, complete with recommendations for future studies and limitations of this research. This chapter will explore areas for improvement and growth in marketing strategies for YouTube videos.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Annie Warner is a pro athlete. She competes in triathlons all over the USA. She is often a top competitor and has won thousands of dollars in prize money. Annie would like to take her area of competition to the next level. However, to move up in ranks she needs to have sponsors. Companies do not sponsor people who are unknown. Sponsors seek to promote themselves by funding the athlete. Promoting a positive image to a large number of people is ideal for sponsors. Think of Lance Armstrong, when it became known that he used drugs to advance his career Nike and other large name sponsors dropped him as their funded athlete. YouTube is a valuable outlet for developing fans and followers. There are more than 100 million videos watched daily on the popular video-sharing site (Hsu, Tan, & Yang, 2010). It is also international. By using YouTube as a promotional vehicle a person has the potential to gain global recognition for their work. This means the average person can become famous in record time if they get enough people to watch their videos. A prime example of this is Psy the Korean rapper who uploaded his Gangnum Style video July 15, 2012, and by December it had received over 800 million hits and over 5 million likes (YouTube, 2012). Psy is internationally recognized. His song is played on global stations, the media continually airs his video, and he has been on several music awards shows. Psy won the lottery of YouTube. The question is how did he do it? Another question is how can others like Annie do the same? The answers may lie in the cybernetic tradition. What insights may be gained by applying concepts associated with cybernetics, to get more hits on a YouTube video?
**Theoretical Basis:**

The term cybernetics was derived from the Greek word for “steersman” or “governor” (Wiener, 1967, p.23). MIT scientist Norbert Wiener used the word to discuss artificial intelligence. He needed a word to explain the way feedback makes information processing possible in electronics and in human minds (Wiener, 1967). His development of an antiaircraft firing system showed communication as the link connecting the parts of different systems, such as the computer system, the organizational system, the media system, and even the family system. Theorists in the cybernetic tradition look to fix the problems within different systems (Griffin, 2009). Claude Shannon, who was a scientist for the Bell Telephone Company used the tradition to solve the technical problems of sound transfer. He developed a model to explain the communication process in systems and created an equation that relates noise to the channel carrying capacity (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). The model is called the Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication. In his model there is an information source that sends the message to the transmitter. Then it sends a signal to the receiver, which delivers the message to the

![Diagram of the Shannon-Weaver Mathematical Model]

*Figure 1. Shannon-Weaver Mathematical Model*

Channel Capacity = Information + Noise

(Griffin, 2009, p.44)
intended destination (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). There is a noise source at the center of Shannon’s model (Figure 1). Information is lost at every stage. The intended message is altered by the time it gets to the intended receiver. The carrying capacity of the channel between the transmitter and the receiver is disrupted by noise (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). “In particular, the channel may be defined by its capacity to fail, in the sense of introducing noise into the system, and thereby interfering with the signal and garbling the message” (Kockelman, 2010, p. 409). Shannon’s equation to explain the relationship of noise and channel capacity is Channel Capacity = Information + Noise (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). With less noise more information is transferred.

The Literature

Cybernetics and YouTube

YouTube is a system. Users of the social video sharing site, make the videos, upload the videos, and hope that people watch the videos they produce. However, some video producers take it a step further and find methods to eliminate the hope of others watching their videos to secure guaranteed views. The YouTube system can be plugged into the Shannon

![YouTube and the Communication Model]

Figure 2. YouTube and the Communication Model
and Weaver Model of Communication. The video is the information source. YouTube is the transmitter. The noise source would be other YouTube videos. The receiver is the intended audience and the destination is the anticipated audience clicking on the specified video (Figure 2). If this idea were plugged into Shannon’s equation it would look like this; Channel Capacity = Specified video + other YouTube videos which makes for a much larger channel capacity than an uploader wants. The goal was to lower the noise of the other videos by having the intended video chosen more frequently.

To better understand how this can be done, it is helpful to know what drives people to use the website for sharing. In the last few years a study was conducted using cybernetics and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to determine what motivates individuals to share their videos using YouTube. TAM (figure 3) is a model that explains the correlation between people’s perception of technology and use of it. According to the model a person will act based on their intentions. Their intentions are influenced by their attitude and the subjective norm related to the behavior (Davis, 1989). The subjective norm is defined by the plausible actions of important people to another person. The president of the Unites States of America is an important person. Any way he may act is a subjective norm. For today’s society many celebrities
set the subjective norm. Many young people follow their trend. According to Tan, Yang, and Yi (2010) users of YouTube base their activity level on perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEU). When looking at the TAM model (figure 2) the use of the external variable is dependent on PU and PEU. The PU and PEU are determined by the attitude of the user, which leads to use intention and then actual system use. Tan, Yang, and Yi (2010) found that in order to increase video sharing on YouTube it is important to generate and foster favorable attitudes when using the site. It needs to be something that is popular among other people as well. The study also looked at the difference of use for the two genders. Women’s video sharing was driven by expert opinion (Tan et al., 2010). Men were more driven by interpersonal communication. Men were more likely to follow friends and family in making content selections in the new media environment (Tan et al., 2010). While this study was specifically conducted to explain what drives people to share videos on YouTube the results can also be used explain why people view the videos they do. Women are more influenced by what the experts think and men are more concerned with what peers and family find important. Knowing this information can help video creators build messages.

**Using Cybernetics to get Desired Results on YouTube**

Understanding the way people process information is another concept that is helpful to increasing video views on YouTube. There are three steps involved in the way people process information. The steps are encoding, storage, and retrieval.

**Encoding**

Encoding involves the process of transmitting the intended message out of the controlled environment into a person’s brain (Eysenck, 1993). To do this the message
must first engage the sensory receptors. The intended audience needs to be attracted to the message. Researchers have noted two factors that can influence the effectiveness of promotion. One is entertainment and the other is personalization (Myers & Valente, 2010, p.261). People focus more on a message that is relevant and emotionally appealing to them, but is also delivered in a creative manner. Research also shows that there are unlimited sensory stores for each sense. However, information can stay in these stores only for a short time with the visual sense being retained for the shortest period (Coltheart, 1975; Holding, 1975). The encoding process is a two-step system. First specific bits of information are selected from the original message held in the sensory stores and then transformed into working mental representations in the short-term memory. There are two factors in the selection process for information to be transferred from the sensory stores to the short-term memory. They are the controlled selection process and the automatic selection process. The controlled selection process involves the goals of the viewer. For example, if a person decides to focus on what shoes another person is wearing in the store; the shoe style will be processed into short-term memory while watching. Automatic selection processes are not planned and are unexpected but triggered by stimulus. There two types of stimuli that trigger the automatic selection process. One of them is information that is important to the objectives and wants of the individual. The other is information that represents change or an unpredictable event in the world around them (Graham, 1997; Ohman 1997).

**Storage**

Once the message is encoded it goes to storage. During the sub process of encoding mental images of the message is transformed into working memory. If a person
continually thinks about the new information associations with the old information will soon form. The more a person connects new information into their associative memory the better they retain the new message they received. This association process soon leads to the formation of brand new information (Eysenck, 1993; Eysenck & Keane, 1990; Klimesch, 1994).

**Retrieval**

Retrieval is the last phase of the process. It consists of reactivating the mental image of the message saved. People retrieve important or previously recoded knowledge from the long-term memory to help process new information as it is obtained.

**Encoding, Storage, Retrieval, and YouTube**

Knowledge of this process is helpful for obtaining more hits because it explains how to catch a viewer’s attention and then keep it. The encoding phase is the most important step to better market a video. According to this model in order for the human brain to begin processing information one or more of the senses have to be activated. When selecting a video to view on YouTube the only sensory receptor that can be engaged is the visual sense. This is true for the video selection process because, the viewer has to choose what to watch based on the video’s thumbnail image, title, and description. The visual sense also has the shortest life span in the sensory stores. For YouTube videos, it would be ideal to capture the viewer’s attention with an image that is unexpected. Then, the automatic selection process saves that image in the short-term memory bank, which may lead the viewer to click the video for more information. For a YouTube video this image can be uploaded as a thumbnail that is shown when a clip is searched for. Thus, collecting more hits for the production.
**Emotional Appeal**

Another way to garner more attention for a specific YouTube video is to create it in a way that evokes a positive emotional response from the intended viewing audience. “People experience emotions when their personal interest are at stake” (Pieters, Teixeira, & Wendel, 2012, p.145). Therefore one of the best methods to viewership is appealing to the emotions of the people with personal interest in the video. It would be more effective to have an opening thumbnail that not only catches the eye but also broadcast what the video is about. For example, if the clip pertains to how to change a tire, it would not be beneficial to add an image of a tasty cake as the thumbnail. A better alternative would be a picture of a flashy car, like a Lamborghini with a flat tire. Maybe the image would also say, “Got a Flat?” A Lamborghini with a flat tire is not something that people see every day and they might be more inclined to investigate the video further.

The study conducted to research user’s interest in online advertisements found that attention concentration was enhanced with surprise. Joy increased the retention rate. (Pieters, et al., 2012, p.156). The guidelines molded by these finding can help advertisers catch and retain their target audience’s attention at certain moments of an advertisement (Pieters, et al., 2012, p.156). On YouTube one video does not lead to another like they do on television. For capturing the attention of a YouTube user the critical moment is the very first image that they see when they search for clips.

**Research Rational**

There is a need for more research to be conducted on how to better use YouTube for promotion. There were limited search results for the effectiveness of advertising on YouTube. Advertising is becoming increasingly difficult with the invention of
commercial skipping technology for television. It is also challenging because newspapers are losing popularity among the younger generation. The major area for advertising has moved to the Internet. YouTube is a powerhouse for self-promotion. More research should be conducted using the cybernetic tradition to explain the relationships between video popularity, and thumbnail placement. The major systems of the tradition that would be most beneficial for garnering more hits are the Shannon Weaver model of communication to eliminate the noise of other videos, the TAM to understand what motivates people to share the videos, and the process of encoding, storage, and retrieval for catching the viewer’s attention at first glance. Using all of these systems together should increase the chances of accomplishing a popular YouTube video.

The study that follows aims to address the following research question: 1) How can ideas and models associated with the cybernets be applied to generate hits on a YouTube video?
CHAPTER III: SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Scope of the Study

This was a quantitative study that involves counting. This approach was ideal because it “measures objective facts” and “focuses on variables” (Neuman, 2006, p.13). When using the quantitative method it is advantageous to begin the research design process by defining the conceptual hypothesis, the empirical hypothesis, and the rules of correspondents. These elements are tools that link conceptual ideas to measurement procedures. These procedures formulate direct quantitative data about empirical realities (Neuman, 2006, p.184). The conceptual hypothesis of this research was that thumbnails with particular qualities would increase the number of views of a YouTube video. The empirical hypothesis of the study was that having a thumbnail which appeals to the visual sense will be more successful getting a large number of YouTube hits. This was the case because the first image you see to click on for any video is the thumbnail. Creative, inviting images should diminish the distraction of other videos. This research only has one rule of correspondence. It links the abstract idea of reducing the signal noise of unrelated YouTube videos to clicks for the marketed video. The idea was that an upgraded thumbnail would get more views than a video lacking this element. Well-crafted image creation should make the video more enticing to the target audience.

Methodology of Study

The design of this research is very simple. The most important factor of this study is the number of views that a video receives. YouTube tracks each time a video is opened, so data collection was simple as well. There was one video created. The video was a how to, informational video. The teaching session was posted to the designated
channel of the marketer. However, the video was to be posted twice with a plain text thumbnail and an image thumbnail. The independent variable is the thumbnail that was be posted. The dependent variable is the number of times the video is opened by an individual. The upgraded video should have received significantly more views than the plain text video. The only data that the study was concerned with was the number of times each video is clicked on. Data was analyzed by measuring the number of views of the plain text thumbnail video compared to that with the picture thumbnail.

**Validity and Reliability**

Validity is determined by the truthfulness of the research, and this study is designed to produce valid data (Neuman, 2006, p.188). YouTube only tracks a view if the user clicks on the video. The person who clicked on the video may not watch the entire clip if they choose, but it still counts as a view, per the counting algorithm on YouTube. This study was only concerned with getting more traffic to the video and not how much of the video is watched. The most important part of the cybernetic tradition for garnering more views is the encoding process. Storage and retrieval are not as critical for capturing the attention of the targeted audience. The encoding process starts with entertainment and personalization. The images used should be intriguing as well as relevant to the desired audience. The encoding process is also important for reaching viewers who may not have much interest in the chosen subject but are looking for something new. Building more followers is a major factor for being a success on YouTube. The automatic selection and the controlled selection process of transferring information from the sensory stores to the short-term memory are useful for hitting the desired market and drawing new viewers. The reason these processes are influential is
because one focuses on the goals of the viewer, and the other on the unpredictability of the media. The numbers and data generated by this research turned the abstract idea of signal noise reduction into the reality of obtaining more hits for a marketed production.

This research is also reliable. It follows a clear design and simple design process, and can be repeated as needed to test and verify the results. The number of views may change with each video but it will always be a measurement tool in YouTube. A person will always be able to repeat this study and use YouTube’s view tracking as a way to measure how many times the clip was clicked on. The results will always be a number generated by YouTube.

**Method Limitations**

There are some limitations to this research method. The design process does not include an assessment on what the target audience would define as a captivating thumbnail. To accommodate these shortcomings the research found in the literature review was to be used to find popular images for the subject matter to formulate a new unique picture for the thumbnail of the video. The study was to use images that are informative but also garnish an unexpected emotional response. These images were also determined by looking at the thumbnails of other successful videos in the subject area of the marketed video.
CHAPTER IV: THE STUDY

Introduction

Annie Warner is a triathlete because of her love for running, swimming, and biking. She said training for her races is one of her favorite things to do. However, she teaches young hopefuls better swimming techniques to fund the races she competes in. Annie would love more time to train, but she needs the teaching job for travel money. Most triathletes are like Annie. They love to compete, but have to sacrifice training time to work for money to travel to different race locations. If serious competitors had sponsors they would not be concerned with paying for competition expenses. To gain sponsorship, athletes have to build a fan base for the sponsors to advertise to. Promoting themselves on social media sites, such as YouTube, offers an accelerated path to popularity. Some triathletes self-promote on YouTube by creating training videos for their audience to learn from. The training videos they create can sometimes be dry and boring. The video post for this study was designed to not only to stand out from other athletic training videos, but also to be fun as well. The video has an element of humor and of applicable information. After video creation, the next step is uploading the video to the YouTube site. However, YouTube’s control options do not allow the user free reign on posting settings. This affected the research design greatly.

The video was two fold. The intent of the first half was to show a bit of Annie’s personality. It was a humorous way to connect the audience with the athlete. Yes, Annie is an excellent triathlete, but she is not talented in everything she tries. However, through practice she can get better. The purpose of the entire video was to help viewers identify
Annie as a regular person, and to encourage the viewers to continue to keep trying at things, such as athletic activities, even though these may be difficult.

The first section shows Annie struggling with a task. She overcomes her troubles with a positive attitude and a smile. Annie has never owned a pair of high heel shoes. So, she does not know how to walk in them. When Annie walks in heels she looks like a cat in shoes, uncomfortable and disoriented. It is great entertainment. This piece of the video was an attempt to teach Annie how to properly walk in high heels. The mission was unsuccessful, but she did look more comfortable by the third take.

The second part of the video was centered on Annie teaching proper swimming techniques. This is an area Annie thrives in. It was also the section that would be most helpful for another triathlete or aspiring competitive swimmers. Janay is not a swimmer. She barely likes being in the water. She thinks she can float, however, that does not prove to be true. Through Annie’s demonstrations and insightful tips, by the third take Janay can now swim a quarter of the pool. She is still a novice but with more practice, she has the potential to become a stronger swimmer. This section was amusing but more instructional. The purpose of the video was to teach better swimming techniques. It was also to encourage others to try activities that they perceive to be challenging. It was the key message relayed to the audience.

**Results of the Study**

**Original Design and Conflict**

According to the original research design, the video was to be posted twice on Annie’s YouTube channel with the same title, description, and keyword search. The only difference in the posting method was the change of thumbnail images attached to each
One thumbnail was to be an image of an eye-catching element of the video. The other thumbnail was to be set to a text title on a white background. The goal was to narrow the scope of the study to only focus on one variable that could factor into choosing any one video. The thumbnail was chosen as the variable because for the encoding process to begin in the cybernetic tradition the sensory stores must be engaged (Eysenck, 1993). The most impactful sensory receptor that can be engaged at first glance on YouTube’s results page is the visual thumbnail.

However, complications arose and it was not possible to follow through with the experiment as originally designed. YouTube does not allow the uploader to choose the exact thumbnail that they will to use. Instead, the site chooses three random stills from the video for the uploader to use as the thumbnail. YouTube also does not allow duplicates on one channel. Thus, restricting the ability to limit the variables influencing viewership.

As a solution to YouTube’s inference with the research method, the same video was posted on two different channels. One video was posted to Annie’s already established channel (Video A), while the other was posted to a new channel (Video B). They both have the same keywords. However, the titles, thumbnails, and descriptions are different in each case. The titles were supposed to remain the same, but when the name was searched, only one of the videos appeared as an option to choose from. The titles had to be different for both to be searchable by the title search method. If only one video was searchable by name the other probably would not get many views. Video A was titled *Annie Walks-Janay Swims*. The other video was named *Annie in Red Heels- Janay in Pool*. The thumbnails were different because the original project design included two
images as video identifiers. Video A is represented by an image of Janay in the pool. A tight snapshot of feet in red heels represents Video B. The descriptions were changed for each video, to meet the requirements for posting the same video more than once on YouTube.

For a future study the descriptions should remain the same. The description for Video A says, “This is a fun video for people who want tips on how to walk in high heels and how to swim. The key message is basic swimming techniques.” Video B says, “This is a fun video of a triathlete learning to walk in high heels and a novice swimmer learning to swim.” The differences are represented in figure 4.

![Annie’s Channel Video](image1)

**Annie’s Channel Video**

Title: Annie Walks-Janay Swims
Description: “This is a fun video for people who want tips on how to walk in high heels and how to swim. The key message is basic swimming techniques.”

![New Channel Video](image2)

**New Channel Video**

Title: Annie In Red Heels-Janay In Pool
Description: “This is a fun video of a triathlete learning to walk in high heels and a novice swimmer learning to swim.”

![Video A](image3)

**Video A**

![Video B](image4)

**Video B**

Figure 4. Annie’s Channel VS. New Channel

The change in research method due to YouTube restrictions significantly impacted the results of the study. The number of views on both videos was drastically different. Since both videos had a different title, thumbnail, and description, knowing the exact reason for the gap is almost impossible. There are too many factors to consider that might explain why one video received more hits than the other. There is no way to say
conclusively that the thumbnail image alone influenced any single individual to watch either of the videos.

Both Video A and Video B were posted on Sunday, April 14, 2013. By mid-morning on Monday April 15th, Video A had received five views and Video B had twelve. By Monday night Video A still had five views, while Video B had grown to thirty-two views. On Wednesday April 17th, Video A grew to seven views and Video B continued to increase to thirty-seven videos. On Friday the 19th, Video A finally hit double-digit numbers with ten views. Video B seemed to be plateauing with one additional view, bringing the total to thirty-eight hits. On Monday April 22nd, after being on YouTube one full week, Video A was still at 10 hits and Video B had grown to forty-one. These figures are recorded in table one. Neither video received any likes, dislikes, or comments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monday, April 15</th>
<th>Wednesday, April 17</th>
<th>Friday, April 19</th>
<th>Monday, April 22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video A Views</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video B Views</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Video A&B View Totals*

While it is uncertain why Video B received more attention than video A, YouTube has a video analyzing tool that offers insight on the type of people who watched the video. With this information content uploaders can get a general idea of their viewership, allowing them to adjust their target marketing strategies when needed.

The analytics parameter of YouTube tracks gender, demographics, minutes the video was watched, what device the video was watched on, referral location, likes, dislikes, comments, subscribers, shares, favorites added, and favorites removed. Each of
these sections, when clicked on, is broken down into subsections that share information about each viewer. The similarities and differences of each video are listed in table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video A</th>
<th>Video B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 total views</td>
<td>41 total views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender of viewers: Unknown</td>
<td>Gender of viewers: Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watched globally: America, Czech Republic and Germany</td>
<td>Watched globally: (Spain, France, Poland, Germany, Finland, U.K., Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, and Czech Republic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Minutes watched: 1:30 of 2:58</td>
<td>Average minutes watched: :45-1:00 of 2:58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top playback location: 80% YouTube page 20% mobile device</td>
<td>Top playback location: 77.5% YouTube page 22.5% mobile device</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic source: YouTube referrals: 80% Mobil apps and direct traffic: 20%</td>
<td>Traffic source: YouTube referrals: 72.5% Mobil apps and direct traffic: 25.0% Referrals from outside of YouTube: 2.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Video View Comparison Data

This type of data helps content managers speculate why they are not achieving the viewership they were looking for, or why their viewership has grown exponentially.

**Discussion: Methodological Reflections**

Video B received most of its hits in the first twenty-four hours following it’s posting. The fact that it was on a new channel rather than an already established channel may have caused it to surface more frequently. This could be because of a keyword search entered or from YouTube promoting the new channel video. This is a plausible assumption because there are ways to manipulate the results page of search engines. One method is called search results optimization (SRO) (Malaga, 2008). SRO allows content managers to trick the search engine into placing certain elements at the top of the result list depending on the keywords entered (Malaga, 2008). YouTube is a video search engine, which may have system settings that place higher priority on new channel videos over the videos of established channels.
Channel operators receive news feed updates of new videos every month. The video-sharing site also recommends videos for content managers to watch based on previous selections. YouTube, a computer program, cannot see a thumbnail image. Perhaps, it selected words from the title that matched previously watch videos of the viewer and suggested they watch Video B. Also, most of Video B’s viewers did not watch at least half of the video. Not one of them watched the entire clip. The video was not what they were looking for. Video B did not reach the intended audience. Over half of Video A’s viewers watched the entire post. Is it better to have more views but not reach the intended audience, or have fewer views from the people who the video was produced for? With this question there is the assumption that the people who watched the entire clip for Video A were looking for that type of information. It is also the assumption that Video A viewers were the targeted market, because it was watched on Annie’s already established channel with a small following. It is possible that they were entertained enough to watch the whole video, but did not care about learning to swim or walk in heels.

The keywords used to describe the videos were tailored to the audience that the video was created for. They were descriptive yet informative. The words used to describe the videos were, swimming, swimming technique, swimming (sport), heels, learn to swim, swimmers, and triathlete. The words were descriptive so that YouTube would bring up the preferred video when the specific word was searched for. They were informative so that interested users would open it. Chan (2011) stated the following:

The major concern of advertisers lies in what message is communicated to whom under what conditions, and thus the identification of variables that may either
enhance or attenuate the effect of ad messages is of great importance for advertising research. (p.416)

Videos on YouTube are essentially ad messages that producers want people pay attention to. When surveying college students Chan found that online users are more likely to respond to ads on the top or bottom of the webpage if the ads had a positively framed message. Chan (2011) also found that web users were more likely to click on an ad when the ad creator used the keyword insertion strategy. The key word insertion strategy is when advertisers link “key phrases” to their merchandise or service (Chan, 2011, p.404). The keywords were the same for both videos. They were also tailored for the video posted. The keywords chosen could not have been a factor for the gap in video views.

In the confusion of navigating YouTube’s video posting restrictions more variables were changed than originally planned, causing inconclusive results. If the original research design had been followed all inquiries that framed this study would have been answered. Instead, more questions arose. The benefit of the information discovered is that it revealed more data collection options. YouTube has several analytic parameters to learn more about the audience that view videos, such as demographics identification, gender tracking, location mapping, and more. With this knowledge researchers can design projects fashioned specifically to use these tools. Even with skewed findings, the study presented interesting areas for further research.
CHAPTER V: SUMMARIES AND CONCLUSIONS

Limitations of the Study

Time was the most critical limitation of this study, and time limitations prevented the researcher from testing the YouTube video uploading and dissemination process. The YouTube posting process should have been reviewed before the videos were created. There might have been a way to manipulate the videos in the editing stage that would have allowed for the desired images to be included with the YouTube thumbnail options. Had that happened first, a different variable outside of the thumbnail might have been chosen for isolation. There would have been no confusion with changing all other elements of the video search items. The videos should have been analyzed over a longer period of time to see if the videos would have eventually received a similar amount of hits. Data collection for the two videos only lasted one week. It would be beneficial to record information for the videos for one month to see how time changes view totals. It is possible that over time the views for the videos will reach parity. The research could have been replicated with more video productions to see if all videos posted to the newly established channel received more hits than the ones posted to Annie’s site. This would have shed more light on YouTube’s inner workings. If time were not a restriction this study would have produced more conclusive results.

Opportunity for Further Study

For a future study, the researcher should find a work around to YouTube’s barriers or isolate a different variable. Another possible variable to isolate is the title. One factor that could have increased the number of views for Video B is the suggestive tone of the title and thumbnail, *Annie in Red Heels-Janay in Pool*, with an image of someone
in red high heels. It is plausible that a viewer can get the impression that the video was meant for a mature audience. When “red heels” is entered into a YouTube search the results page shows videos with suggestive adult images. Most of the thumbnails show crossed women’s legs with red heels and titles like, “Shoeplay with red heels.” This was not the intent at all, nor did that thought factor into the title and thumbnail selection decision. A more generic title that cannot be confused for anything other than the topic area should be used in the future.

Another element to analyze is the use of other social media sites to boost YouTube hits. If a self-promoter has a Facebook page, blog, Twitter account, or etc. they can link to the YouTube video to see how social media sites can be used jointly to build a fan base. This is a second set of variable that should only be examined after the app specific variables are isolated and documented. This element adds another layer of complexity that is advantageous to consider after the original design is conducted. While the expected results were not achieved, this research opened a door for more studies to be conducted on YouTube’s operation process.

Summary

According to the cybernetic tradition, in order to learn from past failures there has to be some form of recording, storing, and retrieving information. Too much noise interferes with signal transmission causing an error with sending the message (Wiener, 1961). “Within closed systems, too much information could overwhelm the system’s stability. In short, faced with an excess of information/stimuli the system may lose its capacity to manage and respond” (Halpren, 2012, p.225). The extra variables of title, description, and thumbnail change; possibly caused noise within the video posting
system. This derailed the goal of eliminating the noise of other videos in the entire YouTube system. The purpose of the original design was to limit the observation point to one variable, the thumbnail. Isolating that variable was expected to give concrete data on one reason for choosing one video over another. The results from the original design were to give insight on how to better promote a video on YouTube. Yet, there were too many variables, and YouTube provides a plethora of data points to analyze for a definitive conclusion on user video selection. The system was overloaded.

Social media is constantly evolving and so is the way society absorbs information. Advertisers are aware of the change. They are adapting their marketing techniques to include diverse technological competencies. More companies are turning to the Internet to boost sell profits. There is a need for more research to be conducted on effective marketing on social media sites. Cybernetics is a theory process that can systematically evaluate better promotion strategies. While this study did not render definitive results, it is advantageous to use the cybernetic tradition to explore social media marketing solutions.
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