Combining Social Media and Traditional Media in a Modern Communications Plan

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Abstract

This study explored (a) how organizations can determine the best ways to reach consumers as social media and traditional media evolve, therefore changing the way people conduct their lives; and (b) how organizations can combine traditional media and social media to enhance conversations with consumers, given that changes in media have forced organizations to develop relationships and have conversations with consumers. The literature review investigated how traditional media and social media have evolved in recent years, how they currently are being used, and how their combined use differs from previous marketing tactics. This information was filtered through the theoretical belief that people evolve with the media, and through the philosophical assumption that humans need to form relationships and bonds. In surveys of 34 undergraduate public relations students and 32 communication professionals, as well as six individual interviews, it was found that social media and traditional media largely should be used in tandem to reach modern audiences. This builds on previous research that demonstrates the rise of social media in communication and marketing, while traditional media maintains a stronghold on the public. Further research could include a larger sample of the population and determine how social media and traditional media should be combined as audience preferences continuously shift.
Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 The Problem or Goal of the Study

In the recent past, communication practitioners had fewer tools to spread an organization’s message. Typically, a communication professional would write a press release about an announcement, new product, or service and would send it to traditional media outlets such as television, radio, newspapers, and magazines in hopes of gaining coverage. They would offer interviews with key people in the organization, who would tell the organization’s story with hope that people were watching or reading the news. This method of spreading a message was the main tool to reach mass audiences – and it worked for many years.

In 2012, there are many more ways to spread a message and reach consumers. Traditional media outlets still exist but social media such as blogs, Facebook, and Twitter have entered the picture. The Internet has given people the ability to get news instantly from an endless variety of sources. Consumers can gain immediate insight from numerous family, friends, colleagues, and organizations via social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Linked In. They can frequent blogging sites where everyday people post their thoughts about new products, organizations, and events. People no longer turn to just their local newspaper, magazines, radio, and TV to get their news and information.

1.1.2 Why This Study is Important

This study is important because market research provides only the demographics of those using each of these communication methods, so marketers still need to learn how to effectively use these media jointly to reach their intended audiences. While there is a lot of recent research showing how to use social media for marketing, it ignores that there is still a large audience for traditional media outlets. Communication professionals also need to learn where to find their
audiences, as their communication methods have evolved with the media. In addition, the evolution of social media has forced organizations to form bonds with consumers and engage with them, as opposed to just providing the message through one-way media. Consumers are now helping shape and disseminate the message. As Mangold & Faulds (2009) noted, people used to have the ability to tell 10 people about their experiences, but social media gives them the vehicle to share their thoughts with 10 million people instantaneously. This points directly to Marshall McLuhan’s (1964) theory that media changes the way people live their lives. Social media has certainly changed the way people interact with one another, so communication professionals must determine how to communicate with and form bonds with their constituents if they want to continue to have some control over their own messages.

1.2.1 Definition of Terms

**Blog:** Web sites where people can post their thoughts about various topics and discuss them with others. This is typically an ongoing exchange in which the blogger contributes regularly to the web site.

**Guerilla Marketing:** Grass roots marketing tactics that are relatively inexpensive and typically target a local audience, such as sidewalk chalking, hanging up posters, street performances, and disseminating flyers to passers-by.

**I-It/I-You:** A philosophical belief by Martin Buber (1970) that humans must form relationships and bonds with one another to truly participate in life.

**Podcast:** An online audio or video file that can be downloaded onto devices such as computers, cell phones, and iPods.
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**Social Media:** Internet-based forms of communication such as web sites and blogs.

**Social Networks:** Web sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google+, FourSquare, and Twitter that enable consumers to keep in constant contact with one another. These sites enable consumers to spread their opinions around the world.

**Spam:** Spreading unwanted, unsolicited messages through electronic means, such as email or blogs.

**Traditional Media:** Communication outlets such as newspapers, TV, radio, and magazines.

**Wikis:** Web sites where consumers can provide or delete content about various subjects. Examples include corporate intranet sites and online encyclopedias.

**1.3 Organization of the Chapters**

The remaining chapters in this thesis will provide background information on the rise of social media, how traditional media and social media have been used in the past, how they currently are being used, and how they should be used to reach consumers.

The literature review encompasses chapter two, which explores (a) the history of social media, (b) the use of multiple media by communications practitioners and consumers in the past, (c) how the combined use of social media and traditional media to market organizations differs from tactics used in the past, (d) how traditional media is currently being used, and (e) how social media is currently being used. This chapter provides the rationale for this study and the subsequent research questions it will answer.

Chapter three describes the scope and methodology of the study, including how the study was shaped and conducted. Chapter four examines the results of the study and analyzes them
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within the chosen theoretical and philosophical frameworks. Finally, chapter five includes a
summary and conclusion of the study, explores limitations of the study, and provides
recommendations for further study. A list of references and appendices will conclude the thesis.
Chapter 2. Literature Review

This chapter will initially provide the theoretical and philosophical foundations of combining social media and traditional media in a modern communications plan. From a philosophical standpoint, humans need to form relationships and bonds. Theoretically, as media evolves, so do the people who use it. For example, McLuhan (1964) points out that, with the invention of TV and movies, people began to buy the products that movie starts use. This theoretical and philosophical overview will be followed by a review of existing literature on how social media and traditional media are being used. This chapter will explore (a) the history of social media, (b) the use of multiple media by communications practitioners and consumers in the past, (c) how the combined use of social media and traditional media to market organizations differs from tactics used in the past, (d) how traditional media is currently being used, and (e) how social media is currently being used. Finally, this chapter will provide the rationale for this study and the questions it will answer.

2.1 Philosophical and Theoretical Basis

2.1.1 Philosophical Basis

Philosopher Martin Buber believed in a world of I-It and I-You. I-It is when an individual is consumed by his own needs, desires, and feelings and does not consider others. People who live according to the I-It model look at It as the world and things around them. Those things are to be experienced. But this, Buber (1970) contends, does not allow a person to live with their whole being. “Those who experience do not participate in the world. For experience is “in them” and not between them and the world” (Buber, 1970, p. 56).
Participation, on the other hand, arises out of Buber’s (1970) I-You philosophy, which puts forth the idea that humans must form relationships and bonds to truly participate in life. Buber (1970) believed that there are three spheres of relation: “Life with nature,” “life with man,” and “life with the spiritual world” (pp. 56-57). When we become involved in one of these spheres, the It changes to a You.

When I confront a human being as my You and speak the basic word I-You to him, then he is no thing among things nor does he consist of things. He is no longer He or She, limited by other Hes and Shes, a dot in the world grid of space and time, nor a condition that can be experienced and described, a loose bundle of named qualities. (Buber, 1970, p. 59)

Buber (1970) believed that all of life is an encounter with others and one can never live a whole life without such relationships.

Buber’s (1970) I-It, I-You philosophy can be used to describe the way organizations have used media to interact with the public. In the past, organizations have largely pushed information to the public through a one-way communication vehicle, such as a television commercial or newspaper advertisement. Mulhern (2009) referred to this as a “centrally-controlled, top-down” form of mass communication. The audience was the “It,” a thing with which the organization formed no real relationship. However, the advent of social media has forced the tables to turn and organizations now must form I-You relationships with their audiences. Audiences now have multiple ways to communicate with one another and with the organization, so each side is not only experiencing but participating in the information exchange (Mulhern, 2009). This study
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will explore how such I-You relationships are pertinent to successful communications in today’s social media-laden world.

2.1.2 Theoretical Basis

Marshall McLuhan is renowned for his theory that modern technology changes the way we conduct our lives. For example, McLuhan (1964) contended that the modern railway increased the speed of existing commerce. Similarly, he believed that media’s evolution had and would continue to change the way people live.

“Communication media of the future will accentuate the extensions of our nervous systems, which can be disembodied and made totally collective. New population patterns will fuel the shift from smokestack industries to a marketing-information economy. Video-related technologies are the critical instruments of such change” (McLuhan & Powers, 1989, p. 83). McLuhan & Powers added that new media will allow users to “simultaneously become producers and consumers” (1989, p. 83). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube have transformed this prediction into a reality. Consumers now have more ways to share their views than ever before and with many more people at a faster pace. As a result, Mulhern (2009) contends that public relations practitioners now must let go of much of the control they had on communication and actively engage consumers and employees. Mulhern (2009) advocates welcoming all to the conversation. McLuhan & Powers (1989) sum up this lifestyle change by saying; “The electronic society … does not have solid goals, objectives, or private identity. In it, man does not so much transform the land as he metamorphosizes himself into abstract information for the convenience of others” (p. 98).
Applying McLuhan’s theory helps explain why and how social media has changed the lives of consumers, communication practitioners, and organizations, as well as how communication will continue to follow media’s evolution. His theory also builds a case for why organizations and, in particular, communication practitioners, must learn how to use social media and traditional media cohesively to effectively communicate with their audiences.

2.1.3 Summarizing McLuhan’s Theory

McLuhan has provided three main points that will help shape this study.

- Media will change the way we live and communicate.
- New media will allow those who use it to become both producers and consumers.
- Public relations practitioners will need to let go of much of the control they have had over communication with consumers if they are to succeed in connecting with the public in the future.

These points will help guide the literature review in discovering how social media’s rise has changed the way consumers and public relations practitioners interact. Recent literature shows that, as McLuhan predicted, the rise of social media has indeed changed the way people receive and share information. For example, businesses, consumers, and journalists now use both social media and traditional media as information sources. As a result, social media has changed the way people make decisions.
Though social media did not exist in McLuhan’s time, he predicted correctly that new media would enable people to become both producers and consumers of information. Recent studies show that social media can be shared much more easily than traditional media, forcing public relations practitioners to redesign their formula for disseminating information. Thus, they must also give up the control of one-way communication that they have enjoyed for decades if they are to succeed in interactive communication that is now demanded by the public.

Overall, McLuhan’s theory will help guide the literature review, which will demonstrate how traditional and social media have been used in the past and how they currently are being used. Ultimately, the literature review will prove why further study is needed to determine how social media will change communication patterns in the near future.

2.2.1 History of Social Media

Though social media began with blogs and has been in existence for more than a decade, it now also includes social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, Internet forums, wikis, podcasts, and video (Wright & Drifka Hinson, 2009, pp. 13-14). Social media really began to take hold with the launch of the social networking sites MySpace in 2003 and Facebook in 2004 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60). Those sites were created for college students, but some believe social networking sites became part of the mainstream population during the 2008 presidential campaign, when Barack Obama and his supporters used social media and community organizing skills to “shape the winning campaign” according to Caesar, Bush, & Pitney, 2009; Jarvis, 2009; Todd & Gawiser, 2009; Hutchinson, 2009; and Libert &
Faulk, 2009 (as cited by Wright & Drifka Hinson, 2009, p. 6). Ryan Anderson, a social media expert with consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton, provided the following list of social media activities that were driven by Obama’s campaign strategy (Wright & Drifka Hinson, 2009, p. 7).

- Obama gained five million friends on 15 social networking sites.
- 70,000 supporters raised $30 million for the Obama campaign on their own personal fundraising sites.
- 35,000 volunteer groups used social media to plan 200,000 offline campaign events.
- 400,000 blog posts were written about the campaign.
- The Obama campaign created an email list of 13 million people.

At that time, social media was a relatively new venture for many Americans but blogs were popular. In 2008, blog search engine Technorati noted that there were 23 million bloggers and 94 million blog readers in the United States (Wright & Drifka Hinson, 2009, p. 8). However, other types of social media have gained popularity in the last three years.

According to Rainie (2010), 61% of Americans get at least some of their news online each day. More than 83% of American adults between the ages of 18 and 33 are members of online social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, according to a 2010 report by the Pew Research Center (as cited by Constantinides & Stagno, 2011, p. 10). Adults over the age of 30 are the fastest-growing segment of Facebook users (Wright & Drifka Hinson, 2009, pp. 13-14).
In another 2010 report by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press on how Americans consume news, it was found that 34% of the American population used a computer to get news online the previous day. When combined with the use of cell phones, email, social networks, and podcasts, that figure jumped to 44% (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2010). By comparison, those who get their news from traditional media such as newspapers, TV, and radio held steady or trended down slightly (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2010). In fact, 75% of respondents said they had consumed news from one of these traditional media the previous day (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2010).

At a time when it seems that most Americans have some sort of online interaction, marketers have to wonder how these audiences are using social media.

2.2.2 Historical Use of Multiple Media

Organizations have always used multiple media to share their message with consumers. In the past, they used guerilla marketing, newspapers, television, radio, and magazines to reach a broad audience. Pilotta (2004) contends that this recipe for communication was easy to follow. “These media forms were commonly limited to local and national markets. Thus, identifying which media vehicles to use, their price and the scheduling details was a relatively simple task” (Pilotta, 2004, p. 287). Though these traditional media outlets came available at different points in time, they all used the same business model – “the selling of broadcast time slots based on demographically defined target audiences” (Mulhern, 2009, p. 86).

While organizations can and should continue using multiple media to spread their message, the rules have changed with the inclusion of social media. “Implications of the current
revolution for media and marketing communications are systemic, profound and unlike anything the field has experienced” (Mulhern, 2009, p. 87). For example, Mulhern (2009) notes, print media must be in the person’s hand to be consumed and a person must be in front of a TV screen to watch its content. Therefore, organizations were able to use these traditional media platforms to control the dissemination of their message. This is not possible with social media. “In a digital world, media content is free of the physical constraints of print and broadcast and can be copied and shared repeatedly, at little or no cost and with no loss of quality” (Mulhern, 2009, p. 87). “Once users are in control, they will create whatever consumption experience they desire. The media content, ads and all, will be customized – not by the media company or marketer, but by the user” (Mulhern, 2009, p. 88). As a result, marketers are forced to change their tactics and their messages to respond to the consumer’s wants and needs, according to a 2005 study by Gal-Or and Gal-Or (as cited by Mulhern, 2009).

With so many new media outlets available, marketers will need help in determining which media outlets to use and for what purpose. In addition, public relations practitioners will need to understand the unique challenges brought forth by social media. For example, public relations practitioners will need to become familiar with search engines such as Google that have created “automated ad serving systems” that track online audience demographics (Mulhern, 2009, p. 91). Many mobile phones also now are equipped with tracking devices that can pinpoint where the user is at any time. While this enables organizations to directly market to this person, such as with the use of social media platform FourSquare, it also challenges marketers to become familiar with geographic tracking devices and how they affect a communications plan (Mulhern, 2009, p. 90). “Market intelligence – data from digital media – provides numerous opportunities to understand consumers, competitors and marketplace interactions better than ever” (Mulhern,
However, the challenge remains in creating ways to place and monitor “brand messages across multiple media platforms” (Mulhern, 2009, pp. 94-95).

Though challenging, communication professionals must determine how consumers are using social and traditional media together if they are to use both kinds of media to spread their message. According to a 2010 study by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, people continue to spend an average of 57 minutes a day with traditional media, same as they did a decade earlier, but they also spend another 13 minutes a day getting news online. Overall, people are spending more time with media now than they did in 2000 (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2010). “The groups that are driving the increase in time spent with the news – particularly highly educated people – are most likely to use digital and traditional platforms” (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2010, p. 3). This is in direct contrast to previous studies that compared time spent with various traditional media. For example, radio and movies took time spent away from traveling shows, and the invention of television caused people to spend less time with radio, according to Gulick (1909); Edwards (1915); (1909); Hurley (1937); Hudson (1951); Bogart (1957); Cunningham & Walsh (1958) (as cited by Dimmick, Chen, & Li, 2004). Likewise, when the digital video recorder (DVR) was invented, it was predicted that all television programming would go to on-demand, rendering the 30-second TV commercial null and void (Enoch & Johnson, 2010). But DVR use leveled off to about a third of the American population and accounted for only about 6% of TV viewing by the fourth quarter of 2009 (Enoch & Johnson, 2010). “Heavy users of one medium tend to be heavy (or at least above-average) users of all media” (Enoch & Johnson, 2010, n.p.).

While people are spending more time using all types of media, each day still consists of only 24 hours, so they are using these various media concurrently. In other words, the
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consumer’s attention is more often split with the advent of social media. In a 2005 study, Foehr found that 26% of Americans were consuming multiple media at the same time, up from 16% in 1999. This trend included various age groups. For example, a 2007 study by Baron found that 98% of American college students were doing something else while instant messaging, such as surfing the Internet, using computer-based media players, or word processing (as cited by Meng & McDonald, 2009). In 2006, Holmes, Papper, Popovich, & Bloxham observed 394 study participants and found that 96% used multiple media platforms at the same time. “Passive” media such as TV, radio, and music were often on in the background while participants engaged in some other type of media, such as emailing (Holmes, Papper, Popovich, & Bloxham, 2006, p. 20).

2.2.3 How Traditional Media is Currently Being Used

With the sudden rise of social media in the last decade, some might assume that traditional media is dying. Consumers have many more media outlets vying for their attention, including online news sites, social networking web sites, local and cable TV channels, traditional newspapers, magazines, radio, and blogs. In recent years, many traditional newspapers have closed due to lost readership. But, research shows that some surviving traditional news outlets are maintaining or even growing their audiences.

According to a 2010 presentation by Lee Rainie, director of the Pew Internet Project at the Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C., many Americans are still getting at least some of their news from traditional media outlets. In fact, 78% of adults over the age of 18 still watch local TV daily and 73% watch national or cable TV each day (Rainie, 2010). Fifty-four percent
of Americans listen to the radio (Rainie, 2010). Ninety-two percent of Americans use between two and six different platforms each day to get their news (Rainie, 2010).

Magazines are also sustaining readership. The State of the Media Democracy, a 2011 survey of Americans performed by consulting firm Deloitte, notes that though 85% of US households own a computer – where they can get most printed material – 55% still subscribe to printed magazines. “Since 2007, 80% of US consumers who read a magazine in the past six months state that reading the printed copy is their favorite method” (Deloitte, 2011, p. 2). In addition, 55% of people surveyed said they turn to advertisements in magazines to learn about new products (Deloitte, 2011).

Some traditional outlets are even growing their audiences. In the recently completed 2010-2011 television news season, the three evening newscasts on ABC, CBS, and NBC grew their audiences for the first time in nine years (Ariens, 2011). NBC Nightly News came out on top with 8.79 million viewers, up 2.7% over the 2009-2010 television news season (Ariens, 2011). ABC World News had 7.81 million viewers, 3.3% more than in the 2009-2010 television news season (Ariens, 2011). Finally, the CBS Evening News had 5.87 million viewers, up 2.7% over the 2009-2010 television news season (Ariens, 2011). Overall, 78% of American adults still watch local, television news shows (Rainie, 2010).

However, the story is different for traditional newspapers. According to a 2011 report by the Newspaper Association of America, more than 102 million American adults currently read a daily newspaper. According to Rainie (2010), about half of American adults read their local daily newspaper. In comparison, about 140 million American adults read a daily newspaper in 2001
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(Newspaper Association of America, 2011). That amounts to a 25% decline in daily newspaper readership by American adults over the last decade.

Given the decline in newspaper readership, the increased interest in the national, evening news programs, and the sustained interest in local TV and magazines, marketers might be confused as to where Americans are obtaining their information and news. As research has shown, social media has become a more formidable information source with each passing year.

2.2.4 How Social Media is Currently Being Used

It is important to understand how social media is currently being used by different groups of people so that organizations can craft a successful plan for its use. Much research has been completed in this field in recent years, but that research has yet to be tied to the future use of traditional media – and how the two can be used in tandem to reach the desired audience.

By Consumers. It appears that 2008 was a pivotal moment for social media, as a significant number of consumers began participating on various sites. That was the year that social media overtook pornography as the top use of the Internet, according to Bill Tancer, general manager of global research at Hitwise, an online competitive insight service (as cited by Wright & Drifka Hinson, 2009, p. 2). It was also the year that more Americans began obtaining news online than through traditional media sources such as TV and newspapers, according to the Pew Research Center (as cited by Wright & Drifka Hinson, 2009, p. 3).

Forrester Research noted that 75% of Internet surfers joined social networks, read blogs, or provided opinions on shopping sites in the second quarter of 2008 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 59). In 2007, only 56% of Internet surfers used social media in this way (Kaplan & Haenlein,
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2010, p. 59). “The growth is not limited to teenagers, either; members of Generation X, now 35-44 years old, increasingly populate the ranks of joiners, spectators, and critics” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 59).

A large amount of product and company information is being disseminated and debated online and consumers increasingly view social media as a credible source of information, according to Foux (as cited by Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 360). “Consumers are turning more frequently to various types of social media to conduct their information searches and to make their purchasing decisions,” according to Lempert, 2006; and Vollmer & Precourt, 2008 (as cited by Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 360).

Blogs are typically used by the public to lodge complaints against a company, organization, or product that they are unhappy with, according to Ward & Ostrom, 2006 (as cited by Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 63). As an extension of word-of-mouth communication, blogs are one way consumers use social media to talk to one another and offer advice (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 358). In the 2007 book The New Influencers, Gillin notes that “conventional marketing wisdom has long held that a dissatisfied customer tells ten people. But that is out of date. In the new age of social media, he or she has the tools to tell 10 million” consumers virtually overnight (as cited by Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 359).

Facebook is not only used to help friends, family, and colleagues stay in touch, but as a way to connect to businesses and favorite brands. People tend to “like” a company or product on Facebook if they are already using that product or favor that company, according to research by DDB Worldwide and Opinionway Research (as cited by Neff, 2011). They found that 84% of a brand’s Facebook fans are existing customers (Neff, 2011). However, in the DDB and Opinionway study, it was discovered that fewer Americans follow brands than natives of other
countries such as Turkey (Kerwin, 2011). “Fans in the U.S., U.K., and France are following fewer brands; are less likely to press like, post on a brand’s wall or recommend it to friends; less inclined to participate in brand pages’ games, events and competitions” (Kerwin, 2011).

In 2008, Twitter became a major player in the social media industry. It is cited as the first source to provide information on the terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India that year and to provide video of the US Airways flight that landed in the Hudson River in January 2009 (Wright & Drifka Hinson, 2009, p. 6). People now are using Twitter’s microblogging website to share knowledge with like-minded people in 140 characters or less per tweet, according to Stephen Hart, a corporate trainer (as cited by Conner, 2009). “Those you follow and who follow you create personalized, overlapping networks organized around shared interests” (Conner, 2009).

Linked In is primarily used by professionals to share career information, conduct job and talent searches, and connect with others in their fields of interest, study, or work, according to Diane Gomez, public relations manager at the Public Relations Society of America in New York (personal conversation, 2011, September 23).

**By Businesses and Organizations.** Businesses are using social media in a variety of ways, with only partial success. For example, many businesses are using social media such as blogs, Twitter, and Facebook to keep consumers and employees informed of what is happening within the organization. An overview of these types of social media show that organizations are using these platforms to share news, media coverage, advice, and to engage their followers in conversations about the firm and its products. For example, they post press releases, informational videos, photos of company-related events, information on upcoming events, and send coupons. Some even use social media to launch contests. In 2007, Dove soap launched its “Campaign for Real Beauty,” in which consumers were asked to create advertisements (Mangold
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However, some businesses are still not sure how to use social media to their advantage. Gomez (2011) said she still sees a lot of press releases and marketing information on Facebook and Twitter, which does not make her want to learn more about the organization (personal conversation, September 23).

Many companies are still slow to adopt social media. A study released in 2009 showed that only 16% of the companies listed in the 2008 Fortune 500 had a corporate blog that had been active in the last 12 months (Barnes & Mattson). Of those blogs, only 28% linked to a corporate Twitter account (Barnes & Mattson, 2009).

By Journalists. Journalists are increasingly using and being influenced by social media. Lariscy, Avery, Sweetser, and Howes (2009) surveyed 200 journalists to determine how they used social media. Of those surveyed, 32% rated social media as important or very important to their work but, overall, the group did not feel it improved their work (Lariscy, Avery, Sweetser, & Howes, 2009, p. 315). Of those surveyed, 18.5% said they consulted social media when embarking on a story (Lariscy, Avery, Sweetser, & Howes, 2009, p. 315).

Websites were the most commonly used online source, with 79% of surveyed journalists consulting them, and blogs came in at a distant second with 8.4% consulting them as a source (Lariscy, Avery, Sweetser, & Howes, 2009, p. 315). Of the journalists surveyed, 59% said they
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turned to blogs as a primary resource to gain information and 24% said social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace are some of the first places they look for information (Lariscy, Avery, Sweetser, & Howes, 2009, p. 315). Corporate social media sites were visited by nearly 25% of journalists when they were pitched a story by an organization, but 35% said they rarely or never visited corporate web sites (Lariscy, Avery, Sweetser, & Howes, 2009, p. 315).

Non-interactive web sites such as web pages and directories are still the preferred online sources for journalists, but they are not yet fully adopting social media (Lariscy, Avery, Sweetser, & Howes, 2009, p. 316).

Since the 2009 study by Lariscy, Avery, Sweetser, & Howes, more journalists have jumped on the social media bandwagon. In a study by the Arketi Group, 69% of journalists are using social networking for their work (as cited by PR Newswire, 2011, p. 8).

**By Public Relations Professionals.** Though many studies and trends have shown that interest in traditional media such as TV, radio, newspapers, and magazines is waning, public relations professionals continue to use them as a tool to promote their organizations (Wright & Drifka Hinson, 2009, p. 20). Wright & Drifka Hinson (2009) surveyed 574 public relations practitioners and found that 73% believed social media has changed the way they communicate with the external public (p. 23). Many of these practitioners, 85%, believe social media complements traditional media (Wright & Drifka Hinson, 2009, p. 23). But while 84% of public relations professionals surveyed view social media as a low-cost way to build relationships with the public, only six percent believed social media was more accurate than traditional media and just nine percent believed social media is a more credible source of information (Wright & Drifka Hinson, 2009, p. 23).
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In 2008, Eyrich, Padman, and Sweetser surveyed 283 public relations practitioners on their use of 18 different social media platforms to determine which forms they use most. The most popular use, by 96% of respondents, was email (Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008, p. 413). Coming in second place, with 68% usage, was intranet sites; and blogs achieved third place with nearly 42% of respondents using them (Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008, p. 413). Eyrich, Padman, and Sweetser (2008) noted that the public relations professionals surveyed at that time were “slower to integrate more technologically complicated tools that cater to a niche audience (e.g., text messaging, social networks, virtual worlds)” (p. 414).

2.2.5 Theory

Traditional media allowed consumers and public relations practitioners to live apart for many years. In essence, both consumers and public relations practitioners lived I-It lives in which they experienced one another but never interacted (Buber, 1970). They were communicating but were not forming relationships with one another. Each party saw the other as something to be experienced. Traditional media allowed this to happen because communication professionals controlled the one-way conversation of newspaper, radio, and TV ads (Mulhern, 2009). Consumers were not given the chance to voice their opinions and to interact with the organization. “Today’s press agent regards the newspaper as a ventriloquist does his dummy. He can make it say what he wants” (McLuhan, 1964, p. 213).

McLuhan (1964) believed that media transforms the way people live. ”Media as extensions of our senses institute new ratios, not only among our private senses, but among themselves, when they interact among themselves” (McLuhan, 1964, p. 20). In other words, he believed that media and consumers changed one another. Indeed, as social media has given consumers a louder voice to sound off about and with organizations, it has changed the way
consumers and organizations act and interact with one another. In 1989, McLuhan and Powers wrote; “More and more people will enter the market of information exchange, lose their private identities in the process, but emerge with the ability to interact with any person on the face of the globe” (p. 118). Recent studies have shown that this theory holds true today as social media has given consumers and organizations the ability to step outside their communities and communicate with many more people and in different ways. For example, businesses now can use social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to connect with many more consumers than they were able to through the use of traditional advertising (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Organizations are no longer talking at the consumer, but are now talking with them (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). As consumers have been given the tools to voice their opinions and interact with organizations, organizations have been forced to reevaluate their communication plans to form relationships with consumers. Therefore, they have adopted Buber’s (1970) theory of I-You, in which all parties involved are now participating in the conversation and are forming relationships with one another, rather than just observing. However, the transformation from I-It to I-You relationships has not yet been completed because both consumers and organizations have only begun to form bonds with one another. As social media evolves, so will this concept of bonding between consumers and organizations.

These theories demonstrate how social media and traditional media have evolved, and how they have forced those participating to change as well. However, public relations professionals now must determine and overcome the challenges presented by the use of social media and traditional media to reach and bond with their desired audiences.

2.3.1 Rationale for This Study
Following a review of the current literature, it can be concluded that much work has been
done to study the use of social media and the use of traditional media. This literature review
demonstrated (a) the history of social media, (b) the use of multiple media by communications
practitioners and consumers in the past, (c) how the combined use of social media and traditional
media to market organizations differs from tactics used in the past, (d) how traditional media is
currently being used, and (e) how social media is currently being used.

We now know that people of all ages, particularly Americans, are increasingly
incorporating social media into their daily lives. They are using social media to get information
in areas such as news, information about new products, and entertainment. However, traditional
media is not losing steam. As noted in the literature review, people are spending about the same
amount of time each day with traditional media as they did 10 years ago (Pew Research Center
for the People and the Press, 2010). The difference is that now they are also using social media at
the same time, such as having TV on in the background while surfing the Internet or checking
email. Their time and attention are divided.

In addition, existing literature shows that social media has provided multiple outlets for
people to become engaged in the conversation – regardless of the topic. Organizations no longer
can control the dissemination of information, as they did with traditional media outlets, because
the public can disseminate and repost information about any organization online (Mulhern,
2009). The message can reach many more people than the intended audience and it can also be
accompanied by public opinion.

Though social media did not exist in McLuhan’s time, his theory that media changes the
way people conduct their lives still rings true with the rise of social media. However, as the
literature shows, organizations and communication professionals have been much slower to join the conversation and to determine how to best use traditional and social media to their advantage.

Part of the problem could be that they are unsure how to combine social media and traditional media to effectively reach their audiences. This is difficult to determine simply because social media is changing so fast. By the time studies are completed, they are already outdated. For example, much of the existing literature focuses on the use of Facebook, Twitter, and blogs. Social media outlets such as Pinterest and Google+ are so new that they have not yet had enough time to develop and be studied. As shown, there are multiple challenges presented by the invention and popularity of social media that previously were not found in traditional media. As a result, there are many questions that need to be answered to help public relations practitioners overcome these challenges and effectively use social media and traditional media to reach their audiences.

2.3.2 Questions to be Answered by This Study

In this study, the following questions will be answered.

- As social media and traditional media evolve, therefore changing the way people conduct their lives, how can organizations determine the best ways to reach consumers?
- Changes in media have forced organizations to develop relationships and have conversations with consumers. How can organizations combine traditional media and social media to enhance these conversations to benefit the organization?
3.1.1 Scope

This study explored how organizations can determine the best ways to reach consumers through both social media and traditional media. Once it is determined how to reach these consumers through social media and traditional media, it is important to learn how those different forms of media can be used to enhance the conversation and relationship between consumers and organizations to benefit the organization. Therefore, this study posed questions to obtain guidance in that area.

While many studies have focused on the use and rise of social media, there is not much empirical evidence available on why and how organizations should combine social media with traditional media to engage their audiences. Studies have not yet broached the question of how organizations can continue to transform from an I-IT relationship to an I-You relationship with their audiences (Buber, 1970).

Though many people in various roles had the potential to be surveyed for this study, those included were communication professionals and undergraduate students planning to enter the field of public relations. These participant groups were chosen to narrow down the study’s results and provide answers from those closest to the subject. Undergraduate students were polled to get a sense of how they see social media and traditional media being used in tandem in the near future. Communication professionals were polled because their experience with and understanding of social media and traditional media is likely extensive. These two groups were separated by taking a slightly different survey. Current communication professionals were asked questions about use of social media and traditional media in the present tense, while
undergraduate students were asked the same questions in the future tense. For example, undergraduates were asked how they would use various media if they were public relations professionals. The 34 undergraduate students surveyed were enrolled in a public relations course at Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio. The original goal was to try to reach many more undergraduate students across the country by posting the survey on the Public Relations Student Society of America group on LinkedIn but the group’s administrator declined, citing previous issues with spam surveys. At that late date, it was most feasible to survey a group of local students to which access was granted. It was important to distinguish between these two groups because they were at different stages of their lives and careers; therefore, their experiences with social media and traditional media vary widely. Separating data into two separate groups also allows for differences in opinion to be highlighted and extracted.

3.1.2 Methodology

Qualitative sampling was used to reach public relations practitioners and undergraduate students planning to enter the field of public relations. “Qualitative studies focus on the social practices and meanings of people in a specific historical or cultural context” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 122). Because the population included in this study represents a specialized field that might not mirror the population at large and because the goal was to find specific cases into which I could delve deeper, the sample used is purposive. As Schwandt (1997) explains; “Sites or cases are chosen because there may be good reason to believe that ‘what goes on there’ is critical to understanding some process or concept” (as cited by Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 122). Communication professionals were reached through the Public Relations Society of America, eMarketing Association Network, Public Relations and Communications Professionals, and the Ohio State University Alumni Association groups on www.LinkedIn.com. Though I am a
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member of the Cleveland chapter of the Public Relations Society of America and have easy access to local public relations professionals, I felt it would better serve my purpose to send out a call for assistance through more diverse groups because they can reach communication professionals from across the country. By getting opinions from across the country, there could be a better chance of gaining an understanding and an overall picture of how traditional and social media should be used in tandem to reach and bond with audiences. In choosing to interview and survey only public relations professionals in Northeast Ohio, the answers might have been incomplete and skewed to best practices currently relegated to one portion of Ohio or the Midwest at large. The results would not be representative of the American communication field as a whole.

A link to the professional survey was posted to group members of the Public Relations Society of America, Cleveland Public Relations, the Ohio State University Alumni Association, and Public Relations and Communications Professionals on www.LinkedIn.com. Thirty-two communication professionals took the survey. A similar survey (see Appendix B) was given in person to 34 undergraduate students in two public relations classes at Baldwin-Wallace College. A short explanation of the study and how the responses would be used was provided before participants chose to take the survey. Participants were asked to complete the survey on how they would approach discovering how to reach consumers through both social media and traditional media. They were also asked to answer questions on how they would use social media and traditional media collectively to bond with audiences. The surveys were delivered via www.surveymonkey.com and in person. Surveys were chosen as a study method because they can “track opinion, technology use, or a host of other social indicators over time” (Lindlof &
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Taylor, 2002, p. 119). The survey was posted online and open for communication professionals to complete for two weeks.

Six interested survey participants – three communication professionals and three undergraduate students – were also interviewed in short phone conversations to delve deeper into their experiences. “Interviews are particularly well suited to understand the social actor’s experience and perspective” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 173). These interviews took place over one week and participants were provided with an explanation of the study, as well as an explanation of how their responses would be used.

3.1.3 Anonymity

Survey respondents were provided with a consent form that detailed the study. The survey did not ask people to provide their names, employers, or geographic locations. Their titles were requested to lend more credibility to the study by demonstrating how the respondents are linked to the field of communication. The data collected was presented in aggregate form and the respondents’ perceptions were coded. In responses used from individual interviews, only titles of those interviewed were used to protect their identity.

3.1.4 Survey Questions

The survey questions focused on determining how to reach audiences via social media and traditional media, as well as how those media could be used to build relationships between organizations and their audiences to benefit the organizations. The questions were designed based on the belief of Marshall McLuhan that media changes the way people live. Martin Buber’s (1970) I-You philosophy, which posits that humans must form relationships and bonds to truly participate in life, was also considered in development of the research questions. Each
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question was followed with ‘yes’ or ‘no’ options, or by a series of possible answers. Some directive questions were used to determine how the respondents used social media and traditional media. A short explanation of how the answers to the survey would be used was provided to the respondent before taking the survey. This explanation was posted on www.LinkedIn.com. See Appendix A and Appendix B for survey questions.

3.1.5 Interview Questions

Prior to the telephone interview, participants were reminded how their responses would be used and that they would remain anonymous. Interview questions focused on determining how to reach consumers through social media and traditional media; as well as how to use these media to build relationships between organizations and consumers. Open-ended questions were used to gain in-depth insight and to get specific examples of how participants are reaching consumers and building relationships. When warranted, additional questions were asked throughout the interview to gain more in-depth information and insight. Those questions were tailored to the individual interview at the time of the interview. See Appendix C and Appendix D for planned interview questions.

3.1.6 Analysis

WWW.surveymonkey.com compiled the survey responses for communication professionals, while the survey responses by undergraduate students were compiled and coded by hand. Those responses were then scanned for trends to demonstrate how social media and traditional media are used to reach consumers and help organizations bond with those consumers. Responses to interview questions were used to enhance the results of the survey and provide examples of how social media and traditional media are being used in tandem by communication professionals and undergraduate students studying public relations.
Chapter 4. The Study: Results and Analysis

4.1.1 How the Study was Designed

This study was designed to answer the following two questions.

- As social media and traditional media evolve, therefore changing the way people conduct their lives, how can organizations determine the best ways to reach consumers?
- Changes in media have forced organizations to develop relationships and have conversations with consumers. How can organizations combine traditional media and social media to enhance these conversations to benefit the organization?

These questions were formulated based on theories by Marshall McLuhan and Martin Buber. McLuhan (1964) believed that media shapes the way people live their lives. As social media continues to evolve and change the way people disseminate and receive information, as well as how they participate in conversations, it is important to consider how social media and traditional media combined can best be used to reach consumers.

In addition, Buber’s (1970) theory of I-It and I-You relationships helped shape the study around how social media and traditional media can be used to form relationships between organizations and their audiences. According to Buber (1970), people and organizations in I-It relationships experience events in life, rather than participate in those events. As Mulhern noted in 2009, such I-It relationships between organizations and their audiences were popular before social media was created because organizations controlled the message and content being disseminated to the public. In I-You relationships, the parties involved participate with their whole beings, therefore becoming actively involved in a conversation, with both organizations and their audiences providing perspective and disseminating messages (Buber, 1970). As social media evolves and becomes a more formidable player in the communication field, it is important
to consider how it is being used along with traditional media to help people and organizations enter into more I-You relationships with one another.

4.1.2 How Communication Professionals use Social Media and Traditional Media

A survey of 32 communication professionals found that many view social media as a viable way to spread the message about an organization, but they have not counted out traditional media completely. Nearly 94% use social media such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and Pinterest to reach their desired audiences. “The consumers are using it and we have to go where they’re at,” according to professional interviewee number two, a web communications specialist.

According to professional interviewee number two, organizations have to be part of that conversation, even if they are unsure yet how to use it to their advantage. Social media is also free and can be tracked for return on investment, so it is a smart tool to use for the right audience, professional interviewee number two said.

However, 65% of those surveyed still use traditional media, such as newspapers, radio, and TV, to reach their intended audiences. There are numerous reasons for holding on to traditional media. According to professional interviewee number two, “There are some things that there aren’t new media substitutes for, such as a how-to brochure. You need to catch them at that point of sale.” For instance, professional interviewee number two helped launch a new computer software tool and found that giving people a brochure that explains how to use the tool at the time they install it helped consumers understand the tool, better than they were able to understand it by using new media such as a training video. Professional interviewee number one, a communication professor and independent public relations consultant, predicts that, in a quarter century, social media might be the preferred information source, but “at this point in the game, you can’t not be there” because there are many people who still rely on traditional media.
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Only 53% of survey respondents said they currently use social media and traditional media to reach the same audiences, but nearly 60% said they think both social media and traditional media combined is the best way to reach an audience overall. The reason for the combined use of social media and traditional media is that social media has not completely taken over as the preferred information source, according to professional interviewee number one. He said both social media and traditional media have their place but, right now, they are complementary. For example, in a crisis situation, social media provides short, fast, up-to-the-minute updates about the situation, but people still turn to traditional media such as TV, radio, and newspapers to get the full story, according to professional interviewee number two.

The difference can be seen in the audiences that organizations target through either social media or traditional media. More than 90% of respondents said it is best to reach audiences age 46+ through traditional media, while all 32 survey respondents believed it was best to use social media to reach audiences age 18-35. Communication professionals were torn about how to reach audiences in the mid-range, ages 36-45. About 56% said that audience is best reached through traditional media, while nearly 72% of the same survey respondents said that audience can best be found on social media. Professional interviewee number two said the type of media to use can change based on the audience, the message, and the timing of dissemination of the message. “Traditional media still works best for that broad audience because a billboard is going to be seen by thousands of people on the highway each day. Social media will reach a more targeted audience,” according to professional interviewee number two. Soft drink maker PepsiCo. Inc. has combined both traditional and social media well, according to professional interviewee number two. “A billboard will point you to a web site that points you to YouTube that will show
you ads that ran on TV. It’s pretty cyclical, so people need to not think of (social media and traditional media) as separate anymore,” professional interviewee number two said.

4.1.3 How Undergraduate Students Would use Social Media and Traditional Media

Undergraduate students studying public relations had a much more favorable view of social media, and perhaps will set the tone for the way it is used to help reach consumers and form bonds with them in the near future. In a survey of 34 undergraduate students, all said they would use social media such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and Pinterest to reach a desired audience, while only 30 said they would use traditional media such as newspapers, TV, and radio. Undergraduate interviewee number two said he currently uses social media in the store where he works to engage consumers in discussion about products, sales, and the company itself. “The purpose is not to list prices, but to create a conversation with your customers,” undergraduate interviewee number two said. Undergraduate interviewee number three said he uses social media in the company where he works to invite people to social events and to spark conversation about those events.

Traditional media, however, is still popular among the undergraduate students surveyed because they feel consumers still use traditional media to obtain information. Undergraduate interviewee number one said social media provides small nuggets of information but traditional media still has a significant impact on consumers. “People trust social media for the initial news, such as a headline, but for more information, they go back to the original source,” according to undergraduate interviewee number one. She believes that all news found on social media comes from a traditional media source. For that reason, undergraduate interviewee number one believes it is possible to reach the same audiences through social media and traditional media, and that they can be used in combination to provide all the information consumers need. “Social media
spreads the word, but traditional media spreads knowledge,” undergraduate interviewee number one said. That is, people use traditional media to get the full story of an event so they can have a conversation about it, undergraduate interviewee number one said. Overall, 20 of the 34 survey respondents believed it is best to use both social media and traditional media to reach desired audiences. Of the survey respondents, 13 believe it is proper to use both social media and traditional media to reach the same audience at least “sometimes.”

While not all undergraduate students surveyed agreed on how to use social media, they agreed on which demographic groups could be reached by social media and traditional media. About 75% of respondents agreed that ages 36 and older could best be reached through traditional media, while people ages 18-34 could best be reached through social media. This is in contrast to the beliefs of professionals surveyed, who were torn on how to reach the 36-44 age group. Undergraduate interviewee number two said he sees firsthand which age groups use social media and which ones are using traditional media in the store where he works. Though the store places coupons online and on flyers inside the store, those who redeem them are different, undergraduate interviewee number two said. According to undergraduate interviewee number two, younger patrons print coupons from Facebook while older patrons use the in-store flyers. Undergraduate interviewee number three said his company uses traditional media to reach an older audience that he knows still uses landline telephones and notice billboards alongside the road. However, undergraduate interviewee number three believes the ways in which his target audience can be reached will change as younger people who are accustomed to technology grow older and need his services. At that point, undergraduate interviewee number three said he would transition to using more social media instead of traditional media. undergraduate interviewee
number three believes radio is one traditional media outlet that still crosses all generations because many people young and old still listen to the radio in the car.

Though the undergraduate students surveyed focused largely on age when determining when to use social media or traditional media, the undergraduate interviewees said the use of social media and/or traditional media depends on demographics and the type of message the organization is trying to convey. “You will address people differently on Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn. It’s all about knowing your audience and knowing what they want,” according to undergraduate interviewee number one. The type of media used also depends on how much the organization wants to control where the message goes, undergraduate interviewee number three said. In essence, undergraduate interviewee number three said organizations can use social media to target a specific type of audience but traditional media is best when trying to reach a broad audience.

But there are times when it would be wise to use both social media and traditional media to reach a broad audience. For example, when trying to reach people for a large fundraising event such as the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, undergraduate interviewee number three said it would be best to advertise the race in traditional media, while also pointing them to the web site to register for the race or donate money toward the cause. “You have to give people those options,” undergraduate interviewee number three said. Undergraduate interviewee number two agreed, saying that, when trying to reach a broad audience that spans generations, it would be best to combine social media and traditional media because those generations are likely using social media, traditional media, or both.

4.2.1 Discussion
Research Question 1. As social media and traditional media evolve, therefore changing the way people conduct their lives, how can organizations determine the best ways to reach consumers?

The results of the study involving both undergraduate students and communication professionals showed that the best way to determine how to reach consumers is to know how they are living their lives and how media fits into their lives. As with traditional media, it is best to use demographics. For example, all 34 undergraduate students believed that the best way to reach people ages 18-25 is through social media, while the best way to reach people 36 and over is through traditional media. To figure this out, undergraduate student interviewee number two used simple observation to determine what age groups are partial to social media or traditional media. Undergraduate interviewee number two pays attention to which age groups use online coupons versus in-store coupons.

However, the type of communication in which an organization is trying to engage and how the selected media would be used should also be considered when determining how to reach an audience. Professional interviewee number three, a marketing specialist, said it might be best to use more social media than traditional media if the audience the organization is trying to reach is considered technologically savvy. Social media might also be used to best approach a time-sensitive issue, such as a web site having technical difficulties, because people can lodge complaints and have them answered in a timely manner or the organization can give up-to-the-minute updates on the situation on social networking sites such as Twitter or Facebook, according to professional interviewee number three. Professional interviewee number one agreed, saying the organization must consider how fast the message needs to be disseminated when determining whether to use social media or traditional media. If immediate distribution is
needed, social media provides the proper outlets, professional interviewee number one said. If consumers are going to a web site for information, professional interviewee number two said it is also safe to assume that they are more comfortable with other social media.

On the other hand, “traditional media is very effective for campaign announcements and major branding” because people have more trust in traditional media, according to professional interviewee number three. People also turn to traditional media to delve deeper into a story so that they can apply it to their own lives, undergraduate interviewee number one said. Major campaigns or branding initiatives also are typically aimed at a more broad audience, which can be found through traditional media, according to undergraduate interviewee number three. For example, TV ads and highway billboards will reach a range of age groups, while an online advertisement can be more targeted to the demographics of people using that one web site.

As McLuhan suggested in 1964, the evolution of media has led to an evolution in the way people live their lives. While consumers still put more trust in traditional media, they are further relying on social media to lodge complaints and learn more about a specific product. For example, consumers may see a billboard or newspaper ad about an organization that prompts them to visit a web site to learn more. When something makes consumers happy or unhappy, they no longer write letters and make phone calls, but rather take to social media to voice their opinions. Therefore, as McLuhan (1964) suggested, people have shaped the way they live their lives with the advent of new media and the changes in traditional media. The public has adapted along with changes in media.

One of the easiest ways to determine how consumers are using traditional media and social media to conduct their lives is to pay attention to the demographic information provided by both types of media. Traditional media still study their audiences and provide a wealth of
information about them to advertisers. In addition, social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest, as well as web sites owned by other organizations provide free analytics on their users (personal conversation, professional interviewee number three, March 28, 2012). As undergraduate student interviewee number two suggested, observation is also key in determining where to find an audience (personal conversation, March 20, 2012).

**Research Question 2.** Changes in media have forced organizations to develop relationships and have conversations with consumers. How can organizations combine traditional media and social media to enhance these conversations to benefit the organization?

In this study, the surveys and interviews concluded that, once the organization knows where to reach consumers and observes how consumers are using social media and traditional media in their lives, it will be easier for the organization to determine how to use social media and traditional media to reach and form bonds with those consumers.

As outlined previously, both undergraduate students and communication professionals surveyed and interviewed agreed that younger audiences are best reached through social media and older audiences are best reached through traditional media. The exception is the 36-44 age group, which is on the cusp of both social media and traditional media. However, professionals and undergraduates agreed that both types of media can be used to form bonds. Understanding how to form bonds with consumers is important because, as Buber (1970) suggested, people do not become fully engaged until they form I-You relationships with others, which suggests that they are involved with their whole being, instead of just observing. Social media has made it easier to formulate such bonds between organizations and consumers.

According to professional interviewee number three, social media helps consumers feel that they are part of a relationship with the organization because the organization can respond
quickly and in real time to their concerns and statements. For example, an organization can invite followers on Facebook to share their success stories and photos that involve the organization, then the organization can respond with appreciation, making the consumer feel that they have formed a bond with the organization, professional interviewee number two said. Indeed, social media makes it easy to monitor the public’s thoughts about the organization and to do something immediately to change those thoughts if needed, thereby making followers feel that they have a stake in the organization and are valued, according to undergraduate student number one. Professional interviewee number one said he frequently tweets about what is happening at the university where he works, which helps followers – both parents and students – take the pulse of the university and, therefore, feel more connected.

It is a little harder to form bonds between organizations and consumers through traditional media, but it can be done. Professional interviewee number two said his organization uses newsletters that are mailed to the audience’s homes in their native language, making them feel that they are part of the organization’s community and that they are valued. Traditional advertising on TV, in print, and on the radio can be personalized by using real people and their stories, which helps the consumer feel that they have been recognized by the organization and that they belong, according to professional interviewee number three. “It gives them a sense of ‘That person is just like me,’ “ professional interviewee number three said.
Chapter Five. Summary and Conclusion

5.1 Limitations of the Study

While this study is fairly comprehensive, it does have limitations due to available resources and time constraints. First, the survey was answered by only 32 communication professionals and 34 undergraduate public relations students. Initially, it was planned to attract as many people as possible from across the country to answer the survey, which was posted for various groups to see on LinkedIn. The survey was available for two weeks but many professionals proved to be unwilling to take the short, five-minute survey. In addition, the survey was to be placed on the Public Relations Student Society of America group on LinkedIn for undergraduates to answer. However, after a week of trying to reach the administrators of this group, the administrators denied permission to post the survey on LinkedIn due to previous issues with spam surveys. As a result, a professor at Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio, allowed the survey to be presented to two of her public relations classes. This limited the number of students who were able to take the survey and lacked the geographic reach that was originally anticipated.

Another limitation is that this study has the potential to be outdated quickly. Social media and consumer practices are changing remarkably fast, which means that the way people live their lives and use media will change as well, according to McLuhan’s (1964) belief. McLuhan (1964) classified media that is highly participative as cool media. As a type of cool media, social media will continue to shape the lives of those using it, rendering this study a stepping stone in what should be an ongoing study of media and its use by the public.

Due to the methods used to conduct this study and promises of anonymity, we have no way of knowing how far of a geographic reach this study had.
5.2 Further Study and Recommendations

This study laid a foundation for the combined use of social media and traditional media, but it also leaves several opportunities for further study.

It would be useful for researchers to study a larger group of communication professionals and undergraduate students with a more broad geographic reach to obtain more opinions from various parts of the country. With more time and resources, additional insight could be gained about the way social media and traditional media should be used to reach and bond with audiences.

The literature review showed that social media has come a long way in a very short amount of time and has changed the way organizations communicate with the public. For example, companies initially adopted blogs nearly a decade ago and have since ventured into the use of social networking sites, wikis, and podcasts (Wright & Drifka Hinson, 2009, pp. 13-14). Consumers also have changed the way they get information. According to Rainie (2010), ninety-two percent of Americans use between two and six different platforms each day to get their news, as opposed to just getting news on TV or in newspapers. With the invention and rise of more social media, as well as the melding of social media and traditional media, researchers should continue to investigate how consumers are using these media. This would provide a continuous flow of information on how social media and traditional media can be used for communication between organizations and their audiences.

5.3 Conclusions

This study investigated the history and rise of social media, how consumers are currently using social media and traditional media, as well as how the two forms of media should be used
in tandem for organizations to effectively communicate and form bonds with audiences. Surveys and individual interviews were used to determine how communication professionals are using and should use social media and traditional media to spread their message across an increasingly fragmented audience.

The study concluded that audiences are getting information from a variety of sources and are spending more time with various media than ever before. Yet, with many more media outlets available, it is harder for communication professionals to determine where to find their audiences, such as on certain TV channels or on a multitude of web sites. The job of a communication professional is becoming harder as they wade through a sea of media outlets to find their audiences and search for ways to form bonds with them.

In his I-It, I-You philosophy, Buber (1970) suggested that all people must form relationships with one another to truly participate in life with their whole beings. “Those who experience do not participate in the world. For experience is “in them” and not between them and the world” (Buber, 1970, p. 56). Before the advent of social media, conversations between organizations and their audiences were one-way. Organizations talked at consumers through traditional media such as newspapers and TV, but did not engage them in the conversation (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). However, social media has changed this dynamic and now enables consumers and organizations to have a two-way conversation. “First, social media enables companies to talk to their customers, and second, it enables customers to talk to one another. Social media also enables customers to talk to companies” (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 358). Therefore, bonds are being created between organizations and consumers and the two parties are now able to participate in this exchange with their whole beings. The organization now sees its
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audience as a “You” instead of an “It,” thereby applying personal qualities to the audience. “The You encounters me. But I enter into a direct relationship to it. Thus the relationship is election and electing, passive and active at once” (Buber, 1970, p. 62).

Relationships also played a prominent role in the theoretical beliefs of Marshall McLuhan, who posited that people change the way they live their lives according to changes in media. For example, McLuhan (1964) noted that people began to buy the products that Hollywood stars use because they see them on TV. Likewise, he said technology has changed the way we live our lives (McLuhan, 1989). “The railway did not introduce movement or transportation or wheel or road into human society, but it accelerated and enlarged the scale of previous human functions” (McLuhan, 1964, p. 8). He also believed that technology would continue to change the way people conduct their lives, thrusting them away from the confines of their own neighborhood and onto a more global stage. “More and more people will enter the market of information exchange, lose their private identities in the process, but emerge with the ability to interact with any person on the face of the globe” (McLuhan & Powers, 1989, p. 113).

The literature review found that social media has extended this global exchange and enabled it to take place at a much faster pace. In the book, The New Influencers, Gillin (2007) noted; “Conventional marketing wisdom has long held that a dissatisfied customer tells ten people. But that is out of date. In the new age of social media, he or she has the tools to tell 10 million” people in an instant (as cited by Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 359). According to Rashtchy et. al (2007), the Internet has become a mass media vehicle for people to communicate with one another (as cited by Mangold & Faulds, 2009). According to Hutton & Fosdick (2011), one of the top reasons people go on the Internet is to share their experiences with others. In the past, this kind of information exchange might have only taken place in line at the grocery store,
at a diner, or at a child’s sports game. Social media allows consumers to be more inclusive in sharing their message, therefore an organization is not able to control the message or who receives it.

In summary, this study explored the ways in which social media and traditional media should be used in tandem to create a modern communications plan to reach desired audiences. The research and the findings were filtered through the philosophical lens of Martin Buber and the theoretical belief of Marshall McLuhan. The study found that consumers are using both social media and traditional media to receive and share messages, so it is becoming more difficult to find these audiences because they are not in only a handful of media locations. Therefore, organizations should continue to study where to find these audiences and explore ways in which to reach them to effectively spread their message and form lasting bonds with these consumers.
References


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Appendix A

This survey is being levied as part of a thesis project that aims to determine how social media and traditional media can be used to reach an increasingly fragmented audience; as well as how social media and traditional media can be used together to form bonds between organizations and consumers. Responses will be compiled and analyzed to provide answers to the above questions. All respondents will remain anonymous.

1. Please provide your current title.

2. Do you currently use social media (such as Facebook, blogs, Twitter, Google +, and Pinterest) to reach your intended audience?
   a. Yes
   b. No

3. Do you currently use traditional media (such as newspapers, magazines, and television advertisements) to reach your intended audience?
   a. Yes
   b. No

4. Do you currently use traditional media and social media to reach the same audiences?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Sometimes (If you answered “sometimes,” please provide context below.)

5. Which do you feel is most effective in reaching your current desired audiences?
   a. Traditional Media
   b. Social Media
   c. Neither
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d. Both

6. Which age groups are best reached through traditional media outlets such as newspapers, television, magazines, and radio? Please choose all that apply.
   a. 18-25
   b. 26-35
   c. 36-45
   d. 46-55
   e. 56+

7. Which age groups are best reached through social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Pinterest, and online news sites? Please choose all that apply.
   a. 18-25
   b. 26-35
   c. 36-45
   d. 46-55
   e. 56+

If you would like to be contacted for an individual interview, please provide your name, email, and phone number. Thank You!

Appendix B

This survey is being levied as part of a thesis project that aims to determine how social media and traditional media can be used to reach an increasingly fragmented audience; as well as how social media and traditional media can be used together to form bonds between organizations and consumers. Responses will be compiled and analyzed to provide answers to the above questions. All respondents will remain anonymous.
1. Please provide your current title.

2. As a public relations professional, would you use social media (such as Facebook, blogs, Twitter, Google +, and Pinterest) to reach your intended audience?
   a. Yes
   b. No

3. Would you use traditional media (such as newspapers, magazines, and television advertisements) to reach your intended audience?
   a. Yes
   b. No

4. Would you use traditional media and social media to reach the same audiences?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Sometimes (If you answered “sometimes,” please provide context below.)

5. Which do you feel is most effective in reaching a desired audience?
   a. Traditional Media
   b. Social Media
   c. Neither
   d. Both

6. Which age groups are best reached through traditional media outlets such as newspapers, television, magazines, and radio? Please choose all that apply.
   a. 18-25
   b. 26-35
   c. 36-45
7. Which age groups are best reached through social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Pinterest, and online news sites? Please choose all that apply.
   a. 18-25
   b. 26-35
   c. 36-45
   d. 46-55
   e. 56+

8. In the near future, which media outlets would you use to reach your intended audience?
   a. Traditional media
   b. Social media
   c. Both
   d. Neither

If you would like to be contacted for an individual interview, please provide your name, email, and phone number. Thank You!

Appendix C

This interview is being conducted as part of a thesis project that aims to determine how social media and traditional media can be used to reach an increasingly fragmented audience; as well as how social media and traditional media can be used together to form bonds between organizations and consumers. Responses will be compiled and analyzed to provide answers to the above questions. When warranted, questions will be added throughout the interview process to gain more insight or details about the use of various media. Those additional questions will be
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tailored to the individual interview at the time of the interview. To protect your identity, you can opt to change your name or use only your title if your responses are used in this study.

1. Do you currently use social media such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and Pinterest to reach intended audiences? Why or why not?

2. Do you currently use traditional media such as newspapers, television, magazines, and radio to reach intended audiences? Why or why not?

3. Which do you feel is more effective – traditional media or social media? Why?

4. Please describe instances in which it is best to use traditional media, social media, or both to reach a desired audience.

5. How do you know when to use traditional media, social media, or both to reach a desired audience?

6. Please provide instances where you have used social media and/or traditional media to successfully reach your desired audiences.

7. Please provide examples of when the use of traditional media and/or social media to reach your desired audience was not successful and describe why you think that method did not work with that audience.

8. How do you use social media to form bonds with consumers?

9. How do you use traditional media to form bonds with consumers?

10. What does the future of public relations hold for the combined use of social media and traditional media?

Appendix D

This interview is being conducted as part of a thesis project that aims to determine how social media and traditional media can be used to reach an increasingly fragmented audience; as
well as how social media and traditional media can be used together to form bonds between organizations and consumers. Responses will be compiled and analyzed to provide answers to the above questions. When warranted, questions will be added throughout the interview process to gain more insight or details about the use of various media. Those additional questions will be tailored to the individual interview at the time of the interview. To protect your identity, you can opt to change your name or use only your title if your responses are used in this study.

1. As a public relations professional, would you use social media such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and Pinterest to reach intended audiences? Why or why not?

2. As a public relations professional, would you use traditional media such as newspapers, television, magazines, and radio to reach intended audiences? Why or why not?

3. Which do you feel is more effective – traditional media or social media? Why?

4. Please describe instances in which it is best to use traditional media, social media, or both to reach a desired audience.

5. How do you know when to use traditional media, social media, or both to reach a desired audience?

6. Please provide instances where you would use social media and/or traditional media to successfully reach your desired audiences.

7. Please provide examples of when the use of traditional media and/or social media to reach your desired audience would not be successful and describe why you think that method would not work with that audience.

8. How would you use social media to form bonds with consumers?

9. How would you use traditional media to form bonds with consumers?
10. What does the future of public relations hold for the combined use of social media and traditional media?