

Rhetorical Analysis of Successful Brands in Social Media Discourse

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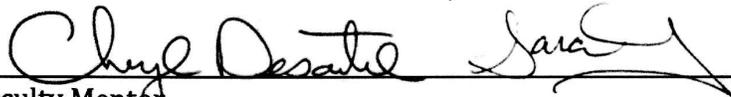
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We the undersigned, certify that we read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree Master of Arts.



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Abstract:

The expression "content is king" is a sentiment those in the marketing and public relations industries live by. When it comes to social media, still considered a newer form of communication, not all brands are sure of what makes for successful utilization of the medium. This study performed a rhetorical analysis on three brands considered to be social media standouts in their respective industries, Coca-Cola, Southwest Airlines and the U.S. Army and identified patterns on what makes these brands successful in their social media discourse. The study proved that social media discourse has much to do with sound communication principles dating back to Aristotle's time than it does with the actual use of technology. By conducting a rhetorical analysis on Facebook posts and Tweets by the three select brands mentioned, the study proved the importance of content when it comes to social media discourse and how success in this medium is rooted in communication theories.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Social media has evolved from being the new and innovative way for brands to target audiences to being another necessary communication tool at the disposal of marketing and public relations professionals. Using social media to reach audiences is no longer trendy; using these tools has become a reality for brands vying for relevance in a crowded marketplace (Chung & Austria, 2010). Blanchard (2011) states that that social media isn't a fad, instead, a fundamental shift in the way we communicate. It is no longer a question if a brand is engaging via these mediums, instead, a question of which tools and specific networks they have chosen to take part in. As brands are becoming more active on social media networks, it becomes critical to understand what is considered successful when it comes to social media discourse, specifically how the brand's voice is expressed in this medium and how it matches the overall brand management goals brands have set for themselves.

The Problem and Goal

While social media has reached dominance, according to previous studies and research on how companies are targeting audiences, many brands aren't truly capitalizing on its value or implementing a strategic outlook when using these tools. To this end, this study identifies the link between successful implementation of social media practices and relevant communication theories. Specifically, through analyzing social media discourse via a rhetorical analysis, the study shows effective social media practices. By focusing on the brands standing out in the social media space according to marketing and public relations industry literature, this study

looked at three industries in order to showcase similarities when it comes to content and add to the idea that rhetoric has something to offer to what is known about compelling social media content. The popular belief that only “cool” products or services have the ability to produce compelling content is a fallacy this study will disapprove. Instead, the study shows that compelling content can come from any industry by relying on communication theories and principles.

Public relations and marketing professionals that are involved in content management of social media pages for their respective brands or institutions will benefit most from this study. There has been a lack of focus on studying content and analyzing how the way messages are framed shared via social media networks can impact audiences (Oliver, 2011). This study’s takes a deeper look behind successful brands’ social media discourse and treats the content as the story the brand puts out that can be rhetorically analyzed in a similar fashion to a speech. Focusing on successful brands that are producing successful content for social media discourse allows the readers to learn from those examples. In addition, this study may provide evidence as to why the primary practice of social media is best suited for communication departments of a company and those responsible for brand management rather than the marketing sales functions that may only be concerned with return on investment and not properly equipped to handle the voice and persona of the brand that is reflected through social media.

Importance of Study

As social media is still considered a newer form of communication, conducting studies to show for what makes successful social media discourse is useful as more patterns emerge that can be applied. While much focus has been placed on the technology aspect of social

media, there have not been studies that sufficiently focus on the messages being distributed in social media discourse and the link between the type of content produced and successes on social media platforms. Looking specifically at Facebook messages brands produce and the Tweets they send out, rhetorical analysis, specifically neo-Aristotelian analysis is the method that best fits this particular angle of analyzing social media as a message vehicle and as a symbol. Focusing purely on Facebook posts and Tweets and only on the content aspect of those two platforms allows the readers to understand how social media discourse fits in to overall brand management and voice.

Definition of Terms

This study has a few key terms to understand such as rhetoric, social media, Facebook and Twitter. Rhetoric is communication rooted in influence and persuasion and analyzing the particular language and symbol choice allows a close look at mechanics behind the persuasion and influence (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991). According to Blanchard (2011), social media is a fundamental shift in the way we communicate and discover new information. The medium uses web and mobile technologies to facilitate and support interactions and dialogue between individuals, communities, brands and organizations. One of the popular social media platforms, Facebook allows users to become friends with each other and become fans of brands, allowing for open dialogue between those users are friends with or “like,” such as brands and organizations (Facebook, 2012). Twitter is another popular social media platform that allows users to engage in dialogue in a similar fashion as Facebook, however, the messages are limited to 140 characters and users do not need to be connected to be able to engage

(Twitter, 2012). With Twitter, anyone can send a Tweet to anyone, while private messages are reserved to users that follow each other.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

Chapter two consists of a comprehensive literature review that explored successful brands take on social media content and included discussion of key communication theories. An element of persuasion, when it comes to successful social media campaigns is a strong theme that ran through the literary review and illustrated Aristotle's work theoretically, and then later in chapter three, the neo-Aristotelian step-by-step process as a method was detailed. In addition, the narrative paradigm and media equation communication theories were also applied. The artifacts for the rhetorical analysis came from a variety of industries and showed the audience that application to the rhetoric and communication theories was the key success to social media discourse despite what industry was analyzed. In chapter four, the readers saw the link between marketing messages in this case the artifacts, through social media discourse and the brand's ability to brand themselves as entities that make audiences feel like they belong to something bigger. Finally, chapter five will offer recommendations on how to maximize their effectiveness in social media discourse efforts for brands that are engaging in these platforms.

Chapter 2

Introduction

In today's complex marketplace the lines between marketing and public relations are blurring at a rapid pace. The advent of social media and the ever-changing technology are making the jobs of those responsible for brand reputation and management more challenging. With so many technology options at one's disposal, sharing of information has become a seamless process (Green, 2011). While it can be said that social media is a fundamental shift in the way we communicate, especially the dialogue with branded entities, brands that are receiving favorable results are rooting their behavior in communication theories and borrowing from successful storytelling and engagement techniques that have been around before the technology was (Blanchard, 2011). Creating a social brand is no longer optional and it requires strong social governance, which will allow brands to meet their business objectives (Webber Shandwick & Forbes, 2012).

The social nature of consumers has always been an important principle in marketing and the concept of word of mouth has existed long before there was even a proper name for it (Moran & Gossieaux, 2010). According to Moran and Gossieaux (2010), word of mouth was likely just as powerful in the medieval marketplace as it is today and neither buyer nor seller had an advantage over one another. Throughout the centuries as businesses evolved, companies began to enjoy the advantages marketing provided and the voice of the buyers became quickly drowned out (Moran & Gossieaux, 2010). This was happening because the marketing dollars and options afforded to marketers to spread their messages was in every way winning anything a consumer could purely on a reach level. Fast forwarding to today and the age of internet

connectivity and expectations of instant gratification, social media has given consumers their voices back in a new way and allowed for a two-way computer-mediated interaction between brands and potential consumers. With most branded entities jumping blindly into the social media space, the types of messages being sent and the brand portrayal are both becoming increasingly important in the way they are being judged by consumers, as authenticity is what consumers are looking for and it's easy to spot (Blanchard, 2011).

Analyzing brands with a successful social media presence shows that their actions are rooted in communication theory, which in turn is fostering a positive relationship with their costumers via social media networks. Studying the meaning behind the actual Tweets and messages posted on Facebook analyzes the language and symbolism used via these social media networks. Analyzing content strategy and the direction brands are taking their social media is indicative in their success on this medium. By analyzing the content via a rhetorical analysis, it becomes clear that social media practices have much more to do with sound communication principles and practices rather than the flashy technology behind social media.

Greek philosopher Aristotle's division of persuasive elements into three categories, ethos (credibility), pathos, (emotion) and logos (logic) are not only principles that aid in argumentative writing, but can also be applied to today's brands that are considered standouts in social media (Aristotle & Roberts 2004). An element of persuasion, when it comes to successful social media campaigns is a strong theme that runs through the literary review and illustrates Aristotle's work theoretically. These ancient communication principles prove to be valuable in offering insights into contemporary style of communication, including being able to analyze social media discourse.

Blanchard (2011) defines social media as a way to turn communication into interactive dialogue. For the purpose of this study, social media will concentrate on two social networks, Facebook and Twitter. Facebook is a service that allows users to set up profiles, add friends and brands to their circle and have the ability to send both private and public messages to those that they've chosen to interact with. Twitter on the other hand is a social network that allows users to communicate via 140 character interactions that are called tweets. One of the main differences between the two networks is the length of the post an individual or a brand can provide, where Twitter allows for only up to 140 characters per tweet while Facebook allows for lengthier posts. The other predominant difference is that two parties can interact via twitter without being connected, where Facebook requires users to be friends or for the user to "like" the brand page in order to be able to comment on the content provided.

Theory

Aristotle's definition of rhetoric is the ability to see the available means of persuasion in each individual case through the three main forms, ethos, pathos and logos (Aristotle & Roberts, 2004). Aristotle's theory focuses on the use of language as a tool and vehicle when it comes to shaping persuasive arguments (Aristotle & Roberts, 2004). According to Aristotle & Roberts, (2004) the rhetor has three ways of successfully delivering the rhetoric. The power of demonstrating his personal character will make his speech credible, (ethos) his ability to stir emotions and get in the heart's of his listeners will allow for a connection to be made (pathos) and his power to prove truths or apparent truths through the means of persuasive arguments (logos) (Aristotle & Rhys, 2004).

When connected and working together, these three means of persuasion are what make for successful rhetoric. While these means of persuasion are typically meant for a speech by a rhetor, when it comes to social media, these become relevant because it's not just about a one time performance on stage, instead, a virtual town hall meeting that goes on twenty four hours a day and is never ending (Blanchard, 2011). Because of this element of dialogue and an aspect of real time, it is important for the social media discourse to follow a sound communication strategy and elements of rhetoric to ensure success for the brand. Depending on the brand, or the situation, ethos, pathos or logos can be appropriate at different times.

Ethos, or credibility has to do with the ethical appeal of the rhetor, it is easier to believe those that are trusted and respected by the audience (Ramage & Bean, 1998). The tone and style of the message given can convey a sense of ethos or trustworthiness (Ramage & Bean, 1998). A sense of the writer's reputation outside of the particular rhetoric can also have an effect on ethos. Certain brands and institutions have a higher level of credibility based on their position in society, such as the military, or institutions such as the Red Cross.

Considering a sense of ethos when delivering prose or in this case composing social media content will ensure the language and tone behind that content is strong and has an air of credibility. When it comes to social media discourse however, weaving messages into a brand's story without actions to back it up will discredit that story and tarnish the reputation of the brand (Webber Shandwich & Forbes, 2012). It is for this reason that it's important to align the brand's voice on social media platforms with what the brand actually stands for, sending a credible and trustworthy stance and message to the audience. According to Aristotle & Rhys (2004), it is not enough to know what we ought to say, we must also say it as we ought; in other

words, it is not enough to know what to say but we also must say it in the right way considering the audience. The brand's voice on social media discourse has to do with the ethos element, the way the brand is portrayed through carefully selecting words and the way in which the brand communicates its desired messages and responses to the audience.

While ethos is focused on the credibility of the rhetor, pathos has to do with appealing to the audience's emotions (Ramage & Bean, 1998). Pathos has the ability to create a sense of emotion through words and appeal to the audience's sense of identity and self-interest (Ramage & Bean, 1998). Triggering emotions out of the audience is a powerful means of getting the desired message across. Through pathos is where successful social media brands are able to shine. Social media discourse centers around the idea of a community and strongest communities are structured around a sense of shared goals, emotions and beliefs (Del Monte, 2012). Communities that have been able to prevail are ones that embrace the passions of their audience and recognize their commonalities, appealing to their sense of pathos (Del Monte, 2012).

An early example of pathos in a real life virtual community comes from SoBe beverages. The brand was aligned with action-sport athletes and consumers that were health-conscious who cared with a great passion about both sports and their bodies (Del Monte, 2012). SoBe believed it was important to create a space for that audience to engage with one another and the brand, capitalizing on the sense of pathos as they created a community that encouraged loyalty and intimacy and involved the audiences heightened sense of emotion (Del Monte, 2012). The social media discourse in this example was aligned with a sense of pathos from the starting point of the community. A more modern day example of this in the social media space

comes from Mystarbucksidea.com. Starbucks was able to recognize that its costumers, even though different from each other were passionate not only about their product but also the “experience” of being at a Starbucks and the type of products Starbucks introduced (De Monte, 2012). Every brand has a personality and public relations and marketing messages are crafted with that personality in mind to articulate to consumers why they need to align themselves with that brand (Murdico, 2012). This notion of personality very much draws on the sense of pathos and evoking emotions out of the audience. In social media discourse the brand’s voice and its personality are much more apparent than in traditional media due to the social nature of a dialogue that comes across in social media. For this reason, pathos becomes an important element in brand’s social media strategy.

The engagement portion of social media is arguably the most important element of successful social media programs. Engagement comes from emotions of the audience being invoked in a way that prompts them to have a discussion and sharing of thoughts and ideas with other members of the brand community or the brand itself. Typically, this occurs when there is a strong sense of community the brand has been able to establish due to pathos of their messaging or what the brand stands for. Due to the nature of social media, it is conducive to a virtual ground that gets individuals together and allows for community building. Brands like Starbucks that was discussed earlier understand this notion and strategically use their messaging and this medium to build a loyal audience, which in turn indicates engagement.

Logos refers to persuading through sound reasoning and clarity of message (Ramage & Bean, 1998). Through a sense of logos, the rhetor can prove truth, or apparent truth through persuasive arguments (Aristotle and Rhys, 2004). Logos has to do with consistency of the

message and the clarity of the statement the rhetor is making, appealing to the audience's sense of logic (Ramage & Bean, 1998). Randall Brown, the global director of digital strategy for Gatorade often speaks on the importance of thoughtful preparation with his brand's approach to the social space (Pathank, 2012). When it comes to social media strategy of the brand, it is related to the idea of logos and providing a message that aligns with what the brand stands for in a clear, concise and logical manner.

Through logos, the rhetor has the ability to articulate a point through reasoned discourse (Ramage & Bean, 1998). In the instance of social media discourse, logos would be the strategy behind messages being powerful and making sense. Additionally, through the use of logos, the brand would be allowed to offer expert opinion from the subject matter expert in cases that warrant that type of content or reaction. It becomes harder to argue with the statement made by a subject matter expert or a CEO or leader of a particular brand, drawing on the elements of logos through means of social media discourse.

Additionally to Aristotle's rhetoric, two other theories apply when it comes to analyzing social media. The narrative paradigm is a communication theory that proposes humans view life as a story and relate to stories that are based on their particular set of values (Griffin, 2009). The narrative rationality has to do with coherence and fidelity, meaning the story has to be consistent, make sense to the audience and hold elements of truth (Griffin, 2009). This theory implies that audiences look for their desired values through various stories that are consistent and hold true to the values they are looking for. Moran and Gossieaux (2010) conducted a study of 500 online communities to look for the most effective practices in these communities. The main lesson that came out of the study centers around social media concentrating more on

human traits rather on the technology itself. This means that audiences are interested in the way the brands are interacting with them and making them feel like they are connected to another human being on the other end versus a glitzy design and capabilities some of the social media platforms offer through technology. Social media is set up in a way that is very much conducive to story telling and allowing a brand to take up a persona or voice that applies to what they stand for.

According to Fisher (1987) we understand interactions as stories. Fisher is convinced that we are narrative beings who experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing narratives, as conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends, ultimately appealing to our reason that communication needs to be seen a series of stories (Fisher, p. 300 1987). This theory implies that we understand the world through stories and make sense of communication narrative in this way too. When it comes to understanding narrative, Fisher (1987) states that logic of good reason centers on five valued based issues Fisher states that we are concerned with values embedded in messages, relevance of those values to our decision making process, the consequences of adhering to those values, the overlap between those values and those of the audience and finally conformity with what the audience believes to be the ideal basis of conduct (Fisher, p. 304, 1987)

The other theory that can't be ignored when studying social media is the media equation theory. Simply put, the media equation theory states that people treat communication media as if they were human (Griffin, 2009). In other words, brands begin to have attributes humans would have and individuals begin to be drawn to those attributes as they see a piece of themselves in that brand. The media equation theory deals with relating to media, or in this

instance a brand, which possesses human-like qualities attracting the individual to that brand as they feel the individuals feel they relate to it. Brands taking part in social media develop a persona and have the ability to speak to their audience, encouraging the audience to speak back to them and interact with them as if they truly are human. When a consumer detects his or her identity may be reflected in the way a brand positions themselves in the marketplace and what the brand stands for, they are more likely to be a loyal patron of that brand (Taylor, et al., 2011). This not only helps with sales and loyalty in the future but with the likelihood of the individual becoming a brand ambassador, resulting in feeling so passionate about the brand possibly wanting to recruit others into their lifestyle or clique.

This affinity individuals feel to brands is something Reeves and Nass (1996) try to explain in the media equation theory as a connection humans feel when interacting with a computer. People are polite to computers and respond to praise from them, viewing them as teammates (Reeves & Nass, 1996). According to Reeves & Nass, (1996) people like computers with personalities similar to their own, often finding masculine-sounding computers extroverted, driven and intelligent, while they find feminine-sounding computers knowledgeable about love and relationships. This line of thinking can be attributed to the way consumers bond with brands and feel an expectation when interacting with them due the established brand voice and personality. The results conducted by Reeves & Nass (1996), which makes up their media equation theory demonstrate that people interact with media just as they interact with other humans.

Philosophical Assumptions

There has been ample evidence that states social media platforms represent a paradigm shift in not only marketing communication, but communications as a whole (Christodoulides, Jevons & Bonhomme, 2012). Previous forms of communication and advertising were very much focused on a way-way communication stream and consumers were less empowered than they are today. While this shift in communication may change over time, industry experts agree that social media is not a fad and it becomes critical for those working in communication functions to understand this medium (Blanchard, 2011). In 2012, 90% of internet users visited at least one social network, with Facebook and Twitter being the most popular networks visited (Schnuer, 2012). With compelling evidence that audiences are spending time online, brands that are looking to stand out in this medium need to have a strong understanding on what drives successes and audience views and engagement.

This study assumes that brands are looking to master the online space and gain a true understanding on what makes their presence worthwhile for their potential consumers or audiences. The findings aim to meet the need of analyzing the type of content that has proven successful by industry experts. While there has been plenty of studies and evidence that encourage participation by brands in the social media space, there have not been many studies that purely look at the content brands are producing and why it is driving views and engagement (Weber Shandwick & Forbes, 2012). Compelling content produced by brands benefits them better by better connecting with audiences, while it benefits the audience by meeting their needs for visiting the social media platforms.

Literature Review

According to Marshal McLuhan, the medium is the message; however, in today's marketplace concentrating too much on the medium and not enough on the substance of the brand story, message and identity can be dangerous (Webber Shandwick & Forbes, 2012). Since majority of brands use social media, the medium becomes ubiquitous and successful brands are those that are able to differentiate their brand in this medium (Webber Shandwick & Forbes, 2012). Differentiation comes in many formats, but it's mostly always centered on the content produced and what makes that content stand out in the minds of the audience (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Berger & Milkman (2012) claim that emotion shapes content going viral. The social media medium is set up in such a way that the medium has the ability to evoke emotion due to its nature of allowing sharing, commenting and relationship building. Brands that don't realize this are missing out on the powerful emotional connection the medium can offer to their audiences. Berger & Milkman's (2012) results imply that positive content is more viral in nature than negative content, but the relationship between emotion and social communication is somewhat driven by physiological arousal (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Content that evokes high-arousal positive (awe) or negative (anger or anxiety) emotions is more viral, based on the data of nearly 7,000 different content pieces ranging from newspaper articles to YouTube videos and social media postings (Berger & Milkman, 2012).

This evidence in a modern study confirms Aristotle's means of persuasion method of pathos that highly concentrates on evoking emotions out of rhetoric. This applies to brand's because audiences will likely share, engage and be affected by content that shapes and communicates their identity (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Sharing this type of content refers

positively on the senders and allows them to identify with a particular lifestyle trait they may be proud of. Brands like Nike, Apple, U.S. Army, Starbucks and others that have mastered lifestyle marketing tend to do well with creating social media content. Just like their brand voice through traditional means of communication and advertising, these brands are able to evoke emotion out their audiences and consumers through social media circles.

Their message and appeal to the emotional sense of their audience is interwoven and integrated on every level of communication on both traditional and social media platforms. Weber Shandwick and Forbes (2012) state that brands who integrate their social media strategy as part of their overall communication and marketing strategy tend to be more successful social media practitioners. Going back to Aristotle's means of persuasion, which centers on ethos, pathos and logos, working together, or in some instances one of the categories taking a lead, states that this approach to rhetoric will result in success. The approach of sound communication principles and integrating social media into that mix as another tool that must work together with the rest of the brand voice yields success to brands in the social media sphere (Blanchard, 2011). Those brands that don't integrate their social media efforts or have a specific social media strategy tend to not capitalize on what social media has to offer (Weber Shandwick & Forbes, 2012).

Successful social media can be attributed to having a strong and vital online community (Garfield, 2012). Moran and Gossieaux (2010) conducted a study of 500 online communities to look for the most effective practices in these communities. The main lesson that came out of the study centers around social media concentrating more on human traits rather on the technology itself. This means that audiences are interested in the way the brands are interacting

with them and making them feel like they are connected to another human being on the other end vs a glitzy design and capabilities some of the social media platforms offer through technology. The study found that the most appealing aspects of online communities are connecting with like-minded people, helping others and developing their reputations with other community members (Moran & Gossieaux, 2010).

The fact that audiences are interested in being brought together and finding value out of the content provided to them should be a major indicator to brands that while presentation of the content, the technology piece is important, the messages that drive engagement, foster a community and provide value are more important and will bring them success. Elements of ethos, pathos and logos can be seen in this example. The study proves that individuals are drawn to communities that they trust (ethos) with those that are like them. The pathos aspect comes from the fact that communities feel passionate about the ideas being exchanged, bringing them back for repeated engagement. Finally, the logos comes from the fact that there is strategy behind putting together a brand message centered around community that allows for the sense of engagement; without a carefully crafted strategy and message that makes sense, the community wouldn't be engaging.

A living example of the above study comes from Toyota, who has created a cult of loyalists via its social media channels that has allowed the brand to go virtually undamaged during a time of crisis (Michael, 2010). Michael (2010) states that Toyota has set up online communities where owners had the ability to share real-life anecdotes and learning lessons from owning Toyotas, individuals that have owned the vehicles for 20 years and brand new owners were interacting based on their passion for the brand and perceived shared values.

While social media alone can't be deemed solely responsible for Toyota's ability to wither the bad publicity storm, it has contributed to loyalists sharing their stories and sticking by the brand. Feeling like passionate about the brand and having a place to express their stories and connect with others created a virtual moment that also picked-up positive media attention in Toyota's time of need (Michele, 2010). The fact that media was able to see all the loyalists defending the brand, that type of message sends a much different implication vs. a Toyota employee trying to defend the brand or offer explanations on their own. Zmuda (2011) gives another example of an authentic community through Home Depot's use of social media. In this example, select employees with video cameras share happenings throughout their duty day, focusing on stories of costumers they meet and how Home Depot helped them accomplish their personal and professional projects. This type of content is both relevant to those looking to shop at Home Depot and provides a human element behind the brand, as the employees are the face of the brand.

Both Toyota and Home Depot examples echo the Moran and Gossieaux (2010) study that explains the importance of having the human element in online communities. This human element trait creates an environment for like-minded people to be able to converse, helping each other and having the brand provide that space for storytelling and idea exchange. This way, audiences find the brand space useful and the messaging convincing as it is more so a sharing of information platform vs. a hard sale. All of these examples concentrate highly on the concept of pathos and appealing to the emotional side of audiences to draw them in and provide value. They are able to articulate how their brand aligns with the passions, beliefs and self-identity of the audience, allowing for the discourse and engagement to take place.

For more research on the way emotion plays a role in advertising and getting the message across, a study was conducted showing the effect of emotion when trying to figure out what makes individuals pay attention to advertising within social media channels that polled 15-30 year olds in the southwestern United States (Taylor, Lewin & Stratton, 2011). The study confirmed previous research as quoted by the Taylor (2011) study suggesting advertising value comes from the content being able to meet consumer's need for diversion, entertainment, escapism and enjoyment (Taylor, et al., 2011). The study determined that entertainment is more positively related to social network advertising than perceived informative nature of the advertising (Taylor, et al., 2011). This finding compliments the fact that individuals relate to stories and see their values through compelling storytelling. Through extensive surveys and in depth interviews with a demographic in the southwest, the Taylor (2011) study showed that when it comes to advertising and getting the company message across, the storytelling method is most effective. In order for true success to take form in the way it has for Toyota and Home Depot, consumer experiences must closely match expectations that were created by marketing messages and in essence told through stories (Blanchard, 2011).

Through compelling storytelling, the audience feels like they are part of a movement and are left with an impression that lasts after they have left their computers and that particular social media session. According to cognitive psychologist Roger Schank, humans are not wired to understand logic; instead, they are wired to grasp stories (Blanchard, 2011). The narrative paradigm is a communication theory that proposes humans view life as a story and relate to stories that are based on their particular set of values (Griffin, 2009). This theory implies that audiences look for their desired values through various stories that are consistent

and hold true to the values they are looking for. Moran and Gossieaux (2010) conducted a study of 500 online communities to look for the most effective practices in these communities. The main lesson that came out of the study centers around social media concentrating more on human traits rather on the technology itself. This means that audiences are interested in the way the brands are interacting with them and making them feel like they are connected to another human being on the other. While technology is what enables this to happen, it is the actual communication and the type of messages sent that contribute to community building.

Gottschall (2012) claims that results repeatedly show that our attitudes, fears, hopes and values are strongly influenced by stories. When absorbed in a story, our intellectual guard drops and we are emotionally moved, something successful brands are mindful of and are often referred to as great storytellers (Gottschall, 2012). Nike in particular capitalizes on creating a story behind its products to draw on the emotional appeal of those that use its products, making a correlations between belong to a group that shares the same values and passions (Gottschall, 2012). This strong sense of pathos behind Nike's messaging has not only made it as a standout brand when it comes to storytelling, but they are able to translate this to their social media effort via creating compelling videos on YouTube and sharing with their audience on other social media platforms, creating engagement and content the audiences sees as valuable and entertaining.

Social media gives the ability to brands to be storytellers, however, not all brands are borrowing best practices from communication theories, instead only using the space for pure sales or unsure of the proper presence they should partake in the first place. 52% of marketers are operating without a game plan or strategy when it comes to what they are posting on social

media networks.(Chung & Austria, 2010). This is an alarming statistic that indicates these professionals aren't seeing these networks as an opportunity to partake in quality communication principles that are more often than not drawn from communication theories, such as Aristotle's means of persuasion.

In the previous discussion on online communities created by brands that foster exchange of like-minded individuals, this theory brings us closer to understanding why "fans" or "followers" of certain brands feel like they are part of a community and why they look at channels that provide this interaction in a favorable light. A study by Massachusetts Institute of Technology suggests that costumers that are engaged in social media campaigns generate commitment on the part of the consumer, reinforcing loyalty to the particular brand and making the consumer more likely to commit additional resources and effort to support the brand in the future (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010).

Hoffman and Fodor (2010) discuss Target's "Circle of Moms" campaign that allowed mothers to post messages, arrange carpools, set up back-to-school checklists and discuss promotions offered by Target, an effort that generated 20,000 visitors in the six weeks the campaign took place. In this instance Target was able to offer a safe place where like-minded individuals were able to discuss what matters to them and due to the nature of the network felt like they were part of each other's lives, discussing important day-to-day happenings and events having to do with motherhood. The online community was a place where mothers had the ability to network with other mothers and gain advice from others going through the same situations as they are. This type of relation to one another and the fact that these weren't

immediate friends made the environment a safer place from possibly feeling judged for having questions on best practices when it comes to motherhood.

In essence, the online community was able to provide a real place of value for these mothers and wasn't just a place there felt they were being sold to (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). In another study of an online community, the New York University Stern School of Business' Center for Measurable Marketing (CMM) provided a social media monitoring and analysis study in which it concluded that word-of-mouth communication via social media channels led to higher level of store visits in comparison to brand's paid media efforts ("Social Media Drives More Retail Store Traffic," 2011). The study analyzed three million conversations in the social media space to analyze reactions by consumers to brand's paid media, word of mouth promoting and was able to link it to in-store interactions and visits ("Social Media Drives More Retail Store Traffic, 2011).

Similarly, a study conducted by Taylor, et al., (2011) that measured what makes for effective advertising on social media platforms discovered that active media is more likely than passive media to promote interpersonal relationships. Users on the social media networks are sharing ideas and dialogues with others in the space and the ads themselves facilitate dialogue, and bring those that think alike together, creating a sense of bonding (Taylor, et al., 2011). Hill and Moran (2011) hold a discussion amongst PhD's in social sciences and business about effective social media campaigns and determine that greater levels of interactivity, feedback and overall discussion on these spaces results in more successful campaigns. The study included discussions and a questionnaire to over 500 PhD's in social science and business fields about the notion of interactivity and how it relates to social media. All of the participants

in the study have studied social media for an extensive time period and are experts in the social science and business field. Those branded entities that are successful on social media networks recognize that online interactions can forge into powerful relationships, and in their case a powerful connection to the brand that can result in sales and future dealings with the brand.

Garfield (2012) states that in today's relationship era, it is more important than ever to cultivate a community through creating and sharing compelling content vs. trying to sell. He goes on to say that those that try hard to sell either bore or scare audiences away because that is not why they are visiting these social networks, instead, they are looking to form some kind of relationship with the brand (Garfield, 2012).

45% of people that join brand communities do so to express their passion for the brand, while 61% of those that will write about a brand will do so to praise their favorite brands (Friedman, 2012). Because of this data, it is important for brands to get out of the media mindset, and adopt a social mindset when engaging on social networks that allows for a two-way dialogue as that is what consumers are expecting (Friedman, 2012). In order to drive that engagement and two-way dialogue, the brand must start with compelling content and something that inspires the audience to start engaging and in order to drive the conversation in the first place (Blanchard, 2011). According to Murdico (2012) pre-approved and written Facebook updates and tweets are necessary to maintain the flow of information, but more emphasis needs to be placed on creating content that will drive engagement. Aristotle's principles of good rhetoric apply to creating that compelling content because they center on content that is organized, evokes emotion and comes from a credible source.

Fast forwarding to present time, and keeping in mind Aristotle's principles of effective rhetoric, a study conducted by Lewandowsky, Ecker, Seifert, Schwartz & Cook (2012) proclaims that most people look for information compatible with their beliefs, how coherent the story is, whether the source is considered credible, and how many other people believe it or "buy into" it. Based on this assertion it can be argued that having a seemingly credible source deliver a well-crafted story or message to an audience that is likely to believe it is the formula for successful persuasion, or communication. The overlap between Aristotle's thinking and the findings in many of the studies discussed thus far illustrates that principles of good rhetoric are timeless and following this formula or recipe for good and persuasive communication translates not only to the overall communication of a brand but also to social media discourse taking place.

While there is no "one fits all" solution for social media success when it comes to creating compelling content, it is important to realize that social media success and return on investment must be looked at from a different intelligence perspective (Schnuer, 2012). Instead of focusing purely on a quantifiable return on investment, instead, tracking the trust, purchase-decision influence and recommendations based on time spent on the social network are how successful brands are measuring and gauging their social media efforts (Schnuer, 2012). This goes back to Aristotle's *logos* principle of logic, in this particular medium, a different set of logic, rules and measurement must be applied in order to be successful. What most brands have not figured out yet is that measuring social media ROI is not the same as other communication methods, creating confusion and not allowing brands to truly prosper in the area of content because their focus is elsewhere (Blanchard, 2011).

Brands using social media often develop a persona and have the ability to speak to their audience, encouraging the audience to speak back to them and interact with them as if the brand is truly human. When a consumer detects his or her identity may be reflected in the way a brand positions themselves in the marketplace and what the brand stands for, they are more likely to be a loyal patron of that brand (Taylor, et al., 2011). This not only helps with sales and loyalty in the future but with the likelihood of the individual becoming a brand ambassador, resulting in feeling so passionate about the brand possibly wanting to recruit others into their lifestyle, strongly relying on the pathos element of rhetoric.

Nissan is able to capitalize on this via its social networks by branding itself as a carmaker passionate about driving, with its patrons forming “Z Clubs”, get-togethers, blogs dedicated to this ideal of passion and forums on social networks that encourage owners to talk about their passions (Jarski, 2011). Nissan also uses social media to provide access otherwise not given by the brand and create information that is exclusive. As an example, During the New York International Auto Show, Nissan’s chairman and organizer of the auto show did an exclusive “ask the chairman” series where questions from Facebook and Twitter were chosen and he recorded video responses (Jarski, 2011). Attaching this type of face to the brand and interacting with the consumers makes the human element even more apparent and capitalizes on pathos and ethos. All the brands discussed thus far have a human element they’ve embodied in their use of social media making them have more success rather than brands that only have a one-way monologue on their pages or don’t take regard for having a human element in the way they conduct business on social media platforms. The brands that have been capitalizing and doing well are embodying Aristotle’s principles of good rhetoric. They are either capitalizing

on evoking emotion from their content, using their credibility as a driving force behind the engagement, or realizing the logic behind social media while similar to other communication principles must be evaluated through different means. Most likely, the brands are looking at all three elements and seeing how they can work together to give them to optimal social media strategy.

Leading industry blogger and contributor to Mashable, the social media go-to news source, Matthew Latkiewicz (2010) discusses the importance of choosing the right social media engagement style. He discusses the way a brand interacts with the consumers and the style in which they choose to communicate with their audience is very telling of the persona the brand stands for and how they will be perceived (Latkiewicz, 2010). The more the brand has the ability to humanize their interaction with the audience and their online persona the more of a chance the media equation theory will be seen and individuals will treat that brand as another human and want to engage and partake in dialogue with it, ultimately allowing the brand more chances to get their messages across and potentially close sales. When Green (2011) discusses differences in social media platforms he calls Facebook the identity shaping network for individuals and it can be argued that this can be said of brands as well, as it allows them to showcase personality through what the brand chooses to reveal about itself, who it chooses to interact with, and in what way it communicates with its audience. The way the brand chooses to tell its story and what other entities it invites into its environment or community shares the identity of that brand and what types of values it stands for. Looking deeply at the messaging being shared and commented on, the personality of the brand begins to reveal itself on the network. Social media has the ability to make the brand seem much more human and

personalized than traditional media channels can simply due to the engagement and dialogue options the platforms offer. In essence, the brand can talk back, one of the biggest traits associated with humans.

While much of the focus of the literary review was on corporate brands, select government agencies and the military units are also successful practitioners of social media. Government officials are having their own social media platforms and agencies are using the tools for anything from sharing their missions and stories with the public, essentially renewing their trust with the public to serving as sounding boards during times of crisis (Hoover, 2012). In this particular sector, ethos plays an important role and it is likely what draws audiences to these pages. Because of the position most of these organizations hold in society, their credibility is perhaps why audiences go to them in the first place, and helps explain their success, rhetorically

Two separate examples of government standouts are both centered on the type of content they provide. The Center for Disease Control is known as being particularly active in social media. The type of content they post is centered on speaking with authority and credibility on all matters concerning health (Hoover, 2012). They were able to figure out that audiences crave credibility when it comes to important topics such as their health, and the social media activity takes that element as the lead piece when releasing content. Taking the approach of a virtual town hall mentality, they address their audience with ethos in mind first, which for the subject matter they are covering makes the most sense.

While CDC heavily concentrates on the element of ethos, NASA, the most popular federal agency on both Facebook and Twitter takes the pathos approach as the leading category

to their rhetoric (Hoover, 2012). Their regular updates that are heavily meant to inspire their audience and persuade them as to why space research is important are filled with emotional photos, videos and words of wisdom and encouragement from astronauts that the brand managers of the platforms have been able to turn into rock star like celebrities (Hoover, 2012). While NASA concentrates more on pathos and CDC on ethos, they both have a social media strategy in place that compliments how they communicate to audiences through other mediums as well.

The Department of Defense, which has been one of the first entities to put together formal social media policies in place that were borrowed by the corporate sector, also treats social media as part of a strategy that compliments their overall communication outreach effort (Anonymous, 2010). Using imagery and videos that evoke emotions of the audience and compels them to share that content is the primary social media strategy by the US Marines (Hoover, 2012). While the end goal of social media use of the military is very different from various other government agencies and corporate brands, the lesson to take away is that successful military entities are indeed drawing on Aristotle's principles of ethos and pathos when composing their messages and shaping their content. Even though ethos, pathos and logos are constructed differently for the private and public sector, it is possible to produce quality content regardless of the subject matter at hand.

The CDC and Nike both happen to be standouts in their respective industries because they are using a social media strategy that is focusing on the quality of the content and encompasses what their brand stands for, instead of treating social media discourse as an independent communication channel. This notion should make the reader realize that taboo

around social media only being successful for brands that are “hip” or “cool” is false, instead, successful social media can be done by any brand or entity regardless of their product, service or mission, as long as principles of rhetoric according to Aristotle are followed. By following these principles, the message becomes appealing and easier to understand to the particular audience that needs to hear the message. Every brand or entity out there has an audience of some kind and appealing to their need for credible, concise messages that follow a logical progression and are persuasive because they appeal to their emotional sense is what makes that audience respond in the way the rhetor wants them to. Following the communication foundation behind Aristotle’s rhetoric theory and looking at social media as a platform that involves a clear set of guidelines and a strategy, makes it easier for brand managers and those managing the social media presence to be successful at their jobs.

Throughout the literature review different elements of rhetoric were used together with studies and scholarly articles to determine what type of activity successful brands partake in the social media space. Most of the theories and articles discussed the need for individuals to be part of the story with the brand. These stories are interwoven into what the brand stands for when it comes to individuals seeking communities or brands that make them feel like they are a part of something bigger than themselves. Successful marketers draw on this principle of inclusion when branding themselves as an entity through social media that makes individuals feel like they belong either in their organizations like the U.S. Army for example, or being part of their club of people that stand for something like consumers of Nike or Apple products. The same way these principles are marketed through traditional advertising channels, social media and online communities are allowing for this type of behavior by brands to take into an even

more real and genuine meaning through online channels which are essentially fan clubs of those products or services. The principle of inclusion is echoed in a unique way through each of the different elements of rhetoric discussed. Incorporating these principles in a brand's strategy is one of the most important indicators when it comes to successful social media campaigns; creating online communities that allow for that inclusion to happen is a key indicator of success on social media platforms (Blanchard, 2011).

An element of persuasion is another strong theme that ran in different capacities when various brands were discussed. Social media enables the audience to easily be persuaded as they are in a space where not only the marketer is sending messages that are encouraging consumption, but the other fans and brand loyalists are providing their own success or satisfaction stories that only make the messages seem more credible to the end user. The basis of communication and rhetoric and drawn on elements of persuasion, in essence, communication with a goal or desired outcome has a great deal to do with persuading another party on a particular subject or topic. The rhetoric theory point out that elements of storytelling, inclusion and persuasion all blend together in order to form an identity of a brand. The same way brands pay millions of dollars to advertising agencies to help them obtain that identity that is consistent with its values. The same identity that the brand stands for in all the brand's traditional messaging also needs to be present on social media networks.

According to both Aristotle and other theorist like him, the reason for communicating has been, is and will always be to inform, influence and persuade. New channels like social media may change the way the process of doing the communicator's job happens, but the advent of technology or social media doesn't change the reason or the goal behind

communicating. This is something that seems to be forgotten when brands are engaging on social media. The same sound principles that have been around for years apply even on these forums.

While rules of engagement might be different, the guiding principles to good rhetoric as Aristotle describes them still apply. Ultimately, new ways to reach people do not change how people are persuaded, they are still persuaded by a credible source that evokes their emotions and presents a sound and logical argument. Professional communicators charged with representing brands must still present the audience a clear, concise and credible message in the capacity that will make that message stick and mean something to that audience. Demystifying social media from a form of communication that is totally different than what we are used to, and realizing that the same communication principles still apply on this platform will give those tasked to manage the effort a more manageable roadmap for success.

Rationale

Only about 50% of brands have integrated their social media strategy into their overall marketing and communication strategies (Webber Shandwick & Forbes, 2012). This statistic alone shows a disconnect on how brands are seeing social media and the way it fits into their overall strategy. Because of this oversight in strategy, many brands are not getting the most out of social media platforms. While social media has reached dominance, according to previous studies and research on how companies are targeting audiences, many brands aren't truly capitalizing on its value or implementing a strategic outlook when using these tools.

The scholarly importance of this study is to further examine how brands are interacting via social media circles with their audiences and the specific messaging they are providing. This study is more concerned with the content and the messaging, which is deeply rooted in rhetoric theory and the communication aspect of social media vs. the technology aspect of it. Consumers that are interested in how they are being targeted will also find this information useful when looking at how brands interact with them via social media. There has been a lack of focus on studying the content and analyzing how audiences perceive messages that are shared via social media networks. The goal of this study is to provide that gap in research and focus more on the content produced. Performing a rhetorical analysis accomplishes a study that is solely concerned with content that is being pushed out and how that content measures up to Aristotle's view of rhetoric via a neo-Aristotelian criticism, the narrative paradigm theory and the media equation theory.

The research questions center on the rhetoric of successful brands on social media platforms. This study will show that influential and successful brands use rhetorical theory when constructing social media discourse. This will result in a finding that successful social media is largely based on the quality selection, arrangement, and strategic design of content put out by the brands. Analyzing the content through canons of rhetoric will result in understanding that successful social media is dependent on content that is representative of what the brand stands for. Additionally, forming communities and fostering relationship building helps brands be more persuasive with their messaging and content.

Research Questions

RQ1: What pathos strategies did the rhetor (brand) try to evoke intended out of their messaging?

RQ2: What logos strategies did the rhetor (brand) try to evoke, what is the ethos of the rhetor (brand) and how does it matter?

RQ3: The research will also try to explore the balance between ethos, pathos and logos in social media postings by the chosen artifacts.

RQ4: What is the rhetoric of the medium?

RQ5: How does rhetor position/construct audience in these selections?

Additionally the element of persuasion and how that fits into rhetoric and creates relationship building between the rhetor and the audience is another area that will be explored. These questions will show that social media discourse must rely on communication strategy rooted in rhetoric in order for brands to successfully use this medium.

Chapter 3

Scope

The literature review of this study shows examples of successful social media campaigns and programs through the narrow eye of focusing on content that has been deemed successful by industry standards. As this study focuses on content and what makes that content successful, the rhetorical analysis portion of the study will look at one artifact that is considered a standout in the industry when it comes to its practice of social media. Focusing on three artifacts with limited social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter allows the author to get into specifics on why that content is considered successful and receives positive feedback from the audience. Limiting the scope of the study to only two networks makes for a more comprehensive analysis; especially considering the term social media is a broad umbrella that encompasses various channels. This study will use three industry standouts as artifacts in order to provide a means of comparison among different industry and include a mix of brands. The artifacts for this study will be Coca-Cola, Southwest Airlines and the US Army.

Being one of the earliest practitioners on the social media platform, Coca-Cola has been the leader among large global brands in establishing authentic relationships with its audience (Hempel, 2012). This company can be considered a success story with over 52 million “likes” on Facebook and 619,000 followers on Twitter. Additionally, its commitment to social media can be seen through deducting 6.6% of their advertising dollars and committing those funds to the social media budget (Hempel, 2012). Many global brands have not put this kind of commitment behind their social media effort, going as far as re-allocating their marketing promotions budget. Coca-Cola has a wide social media reach and is involved in almost every

social media platform known, from Facebook to YouTube, Google+, Tumblr and many more, encompassing a very full social media portfolio, showing their commitment and knowledge in the social media space. Being an early adopter on social media, Coca-Cola has been able to keep that momentum since they first started engaging on social media platforms (Hempel, 2012).

Southwest Airlines was another early social media practitioner, who started in 2006 through their blog “Nuts about Southwest,” which launched their social media program with other platforms like Facebook that followed soon thereafter (Joyce, 2012). In addition to being a popular brand on social media platforms and an industry favorite, Southwest Airlines provides a service, which compliments Coca-Cola as a consumer’s good brand, allowing for contrast. That contrast allows the readers to see that following rhetoric principles set out by Aristotle can cross industries and brands and is what accounts for social media discourse that is considered effective by industry standards. Finally, the U.S. Army will provide the perspective from the public sector and allow the readers to apply the criticism to their own situation as a variety of brands were taken into consideration. The U.S. Army was the first Department of Defense branch to come up with an app for smartphones and is a branch that continues to push the boundaries when it comes to social media discourse (Ray, 2012).

While Coca-Cola, Southwest Airlines and the U.S. Army are virtually active on every social media platform, this study will only focus on Facebook and select Twitter examples when necessary to reveal a particular point. The focus of the study is narrow, as it is only concerned with content that is distributed via Facebook and using Twitter. Narrowing the scope makes the study easier to understand and focuses on the two social media platforms that are

most popular with both audiences and brands. By narrowing the focus to only two social media platforms, Twitter and Facebook it also allows the author to go deeper into analysis of the cannons of rhetoric and the intent behind the posts. Narrowing of the social media platforms is also necessary to meet the time constraints put on this study and accomplish the study within the time given.

This study will conduct a rhetorical analysis, specifically, a neo-Aristotelian criticism which will use of Coca-Cola, Southwest Airlines and the U.S. Army as the artifacts. This analysis will show successful social media brands and how they are heavily focused on content in their social media discourse. The neo-Aristotelian criticism will allow for a close look at the content and by allowing for a mix of popular and successful brands on social media discourse it will allow for the audience to see commonalities amongst the different industries.

Methodology:

The neo-Aristotelian method of criticism is primarily used to analyze speeches and their persuasive powers that would leave a lasting impact on the audience (Foss, 2009). While social media discourse isn't a speech, its primary function is to persuade the audience to have high affinity for the brand and buy into its messages. This type of criticism allows the critique to deeply focus on the content produced by an entity through social media discourse. A few of the specific elements this study will focus on will be: the rhetor's (Coca-Cola, Southwest Airlines and US Army) personalities, the public character of the speakers, the public's perception of the speakers, motives to which the speakers appealed, how the rhetors appealed to ethos, logos and pathos and finally the effect of the discourse on the immediate audience and its long term effects on the brands (Foss, 2009).

There are three basic steps in a neo-Aristotelian criticism. The first step is restructuring the context in which the artifact occurred, for the purposes of this study, it would be restructuring the context behind the social media discourse (Foss, 2009). Secondly, applying five canons of rhetoric, which are the steps that go into the process of public speaking by the artifacts (Foss, 2009). Finally, the impact of the artifacts on the audience is assessed (Foss, 2009). These three steps allow for a complete rhetorical analysis of the artifacts, which includes the planning behind the rhetoric, the actual rhetoric itself and assessing the impact of the rhetoric on the audience (Foss, 2009). This complete analysis that includes all stages of analyzing social media discourse will be useful to communication professionals and social media managers looking to either analyze their own presence or learn from a brand that is one of the best in the social media arena.

Restructuring the context is the first step in the neo-Aristotelian criticism and for this study that means looking at the background behind the social media discourse. It is meant to set the stage for the readers to understand the background of the rhetor such as its characters, personality and essentially the reasoning behind the brand's participation in the discourse. This section of the analysis is supposed to give the audience an understanding of the artifact, the audience for the artifact and why the artifact is engaging in the particular rhetoric. These are all critical elements to understanding the rhetors, in this case Coca-Cola, Southwest Airlines and US Army and the background to their participation in social media discourse. The first step sets the stage for the actual analysis of the rhetoric as it gives the readers a clear focus on the rhetor and its audience. Having that background and an understanding of the artifact before specific

rhetoric is analyzed gives the audience a much better perspective and an appreciation for the rhetorical analysis.

The second portion of the analysis is the evaluation of the actual rhetoric. While there are five canons of rhetoric, invention, organization, style, memory and delivery, it is best analyze a limited amount of the canons in order to give the study the appropriate amount of depth (Foss, 2009). This study will focus on invention, organization and style, as they are the most appropriate areas to look at when analyzing social media discourse. In particular, this study is attempting to give its readers a full circle analysis that focuses on social media discourse from the planning stages to the actual delivery.

An in depth look at the Facebook posts and in some cases the Twitter posts by Coca-Cola, Southwest Airlines and the U.S. Army will be analyzed in the second section to show how they are actually executing their social media discourse. This section is the “how” behind social media discourse. It will allow the readers to see how the content is executed behind one of the most successful brands on social media platforms. Looking at how the rhetors are appealing to ethos, pathos and logos is some of the questions that will be answered in this section. Looking at all the specific and details behind the posts will occur in this section. They key questions behind why content is successful is what the second section aims to do.

The third and final section of the analysis will focus on the after-effect of the rhetoric and specifically looking if the goals of the rhetor have been met. This is the section that measures effectiveness of the rhetoric and it depends on the author of how that effectiveness is assessed in the study (Foss, 2009). There are various means and options when assessing the success of the rhetoric. In this study, determining if the rhetor’s intention was met and the

impact to the audience by the rhetor will be the two key ingredients in assessing impact on the social media discourse. As social media discourse is a means of persuasion, it is critical to evaluate the rhetoric and determine if the persuasion was successful. The measures of success can be varied depending on the perspective of the brand. In this case, success will be equated to engagement levels and the amount of fans the brands are able to acquire to hear their respective messages. Social media is often criticized for the lack of a measurement or understanding of what makes it effective. The fact that the neo-Aristotelian criticism has a section that focuses on measurement is very conducive to studying social media discourse.

Performing a neo-Aristotelian criticism allows for a systematic look into the way popular brands approach social media from the planning phases to the actual delivery of content. The research question(s) of this study are focused on proving the importance of what is communicated when it comes to brands being labeled successful in their social media discourse.

Ethical Considerations

This study did not impose any harm on human subjects as none were asked to give their opinion with surveys or through any other means.

Chapter 4

Introduction

While speeches tend to be favorable artifacts to select when doing a Neo-Aristotelian criticism, choosing brands that are standouts in social media in their respective industries allows for readers to understand the importance of rhetoric and communication strategy when it comes to creating social media that meets the goals of the rhetors or brands. The ability to analyze the content posted by brands that are using social media successfully allows for the readers to see a blueprint behind strategy that works and that can be replicated. The three artifacts chosen, Coca-Cola, Southwest Airlines and the U.S. Army are some of the early adopters in their respective industries, all having a clear need and strategy behind participating on social media platforms.

History of the Artifacts

The three artifacts that were chosen for this research are all committed to representing their brand's story via social media and are known for being content machines in their respective industries (Hampel, 2012). Understanding how and why the artifact entered the social media space is significant. It serves the purpose of restructuring the context in which the artifact occurred and discovering the links between the rhetorical efforts and the rhetor's history, character and experience, in other words how does the social media effort match the overall integrated marketing efforts by the brands (rhetors) (Foss, 2009). Understanding the story behind social media beginnings of Coca-Cola, Southwest and U.S. Army will allow the readers to understand their current strategy by understanding how they got their starts.

Coca-Cola has been built on the foundation of storytelling when it comes to its marketing strategy and is consistently considered one of the top marketers of all time (Graham, 2011). While Coca-Cola made a late entry to social media and failed to tap into the initial buzz of the medium, it has managed to fuel its growth by staying at the root of its marketing strategy, storytelling (Baker, 2011). Coca Cola's Facebook page was actually created by two dedicated fans, Dusty and Michael; instead of excluding the creators, Coca Cola flew them to their Atlanta headquarters to work with them and take in the consumer or fan perspective (Baker, 2011.) That strategy paid off as the company currently has a massive presence on Facebook with fans totaling 54 million and increasing every month at the rate of three to five percent (Baker, 2011). The core of Coca-Cola's marketing strategy has always been centered on storytelling.

From the famous Polar Bears holiday advertisements to focusing on the company heritage and reminding its audience of the way their parents or grandparents enjoyed its products, the social media effort by Coca-Cola isn't much different than that original vision (Graham, 2011). Coca-Cola's Vice President of Global Advertising and Strategy states that Coke's stories must add substance and value to people's lives and it has to be the most compelling content possible (Baker, 2011). This type of commitment to this type of storytelling carries to its social media strategy and was the primary reason why they took part in social media discourse. Coca-Cola wanted to continue telling its story to its audiences while having its fans contribute to that story, capitalizing on the very essence of social media (Baker, 2011).

The fact the Facebook page was inherited from Coca-Cola's fans set the stage from the very beginning for that story to be deeply rooted in those that value and use the product. Coca-

Cola's adoption of social media into their marketing repertoire was a natural extension of their current rhetoric, which was heavy on telling stories of the company's history, its products and incorporating stories of the company's products into every day life of its consumers. The virtue of Coca-Cola's social media beginnings being very reminiscent of what the company stands for was an early indicator that Coca-Cola was going to be a standout in the industry. Coca-Cola's place in popular culture was only going to be extended through participation in social media discourse, which explains the context of the social media discourse and how the company began, simply by using another avenue to tell its story.

Shifting to Southwest Airlines, the company had a much different approach to its beginnings on social media, yet stayed true to its brand and what it stands for. Research by business travel experts "Lets Fly Cheaper" declared Southwest Airlines the undisputed ruler of the social atmosphere by studying social media activity of the eight major airlines (Joyce, 2012). Southwest Airlines has been active in social media since 2006, when they launched their "Nuts about Southwest" blog, soon thereafter in 2007, they began a presence on Facebook and Twitter (Brown, 2011). Their early adoption of social media, much sooner than other brands was at the root of what they stood for, as they were the first discount airline that really took off and were known for their early adapter attitude. Southwest Airlines' social media strategy mirrors its overall corporate strategy, a big reason why they've seen success in this medium (Joyce, 2012).

Southwest Airlines has stood out as a brand that shows a lot of personality in all they do, from how they operate on an every day basis to the actual marketing messages they send to audiences (Joyce, 2012). When first venturing on social media, Southwest wanted to show a

unique, fun personality, and ultimately provide relevant information to their customers on the platform that they prefer to get it (Joyce, 2012). The reasoning behind venturing on social media platforms earlier than their competitors as well as choosing to showcase so much personality is at the core of what Southwest Airlines stands for. There is a definite link between Southwest Airlines' rhetorical efforts in the social media space and the rhetor's character.

Their brand is centered on their personality and addressing their customers' needs in a timely fashion. Social media is the perfect medium to allow for both to happen simultaneously. The fact that Southwest has taken to social media earlier than its competitors and the way it uses to accentuate its brand personality makes sense for this particular brand. Helping its audience while showing flair is in line with their overall strategy of communication and marketing.

Coca-Cola and Southwest serve as an interesting means of comparison, as one is an established leader in the marketing community and the other is a new and rising star; however, even by being positioned differently, both their social media strategies are centered on content, a means of commonality between the two. While the strategies are different, they fit what the brands stand for. While they had different beginnings in social media, there was a clear need for both to engage. When it comes to public institutions reasoning behind social media discourse may be a little different; however, the need to tell one's story is something that doesn't change in the public sector.

In the public sector, the U.S. Army has been noticed for its social media discourse efforts as they've been successful in telling the Army story that relates to Americans (Ray,

2012). When the Army started engaging in social networks, there was a realization that the gap between the American people and the armed services needed to be bridged, with only one percent of Americans serving it was crucial to find a way to better connect with the American public (Ray, 2012). The Army's need for continued public support and overall awareness is what started its involvement in social media. While not the first Department of Defense practitioner on social media, the Army has had made up its lag with taking on the medium aggressively (Ray, 2012).

The Army has become particularly good at knowing their audience. There is one simple goal, which is to connect America to its Army not just for the purposes of recruiting, but keeping taxpayers informed and educated on what the Army is doing and why it is important to national security (Ray, 2012). This simple goal has been the reasoning behind the social media rhetoric of the Army, which is a goal they work on meeting through every other rhetoric they participate in. With the media being aggressive on reporting the war efforts, it was crucial for the Army to be able to tell their side of the story in a medium where their target audience was (Ray, 2012). While the need to connect with its audience propelled the Army to engage on social media networks, social media was just a new outlet for the Army to do what it has already been doing for decades.

Knowing how each of the three brands have started in social media is important to gaining a deeper understanding of their discourse on social media. In each of the three examples, it is clear that the social media discourse was very reminiscent of the foundation the brands stand for. Setting up a foundation like that has allowed these brands to come off as credible, in their respective industries from the early goings of their social media discourse

efforts. Understanding the context of what the brands stand for combined with their reasoning to enter social media discourse sets up the rhetorical analysis and allows the audience to have background and clearer understanding about the brands.

Applying Five Canons of Rhetoric to the Artifacts

Analyzing the Facebook and Tweets posted by these brands provides better understanding of how social media discourse are tied to Aristotle's principles of rhetoric that are pathos, ethos and logos. Through paying particular attention to invention, the creation of ideas for the rhetoric, and style, the language of speech, the readers will be able to see the connection between communication theories mentioned earlier in this study and how they link to success by the brands discussed in the rhetorical analysis. After conducted the rhetorical analysis, the readers should be able to see that even though the respective social media strategies may be executed by a dedicated team, everything comes down to executing sound communication principles that match the meaning of the brand.

Coca-Cola has been known as a marketing giant that takes advantage of storytelling principles when it comes to its marketing techniques. This is something that has translated into their social media discourse. Inviting their fans to be part of the Coca-Cola story is partially why the brand is so successful in the social media space. In one particular instance, Coca-Cola's social media team came across a photo of Coke cans in a driveway, arranged in a heart shape and dusted with fall leaves (Baker, 2011). Upon asking the creator to reproduce the art on its Facebook page, Coca-Cola found out the cans were part of a young girl's project on the heart in which she worked closely with her mother to make (Baker, 2011). Coca-Cola ended up turning the photo into a story with educational and mother-daughter overtones, which appealed to their

fan base from a pathos standpoint of evoking emotion out of the fans. Evoking emotion out of the audience in social media posts is one of the biggest reasons why content gets shared and viewed (Blanchard, 2011). This longer type of narrative Coca-Cola practices on Facebook as evidenced by the previous example is continued through Twitter through shorter snippets where Coca-Cola encourages its followers to add on to a scenario they've set up. In essence, allowing their audience to add their own story to the Coca-Cola narrative. Through Twitter, Coca-Cola encourages and invites its followers to a dialogue that allows them to complete the story scenario Coca-Cola sets up for them.

Invention

Invention, or location and creation of ideas for social media discourse and one of the canons of rhetoric that will be analyzed in this study is an important element of rhetoric when it comes to Coca-Cola. The creation of ideas, or the strategy portion behind the social media discourse is arguably the most important step in creating successful program. Coca-Cola take the ideation process very seriously as all its employees involved in social media in any capacity must first undergo a social media certification program (Coca-Cola, 2012). During this program, employees are not only thought about company objectives on social media and the what kind of content and message is favorable to get across to the audiences, the certification also covers a section of why audiences respond more favorably to a certain type of content vs. other. The importance on emotions and evoking emotions out of audiences becomes the number one goal even in the early stages of creation of ideas.

Focusing on pathos in this initial step sets the stage for executing content that has the ability to draw at the heartstrings of audiences. In addition to focusing on pathos, Coca-Cola places a heavy emphasis on ethos and social media. Each employee that is involved in the

social media program or a brand ambassador from another department must always identify themselves as part of the Coca-Cola team and practice transparency 100% of the time (Coca-Cola, 2012). The very robust social media policy Coca-Cola has on their website, which outlines their social media stance and provides a guide for employees is the first step in the ideation process. Knowing the rules, boundaries and the official company stance allows for the content to follow a vision set by leadership and also sets a standard for all content produced by Coca-Cola having to meet a certain set of guidelines for good communication. Having to identify themselves as part of the company when engaging with fans and practicing transparency shows the level of importance placed on ethos, something fans see as credible and draws them to that content.

Standards that are set in the social media policy also ensure logos in posts, providing information that makes sense is in Coca-Cola's interest. The invention process at Coca-Cola starts with a social media policy, followed by a social media certification and finally a team of experts that understand the content that is pushed out from Coca-Cola must follow a set of communication principles where not only the company is represented well, but the audiences is getting value out of the posts. The fact that even in the social media policy it's voiced that value must be provided to audiences is a good sign when it comes to social media discourse that has the ability to make an impact. Guidance that accounts for ethos, pathos and logos sets up the execution of social media discourse for success.

From the very first experience with the Coca-Cola Facebook page, the audience starts the emotional connection with the brand through the actual set up of the page. The style, or the language of the rhetoric exudes happiness, from selected photo from fans to Coca-Cola's most recent feel good advertisement; everything is geared and aligned to establish an emotional

connection with Coca-Cola. The language uses many action words and adjectives that either asks or directs audiences toward happy themes or it paints vivid pictures of a moment in time. While the language is very simple and short in Coca-Cola social media discourse, their ability to pair imagery to simple concepts and thoughts results in audience being able to connect with their messaging.

The fact the content is memorable and exciting, or in marketing circles called “sticky” it appeals to audience because it follows good order of rhetoric; this makes the audience more likely to share it with their friends and family. Coca-Cola’s social media strategy counts on a using pathos to put the audience in particular time and place and triggers memories, all while placing their products in those memories, making the product synonymous with those good memories. On the Coca-Cola Twitter page, a simple post stating the audience may be very busy and hectic but it only takes a minute to open a cold Coca-Cola puts the audience in a position to something they can relate to while making them think about the product (Coca, Cola, 2012).

While Twitter and Facebook are different social media avenues, Coca-Cola sticks to their messaging while having a strong understanding of how to use language to best connect on each medium; on Twitter, Coca-Cola makes their memorable and exciting messages even shorter and engages and responds to fans more so than on Facebook. Understanding the style must be different between the mediums is something that helps Coca-Cola be successful in social media discourse, knowing what audiences are looking for out of each medium. Fisher (1987) is convinced that we are narrative beings who “experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing narratives, as conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends.” Coca-Cola takes this approach to their social media discourse and appeals to the human need to see narratives in forms of stories, even being able to do this through limited amount of characters via social

media discourse through the careful pairing of words and images. Through a short narrative and a photo to go along with it, Coca-Cola is able to tell the story of their brand through the rhetoric of social media discourse. Example of this has to do with Coca-Cola placing their brand in the minds of the consumer and associating it with a positive experience. Specifically, during the holiday season a post from Coca-Cola is a photo of a food spread and Coca-Cola prominently displayed in the center with the rhetoric “Thumbs up if you enjoy the leftovers with a side of Coca-Cola” (Coca Cola, 2012). The audience is able to place themselves in this type of narrative and relate. Coca-Cola’s Facebook and Twitter pages are filled with these mini narratives that cause the reader to positively associate with the brand and the stories shared. Shifting to Southwest Airlines social media discourse, while taking advantage of pathos like Coca-Cola, the company does so in a much different manner. Too often, the main complaint about brands on social media is that they brands appear to be stiff on this medium, not quite sure of how to proceed (Hosenkamp, 2012). This is not the case for Southwest Airlines—its Tweets and status updates are overflowing with the brand’s personality (Hosenkamp, 2012). The company has a philosophy of being “real” on social media, saying that brands should speak the same way as if they are speaking to a person (Hosenkamp, 2012). One way Southwest manages to sound human is by engaging with its employees to be voices of the brand (Hosenkamp, 2012). After Southwest redesigned its award winning blog, “Nuts about Southwest” it recruited employees to tell stories on the blog; the social media team chose 30 people—flight attendants, pilots, mechanics, those that represent what Southwest is all about and breathe life into the brand (Hosenkamp, 2012).

In a similar fashion to Coca-Cola, Southwest's invention cannon puts an emphasis on the planning and strategy portion of its social media discourse. The effort put into coming up with social media discourse for Southwest is truly integrated. There's much internal collaboration: marketing creates the feel for its social media channels, and the communications team, through its emerging media group drives content (Brown, 2011). The legal and investor relations departments are also closely involved in the process, showing full integration amongst the different voices of the company. In addition, similar to the way Coca-Cola conducts a social media certification, all emerging media team employees complete customer service training to ensure they are well-prepared to address customer questions and issues directly and in a timely fashion (Brown, 2011). This level of planning ensures the messages being distributed via social media discourse have appropriate levels of pathos, ethos and logos due to the collaboration with the different departments. The brand's willingness to be so transparent is an ethos trait as that is something their audiences have grown to expect from them based on what they stand for. The experts in a particular area are including their perspective for that balance between pathos, logos and ethos by contributing their point of view to the communication that is coming out of the official brand voice.

While planning for content is an internal effort of multiple departments, Southwest also reaches out specifically to influencers: travel bloggers, brand fanatics, avid travelers, and importantly, employees who all contribute to the content (Brown, 2011). To ensure the brand is coming off as full of personality as advertised and to increase broader employee involvement, Southwest organized an internal social media conference in January 2011. They brought employee contributors into their headquarters space in Dallas for overviews and training on social media and content creation (Brown, 2011). This shows the commitment Southwest Airlines has to

social media discourse and the actual planning that goes into it. An example of this is seen on their Facebook or Twitter page when Southwest employees that are posting are using their initials to identify themselves or when representatives from various departments are able to talk about their job and how they make up the culture of Southwest. That level of personalization is in tune with how Southwest expresses its voice and brand persona not only on social media discourse but all other marketing and communication materials.

Style of Language

Southwest Airlines is known for successfully communicating via social media, in part due to the fact that they have managed to stay authentic in social media discourse through the use of brand voice that resembles the human voice (Ivey, 2011). Taking on conversational tones when responding to consumers on Twitter and posting brand happenings from the first person point of view, treating social media discourse a conversation (Southwest Airlines, 2012). Remaining content-minded, Southwest Airlines takes on a community-based approach to social media discourse and is interested in growing their community through having them feel like they are part of the Southwest family (Ivey, 2012). Often posting photos of their passengers on the Facebook page and asking them to “tag” and identify themselves is an example of this. In addition, on Twitter, Southwest often responds to their followers not only when addressing their issues, but also in back and forth discussions that foster that sense of community. While Coca-Cola concentrates heavily on storytelling and relying on memory triggering techniques with their product taking center stage, Southwest Airlines concentrates more so on humor and exposing its quirky brand personality. Both approaches still heavily concentrate on content that has an element of ethos, pathos and logos; however, they are

mindful about the roots of their respective brands and use those elements of rhetoric to fit the voice of their brand. The brand voices are very much integrated into their overall marketing and communication strategies, making the social media discourse very authentic in nature. A more conversational and longer post approach by Southwest makes sense for their brand, while Coca-Cola's feel good strategy of evoking positive memories out of audiences is representative of what they try to stand for.

Sharing behind-the-scene stories that are occurring every day at Southwest, breaking news about flights and attempting to engage with their fans on a deeper level is how Southwest Airlines sums up their social media strategy (Steizner, 2011). The style of rhetoric capitalizes on play on words and language that is much more colloquial in nature, in comparison to Coca-Cola (Southwest Airlines, 2012). Celebrating popular culture phenomenon such as "Talk like Pirate Day," Southwest fully participates in these types of activities and changes their rhetoric to be relevant by saying things like "Avast! Thanks fer piloting the digital seas with us, mateys (Southwest Airlines, 2012). Staying true to what their brand stands for while participating in social media discourse allows the brand to see success in the social media space.

Through this rhetorical analysis it can be said that both Coca-Cola and Southwest Airlines conduct social media discourse by staying organized and following sound communication principles rooted in pathos, ethos and logos. While relying heavily on pathos, both companies have used the tool of rhetoric in the way it makes sense for their brand voice. The U.S. Army is a brand in the public sector and also uses pathos to get its message across, however, with this particular brand, ethos is the strongest foundation of communication it uses when participating on social media discourse. As a public organization that is dependent on support of the nation, the Army realizes the need for using communication to get its message

out and stay credible in the eyes of Americans (Ray, 2012). Social media discourse has proven to be effective for the Army getting its message out and engaging with supporters, future recruits and overall American taxpayers in a medium where these groups can be exposed to Army messaging even though they may not be physically located close to any sort of military installation.

The rhetorical analysis shows they have been especially successful to reach a broader audience via Twitter where they are engaging and answering questions by those Americans that may not be near a military installation, such as those that live in major cities. Like their corporate counterparts, the Army understands the importance of having a sound social media policy which not only outlets the strategy of communicating with the audience, but also teaches soldiers how to engage in social media (Ray, 2012). Through the invention cannon of rhetoric Army also spends significant time in organizing and ideating what type of content it will feed its social media platforms. With a small team that leads social media engagement, the team is in close contact with every area of the Army, knowing what is most compelling to post on a particular day (Storm, 2012).

Sharing powerful quotes from its leaders, significant moments in history, current mission updates, photos and videos, the Army uses content from its past and present to tell the story of today's Army and motivate those looking to become its future (Ray, 2012). Analyzing U.S. Army's social media discourse through Facebook and Twitter, Ray's research is supported as Army uses Twitter to engage with future recruits, parents and spouses of soldiers and any other interested parties that are looking for more information on the Army. On Twitter, Army is

indexing a variety of topics that represent its multitude of capabilities in order to attract a wider audience and show a broader appeal.

The difference between its Facebook and Twitter efforts have to do with that ability to reach a wider audience on Twitter due to the ability to index different topics. On Facebook, they rely on the virility of their messaging to gain a broader audience by their initial audience carrying that message to their friends. Knowing that credibility of message is single handedly the most important facet of communication, the Army relies on sharing posts in social media platforms that resonate with audiences and focus on ethos. On the Army Facebook page, content having to do with various units and areas such as the medical, snipers, armored, military police and others is showcased each day (U.S. Army, 2012). In order to have that much available content and imagery to share, the Army is in the know of all the various areas and what they are doing that is story or social media worth (Ray, 2012). While the stories, shot outs, images, or posts may cover a wide array of all things that Army stands for, an element of ethos and pathos is present in every post as it is part of the planning process (U.S. Army, 2012). It is hard to properly tell the Army story without showing the value of the emotional element and credibility. Messages filled with sentiments of courage, bravery, teamwork and high moral character are shared on both Facebook and Twitter, with the intention of using pathos and ethos to attract audiences to those messages.

The Army style of language on social media discourse uses powerful sounding adjectives and shifts between short and longer narratives (U.S. Army, 2012). According to Fisher (1987) narrative fidelity is the quality of a story that causes the words to strike a responsive chord in the life of the listener, something the Army attempts to do by sharing

stories of generations of families serving together, familial sacrifices, stories of heroism and bravery amongst other topics that evoke that type of emotional response out of the audience.

While the element of storytelling and capitalizing on pathos and ethos has worked in Army's favor when it comes to its social media discourse, the media equation theory also plays an important role. The theory suggests individuals treat media or brands as people, feeling bonded to these entities and drawn to engage with them in any capacity possible (Reeves & Nass, 1996). This is something the Army takes to its advantage when it engages with potential recruits or supporters, by recognizing that their response can go a long way in getting those third parties to not only support their message but also share it themselves (Reeves & Nass, 1996). Using enough military jargon to stay authentic, yet not overload the social media discourse with it, the Army keeps a fine balance of pleasing the internal and external audiences that are looking at their content (U.S. Army, 2012). The use of jargon becomes a rhetorical tool that can be used to make certain posts more authentic, credible or add an element of ethos. That use of language allows those that are part of the Army social media discourse to feel as if they are part of the Army family as they are being spoken to in a way actual soldiers are spoken to.

By examining these three brands closely in the way they employ planning, the use of language together with images, and the way they interact with audiences, the readers can gain a better understanding of how actual brands employ tools of rhetoric and communication theories to make their social media discourse stronger and resonate with the audience. It has been clear that these brands have been using elements of pathos when attempting to get their messages received and shared. By engaging the emotions of their respective audience, they have all created communities that resemble town halls where they can get an audience that is interested in their content as well as giving feedback. By creating these communities and forging

relationships with the audience the brands have an opportunity to persuade the audience with messages, as social media discourse done properly allows the audience to feel as they are part of that brand's story.

The Impact of the Artifacts on the Audience

The final step in the rhetorical analysis is assessing the impact of the artifacts, in this case social media discourse, on the audience. The fact that these brands post some of the most shared and viral content in their respective industries is what primarily shows a positive impact, of an audience that is engaged and actively participating in the social media discourse. Bill Gates said many years ago that in a short period of time content marketing would be the only marketing there was. And while he didn't call it "content marketing" he understood that the Internet was and would be a marketplace of thoughts, products, processes, interactions and experiences (Gates, 1996). The brands used for this rhetorical analysis are all considered to be heavy hitters with their content. According to a corporate communications expert and blogger Rick Rice, if organizations are going to be in participating in social media, they need to be prepared to engage in conversations, answer questions and provide insights and valuable information. That is exactly what the brands discussed in this rhetorical analysis have done. In addition, Shelly Kramer, a public relations strategist and blogger states the importance of integrating all marketing and communication efforts together, ensuring unity in brand voice even when it comes to social media, something all of the three brands have done as well. While all three of these brands are considered standouts, they do all look at different criteria when measuring their impact on social media networks.

While the measurement standards may be a little different for each of the three brands, using social media media avenues for actual enagement is what all of the brands are considering to be success. Coca-Cola is thinking about their audience in two ways: their initial audience--those they can reach directly, such as the 54 million Facebook Fans and 600,000 Twitter followers and their ultimate audience, which is those people whom their initial audience can reach for them (Baker, 2011). For Coca-Cola, their Facebook fans are just over one fan or friend away from the entire Facebook community of 1 billion and counting (Baker, 2012). The company feels that if they are doing their job well, they are developing useful, compelling, interesting and share-worthy content, in which instance, their fans become their sales force for them (Baker 2011). The analysis shows that Coca-Cola puts efforts into producing compelling content and engaging with the fans that are sharing this content. The way Southwest uses pathos is by showcasing their personality on both Facebook and Twitter. That is appealing to audiences as they see the brand as authentic through never backing down from its persona. Southwest on the other hand measures its success on social media discouse by ensuring they deliver on that customer promise and that outstanding customer service that they're known for, and then showing that fun Southwest personality they are also known for (Joyce, 2012). Finally, the U.S. Army considers social media success through the Army's story being shared by fans that consider the content to be compelling—number one goal for the Army being widest dissemanation of its posts (Ray, 2012). The rhetorical analysis is able to prove that as Army's Facebook and Twitter posts are shared by their fans and they are getting that traction of their message getting to the secondary audience, or, their audience's audience.

Discussion

The rhetorical analysis lent itself to communication theories being seen in action through the social media discourse. In the case of the Army, the tone that represents patriotism, leadership and strength is something audiences are also drawn to, showing that through social media discourse the Army is able to maintain that attribute that attracts audiences to its message. Army's ability to incorporate its history and present through leadership quotes and create a narrative that is meaningful and memorable draws audiences to its message and make what can be a complex message a simpler one. This allows for that message to be easily understood as Fisher (1987) suggests humans understand everything as stories. In addition to Army's narrative being memorable, Army's message is begins with a sense of ethos, which makes that message credible and audiences keep coming back for more. The combination of ethos and pathos in Army's case adds to the appeal of the narrative.

According to Fisher (1987) even when a message seems abstract and devoid of any kind imagery, it is narration because it is embedded in the speaker's ongoing story that has a beginning, middle, and end. This narrative invites listeners to interpret its meaning and assess its value for their own lives (Fisher, 1987, p. 298). This type of attachment to stories audiences have that Fisher voices in the narrative paradigm theory is exactly how Coca-Cola uses its social media discourse to get on that level with their audience. Evoking feelings and overall pathos out of posts and putting them in a form of narrative that has a beginning, middle and end is the formula that has been especially successful for Coca-Cola. Being relevant and forming narratives that audiences can relate to, while using their product imagery to everything they compose, Coca-Cola has made itself ubiquitous in its audience daily life through social media.

No matter what they are doing on any given day, the audiences are reminded that Coca-Cola brings them joy through stories that relate to their experience, are relevant in popular culture and make sense to the way the audience interprets information. One such post was posted to the Coca-Cola Facebook page during the 2012 election season with an appetizing glass of Coca-Cola and a “I voted” sticker with the narrative of, “cheers to all those that voted” (Coca-Cola, 2012). This post received over 40,000 comments and over 3,000 shares, considered to be very successful in social media circles because it brought together the element of pathos and logos and was a narrative that readers could relate to at that particular time.

Moving on past the narrative paradigm theory, as media equation theory suggests, we forge relationships with forms of media we feel take on the human elements and qualities; this validates why the brands discussed in this study have been successful in social media discourse, as they’ve practiced applying a conversational tone in their social media engagement as much as their brand persona allowed. The study also showed that all the brands discussed were masterful storytellers in their own regard and according to Fisher (1987), this is how we process and understand narrative, as stories with a beginning, middle and end and characters and values we can relate to. Good storytelling has an element of planning and rhetoric elements such as ethos, pathos and logos in order to make that story credible, relatable and understandable. The brands that were discussed showed their social media discourse did all of the above and demonstrated solid principles of both rhetoric and communication theory. While Southwest Airlines is concerned with pathos, its approach to evoking emotion out of its audience is different than Coca-Cola. Southwest is more concentrated on the voice and personality of the brand versus classic storytelling, a heavier concentration on ethos. They pride in engaging with their audiences and showing off that brand voice and personality through

social media discourse. Similarly, the U.S. Army's use of language associated with strength brings out pathos through its credibility and the use of ethos in the way messages are constructed to the audience. All three of the examples have a unique mix of ethos, pathos and logos that works for their particular brand and voice of brand.

Throughout the rhetorical analysis, it has been clear that all brands discussed went through all the phases of strategic communication, from planning to executing and then finally evaluating the effort when it came to their social media discourse. While criteria for evaluation may have had a slight variance, the quality of the content was something they were all concerned with. All of the brands discussed used pathos and storytelling when participating in social media discourse shows that they understood the link between those communication elements and compelling content. The use of communication theories and Aristotle's rhetoric principles by the three brands illustrates that they treat social media discourse in the same way they would any other method of corporate communication, yet understand the medium is also meant as a dialogue and are showing every effort to engage with their respective audiences as well.

Going back to the research questions, each rhetor understood the importance of pathos and used it in a way that made sense for their particular brand. Coca-Cola evoked happy memories out of its social media discourse, drawing on elements of pathos. Southwest Airlines displayed its vibrant personality, evoking emotions out of its audience through its brand voice. Finally, the U.S. Army relied on its patriotic messaging that also emphasized teamwork and courage, something its target audience, the American people find emotional.

The logos strategies each of the rhetors exemplified had to do with all of their posts being appropriate for the social media platform they were using. Each rhetor understood that Facebook allows longer rhetoric and messaging while Twitter requires a shorter and more direct approach to rhetoric. Coca-Cola's ability to insert its brand in the everyday lives of its audience was done in a way that was logical to the audience, which made them want to engage in that type of conversation. Southwest Airlines on the other hand was able to remain logical in its postings despite quirky language and an abundance of a personality. Finally, the U.S. Army's ability to break down what can be complex soldier jobs to something its audience can understand showcased the understanding of logos. In addition, the use of jargon was done in a way that made sense to the audience.

Ethos was something each rhetor possessed as a virtue of all of their marketing communication coming together and they were able to carry it through in their social media discourse. Authenticity of the rhetor's was obvious through their social media discourse as many posts identified the actual individuals that were making those posts, something done by Southwest on Facebook and the Army and Coca-Cola on Twitter. Their responses to criticism that at times was visible on their respective social media platforms was addressed by the rhetors. This showed a sense of ethos as many brand's leave the criticism ignored, something that lessens the credibility of that particular brand.

While each of the rhetor's used the ethos, pathos and logos to create messages that were compelling, there was a sense of balance between the three elements. Certain rhetors relied on one element more over the other, but kept all three in mind when conducting social media discourse. All three of the rhetor's relied on pathos more so than the other elements, however, Southwest Airlines was dependant on ethos as it's the element that made it stick out in its

respective industry as the most authentic voice and in turn brand. The U.S. Army paid particular attention to logos as some of its topics were more complex than the other rhetors yet the Army made them easily understood to its audience. All the rhetor's understood that different messages called for a different mix of pathos, ethos and logos and they applied the particular element that was needed most.

Each of the rhetor's had a clear understanding of who their audience was and they were looking to not just persuade them through their messaging but also form communities of advocates. While each rhetor had different goals for the audience, they were all looking to encourage engagement and obtain brand ambassadors that would share their content and allow it to get broader reach. Each of the brands was successful in this effort as it is very notable when visiting their social media platforms that their message is getting shared by their audiences and levels of engagement are active. Each of the rhetors had a clear understanding that engagement with the audience was a key element in conducting successful social media rhetoric.

Chapter 5

Further Study and Recommendations

Upon reading the literature review and the rhetorical analysis, the readers can recognize the link between ancient communication principles and their application to modern communication. Some of the most successful brands on social media outlets have shown a strong connection to planning their content with a sound understanding of how to use ethos, pathos and logos when crafting their messages and engaging with audiences. The implication of this statement has to do with understanding effective communication is rooted in theory and is best executed by those that are trained in understanding those nuances. When it comes to managing a brand's voice, which in today's communication environment often happens on social media channels, it is critical that those brand managers have a familiarity with what makes good rhetoric. In the same way speeches or any other kind of rhetoric were written with a very specific intent in mind, same becomes true of social media discourse. The brands analyzed in this study showed the methodical approach to social media discourse and the need to concentrate on sound rhetoric principles in order to produce content that is considered compelling.

As social media is still considered to be a new form of communication and the communication part is often overshadowed by the technology associated with it, the duty of managing social media presence is often delegated to the youngest member of the staff as they are typically considered to be most technology savvy (Blanchard, 2011). This study has been able to show the complexity that goes into planning for social media discourse and the implications of the study should deter brands from putting individuals or teams in roles that

manage the brand voice if they don't have a firm understanding of communication, especially rhetoric. This suggests that social media should be treated like any other communication discipline and those that are working in that function must be well integrated with the brand and have an experience in the communication field. The study has also shown that successful brands analyzed have an integrated approach to social media that includes involvement from varying divisions of the brand. The implication of this statement has to do with brands that were analyzed in the rhetorical analysis had teams of seasoned communication professionals that were executing social media and also involving multiple divisions of the brand to form one unified and consistent message, which is also compelling to the audience. The rhetorical analysis was able to show that social media is another avenue for the brand to have its voice heard and in order for that message to be compelling it had to match what the brand has already established itself as. The aspect of social media needing to be integrated into the overall communication effort was one of the biggest findings from the study. All the rhetors that were analyzed were masterful in having their social media match their overall branding and communication strategies that were taking place in traditional advertising, public relations and other marketing avenues.

Understanding the intricacies of the brand voice and representing that voice on social media platforms was a key concept that all brands analyzed had mastered. The tie between that concept and the media equation theory was something the study echoed. Southwest Airlines is especially good at understood that brands are seen as having human qualities (Hampel 2012). According to Rick Rice, a public relations veteran, when it comes to sales is all about solving someone's problem and building a relationship by continuing to meet their needs. The way this applies to social media and organizations that are participating in this space is they need to be

prepared to engage in conversations, answer questions, provide insights and valuable information. Broadcasting key messages won't get the brands anything but ignored on Facebook, Twitter or other social networks. According to Rice, when it comes to social media discourse the key word isn't media or network, the key word is social. If brands are not going to be social and interact with the audience, they will not be successful in this medium. This is something the study of the three brands proved; each of the three brands' respective strategies has to do with engaging and realizing audiences follow the same rules as they would in interpersonal communication, this is just what the media equation theory suggests (Reeves & Nass, 1996).

The other theory that came to life in the study was the narrative paradigm and the way the brands analyzed focused on storytelling to not just get their messages out but to also evoke emotion out of their audiences. Fisher, who is credited with the narrative paradigm is convinced that we are narrative beings who experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing narratives, as conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends, ultimately appealing to our reason that communication needs to be seen a series of stories (Fisher, p. 300 1987). While all three of the brands were masterful storytellers, Coca-Cola was especially invested in this technique. One of the top executives from Coca Cola stated if they give consumers content that is engaging, then those consumers become their sales people (Baker, 2011). The rhetorical analysis illustrated how each of the brands analyzed used storytelling to evoke emotions out of their respective audiences and ensure their desired messaging was given in a form of communication the audience would respond to best. According to Shelly Kramer, a prominent public relations blogger and practitioner, when it comes to social media, it's not just about

social and it's not just about brand messaging. It's about finding customers on their terms, where they are, and serving up content that adds value to their lives in some way or another and serves them. The rhetorical analysis was also able to show the readers that link between providing value to audiences and in turn the brand receiving positive results such as shared content that brings in new audiences and keeps the current audiences captive and engaged. Southwest Airlines provides useful content when it comes to their flights but also adds a level of entertainment when it comes to educating its audiences on all the other departments and roles within a company. Providing that “exclusive back-stage” look into the operations of the company is appealing to its audience. Not only is it transparent but also entertaining. The U.S. Army delivers the promise of getting the Army story told to average American tax-payers and showing them why their support is essential to the overall well-being of the Army. Through choosing specific areas to highlight and using ethos, pathos and logos to create that messaging they are adding value to the audience. Finally, Coca-Cola’s positive association with audience memories and its products also add the value of entertainment and a sense of belonging.

This rhetorical analysis can provide information and serve as reference to any other study that is looking to analyze content that is produced on social media and specifically those studies looking to analyze storytelling on social media in more depth. Additionally, studies that are looking at what departments within a company should take ownership of social media would also benefit from this rhetorical analysis. Any further study that is looking at communication techniques that are proven successful on social media discourse or looking at specific communication via different social media platforms can also borrow from this study. Studies that are looking to find the importance of social media discourse in overall

communication disciplines can also use this study as a point of reference. Finally, additional studies that are looking at how to integrate social media discourse into the communication mix may find this study useful.

Limitations of Study

The limitations of this study had to do with time and with narrowing the scope to only two social media platforms, Twitter and Facebook. To understand the full spectrum of social media discourse, more than those two platforms should have been included in the study. Due to the interest of time, the scope of the study had to be limited to only those two social media platforms. Those that manage social media efforts for major brands are working with a full portfolio of social media platforms to tell their story and it is unrealistic to think that they are only using Facebook and Twitter, even though those two are where the largest amount of effort is being placed by most brands. The time limitation was also notable in only being able to choose three brands; the study would have been more comprehensive should there have been a wider sample of brands analyzed from an even wider array of industries. The benefit of adding more industries and brands to the study would have been able to more conclusive patterns and findings between social media discourse and the use of rhetoric and communication theories. Finally, the study could have been taken the other way as well and only concentrate on a sampling from one particular industry. The reasoning behind choosing three successful brands from a variety of industries allowed the author to provide the most complete results even with the time limitation.

Conclusion

This study was able to illustrate that while social media may seem like a complicated concept that requires too many resources to run properly, in reality, it is like any other communication vehicle that demands the use of sound rhetoric and communication theories and applications. The study has been able to demystify the medium and its successes and attribute it to communication theory and brands committed to integrating all of their communication channels and providing a unified message. From the study, it has been clear that engaging is a key component of success in social media discourse, which compliments the media equation theory and audiences' need to interact with media forms. The connection between pathos and social media success as well as building relationships and communities with the audience was another important take-away from the study. Finally, in order to produce a persuasive message and achieve success in social media discourse, brands must produce engaging and compelling content in the same way the brands in this study have been doing. It is critical for brands to understand the social media discourse should be treated like a virtual town hall and engaging and responding back is another key ingredient to success.

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