MILLENNIAL STUDENTS RELATIONSHIP WITH 2008 TOP 10 SOCIAL MEDIA BRANDS VIA
SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to examine links between organization-public relationships and Millennial students' active social media behavior. The Millennial Generation is a key target audience who many public relations practitioners are certainly trying to reach. Social media tools are emerging as technology medium must-haves for public relations practitioners. This study looked at the collision of the new social media tools and the Millennial audience within the four models of public relations (Grunig and Hunt, 1984) through the relationship management framework lens. Four research questions and hypotheses were posed. Millennial students from two Midwestern universities were randomly selected to complete a survey on their relationship with the top 10 most social companies/brands as named by *Ad Age,* as well as the engagement with social media tools in general and specifically with those top 10 companies/brands. A total of 1,062 participants completed the survey. The break down of gender for the sample was consistent with the demographic makeup of both campuses as a whole with 43.6% male (n= 463) and 56.4% female (n= 599) completing the survey.

Findings highlighted that Millennials engage with e-mail and social networking (e.g., MySpace/Facebook) more than other social media tools. For all companies/brands except CNN and Dell, as participants' general use of social media tools increased, their wanting to continue a relationship with the company/brand also increased. However, when Millennials were exposed to a variety of social media tools by each company/brand, no significant correlations were found for wanting their relationship to continue with that particular company/brand. No significant differences were found between gender and interaction with social media tools.

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INTRODUCTION

The Internet has become a major player in the public relations field within the last decade. The World Wide Web has served as a key contributor in how organizations and their publics develop mutually beneficial relationships, an important characteristic for public relations. With emerging social media tools such as Web 2.0, blogs, podcasts, wikis, and RSS technologies becoming more highly discussed topics within the field, the Internet itself has become a public relations toolbox that holds all the newest social media tools for every public relations practitioner. Celsi (2008) encouraged public relations (PR) professionals to begin thinking of ways to lead their agencies and organizations toward the future. Celsi pointed out that "the tools in the social media arsenal can promote our companies and employees as experts" (p. 12). Furthermore, social media tools could make or break hiring of public relations firms in the future. For example, Hitachi Data System's (HDS) recent hiring of the PR firm Ogilvy rather than Hill & Knowlton was based on social media. According to Shah's (2007) cover story in *PRWeek*, HDS spokesperson Steve Zivanic was adamant about public relations agencies adopting more social media practices, an opinion which led to his decision in choosing Ogilvy over its competitor.

Public relations practitioners are not the only people who need an understanding of social media within the field. PR educators in the United States are being advised by public relations practitioners to consider adopting social media into the curriculum. Public relations students around the country are seeking guidance on understanding this new media behavior and its application to the wider public relations world. Hood (2007) commented on the increasing need for a more consistent social media presence in academia. In her article in *PRWeek*, Hood explained that educators need to begin making changes to the traditional programs in order to

accommodate the growing trend of social media within the PR field. Hood challenges those

teaching in the public relations field. "We all need to be much more active about making sure

that it [better understanding for students of new social media] happens, so that the industry

continues to attract the best, and they [students] are equipped with the tools they need to do the

job as it continually changes" (Hood, 2007, p. 11).

Social media are changing public relations careers, whether the field is ready or not. Scott

(2007) pointed out how social media have changed the look of public relations, beginning with

the rise of the Web:

> PR is no longer just an esoteric discipline where great efforts are spent by companies to
>
> communicate exclusively to a handful of reporters who then tell the company's story,
>
> generating a clip for the PR people to show their bosses. Now, great PR includes
>
> programs to reach buyers directly. The Web allows direct access to information about
>
> your products, and smart companies understand and use this phenomenal resource to
>
> great advantage. (p. 11)

Literature on how practitioners are using social media is scarce at this point, primarily

because social media is in its infancy. It is helpful to further analyze the existing public relations

literature to support the thought structure concerning how these emerging communication

technologies fit alongside and/or within existing traditional communication tools. For decades,

professionals and scholars alike in the field of public relations have turned to the foundational

block of relationship building in order to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships

between the public and the organization. Hallahan (2008) asserted that one way to demonstrate a

company/brand commitment to key publics was to make technology-based access available. In

an effort to expand the knowledge in building key relationships, the current study looks at a

particular technology-based medium, namely social media, to understand better what effect these social media tools have in establishing relationships. Because of its extensive use of technology, the Millennial Generation was chosen as the target public. Although others have looked at key publics through the relationship management lens (Yang, 2005; Banning & Schoen 2007; Brønn, 2008; O'Neil, 2007; Ristino, 2007; Hong, 2008; Vorvoreanu, 2008), none have looked specifically within a generational demographic. Hence, the current study contributes to a theoretical body of knowledge in the public relations field by providing acute in-depth understanding into the personal commitment relationship dimension, specifically with a younger demographic, the Millennial Generation.

Social media tools have provided new ways for key publics to build and maintain relationships with companies/brands. Much work remains to be done in the academic realm to further examine the variety of relationship dimensions that may be able to work to the organizations' advantage in building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with key publics. However, the current study hopes to uncover how public relations practitioners are using social media tools to effectively reach the Millennial audiences.

CHAPTER I. LITERATURE REVIEW

Moving from the Web and beyond

First, it is important to look at the foundational studies that have been done in social

media within the public relations field. The Internet and World Wide Web help set these current

powerful social media tools into motion. Defining both the Internet and World Wide Web is

garnered in order to distinguish between the two. According to Franklin, Hogan, Langley,

Mosdell and Pill (2009), "The history of the Internet began in the 1960s with ARPANET or

DARPANET, a project of the US Department of Defense" (p. 113). The Internet serves as a

global network of networks. As a worldwide system the Internet helps public relations

practitioners along with millions of others connect with each other. The World Wide Web, on the

other hand, is a variety of resources that is a specialized portion of the Internet. According to

Kelleher, "The Web is a collection of resources available for us to retrieve with our Web

browsers" (p. 5). With a click of a mouse, users are able to access information quickly, an ideal

tool for any public relations practitioner trying to get information to the public in a timely

fashion.

During the 1990s, many debates examined whether or not public relations practitioners

needed to utilize the World Wide Web. At the turn of the century, the focus shifted from arguing

about whether the Web as a tool was needed, as it was decided as a collective whole it was, to

the issue of the attitudes of practitioners using the Web and *how* they were using the tool. For

example, researchers Gustafson and Thomsen (1996) predicted more than 10 years ago that

public relations practitioners would significantly increase the time that they spend with clients

and colleagues on a daily basis through the use of the World Wide Web. Those predictions were

eventually confirmed. A few years after Gustafson and Thomsen's predictions, editors of the PR

Bibliography section in 1999 *Public Relations Review* pointed out that with the growing interest in all aspects of technology and public relations, the journal needed to expand its traditional categories. The editors presented a new category, *Technology and Graphics*. This period saw the rising presence of the Internet, and public relations practitioners began to consider this emerging technology as a possible useful tool in the PR toolbox.

According to the recent statistic on the *Internet World States* Web page, over 1 billion people around the world are using the Internet (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2009). Usage of the Internet has grown by a staggering 236.8% between 2000 and 2008 and shows no signs of slowing within the next few years. Pew Internet & American Life Project (2008) *Who's Online* data chart supplied statistics, providing more specific demographic information about those using the Internet. The youngest demographic, those between the ages of 18 to 29, checked in the highest. Of all those surveyed in this age group, 90% reported that they used the Internet. In other age categories, 85% of those between 30 to 49 reported using the Internet, 70% of those between the ages of 50 to 64 reported using the Internet, and 35% of those who were 65 years of age or older reported using the Internet. All statistics support the idea that younger audiences do indeed tend to grasp more firmly onto those new media tools that can be found online.

The Pew Internet & American Life Project (2008) *Online Activities* data chart supplied statistics of what the 73% of adults who do use the Internet are doing once they are online. The top 10 activities include sending or reading e-mail (92%), using a search engine to find information (89%), searching for a map or driving directions (86%), looking for information on a hobby or interest (83%), looking for information online about a service or product they are thinking of buying (81%), checking the weather (80%), looking for health/medical information (75%), getting travel information (73%), getting news (73%), and buying a product (71%).

How communication information is delivered and how PR practitioners interact with their customers is now different with this online tool. According to Breakenridge (2008), "The Internet enables you to extend your communications in ways you never could have imagined and to connect with groups you probably never thought you could reach" (p. 13). Researchers are confirming the movement to the Internet from the traditional forms of mass media. McGillicuddy (2006) stated that although companies are spending the same amount of money, the mix of media is shifting from traditional forms to online. "Online marketing and advertising spending by small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) in the U.S. will increase from $1.3 billion in 2005 to $9.3 billion in 2010" (p. 1). The move from traditional media tools to online seems economically smart when considering what businesses can get for the same dollar amount online as compared to broadcast or print outlets. Traditional forms of media aimed at reaching the masses with targeted messages are working, but the online or digital industry is not only reaching those masses, but also doing so more cost efficiently. Gillin (2007) elaborated on this precise point.

> Low-cost Internet publishing, combined with sophisticated search technology and community rating engines means that the cost of producing and distributing content in the future will be orders of magnitude less than it is today. It will be cheaper for advertisers to find customers online than through broadcast or print outlets. (p. 202)

Cost-efficiency and reaching those who really want important information quickly are both considerable benefits of moving online. Scott (2007) pointed out that "the Web has opened a tremendous opportunity to reach niche buyers directly with targeted messages that cost a fraction of what big-budget advertising costs" (p. 6). Scott's ideas are echoed again in a *BusinessWeek* article that praised new technology and fragmented media. In his article, Bianco (2004) clarified who is doomed to die and who will thrive. "The future of many of America's

best-known companies now will rise or fall depending on how well they adapt to what is shaping up as a long and chaotic transition from the fading age of mass marketing to the dawning era of micromarketing" (p. 4). Bianco further highlights what he considers to be the two major advantages of the Internet over the more traditional forms of mass media for public relations practitioners. The interaction factor and the ability to measure more precisely the advertising impacts are the two advantages he highlighted. Nichols & Good (2004) reiterate Bianco's point of interaction with the online or digital media versus the more traditional forms. "The Internet has forever changed the way youth gather and disseminate information and communicate. Instead of late-night phone conversations, youth use instant messaging services to talk long into the night with a number of peers at once" (p. 36).

With social media technology, how much more quickly public relations practitioners communicate with others can be noted. Consider, for example, client environment monitoring. Once done by monitoring the public opinion with time-consuming interviews, client environment monitoring is now being done in minutes by monitoring blogs and chat rooms within specific niche Web sites. Another example of quickness includes software programs that have drastically changed the way practitioners design brochures, newsletters, and other promotional pieces that are critical components of the public relations arsenal of avenues to communicate with their target audiences.

The company Web site is considered one of the first public relations online tools that can be controlled, as it is able to reach the targeted audience in the precise form it was intended. Unlike the traditional press kit that includes press releases, brochures, fact sheets, and other promotional materials, the Web site of the company has the ability to reach mass audiences without the editor acting as a gatekeeper.

One of the first researchers to look at the Internet or World Wide Web through the public relations lens was Robert Heath. Heath (1998) pointed out that considerable attention had been given to the World Wide Web as a communication tool for public relations practitioners. Heath investigated the rich dialogues that can occur on the Web through an issue management approach to the new technology. Heath's conclusion is something of which most practitioners today have a much better understanding; those consumers who are not as well off financially can still play a role in the global discussion of issues via the World Wide Web.

The question that continued to be asked at the turn of the century was whether or not public relations practitioners were utilizing the emerging technology. Porter, Sallot, Cameron and Shamp's (2001) initial research investigated over 150 public relations practitioners and their use of the emerging technology of online databases in their daily activities. The researchers found that although the online databases were not hindering the practitioners' jobs, most were not yet taking advantage of the timesaving tool, lagging behind other fields in the adoption of the new technology.

Two years later, Porter and Sallot (2003) were aware that the Web's full potential impact on public relations continued to remain untapped. In order to close the gap that existed in the public relations literature, the two researchers focused on practitioners' use of the Internet, specifically giving attention to the World Wide Web. Probing the relationships between practitioners and *if* and *how* they used the World Wide Web, Porter and Sallot concluded that public relations practitioners no longer lagged in using new technology as their previous study had posited. The researchers argued that practitioners were using the World Wide Web as a strategic tool in their public relations arsenal of tactics to aid them in their daily activities of promoting clients.

The initial studies of the Web as a public relations tool done by White and Raman (2000) found that most PR companies that were utilizing the tool were doing so in order to keep up with the competition. "Even the WDM [Web site Decision Makers] for the Web site of the religious diocese mentioned competition, noting that other religions had Web sites" (p. 413). Through their research, White and Raman interviewed those PR practitioners responsible for making Web site planning and decisions. They found that many of the companies decided to add a Web site to their collection of mass media tools because there was a sense of urgency to keep up with competition. In turn, the rational planning process that was often used for traditional communication vehicles was no longer utilized. According to White and Raman (2000), "Web site developers believed that their Web sites were perceived by their publics as a mark of quality for their organization" (p. 417). Hill and White (2000) found that participants believed that, "having a Web site creates a positive image and competitive edge for an organization and allows the organization to appear to be on the cutting edge" (p. 46).

Adopting a Web site may have been a mistake for those not trained with the know-how to effectively use the tool. Ryan (2003), in his study of members of the Public Relations Society of America who were practitioners in the field, found that one of the biggest organizational problems was teaching others the components of a good Web site. Within the public relations field, Ryan found one of the biggest problems tended to be the lack of conceptual and technical training. Proper training continues to be an obstacle as the software and hardware of computers is ever changing at a rapid pace. Ryan's study also surveyed women to compare their perceptions of Web technologies to those of men. He concluded that both sexes' perceptions were virtually the same, a finding that put to rest the gender bias that previously existed.

Many researchers argue that most people have moved beyond the now simplified Web inter-workings to concentrating on very specific tools of social media. Eventually, without really knowing it, most public relations practitioners have finally put behind them the debate of whether or not the Internet is a useful tool in the practice, agreeing the Internet is useful. Yet most practitioners have not completely abandoned their traditional communication tools. Hill and White (2000) pointed out that, "most *Fortune 500* companies use Web sites for external communication, focusing on promoting the company image and enhancing public relations rather than for direct sale or other revenue generating activities" (p. 31). In Hill and White's study of the Web site as a communications tool, they found that most practitioners routinely posted news releases to their Web site, but did so without abandoning the traditional means of communicating with journalists through either fax or e-mail. Hill and White also found that when PR practitioners utilized their Web site and supplied the same information that they did in face-to-face communication, online methods did not replace traditional options completely.

Callison (2003) looked at *Fortune 500* companies when he conducted a content analysis of all 2001 *Fortune 500* company Web sites to determine how corporations were using the Web to meet the informational needs of journalists. His analysis concluded that the majority of Web sites do not have dedicated pressrooms. Within three years, things began to change and researchers were no longer looking to see if the pressroom was in existence, but rather *how* this virtual pressroom was going to be used. Gonzalez-Herrero & Ruiz de Valbuena (2006) conducted an analysis of 120 corporate Web sites from around the world in order to evaluate the implementation and use of virtual pressrooms. Although Gonzalez-Herrero & Ruiz de Valbuena viewed no single country standing out more than the other with online pressrooms, they

concluded that all online pressrooms of all companies from all countries are far from being complete, efficient, easy-to-use or reliable, and are not updated on a daily basis.

Relationship and public relations

      Organization-public relationships. The study of the relationship between the organization and its public within the public relations field is a growing area of research (Yang, 2005; Banning & Schoen 2007; Brønn, 2008; O'Neil, 2007; Ristino, 2007; Hong, 2008; Vorvoreanu, 2008). The organization-public relationship approach to PR provides fruitful insights concerning the concept of building and maintaining organization-public relationships. The linkage of the organization-public relationship approach to public relations is natural as most scholars agree that in the definition of public relations, *relationship* is key. Broom (2009) defines public relations as "the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends" (p. 3). Ristino (2007), in his article pertaining to public relations within the health services, speaks of the importance of managing and enhancing relationships with those they serve. "The communication activities are based on a two-way symmetrical communication process that ensures that publics served and the organizations serving them build long lasting, mutually beneficial relationships" (p. 79).

      Beneficial relationships with the public are important for the survival of an organization. Public relations practitioners must build and maintain strong relationships between the organization and its public to lead to a desired behavior by the public for the organization and vice-versa. In O'Neil's (2007) study examining the association between relationship factors and strength and duration of donor support for a local food bank, she found that although strong public relationships were not associated with the amount donated, they were associated with

years of support, happiness to continue donating, and willingness to recommend others to donate. O'Neil (2007) stated, "The findings of this study are useful in that they demonstrate that long-term, successful public relationships impact behavior" (p. 102).

Not only are beneficial relationships needed externally between the organization and its publics, but also those relationships are needed just as much internally. Studies that have been conducted to look specifically at media have aided in understanding the relationships between practitioners and media. Ledingham and Bruning (2007) looked at the relationship between press relations practitioners and news media members, concluding that media audits are a helpful way to enhance the practitioner-media member relationship. "From the organization's perspective, the audit not only provides practitioners with a list of best practices, valuable in itself, it also offers insight into areas practitioners can focus on in order to raise performance ratings and nurture a relationship" (p. 196).

Whether internal or external, relationships are needed in order to get key audiences to act in a desirable way. In order to communicate successfully with target publics, public relations practitioners must revert to communication basics. According to Newsom and Haynes (2008) the basics include "message, public, and medium" (p. 109). Of particular interest to this study is the medium. Whether traditional or social, the medium a public relations practitioner uses is key to effectively building and maintaining public-organization relationships. One study that has been conducted is Vorvoreanu's (2008) Web site experience analysis. In her analysis of nine corporate Web sites, she examined student-public relationship beyond usability, but actual experiences as interpreted by the key public. In other words, was the relationship, in the way the student-public viewed it, how the organization intended to be perceived? Vorvoreanu's study offered readers suggestions on how to improve the public's Web site experience. This study is one that aims to

confirm that the student-public and organizational relationship is the same and not one that is misconstrued through the medium.

Personal commitment. Throughout studies that focus on public-organization relationships, all contain multidimensional factors that contribute to the understanding of those relationships. Of particular interest to this study is personal commitment. In one study conducted by Banning and Schoen (2007) on a museum's relationship with its key publics, the researchers found that the relationships could help determine both those who were likely to continue membership with the museum, as well as those who would not. "The information gained in the use of the three relationship sub-scales can help practitioners reinforce successful programs or change ineffective public relations initiatives, rather than simply measure the amount of communication produced in a newspaper or magazine" (p. 439). Personal commitment to the museum was a vital part of this study to discover those who would continue their relationship with the museum.

Social media tools defined

Eyrich, Padman, and Sweetser (2008) gathered information from practicing public relations practitioners and discovered that "overall, practitioners have adopted nearly six different social media tools professionally" (p. 413). These six tools included e-mail, intranet, blogs, videoconferencing, podcasts, video sharing, and personal digital assistants (PDA's). McLaughlin (2009) argued that Facebook and Twitter needed to be added to the social media must-have list. As mentioned in McLaughlin's article, Telindus, an IT services firm, suggested that denying access to Facebook and Twitter could be the deal breaker for 18 to 24 year olds seeking employment. Both Facebook and Twitter are also important to an organization trying to reach its niche public. In an article on why to use these powerful social media tools, Williams

(2009) stated, "Remember, social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter are all about building relationships. The key to your success is creating value-added content that will connect you more deeply to your existing customers and create new relationships as well" (p. 25).

Social media tools are emerging as technology must-haves for public relations practitioners. Cahill (2009) stated, "Companies, as well as individuals, are still learning how best to use the various social media tools available. The landscape will change in the coming years as new tools emerge and participation continues to increase" (p. 26). The following paragraphs highlight the social media tools that McLaughlin (2009) and Eyrich, Padman, and Sweetser (2008) deem the most significant social media tools to the public relations practice. The defining qualities and significance of social media tools that exhibit a strong ability to reach an external audience, namely the Millennial Generation, will be elaborated on for this study.

Facebook. Facebook is a social networking site that has been in existence since February 2004. Initially started as a site dedicated strictly to members with a college e-mail address, Facebook eventually opened up to the general public in September 2006. As noted on the Facebook Web site, "Facebook is a social utility that helps people communicate more efficiently with their friends, family and coworkers" (Facebook Factsheet, 2009, para. 1). The social media tool now boasts as of December 2009 that it has over 350 million users and is still growing. Hoge (2009) claims Facebook gained 24 million unique visitors worldwide in June of 2009, making it the fourth most trafficked Web site in the world.

Facebook could be a profitable idea for public relations practitioners who are trying to reach the Millennial Generation. According to The Outlaw (2009), a Web site geared to investigating the Millennial Generation's likes and dislikes, Facebook ranked in the top 15 of the generation's favorite Web sites. "Facebook has assumed the throne of the king of social

networking (stolen from Myspace), it seems to be changing the landscape, creating more of a legitimate relationship with social networking" (para. 3). The Outlaw (2009) went on to argue that Facebook has almost become a fact of life for the Millennial Generation, comparing it to Microsoft Outlook, an e-mail program, but with an emotional string attached. Furthermore, Vasquez (2008) reiterated what The Outlaw Web site claimed to be a trend among the generation. "To say more than two thirds of college students rank Facebook as their first, second or third favorite Web site is pretty impressive" (p. 1).

Public relations practitioners have a variety of opportunities to adapt and utilize this social media tool. Companies are able to target individual users based on the personal information that the users provide in their profile page on the social networking site. Facebook does allow users to block certain information or only share publicly information that they want shared with others. For those users who do share their favorite music, movies, interests, etc., public relations practitioners can capitalize on building a relationship with those users. O'Brien (2009) cautions those practitioners who jump into Facebook without fully being aware of its challenges with privacy and PR ethical guidelines. "Having access to thousands of individuals' identities and learning information about their tastes, beliefs and buying habits can make persuasion more effective. This is at the core of the privacy issue that the professional will soon have to confront" (p. 28).

Twitter. Some in the public relations field argue that Twitter has changed the way we communicate (Defren, 2008; Rose, 2009). According to Twitter's (2009) Web site, the social media tool began as a side project in March of 2006. Today Twitter has grown into a real-time short messaging service that is known for its 140-character brief messages that are sent and

received. Radwanick (2009) spoke of how quickly Twitter is making its presence known as a social media tool on a worldwide stage on her April 7, 2009, Web blog entry.

> Over the past several months, we at comScore have watched how quickly traffic to Twitter has exploded. Worldwide visitors to Twitter approached 10 million in February, up an impressive 700+% vs. a year ago. The past two months alone have seen worldwide visitors climb more than 5 million visitors. U.S. traffic growth has been just as dramatic, with Twitter reaching 4 million visitors in February, up more than 1,000% from a year ago. (para. 2)

As Twitter continues to grow, public relations professionals are urged to participate and engage in this social media tool. Defren (2008) argues that PR professionals need to adopt this social media tool early, as it can help not only with personal branding and knowledge, but also Twitter can build relationships. "Twitter may not be mainstream, yet, but it's well-known to the influencers and fellow practitioners with whom most PR people interact" (para. 7). Carr (2009) concurs with Defren, stating, "A channel like Twitter allows your business to engage with customers, other industry leaders and the media to grow your list of followers and update them on your latest company news" (para. 2).

Twitter is redefining the communications environment, namely in response to both positive and negative information (Rose, 2009). An incident that happened on January 15, 2009—"Miracle on the Hudson" illustrates this. Twitter played a vital role in what was reported by the media on that cold winter day when US Airways Flight 1549 made an emergency landing in the Hudson River in New York City after a bird strike disabled both engines minutes after takeoff. Rose (2009) reported that less than a minute after the airplane went down, content related to the incident was reported on Twitter. He argues that Twitter meets the desire of the

swift, high tech response that is needed in today's communication environment. "There is no longer time to debate a response. So reactions must be adapted and evolved for the communication tools and channels of today" (Rose 2009, p. 12).

Twitter does have a unique characteristic in that it is intertwined with other social media tools, namely blogging and social networking sites (Lenhart & Fox, 2009). Multi-tasking by using several social media tools at once appeals to the Millennial demographics, which is salient in the current study. The Pew Internet research team of Lenhart & Fox (2009) investigated who exactly was participating with the social media tool Twitter.

> Nearly one in five (19%) online adults ages 18 to 24 have ever used Twitter and its ilk, as have 20% of online adults 25 to 34. Use of these services drops off steadily after age 35 with 10% of 35 to 44 year olds and 5% of 45 to 54 year olds using Twitter. The decline is even more stark among older internet users; 4% of 55 to 64 year olds and 2% of those 65 and older use Twitter. (p. 2)

These statistics provide confirmation that the Millennial Generation has embraced this social media tool. Twitter has experienced large growth from May 2008 to May 2009. According to Vascellaro in her May 2009 *Wall Street Journal* article, "Twitter's users have jumped to an estimated 32.1 million from 1.6 million a year ago [May 2008]" (p. 1). With Twitter being an emerging communication tool that is increasing becoming more popular, 19% of online adult users provides a statistic of how quickly this social media tool is growing. Pew Internet & American Life Project *Twitter and Status Updating* article shows that in August 2008 the percentage of Twitter users was 6%. In September of 2009, the users of Twitter had increased to 19%. This is a significant increase from a year ago, more than tripling its percentage of users from 2008, backing the idea that the Millennial Generation is indeed using this emerging tool.

Twitter did not even exist in 2005, yet this social media tool has become so large that engaging with the tool has become a job itself. Posted in *The New York Times* in April of 2009, Pizza Hut, Inc. announced that it would be seeking a summer intern who would serve as its Twitter Intern. Bob Kraut, the vice president for marketing communication at Pizza Hut, was quoted as stating, "They'll [the intern selected] be our social media journalist, chronicling in 140 characters or less what's going on at Pizza Hut" (Clifford 2009, p. 1). At this pace, this social media tool is emerging as one of the must have tools in a public relations professional's toolbox.

E-mail. In a list provided by Eyrich, Padman, and Sweetser (2008) of the six most used social media tools utilized by public relations practitioners, e-mail is perhaps the most familiar channel. Unlike postal mail that is still delivered to home mailboxes, e-mail is delivered to a computer account that is set up to exchange messages through an Internet or Intranet server. Two of the major advantages that e-mail has over traditional mail are cost and time. In a matter of minutes messages can be sent across the world through digital means.

According to Kelleher (2007), "E-mail is generally thought of as an asynchronous mode of communication. That is, generally the senders and receivers need not be online at the same time for e-mail to work" (p. 5). This is ideal for public relations practitioners who aim to communicate with both external and internal audiences. E-mail is an efficient way to quickly reach audiences without being as intrusive as face-to-face communication. Marken (2005) commented on how important e-mail is to the PR profession. "As PR professionals we rely on e-mail communications. How often have you said to yourself our mail server is down and I can't contact anyone?" (p. 15). Marken stressed how time-consuming staying current with e-mails can be, yet how important it is to remain on top of this tool in order to effectively work in public relations.

Brunner and Yates (2008) surveyed public relations students on their use of e-mail as a form of communication. They found students most often reported using their e-mail accounts to ask instructors questions and communicate with their parents. These students would fall into the Millennial Generation, which this study will aim to further explore.

Also confirming that the Millennial Generation does engage with this social media tool, Lenhart & Fox's (2009) study for the Pew Internet data reported that 94% of those ages 18 to 32 use e-mail. This percentage was the highest use of e-mail by any of the generations surveyed in the study, although Generation X (ages 33 to 44) closely followed at 93% (p. 5).

E-mail has emerged as a norm in business communication. According to Marken (2005), this has led to the government establishing clear guidelines on e-mail archiving. He warned public relations practitioners that "not only can you embarrass your company and yourself but also e-mail archives can be used in the court" (p. 13). This fact reminds those in the field that although e-mail can quickly be delivered, care must be implemented when constructing and sending messages to target audiences.

Blogs. Blogging is a social media tool that public relations practitioners are beginning to thoroughly explore in order to understand how to utilize it effectively for their clients. Blogs have been around since the early 1990s, but really took flight around the turn of the century (McConnell & Hubba, 2007). A blog, short for Web log, is an online personal journal that can contain reflections, ideas, comments and often hyperlinks that link to other blogs and Web pages. According to Foust (2005), blogs come in all forms. "Some really are like diaries, essentially chronicling the life and thoughts of a particular person. Others deal with a specific topic or issue, such as free trade, the environment or reality television" (p. 66). Blogs are posted to the Web site in reverse chronological order with the most recent date of posting first. One of the assets of

blogging is the wide range of discussions that can take place along with the diversity of people whom it can reach. The technology tool facilitates quick and very easy communication.

The Pew Internet & American Life Project (2008) *Online Activities* data reported that 42% of Internet users in the United States read blogs (up 3% from 2006), 22% are willing to post comments to a blog, and 13% (up 5% from 2006) create and work on blogs. This increase could be attributed to the increase of blogs and blogging that happens every day. Technorati first started tracking blogs in March of 2003 when only a few thousand existed. Now in 2009, according to the company's Web site, the company tracks 112.8 million blogs and over 250 million pieces of tagged social media. The World Wide Web is incredibly active. According to Technorati data, over 175,000 new blogs are created every day. Bloggers update their blogs regularly with over 1.6 million posts per day, or over 18 updates per second.

Even with this amount of blogging taking place, corporations are slow to get on board. Yet blogging serves as a main channel for organizations to get their ideas heard by a specific audience. As easy as blogs are to set up, the time consuming part is maintaining them. According to Gillin (2007), "Fewer than 10% of CEOs in Fortune 500 companies maintain them" and "more than two-thirds of corporations still have no blogging policies in place" (p. 81). Most books and articles that focus on blogging all preach the same thing; if one does not have the time to maintain a blog, one should not bother (e.g., Breakenridge, 2008; Li & Bernoff, 2008; Scott, 2007). There is nothing worse than starting a blog that has outdated hyperlinks or only monthly posts and/or news. It takes ongoing work, and a badly maintained blog will create more havoc than good.

So why should these companies and CEOs of *Fortune 500* companies even bother? One good reason is, as Scott (2007) stated, "My blog allows me to push ideas into the marketplace as

I think of them, generating instant feedback" (p. 43). In addition to receiving feedback, comments that are made to blogs also help build credibility. One side of the story may be fine, but comments and debates on the issue raise the bar of credibility. The two-way communication allows for a more well-rounded post where others can glean truth from reading.

Blogging is definitely different than traditional journalism. Unlike the one-way communication that is weaved into newspapers, blogging invites two-way communication that adds perspective to ideas. As Scott (2007) elaborated, "Blogger's usual focus of promoting a single point of view is dramatically different from the journalist's goal of providing a balanced perspective" (p. 47). In a journalist's world, his or her job depends on the balance of equal information from all sides; however, bloggers are free to put their ideas out there, even if they could be wrong.

Breakenridge (2008) stated, "Blogging is also your cheapest form of a research—it's the greatest focus panel you could ever implement for only a fraction of the cost" (p. 264). There are plenty of free services available to those who wish to start a blog. Getting started blogging is the easy part; choosing the site to host the blog is a bit tougher. Furthermore, most bloggers blog for fun, not to make a profit. According to Gillin (2007), "Many bloggers work for a pittance, though a few are making good money. Most bloggers and podcasters spend nothing on circulation development. In fact, most don't even seek advertising until their readership runs into the thousands every day" (p. 66). Blogging serves as a social media tool that does not break the bank for the sender or receiver. This is yet another reason why the tool has taken off and been utilized by so many.

Public relations practitioners who are embracing the tool are leading the PR field into a different direction. Porter, Trammell, Chung and Kim (2007) stated, "As more Internet-based

communication tools emerge and gain popularity, it behooves [public relations] practitioners to understand how to integrate such tools early on" (p. 92). Blogs are finding their way into the PR practitioners' toolkit before most are really ready to utilize the new social media. Using an online survey, Porter, Trammell, Chung and Kim (2007) set out to explore the relationship between power and blog use among PR practitioners. They found that most blogs were not being used as a standard public relations tool. Although public relations practitioners admitted that they did still find value in blogging, only those who used the social media tool felt that they had more power with their early adopter know-how. These early adopter social media gurus are continually establishing protocols for using new and emerging tools that can better target their clients in order to lead not only their own companies, but also the entire industry.

This idea of online interaction has blossomed to thousands of companies utilizing the tool for feedback from their environment. Blogging also serves as a vehicle for PR practitioners to publish information and get immediate feedback. According to Marken (2006), blogging is not going away anytime soon. He emphasized, "We are entering Renaissance 2.0 that is not a bandwagon rolling hell-bent for somewhere. It is a new phase of community-wide new creativity that management and public relations people have to learn how to deal with and work within" (p. 20). He asserts that blogging is not simply something that companies can just put up on their Web site to work with for a few months and slowly abandon. Blogs require constant attention as an interactive tool.

Though little research is available on blogging within the public relations field, what does exist is noteworthy. Kent (2008) conducted a critical analysis of blogging within the field to examine the many claims made by practitioners about blogs being a powerful public relations tool. He concluded that the answer is yet to be determined. Kent (2008) reiterated what many had

said. "A blog will only be useful to an organization if it has someone to maintain it, someone trained in effective dialogic communication, and someone who has the trust of individuals and publics" (p. 39). Although many public relations firms believe in the power of effective communication with the social media blogging tool, many public relations firms, as well as their practitioners, are still trying to determine how to most efficiently utilize blogging.

      Podcasting. Podcasting is perhaps one of the most promising new trends in 2009, as well as one of the newest social media tactics. According to Gillin (2007), "In early 2004, there were fewer than 100 podcasts available" (p. 142). Yet when you try to find an estimate in 2009, none can be found because simply too many exist. Gillin defined a podcast as "a digital audio or video programming that can be streamed over the Internet or downloaded to a portable device. Podcasts differ from streaming audio or video in that podcasts use a subscription mechanism— RSS—to deliver content to subscribers" (p. 222). Podcasts can be heard on any type of portable media player or even simply from a computer equipped with sound capabilities.

      McConnell and Huba (2007) provided another interesting feature of utilizing the podcast—no FCC regulation of content. As a result, anyone who has a microphone and some sort of recorder can be a broadcaster of content of his or her choice without regulation, a drastic change from the traditional radio medium. There is a fine line with this content, however, as most listeners do not want to listen to an advertisement. For this reason, podcasts should shade on the side of being educational and actionable, and never strictly promotional (Gillin, 2007).

      The actual inter-workings of producing a podcast are not difficult provided one has a microphone and some standard sound hardware. After recording, producers can either buy software to edit their program or get free software through the Internet. Next, files are saved in an MP3 format and uploaded to a server, which again can be owned or purchased from an

external server for a nominal monthly fee. Finally, podcasters are ready to let the world know about their podcast. Many people either link the podcast to their blogs or post it to their Web sites. Tagging the audio, or creating key words that can help locate your file, is an important step to help those searching key terms discussed in your podcast. A listener who subscribes to a podcast can either download it automatically to a computer or put it on his or her portable media player.

Podcasting can gain an advantage over traditional radio for both consumers and producers. For consumers, podcasts can be downloaded and listened to at any time. Producers have the initial investment in the equipment but do not need to have the infrastructure of radio, including the big advertisers to keep the broadcast alive (Scott, 2007). Even though advertising is not needed to keep the podcast thriving, advertisers are not looking away from podcasting. In fact, in its September 2, 2008, article, EMarketer predicted that the growth of the podcast audience in the U.S. would help increase the advertising spending throughout the year 2012. "The U.S. podcast audience will grow from 18.5 million in 2007 to 65 million in 2012—an increase of over 250%" (p. 2). According to the EMarketer (2008b) article, U.S. podcast advertising spending could jump from its 2008 $240 million to a predicted $425 million in 2012. The marketing model for advertising money spent on audio is changing. According to the 2008 Arbitron/Edison Internet and Multimedia Study, consumption of audio podcasting grew from 13% to 18% in the past year, a number that equates to roughly 23 million Americans onboard with the new social media (Webster, 2008). Those who use podcasts are a key niche market that public relations practitioners can use to target those who are already accustomed to using podcasts every day. Jones and Fox (2009) reported in their Pew Internet study that Millennials were leading their older counterparts in downloading podcasts. They reported that 25% of those

in the Millennial Generation have downloaded podcasts, whereas 21% of Generation X and 19%

of young Boomers have downloaded podcasts (p. 5). The Millennial Generation once again leads

as the generation to adopt and embrace social media tools.

Podcasting and online video are two separate distinct media tools but are sometimes

spoken of together. Breakenridge (2007) explained how both could be incorporated internally

and externally in an organization.

> Video and podcasting can be used internally on a company's intranet for training, demos,
>
> for highlights of meetings, and clips from executive presentations. Externally,
>
> applications can be used for customer testimonies, product demos, and support tools, and
>
> can also be included in company news announcements posted in a newsroom area on
>
> your Web site. (p. 182)

Breakenridge went on to conclude that this new way of sharing video and audio applications

eliminates the cost of the traditional forms of videotapes, CDs and DVDs. No longer does one

have to wait to get a copy, as hundreds can log on and get the content immediately with no fee

for mailing or duplication.

Like other social media tools, if public relations practitioners enter the game early, they

develop more followers and, in turn, see a bigger return on their investment. By adopting the

podcasting tool, not only are public relations practitioners reaching the masses, but also those

who adopt this tool are seen as leaders and experts in the field. To date, a very small percentage

of research has been dedicated to studying how public relations practitioners are incorporating

podcasts into their social media artillery.

Online video. In the PR field, practitioners have been utilizing video for nearly three

decades. Video news releases (VNRs) are simple prepackaged publicity features that are sent to

news outlets in hopes of being shown on television. Why video? The idea of actually visually processing what is being said carries weight, especially in persuasion. Video podcasting, usually referred to as online video, is a video that has been uploaded to an Internet Web page in order for others to view on their computer or handheld video device. As defined by Breakenridege (2008), "Video has evolved from being the traditional prototype video to more of a short, news-style clip that can be posted on YouTube or put on your site for a journalist to watch or for a blogger to paste into their blog and make it more viral" (p. 182). Although definitions vary, all include the claim that it is a video posted online. Vasquez (2008) states, "On the new media/online video front, we can say with confidence that the audience is much more apt to consume long-form professional video on their computers as opposed to their iPods or cell phones" (p. 2).

Within the public relations field, practitioners are increasingly utilizing this social media tool. Yet a debate ensues when discussing the move away from traditional media in order to pursue the social media technology. Some have argued the need for both traditional and online components in order to be successful in PR campaigns (Garcia, 2007; Schmelzer, 2007), while others argue the need to evolve in order to keep up with consumer demands (Galloway, 2005; Thomas, 2007). *PRNews* (2008) pointed out that the rules and guidelines that have helped guide PR practitioners throughout the years are changing with this social media tool. "Far too many PR professionals still are applying traditional media rules that were established based on decades of studies conducted on TV viewing habits. While some of those rules still work, others need to evolve" (p. 2). Most public relations practitioners recognize that by learning the new rules of online video, reaching their niche market with relevant content can be more precise. *PRNews* (2008) states:

Along with interactivity, precise targeting is another dimension of audience engagement that has contributed to the rapid development of content for both the Internet and, indirectly, its parent, television. The two-way demand for a more relevant video experience in the relationship between marketers and audiences has brought about the emergence of a third genre of video content: narrative marketing. (p. 6)

Online video sites on the Web are numerous. Yet with all the available choices, YouTube seems to serve as the leader. According to its Web site, YouTube was founded in February 2005 and now serves as a leader of online video. Because of its overwhelming popularity, in November 2006 YouTube was purchased by Google, Inc., for a sum of $1.65 billion. To make a video to post requires only two pieces of equipment: a video camera or mobile phone and a computer that has Internet access in order to post to a YouTube account. Similar to its podcasting cousin, software can be purchased to make all sorts of enhancements, but is not required. In fact, the more raw the video, the better the video seems to be perceived. According to Scott (2007), remaining authentic is key. "Some companies try to sneak corporate-sponsored video onto YouTube in a way that makes it seem like it is consumer-generated. The YouTube community is remarkably skilled at ratting out inauthentic video" (p. 225). Similar to the podcast, the FCC does not yet monitor the video sharing site, making the online video tool very attractive to all those wishing to be their own director.

Yehuda (2007) claimed, "YouTube is the current king of the online video market, commanding 50% of the U.S. market share" (p. 16). EMarketer (2008a) reported a survey conducted by Alloy Media + Marketing with data on their daily online activities of over 1500 students ages 18 to 30. The survey results support that YouTube is popular within this demographic. "Online video is popular with both men and women in college, and YouTube was

in the top five for both groups" (EMarketer 2008a, p. 2). As a public relations tool, the online

video is less cost prohibitive and more accessible to the younger demographic than its traditional

broadcast outlets. Yehuda (2007) pointed out in her essay describing the emerging social media

tool that online video clients are refocusing their advertising budgets to incorporate this new

trend and no longer relying solely upon broadcast television. Thomas (2007) argued in his essay

about video 2.0, translated to mean online video, that many PR practitioners have already made

the shift to online video, focusing on more creative content in their strategies to win over their

target audience. Thomas stated, "PR veterans are becoming painfully aware that proven media

models that have guided them through the dawn of television into the age of 24-hour video news

are limited in today's video 2.0 world" (p. 14). Furthermore, Thomas pointed out that while

some of the traditional rules will continue to work, others need to evolve in order to keep up with

the new technology and meet consumer demands.

The online video is catching on quickly as a social media tool. According to a *Forbes*

article written by Purushothaman (2008), many organizations are utilizing the new online video

social media tool. "Corporations, non-profit organizations, advocacy groups and even

government entities are now stepping into the mix with their own stories to tell, using the same

techniques and technology as the front-line news media" (p. 1). Online video is adopted for a

good reason; people are utilizing the tool. The 2009 report on online video conducted by the Pew

Internet & American Life Project (Jones & Fox, 2009) found that 72% of the Millennial

Generation is watching videos online. This percentage is a good deal more than their older

counterparts who check in at 57% for Generation X, 49% for young Boomers, and drops to 30%

for older Boomers or those ages 55-63 (p. 5). Combined for all generations, Jones & Fox (2009)

found that 52% of all those using the Internet are utilizing this social media tool.

For both video and podcasting, Jason Miletsky, CEO and Creative Director of PFS Marketwyse, provides 10 reasons why the recent surge with the two social media tools has flourished in Breakenridge's (2008) book *PR 2.0*. His 10 reasons include: improvements in technology, more accessible production capabilities, improved compression and playback, the YouTube factor, the iPod revolution, increased competition for the user, less time allotted by visitors to understand content, higher degree of Internet marketing sophistication and integration, expanded use, and twenty-somethings pushing the envelope.

Personal digital assistants (PDAs)/cell phone. According to *Free Encyclopedia of Ecommerce* (n.d.), Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) have been in existence since the 1980s. The handheld computers have evolved from electronic address book and to-do list to the multi-media communication device of the 2000s. Most PDAs are wireless mobile cell phones that allow users to access the Internet, text, and e-mail from the device. It is no wonder why the PDA is making an appearance in the public practitioners' tool kit. Other advantages of the PDA are the camera and video functions. At times it is the random citizen who happens to be at the right place at the right time with his or her camera phone who captures the news. Stewart (2007) explained how the events surrounding the campus shootings at Virginia Tech were all captured and replayed on CNN.com over 900,000 times. "Jamal Albarghouti, a Virginia Tech graduate student, took cell phone video of police charging Norris Hall, complete with the sound of gunfire in the background" (p. 17). The camera phone/video finds its way into PR practitioners' toolboxes now that low-budgeted news outlets accept the recent technology as workable footage. Stewart explains in her essay that practitioners can now record their own event on their cell phone camera and attach the footage to an e-mail. Video clips arrive on the reporter's desk in a matter of minutes for review.

Public relations practitioners are also actively considering pursuing mobile public relations campaigns. In Garcia's (2008) article on cell phone campaigns, she stated that "the key to mobile marketing is to communicate without overwhelming consumers" (p. 15). Constantly hounding consumers will be one of the key issues that those practitioners pursuing this tool of social media will need to address in campaign planning in the future.

Gender differences within technology/social media

With most new technology, a period of adaptation and apprehension exists initially as it takes flight. Considerable attention has been given to the influence of gender with new technology adoption. Studies have shown that females have lagged behind in many aspects of new technology from their use to their confidence or ability to use the technology (Dempsey, 2009; Spotts, Bowman, & Mertz, 1997; Wood & Li, 2005). Yet recently, scholars in a variety of fields have gathered evidence to show how that gap is narrowing, or in some cases, disappearing altogether (Dresang, Gross, & Holt, 2007; Li, Glass, & Records, 2008; Rainer, Laosethakul, & Astone, 2003).

While each side of the gender debate furiously argues whether the divide still stands, Dempsey (2009) argues that the point is irrelevant if society continues to perpetuate the gap with advertisements. "Since 2000, corporate discourses in the US have legitimized inequalities in access to technologies and technological cultures" (p. 52). Although she recognizes a shift beginning to take place that is narrowing the gap, she still asserts her point that the shift cannot be quickly moving forward if these inequalities continue to stay in play.

In looking at communication technologies, specifically social media, very few studies have been conducted for each tool individually. Yet, a longitudinal study by Chesley (2006) looked at PDA tools over time in relationship to couples. Her study found that in the case of

communication technologies, husbands, specifically with exposure to cell phones or PDAs, were more likely to use and convince their wives to also adopt the technology. Chelsley asserted, "This may also be evidence of men's role as the household 'technology expert'" (p. 606).

While gender differences may still remain, Jackson *et al.* (2008) draw attention to an emphasis on activities within the technology as the deal breaker. "Studies focused on the nature of Internet use consistently find that boys are more likely to play games and girls are more likely to communicate, whether online or using other digital devices" (p. 438). Li, Glass and Records (2008) offer a similar piece of advice to scholars and public relations practitioners in their study, suggesting that less focus be put upon the technologies they adopt and more on the services these social media tools offer. A focus on services or activities within the technology could become very relevant in the study of social media tools where the activities within the tools vary.

Looking specifically at the Millennial market for gender differences is especially relevant within the current study. Dresang, Gross and Holt (2007) found in their study of computers and what they called net-generation children very few differences among gender. Although their study points at a closing gap for gender differences within computer use, the scholars do not provide concrete reasons for this closing. They suggest further studies are needed in order to offer more conclusive direction.

Social media shaping public relations field

At the annual International Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) conference in October of 2008, it was apparent that the public relations field is evolving and social media is at the heart of the movement. In an interview conducted with Bill Balderaz (personal communication, June 24, 2008), President of Webbed Marketing, he shared some very important qualities that are currently beginning to shape the field of public relations. First he shared how

difficult it is becoming to reach consumers through the traditional media channels of newspapers, television, and telemarketing. Social media is the way of the future, he claimed, and predicted that by 2012 more money will be allocated to online budgeting items (social media tools) than more traditional (television, newspaper, radio, etc.) PR mediums. He commented on the ease of using social networking sites and starting a blog, but noted that if not properly maintained that the media site can quickly lose credibility, a point that is supported in the literature (e.g., Breakenridge, 2008; Li & Bernoff, 2008; Scott, 2007).

Brian Solis, Principal of Future Works PR, was quoted in Breakenridge (2008) giving hope and encouragement for utilizing the social media tools in the PR industry.

> Social media is an opportunity to break the stereotype, to become experts, and create conversations directly and indirectly. This is our chance to evolve public relations into a more valuable branch of marketing, making everyone smarter and hopefully more passionate in the process. (p. 266)

Solis is not alone with this thinking. MarketingSherpa (2009) surveyed social media marketers and public relations professionals about their opinions of their social media effectiveness. Their research concluded that over half of the professionals who completed the survey believed that social media marketing is effective at influencing brand reputation, increasing awareness, improving search rankings, and increasing Web site traffic. These components are all valuable assets to any public relations practice. Vocus (2009) reiterates some of MarketingSherpa's points in its whitepaper highlighting the impact of social media. Vocus's study provides indicators of impact, sharing points of influence between social media and public relations. Highlighted points include: reaching further with a message, generating sale leads, gauging customer satisfaction

and increasing brand recognition. Vocus (2009) stressed, "Social media has removed the filters between your company and the public" (p. 1).

It is doubtful that public relations will completely step back into its traditional roots, but instead will look forward to moving ahead with the new social media tools. Gillin (2007) points out that "mainstream media has become so dependent on social media, in fact, that is hard to imagine that professional news organizations would let this channel go away" (p. 198). Social media is going to be here for the long run, so public relations practitioners are charged to capitalize on this emerging and growing trend of reaching target audiences.

If public relations practitioners are still not convinced that public relations is evolving and they need to take advantage of these new media technologies, then they should take a look at Levine's (2001) four reasons why PR practitioners should adopt Web practices. At the turn of the century Levine stated that some of largest benefits of using the Web for public relations include: the Web is the great equalizer; the Web is remarkably inexpensive to use; the Web makes the user an international business; and finally, the user can use the Web without having his or her own site. Levine is correct, and he continues to serve as just one of many supporters using the technology to further the public relations industry. Now practitioners look beyond the Web to the social media tools housed within it. Similar to the turn of the century, the field of PR now looks at social media tools with the same amount of trepidation and awkwardness that was once the Web. Carr (2009) encourages those in the PR practice to move past their fears in order to embrace the much-needed social media tools.

In order for PR to successfully manage the tide of information, PR representatives must venture beyond traditional media outlets to Web 2.0 in order to monitor all messages. In

fact, social media management should be an integral piece of your public relations campaign. (para. 1)

Not only the public relations professional, but also the client, particularly the CEO/CCO, need to adapt and adopt the social media tools. Shah (2009) speaks of the shift in media in an article discussing Home Depot's interaction with social media tools. "Social media also supplanted a company's Web site as the fastest growing communications resource, perhaps as executives are learning they need to go to the consumers online, rather than expecting consumers to find their Web properties" (p.12). While some clients waver on embracing the social media tools, some public relations practitioners find that others have accepted the tools. Debruyn & McMurtrie (2008) surveyed over 900 communication professionals on their social media engagement. They found skepticism and optimism about the use of social media tools, but found that most accept the fact that these tools are necessary.

> This is indicative that the world of digital media is still a Wild West for many executives, who have accepted the fact that these platforms are necessary pieces of communications strategies, but are still fumbling for the best ways to engage with and implement them into day-to-day activities. (Debruyn & McMurtrie, 2008, p.1)

Others who have adopted social media tools claim they have done so to follow the consumer. As companies increasingly see the importance of social media, changes are made from traditional to social media. Century 21, a real estate company, has followed its consumers from the television to online activity. Kunz (2009), Century 21's President and CEO, states:

> Around the end of last year, we made a change in directing all our TV spending to interactive media. Since then we've gone forward with our social media platforms, C21 Communities, and partnership with Realtor.com We've started to get involved with

Facebook and Twitter. We're following the consumer, which is what we did when we

went into TV. (p. 13)

As companies increasingly see the value of social media tools, public relations professionals

could see a shift in media needs and wants.

Tying social media and public relations to Millennials

One of the key components to this dissertation is tying public relations social media tools

to youth, or more specifically, the Millennial Generation or Generation Y. In order to gain a

deeper understanding of the literature that has been produced on the subject, the following

section provides some facts from the most comprehensive study of the Millennial Generation and

social media.

Pew Internet & American Life Project. Pew Internet & American Life Project team of

Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, and Smith (2007), released a comprehensive study of teens and social

media. The 36-page document is full of statistical support for why this younger audience is

grabbing hold and increasingly utilizing social media tools. In a previous study the researchers

noted that they sensed a trend emerging. Teens were leading the way into the Web 2.0 era.

"Online teens have access to tools that can gain them widespread attention and notoriety in ways

that simply were not possible under the traditional mass media model" (Lenhart, Madden,

Macgill, & Smith, 2007, p. 1). In January of 2009, Jones and Fox extended the Pew study by

looking specifically at the generations that are online. Although Jones and Fox's definition of

Gen Y or the Millennial Generation is broader than many others' definition (born between 1977

to 1990, ages 18 to 32 in 2009), the study provided an array of salient information.

First and foremost, Jones and Fox (2009) provided statistics which confirmed that 87% of

the Millennial Generation is indeed online. Furthermore, not only is this demographic on the

Internet, they are creating content and participating with the social media tools in place. Social networking within this demographic is phenomenal when taking into consideration the Millennial Generation as compared to all online adult users. Jones and Fox (2009) found that over half (67%) of Millennial users had a profile on a social network, a striking increase over what the overall adult users (35%) report.

Although blogging can be a significant part of social networking, it is not always synonymous with it. Jones and Fox (2009) found that 20% of Millennials blog separately from social networking. This percentage is double their Gen X (ages 33 to 44) counterparts, 10% of whom report ever having created a blog. Creating a blog is one thing, but reading is another. Forty-three percent of all Millennials have read others' online blogs. Again this is a 9% jump from Generation X, who has reported only 34% reading of others' blogs.

Videos are popular for this demographic as well. Although only 52% of online adults reported having watched a video online, Jones and Fox (2009) reported that 72% of online Millennials say they have done so. Statistics in this study provide a glimpse of the opportunities that exist for public relations professionals to target this engaged audience.

Unique characteristics attracting youth. Although there are a variety of descriptions of what birth year qualifies for the Millennial Generation (1977 to 1985), for this study those born after 1982 are defined as the Millennial or Y Generation. This birth year was chosen because it is the birth year selected by Howe and Stauss (2000) who have done extensive studies on this generation and are said to have coined the term "Millennial." According to a *USA Today* article on the Millennial Generation, Armour (2005) states there are roughly 70 million people who fit this generation. When reading articles and books about the Millennial Generation, some common threads quickly emerge. First, this generation is technologically savvy. Phillips (2009) explained

how to determine if one thinks like a Millennial. When asked for preference of face-to-face communication or electronic, Millennials chose the latter. "Gen Y uses all the tools, email, IM, text, Facebook, Twitter, blogs and more. If it can be handled electronically, why should we meet?" (Phillips, 2009, para. 4).

Neuborne and Kerwin (1999) gave public relations practitioners and their clients a heads-up of how to reach this Millennial market in a cover story printed in *Business Week*. "These days, a well-designed Web site is crucial for any company hoping to reach under-18 consumers" (p. 3). Never having had a "typing" class in high school on typewriters, but instead having computer class in elementary school, Millennials are exposed to technology sooner. No longer are school libraries calling themselves just that; instead, they incorporate their technological up-to-date capabilities by calling their spaces the media lab. McConnell and Huba (2007) put it well: "[Millennials] are highly adept with digital tools not only because their Baby Boomer parents bought them computers and cell phones but because they often are doing video editing work and mashups in school media labs" (p. 119). They enjoy using the technology and discovering what is new. Trends seem to always develop through younger generations, and social media tools are no different. According to McConnell and Hubba (2007), the blogging trend began with teenagers. Hill & Knowlton's *Future of Commerce Report* in July of 2009 reported that youth are not only using the tool, but are also able to be reached more effectively than their elders. Mathis (2009) states "Younger generations are predominantly influenced by social media channels: 27% of Gen Y are influenced by an 'online community or blog' compared to 19% of Gen X and only 9% of Baby Boomers" (para. 5).

Yet another unique characteristic is that of multitasking. Those in the Millennial Generation are the kings and queens of multitasking, and social media tools enable them to do

multiple things at one time. Peter Zollo (2004) gave insight to teens in his book *Getting Wiser to Teens* stating:

> Remarkably, this constant media bombardment only seems to make teens hungrier—and savvier—media consumers. They're quite accustomed to multitasking with multimedia: it's not rare to find teens simultaneously talking on the phone, researching their homework assignments on the Web, sending Instant Messages to friends, and watching TV or listening to the radio. (p. 338)

This Y or Millennial Generation might be watching television, but if they have the capabilities, they are fast-forwarding through the commercials. Their radio use now is more likely to have been replaced by their iPod where they have downloaded their favorite music and podcasts for listening. According to Loechner (2009), "Across five survey countries, Millennials are the most active in gaming, music and Internet use for socializing. Eighty percent of Millennials are regularly searching, downloading and listening to music over the Internet" (p. 1). Make no mistake, they are still doing it all, and social media tools enable them to do so. Gillin (2007) made a point in describing how his teenage children do not have a clue what a jump page, section front or pull-quote is from a newspaper as they get all their information online and on-demand. But multitasking is something that they do excel in as Gillin stated: "What they do well is maintain a half dozen simultaneous instant messaging sessions, navigate through their friends' pages on MySpace and find video on YouTube. They use 'Google' as a verb" (p. 200).

Being a multitasker is one thing, but what attracts youth to pick these social media tools for multitasking? McConnell and Hubba (2007) cited a Forrester Research project that found that the Millennial Generation is looking to the social media tools for social purposes. To them, the Internet is a new place to hang out. Why not? Once they own or have access to the technology,

which we already have established that they do, the rest is free. Jumping online at home is feasible, but they can also jump online at school, at a library, or at a favorite coffee shop. Keeping in contact with friends is just that much easier. In research conducted by the Keller Fay Group in July of 2007, they found that youth word-of-mouth conversations are three times more likely than the total public to be conducted through social media channels of text messaging/IM, e-mail, or chats/blogs. Youth take advantage of these forms of communication because they are quick, easy, accessible, and cost-effective.

The final unique characteristic is the idea that social media tools allow the youth to be content contributors. The Pew Research has already shown that youth are leading the way in contributing to and creating blogs. They have mastered the tools because they have found the time to play with them. McConnell and Hubba (2007) stated, "Because of their familiarity with the tools, and because they tend to reject the extreme individualism of the Gen-Xers who preceded them, the Millennials are the generation most likely to have the biggest impact on participatory culture" (p. 119). They want to contribute, and social media tools allow them to do so. McConnell and Hubba (2007) go on to note that "they [Gen-Xers] are mastering powerful new tools that enable them to become publishers and broadcasters in ways that existing traditional media outlets either admire with awe or fear with loathing" (p. 69).

Opportunities and threats of PR practitioners reaching youth with social media

Public relations practitioners can see both sides of the social media puzzle. The social media opportunity lends itself favorably to the field, especially when the market trends are surely heading in this direction. However, challenges arise out of the newness of the tools, and practitioners are navigating along with everyone else in the field to get a feel for how this will all work (Gillin, 2007).

Challenges. One of the first themes that seemed to emerge as a challenge of reaching young people through social media is the lack of support on the PR end and the constant need for change on the youth side. Trends and fads come and go quickly in this world, and old information is not going to cut it. What does this mean for the PR practitioner who is courting this demographic? It means never having a day off. Content needs to be fresh and timely. One day late, and your information is old news to Millennials. Yet those who practice PR and understand the need for timely and fresh information and services will see youth flock to their sites or blogs to find out what is hot and hip, as 93% of teens are online (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007).

With one look through the social networking sites, one can see how good news travels fast and, as the old saying goes, bad news travels faster. Another challenge of social media with youth is the power of linking. Although at times linking can be a definite opportunity, in times of crisis or bad news about your organization, it can serve as a major challenge. Scott (2007) explained how quickly bad information could spread. "The Web's power of linking should ensure that participants who see your posts on one forum or blog will link to them from other forums and blogs, so you don't have to worry about contributing to multiple places" (p. 81). With a reported 67% of the Millennial Generation on social networking sites (Jones & Fox, 2009), it is easy to see how this could very well be seen as an opportunity with positive news about a company and how it could be just the opposite with negative news. An example of linking bad news can be shown through the "Dell Hell" case where Jeff Jarvis blogged about his awful customer service experience with his brand new Dell computer. This one blog entry eventually spread to stories in all online media channels as well as the traditional channels

including the *The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal,* and *The New York Times*

(McConnell & Hubba, 2007).

   Another major challenge of using social media channels is finding that fine line between

effectively engaging the Millennial Generation and totally turning them in the opposite way

running. Mazzarella (2006) spoke of how the media learned from its mistakes in trying to

construct Generation X and are now focusing on the Millennial Generation. Using a framing

theory construct, Mazzarella clued readers of how media had learned from their mistakes and

now targets Generation Y or the Millennial Generation much differently. "Overall, the

differences between the media's construction of Generations X and Y is dramatic, with the end

result being a more positive, optimistic construction of Generation Y" (p. 243). How public

relations practitioners go about courting this new generation will make an impact on their

success. Social media tools are primed to help effectively meet this challenge.

   The youth of today share a common feature of having been immersed in the digital world

their entire lives. According to Perez (2009), "Some 36% of the respondents said they found it

easier to talk about themselves online than in the real world, leading them to share more about

themselves using technology" (p. 1). Although members of the Millennial Generation are

engaging with technology, caution must be used in attracting and maintaining their attention.

Flanagin and Metzger (2008) stated, "The implications of the uses of technology that are favored

by young people present new and different challenges for both discerning and learning to create

credible information" (p. 6). Bombarded with advertisements on a daily basis, Millennials have

found ways to filter. Spam does not work. The Millennial Generation needs to be fully engaged

or do not bother. Scott (2007) alerted those thinking of sending that one piece to the masses, "PR

spam approach simply doesn't work. Worse, it brands your organization as one of the 'bad

guys'" (p. 194). No PR practitioner wants to be labeled as "bad," because as mentioned before, negative news travels fast.

The final challenge that needs to be addressed is that of measuring. Although measurement is more an internal public relations challenge than a PR challenge with Millennials, it is worth mentioning. According to Gillin (2007), "For all the statistical analysis and academic studies that have been performed on the early stages of social media, there is no one metric, formula or service that can reliably measure influence" (p. 77). In the end, how can you measure the relationships you build, let alone with youth? The bottom line is that one must build relationships with the Millennial Generation in order to get out a message or service. Measurement for PR practitioners is crucial to gauging success, but social media makes it very difficult to track exposure with any degree of certainty. Scott (2007) stated that for his small business he can ask consumers how they first learned of his company; however, this is not always feasible for larger corporations. Breakenridge (2008) stated, "Blog measurement is in the infancy stage but will continue to progress and grow to become more and more important" (p. 76). Public relations professionals will continue to look for an efficient way to measure social media success until they are satisfied with the results.

Opportunities. Opportunities with youth are much easier to identify. In fact Breakenridge (2007), in her book titled *PR 2.0,* began the initial chapter stressing three top reasons why social media tools can serve us all better: two-way communication, more information, and longer and stronger relationships.

Two-way communication is the ideal form of communication to follow as public relations practitioners. Engaging in rich conversations instead of creating a glossy magazine or television ad is a much better way to interact with youth. Millennials want to be engaged, and

they want to participate in the process as the Pew Research previously mentioned. According to

Flanagin and Metzger (2008), "as the first generation to grow up with interactive digital media,

Millennials are comfortable with collaborating and sharing information, and do so in ways that

allow them to act quickly and without top-down direction" (p. 6). Not only does this two-way

communication allow youth to participate, it gives PR practitioners instant feedback to ideas.

Two-way communication is an opportunity for the public relations industry to capitalize on the

ideas and feedback from this growing Millennial market.

The ability to spread more information at a quicker pace is a second opportunity in using

social media tools with youth. As already discussed, youth are multitaskers. They are able to

effectively handle multiple social media tools at one time. Smith (2008) stated, "These

Millennials see themselves as 'technology natives,' moderate multitaskers who get a lot done.

Most of them mix entertainment and work" (p. 34). Most of these tools are able to effectively

hold more information than the more traditional means of media. Some Millennials yearn for the

flashiness of multimedia software. This is exactly what social media can offer this generation.

Breakenridge (2007) pointed out that "social media applications lead to more information shared

among more people, using stronger visual imagery and in a manner that people want (and now

demand) to receive in their communities" (p. 25). Furthermore, the technology is able to do so in

a quick, easy, and cost-effective way. This leads to the next opportunity of cost-effectiveness.

Social media gives old forms of traditional media new avenues, and in the process saves

PR practitioners and youth money. With wireless Internet popping up from libraries to

McDonalds for no cost, Millennials are able to actively use the social media tools at little or no

cost. On the opposite end, practitioners no longer need to take out a full-page ad in the

newspaper to attract Millennials who might never even see the advertisement. Instead public

relations practitioners can create a blog or produce a video and post it to YouTube to help the information travel faster to their Millennial targeted interest group. Gillin (2007) reiterated this point by stating that "it will be cheaper for advertisers to find customers online than through broadcast or print outlets" (p. 202). No longer are public relations practitioners needed to serve as the middleman. Instead practitioners can help companies communicate directly with consumers. Two-way communication works well with the Millennials who want to feel grown up enough to have an opinion of their own and invite companies to communicate directly with them. Smith (2008) contends that it is important for employers to provide flexibility of preferred media choices for the Millennial Generation, especially when they enter the workforce. "Understanding that many young people develop their work habits with a broad attention range means employers will need to provide these talented workers with a host of tools and choices. If employers don't provide them, the young people are likely to modify their tools themselves" (p. 39). This assertion is yet another testimony for the Millennial Generation's need of social media tools.

Highlighting longer and stronger relationships is an important opportunity for this Millennial market. The key to most successful public relations efforts begins with trying to build and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship. This relationship encompasses reaching the right groups with the right messages. Mutually beneficial relationships can be especially tricky with the youth demographic. Scott (2007) elaborated on why mutually beneficial relationships can be difficult. "With the average person now seeing hundreds of seller-spun commercial messages per day, people just don't trust advertising" (p. 7). Social media helps effectively build and maintain relationships with youth through means that they are accustomed to using daily. If Millennial

students have the social media tools, PR practitioners have the opportunity to capitalize on this strength and begin to build relationships through these tools.

Not only can PR practitioners build relationships externally with customers, but also internal relationships can be built within the organization. McElroy and Reynolds (2009) found that as the Millennial Generation graduates from high school and college, their employers need to retool their technological infrastructure to be aware of the experience and expertise that this generation brings with them into the workforce.

> Retailers that have not adapted for social media technologies are losing opportunities to gain valuable customer and employee input and to foster brand recognition and loyalty. Gen Y employees can lead the way to this new world of Web 2.0, where mastery of networking applications allows for sophisticated forms of influence, persuasion, and community building. (p. 5)

Along with building relationships, another opportunity that PR practitioners share in utilizing social media tools with Millennials is building credibility. Before the emergence of social media tools, the brand had to build itself. Now with tools such as social networking sites, blogging, podcasting and online videos, influencers, or in this case Millennials, can build a brand and/or they can be the message (Breakenridge, 2007; McConnell & Hubba, 2007). As previously established, youth are using social networking sites. What better way to get your brand recognized than to hear from the people behind the brand? Social networking allows for this to take place. Breakenridge (2007) explained that "if someone trusts the executives of a company, they're probably going to trust the brand" (p. 125). Youth can be targeted through the tools that they use most, which are not the traditional media of radio or newspapers, but instead online blogs and podcasts.

The final opportunity that needs to be addressed is the idea of reaching the youth directly. PR programs, before the invention of social media, aggressively pitched their stories to journalists who hopefully would pick them up and run those stories in the traditional media. Stories often were revised to the journalist's taste and, in turn, sometimes lost what practitioners felt were key points. Social media allows the story to be posted to an online pressroom where the audience can engage in that two-way communication with key target audiences. The Millennial Generation is not accustomed to waiting a long time for anything in a society where fast food can be bought with a credit card while checking out a favorite movie to take home. Cutting out gatekeepers is key to reaching the youth group with the messages intended. In Li and Bernoff's (2008) national best-seller social media book *Groundswell*, the authors spoke of how to build and maintain relationships through the social media tools. Furthermore, they devoted a chapter to each of the essentials: listening, talking, and energizing the groundswell. When talking about how to engage consumers in the brand, Li and Bernoff (2008) provided examples of how it is done. "This is why companies that start out by energizing their most enthusiastic customers often end up *embracing* them—that is, turning those customers into an integral part of the company's products and processes. Energizing leads to embracing" (p. 151). Maul (2009a) explained the public relations campaign that Sears Holdings Corp. launched in May of 2009 in order to not only engage consumers in the brand, but also to energize them to share with others in their community. Targeting mommy bloggers, who the company deemed its primary audience, the company reported that within the first week more than 200,000 people signed up for MySears.com and MyKmart.com. The vice president of public relations of the company commented, "The company is already taking the feedback from customers and applying it to the brands" (Maul, 2009a, p. 19).

Social media tools allow public relations practitioners to specifically target youth with messages that are created and directed toward their demographic. In return, youth are able to search for and find information that is of interest to them in the medium that is most comfortable for them to use. The Millennial Generation wants to hear from niche product markets. The majority of teens say they'd like to hear about one or more types of entertainment products in social networking sites, and close to half say they'd like to hear about enthusiast or special interest products (Smith, 2007).

CHAPTER II. THEORY

The International Public Relations Association called upon its colleagues in January 1982 to address the need for an all-embracing theory to unite the public relations field. The answer to this call was found in Grunig and Hunt's (1984) book titled *Managing Public Relations.* In this book, the authors constructed four models of public relations: press agentry/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetric, and two-way symmetric. Their models put forward two dimensions: one-way vs. two-way communication and asymmetrical vs. symmetrical communication. Their premise was that everyone who practiced public relations fit into one of these four models.

The aim of Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four models is to give public relations practitioners a conceptual framework in order to use the suitable technical communication skill in the appropriate manner when practicing public relations. Understanding these four models equips practitioners with the knowledge of when and how to use their communication skills to solve public relations problems. Addressed in the following paragraphs is each of the four models and how each can uniquely contribute to the foundation of this study. Particular emphasis is placed on the two-way symmetric model.

Press agentry/publicity model

For those who do not practice or know much about public relations, words with a negative connotation (ie: spin doctors, manipulators or propagandist) sometimes come to mind. In looking at the press agentry/publicity model, it is easy to understand how people who are not privy to in-depth knowledge of how public relations can serve the greater good could think poorly of the field. Public relations practitioners who apply one-way communication from the organization to the public in order to promote their product or service are a basic example of the press

agentry/publicity model. Serving as a propaganda function, those practitioners engaged with this model tell the public, sometimes referred to as their target audience, what they want them to hear and care very little about what their target audience has to say in return. Propaganda, one must understand, is different than persuasion. According to Parsons (2004), "While both are attempts to alter people's opinions and attitudes, propagandists do so only to satisfy the needs of the propagandist. In contrast, persuasion takes into consideration the mutual benefit of both the persuader and those being persuaded" (p. 107). Pratkanis and Aronson (1991) discuss how everyday society is bombarded with communication messages, some blatantly propaganda. "These appeals persuade not through the give-and-take of argument and debate but through the manipulation of symbols and of our most basic human emotions. For better or worse, ours is an age of propaganda" (p. 6). The propaganda function can distort the truth and those PR practitioners who continue to use this model spread only news favoring their organization. Grunig and Hunt (1984) explained, "Practitioners spread the faith of the organization involved, often through incomplete, distorted, or half-true information" (p. 21). Although this type of public relations is not always practiced today, with the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and other national public relations ethical standards, it does give readers the understanding of how unidirectional this model tends to be. While this model does serve the purpose of one-way communication well, the main difference between this model and the public information model, the next model to be covered, is the issue of truth.

Although the press agentry/publicity model does not promote unethical behavior, many times one sees public relations practitioners who institute this model caught in an ethical dilemma caused by hiding the truth in its entirety. One classic example can be seen from Edward Bernays, the founding father of public relations, in his Easter Day parade campaign (stunt) with

cigarette-smoking debutantes. Working for the American Tobacco Company, Bernays paid these women to smoke in the parade under the ruse that it was an act of liberation for women, when in reality, he wanted to convince women to buy cigarettes (Tye, 1998). These women smoking did not tell the entire side of the story, as they did not wear signs around their necks to explain that they were being paid for the stunt as part of a public relations ploy. This is a classic example of the press agentry/publicity model.

As mentioned before, many of the international and national organizations associated with the field of public relations have implemented sets of ethical policies to serve the greater good while serving as a foundational block of ethics for all those practicing public relations. In step with the leading organizations, individual agencies, large and small, have followed suit and implemented even more stringent ethical policies within their businesses. These ethical policies have changed one of the key ingredients of this model . . . truth. Telling a half-truth or distorting the truth will quickly get a person fired. Furthermore, if enough practitioners from one particular organization seem to be continually practicing this unethical behavior, they could be chastised from the large international and national public relations organizations. While one-way communication continues to take place, this untruthful behavior is not promoted in the field any longer, and those who practice this form of unethical communication are looked down upon and ostracized when caught (Boynton, 2006). While only a very minute percentage of this concealment of the truth does still exist, when it is identified, it is quickly called out as an example of how not to practice in the field.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) explained this press agentry/publicity model to others, rightfully naming it propaganda. Today, when the word propaganda is uttered, it has a very negative connotation, largely because of the truthfulness factor. Propaganda is linked to giving distorted

information or only telling the half truth, hence coming full circle to the initial argument of PR

practitioners being called manipulators or spin doctors.

Public information model

One of the main differences between public information model and the press

agentry/publicity model just discussed is the issue of the truth. Similar to the press agentry

model, PR practitioners who utilize this model also practice one-way communication. The main

focus of the public information model is to disseminate truthful and typically favorable

information. Unlike its other one-way communicator model, the public information model's

intent is not necessarily to persuade, although it may serve this function.

The public information model continues to be very relevant in today's world. Sometimes

one-way communication is still needed in order to run an event smoothly or to educate an

audience quickly. An example of the public information model is the *Do It Now Ohio* public

relations campaign that works hard to encourage people in the state of Ohio to register for organ

and tissue donation. The campaign posts messages to a Web site in order for people to better

understand the truths of organ and tissue donation. As described earlier, although persuasion is

used, it is not Donate Life Ohio's sole objective. The campaign wants to save others' lives by

adding more donors to the registry.

Two-way asymmetric model

Grunig and Hunt (1984) explained the two-way asymmetric model as one with a

"function more like that of press agent/publicist, although their purpose can best be described as

scientific persuasion" (p. 22). The two-way asymmetric model is practiced by the PR

professionals who use two-way communication to persuade their audiences to change their

points of view in order to better align those views with the organization they represent. This

method also involves collecting feedback from the public; however, this information is not necessarily used to improve services or products, but instead is used to better understand both the attitude and behavior of that target audience and to achieve maximum change to fill the organizations' needs. Locating the word *asymmetrical* in any dictionary, one finds somewhere in the host of definitions the words *unbalanced* or *unequal*. These words demonstrate why the word asymmetric is so appropriate in this particular model. The balance is tipped in the organization's favor. The relationship as a whole is not an equal give-and-take relationship.

Although this model is unbalanced in the organization's favor, the model is still absolutely relevant in today's public relations field. While many public relations practitioners aim for the two-way symmetric model, when falling short, most fall here. Possibly using this approach would be purposeful, but at times some just fall short of the completely balanced perspective.

Two-way symmetric model

The two-way symmetric model encompasses the ideal public relations model, according to Grunig. In Grunig's (1992) book *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*, the two-way symmetric model is carefully constructed to involve two-way communication in order to benefit both parties involved. PR practitioners aim to achieve mutual understanding and resolve conflicts between organizations and their publics by utilizing a variety of methods. Unlike the two-way asymmetric model that aims to persuade audiences to change their view in order to align with the view of organization, the symmetry comes from balancing that change between both parties.

As with any assertion of a theory or model being named the ideal, critics emerge to contest. While some assert the importance of the two-way asymmetric model, others have argued

that those in the PR field need to look beyond this thinking. Gower (2006) contested that although the two-way symmetric model has been tested in various ways over many years to prove its power and viability, naming it the go-to theory discounts many other possibilities. "When one theory is put forward as the excellence model for the practice, then the furthering of the model becomes the goal, while other ways of looking at the field are discounted" (p. 178). While Grower posits arguments throughout her article that are valid, there are reasons that the two-way symmetric model is a dominant form that many practitioners use every day to shape their practices.

A company that is a prime example of the two-way symmetric model of public relations is General Motors (GM). Its blog at http://fastlane.gmblogs.com/ is a very interactive and accommodating site to consumers. From comment sections to online video and a sidebar with Twitter account information, the blog is full of interaction. The company-to-public interaction is from the company's Vice Chairman Bob Lutz. In 2008, Mr. Lutz spoke at the International Public Relations Conference in Detroit where he told the association that indeed he writes and maintains this blog. The two-way symmetric model served this company in a way that was critical in its times of crisis. In 2008-09, enveloped in the bailout plan dilemma, GM experienced a crisis situation where the blog served as a public relations vehicle to maintain a favorable status with its publics (Lutz, 2008).

Relationship management paradigm

As previously mentioned in the literature review, the study of the relationship between the organization and its public within the public relations field is a growing area of research (Banning & Schoen 2007; Brønn, 2008; O'Neil, 2007; Ristino, 2007; Vorvoreanu, 2008). In the early 1990s, the public relations field began to see a shift as the emergence of relationship

management as a paradigm began to take shape. Traced back to a conference paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication by Mary Ferguson (1984), relationship management was suggested to be at the core of public relations research and scholarship. Shortly thereafter, Grunig (1992) recommended that researchers, as well as practitioners, focus on building and maintaining relationships with key publics that help the organization remain successful. Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling (1992) suggested that the elements of reciprocity, trust, credibility, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction, and mutual understanding were the key components in an organization-public relationship. Indeed, this paradigm shift in public relations had been set in motion. Bruning and Ledingham (1999) wrote that "the relationship management perspective has the potential to serve as a platform to guide theoretical inquiry and professional practice, and to provide a method of evaluation that is consistent with the management approach" (p. 158). "Relationship management has emerged as an important paradigm for public relations scholarship and practice" (Huang, 2001, p. 270). As the scholarly research surrounding organization-public relationship increases, the relational perspective as a theoretical framework for the field of public relations is grounded and begins to grow roots.

One of the reasons relationship management as a theoretical framework thrives in public relations research is because of its tie with human perceptions and behavior. Bruning and Ledingham (1999) stated, "Despite the difficulty of documenting cause-and-effect relationships when dealing with complicated human behavior, public relations practitioners who used quantified relationship measures can effectively argue for the organization-public relationship as part of the mix of complex interactions that combine to influence human perceptions and behavior" (p. 159). Public relations practitioners must build and maintain strong relationships

between the organization and its public to lead to a desired behavior of the public for the organization to succeed. A study conducted by Brunig, Castle and Schrepfer (2004) was designed to measure respondents' perceptions of their relationship with an organization. The study was done in order to determine the ways in which organization-public relationships were linked to evaluations of satisfaction and behavioral intent. What the researchers found supports the relationship management approach and its foundational knowledge. Brunig, Castle and Schrepfer (2004) reported that "the results from this investigation, coupled with previous relationship management research suggest that organization-public relationships, when managed effectively, positively affect the attitudes, evaluations, and behaviors of key public members" (p. 445).

Current investigation

When research came to a point of engagement with studying different practices of public relations, Grunig and Hunt's four models of public relations were developed to help practitioners become better equipped with the *when* and *how* to use their communications skills to solve public relations problems. The current study is being presented within Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four models of public relations through the relationship management framework lens. The question of how public relations practitioners are using social media tools to effectively reach Millennial audiences will be addressed through these guiding foundational blocks.

The following research questions and hypotheses are advanced:

RQ[1]: Do Millennial students interact with one particular social media tool over another?

H[1]: Millennial students who indicate they interact with company/brand e-mail will generate the most committed relationship over all other company/brand social media tools.

RQ^2: What is the relationship between a Millennial student's commitment to maintaining a relationship with one of the top 10 most social company/brand and the interaction of the Millennial student with a social media tool of that company/brand?

H^2: Those Millennial students who have had a relationship with the top 10 social brands via social media tools will be more likely to have a favorable perception of that company/brand.

RQ^3: To what extent is a Millennial students' favorable perception of the organization positively associated with his or her active social media behavior?

H^3: Millennial students' satisfaction with the relationship they have with one of the top 10 social brands will be positively associated with the company/brand through a social media outlet.

RQ^4: To what extent, if any, is there a difference between gender and each social media tool?

H^4: Millennial males will be more likely to interact with social media tools than Millennial females.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

The methods chapter will describe how this study was designed and conducted with an explanation of the methods and procedures used to carry out the study. This section details the specifics of the subjects used in the study, the description of the data collection, as well as the procedure format.

The method used to test the theory was survey questionnaire research. Surveys have provided researchers with statistical data, that is quantitative or numerical descriptions, on an extensive range of subjects (Fowler, 1993). Used not only to develop, but also to test and refine research hypotheses, surveys are a useful method for social scientific research. By utilizing surveys, researchers can obtain a wealth of information about a variety of people in a timely manner. Survey research includes a set of orderly and well-prepared questions that specify the type of information the researcher is attempting to gather from the defined population. These answers to the questions then become the data that are analyzed by the researcher (Fowler, 1993; O'Hair, Kreps, & Frey, 1990). Since the current study is intended to explore the answers to questions about the relationship between the top 10 most social organizations and the Millennial Generation via social media tools, the survey design allows for maximum exploration of the study's purposes.

Much information has been published about conducting social scientific research, particularly survey research, as it is one of the oldest and most common research techniques (Smith, 2002). Although there are exceptions to every rule, Singleton and Straits (1999) provide three typical features that professional survey research has in common. These include:

1) A large number of respondents that are chosen through probability sampling procedures to represent the population.

2) Systematic questionnaire or interview procedures are used to ask prescribed questions

of respondents and record their answers.

3) Answers are numerically coded and analyzed with the aid of statistical software. (p.

239)

Companies/Brands to be targeted in study

In selecting companies or brands to be investigated in targeting Millennials from a public

relations perspective in this study, no list with this exact criteria emerged. However, one list

dubbed by *Advertising Age* as the "Most Social Brands of 2008," rose to the top. This list is

intriguing and relevant because it outlines the brand or branded company product that is

mentioned most often in social media. Brands were chosen based on the conversation volume on

a variety of social networking, blogging and microblogging sites according to Klaasen's (2009)

article. "This survey stuck to a pretty rudimentary metric—it measures mentions, not the

sentiment of those mentions or the word parings" (Klaasen, 2009, p. 1). Sheer volume of

conversations on social media tools is what caused each of these top 10 companies/brands rise to

the top of the list. The following section outlines each of the top 10 companies/brands as

identified in Klaassen's (2009) article. Each of these companies/brands will be explored further

in this dissertation in an effort to obtain a deeper understanding of how public relations

practitioners from each of the top 10 target companies/brands can better target the Millennial

Generation with their social media tools.

#1—iPhone. Number one on the list is the Apple iPhone. On January 9, 2007, Apple

announced that it would release a phone that would rival all others (Honan, 2007). Six months

later, the iPhone made its appearance in the United States. The iPhone has evolved into what is

now called the iPhone 3G. According to Apple's Web site, the upgraded version combines three

products in one: a phone, an iPod, and the Internet. In March of 2008, Rubicon Consulting conducted a detailed survey of 460 randomly selected iPhone users in the United States. They found that 50% of the iPhone users are under the age of 30 and 15% are students. Rubicon (2008) elaborated on this statistic: "This is not unusual for a mobile entertainment product, but it is significantly younger than the age distribution for many smartphone and PDA products, which in the US tend to be most heavily used by professionals in their 30s and 40s" (p. 27).

Most recently, Nokia, the current world's leader in the construction of cell phones, sued Apple claiming the iPhone violated 10 patents for wireless transmission technologies (Hansell & O'Brien, 2009). This is not the first time that Apple has been accused of infringing on patent rights. Paul Boesen, in 2007, alleged that the touch keyboard on the computer maker's iPhone PDA violates a patent he holds through a company called SP Technologies (McDougall, 2007). Patent disputes are frequent within the electronic industry and according to Hansell and O'Brien (2009), "Nokia said it had repeatedly asked Apple to license its patents related to these standards and that Apple had refused" (p. 1). Only time will tell if this will effect the iPhone and its company.

#2—CNN. CNN is second on the list of most social brands of 2008. As one of the top news networks, CNN covers a myriad of topics and is known for its breaking news coverage. In recent reports, CNN hit an all-time low against its competition. According to Carter (2009), "CNN, which invented the cable news network more than two decades ago, will hit a new competitive low with its prime-time programs in October [2009], finishing fourth—and last— among the cable news networks with the audience that all the networks rely on for their advertising" (p. 1).

According to its Web page, CNN is staffed every hour of every day of the year. Although headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, CNN has news bureaus worldwide. In the summer of 2009, heated debates ensued over Iran elections. Twitter, a social media tool that CNN engages in, was blasted. According to Cashmore (2009), "Twitter users blasted CNN for a lack of coverage of the Tehran protest, with Iranian citizens claiming ballot fraud and taking to the streets" (p. 1). The article further pointed out that Twitter users used the hashtag #CNNfail to highlight the lack of coverage by CNN. This was negative publicity for one of the most widely known media news organizations.

Twitter is not the only way CNN communicates with key publics. No stranger in marketing to the younger demographic, CNN attempts to use all avenues to reach their target publics. When the Internet first started developing and more people were adapting to the new technology, CNN decided to not only participate in the technology with their news stories, but also in respect to advertisements. Each advertisement corresponded with the story. Hansell (1997) provided an example: "With a recent CNN article on the killings in a Kentucky high school there was a button promising a link to books on teen-age violence" (p. 12). A look at its Web page shows that CNN is up-to-date with its social media tools, and even has a link titled, *Check out the rest of CNN.com's tools and widgets.* CNN has prepared itself for the social media wave by adapting tools that the Millennial Generation is using.

#3—Apple. Number three on the list is Apple. Number one and seven on the list are products of the Apple company, but number three encompasses the entire brand of Apple. According to Apple's Web site, the company was founded in 1976 in California and named Apple Computers, Inc. In January of 2007, the company chose to drop Computers from its name and now is just Apple, Inc. According to Hesseldahl (2006), the media has a crush on the

product. Citing examples of the media's leniency and careful watch of Apple, Hesseldahl posited that Apple gets a free-ride by not having to answer the tough questions that the media often ask other companies. He further argues that Apple needs to be asked the tough questions and needs to be accountable for its answers. Maybe this perceived leniency is why the company ranks so highly on the social media brands of 2008.

Cuneo, Elkin, Kim and Stanley (2003) stated, "The genius of Apple is that its brand has come to embody a lifestyle. In a tech business where two or three giants have become global dominators, still-the-underdog Apple resonates with consumers across generations and international boundaries" (p. 50). According to Shah (2008), Apple is slowly catching up to Dell, the current leader as the United States PC vendor. "Apple has a small market worldwide compared to HP and Dell, but it represents an opportunity to grow" (p. 1).

Apple is no stranger to the Millennial Generation. In fact, a 2008 article by Hesseldahl predicted the back-to-school sales for Apple to be higher than ever before. Hesseldahl (2008) pointed out that a "recent survey by Student Monitor, a New Jersey outfit that tracks the buying habits of college students, found that 13% of all undergrads expect to buy a new notebook this fall. Of those, 43% say they plan to get a MacBook or MacBook Pro, nearly double those who said they expected to get a Dell notebook" (p. 15).

#4—Disney. No stranger to a younger demographic, checking in as number four on the list is Disney. Nearly a century ago, a small cartoon studio (named Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio) started on an idea of creativity and innovation. Now, in 2009, Disney is a global corporation that provides that same creativity and innovation in which it was founded. Disney is known for its ability to relate with key publics, and one example of how this company does so is through social responsibility. Ranked in 2007 as one of the top corporate citizens in their

respective industry. McCafferty (2007) stated, "Walt Disney scored the highest in the climate change category for media companies because of several factors, including its participation in the Carbon Disclosure Project" (p. 2).

Disney has been studied through a variety of lenses, but one that is of particular interest is a case study conducted by Michael Bush. He pointed out how influential Disney has been in recent years in reaching the Millennial Generation with social media tools. Bush (2008) asserts that "the proof is in the numbers: box-office receipts, DVD sales, number of friends on MySpace and results from a Nielsen NRG study, to be more specific" (p. 46). His study looked specifically at how the social networking site MySpace had not only boosted Disney movie revenue, but also how Disney had used the public relations technique of two-way communication to engage and converse with a target market through a social networking social media tool, thus increasing Disney's fan base significantly for the movie industry.

#5—Xbox. In the middle of the top 10 list, at number five, is Microsoft's Xbox. Playing electronic games, whether on a personal computer, a video game console, or a handheld device has increasingly become more popular in recent years. The video game market faced a transition period in 2004 to 2005 as they waited for the introduction of the next-generation consoles. Since that time, the video game industry has boomed. According to Schooler and Scholes' (2006) research, they predicted that the video game market would expand at a rate of 11.4%. Video games now encompass personal computer (PC) games, console games, online games, and wireless games. Consumer demographics for each of these categories vary. Male children 11 to 14 years old tend to play the most video games (Roberts & Foehr, 2004). However, women are also entering the entertainment software market. For example, Stith (2008) reported that 40% of video gamers are women.

Xbox is one of the leading gaming consoles in the industry. Fox News (2009) reported that the Xbox sales in April of 2009 placed third among its competitors as the best-selling console with 330,000 units sold (p. 1). Kent (2004) recalled the first launch of the Xbox. "When Bill Gates unveiled it at the Game Developers Conference in 2000, audiences were dazzled by the console's amazing technology" (Kent, 2004, p. 1). Since its inception, Xbox has taken off and not looked back. In an article by Snider (2008) in *USA Today*, the author raves of the newest features of the gaming console. Snider stated, "When the network's 14 million members log in on Nov. 19 [2008], they'll automatically get a new, more user-friendly, 3-D version of the Xbox Live software" (p.10).

When looking specifically at the Xbox Web page, an online pressroom, forums, and blogs are all present. These allow consumers to engage with the company more than just through the console itself. Again, a two-way communication flow can be indentified.

#6—Starbucks. Starbucks is number six on the list. Starbucks aligns perfectly with the public relations two-way communication models. Take, for example, their customer mission statement, which includes a commitment and connection with their brand. "Sure, it starts with the promise of a perfectly made beverage, but our work goes far beyond that. It's really about human connection" (Starbucks, 2009, para. 3). According to the Starbucks' Web site, the first store was opened in Seattle in 1971. Today the company has stores in all 50 states in the United States and in 43 countries around the world. According to Miller (2009b), "Starbucks has been fending off competition from McDonald's, which has introduced a new line of lower-priced espresso drinks that have proved popular" (para. 3). Starbucks rebuttal to the accusation of loss of customers was that they were not losing coffee drinkers to McDonald's, but instead had found customers cutting back due to the economy (Miller, 2009a).

No stranger to social media, the coffeehouse giant ran a campaign in the summer of 2009 placing advertising posters in six major cities. Starbucks then challenged people to hunt for the posters and be the first to post photos of those posters to Twitter (Miller, 2009a). Starbucks is also engaging the Millennial generation. As noted in Water's (2007) article in *MarketWatch,* there is a growing number of youth who are hanging out at Starbucks. "They meet their friends there, do their homework and listen to and even buy music" (p. 1). Not only does Starbucks encourage Millennials to hang out at their stores, but they encourage them in other ways as well. Starbucks has an Entrepreneurial Fund that they use to inspire youth to think outside the box and create positive solutions to real local needs. "We believe that by supporting young social entrepreneurs, we make real change in local communities" (Starbucks Foundation, 2009, para. 1).

#7—iPod. In the number seven spot is found yet another Apple product, the iPod. First introduced in 2001, the portable digital audio player contains a portable flash or hard drive (depending on size) onto which music, videos, and pictures can be downloaded. According to Apple's Web site, the classic iPod with 120GB of storage can hold up to 30,000 songs, 150 hours of video, or 25,000 photos. When interviewing the Vice President of Trends at Youth Intelligence, Barbara Coulon, Kahney (2003) found that "the iPod is primarily responsible for Apple's high profile among young people" (p. 1). As with most electronic devices, grumblings ensue. For the iPod device, most of these complaints pertain to the low batteries and screens. According to Wingfield (2006), "The iPod's durability could become a more important issue as consumers become less dazzled by cutting-edge technology and more concerned about longevity, especially for a advice that can cost hundreds of dollars" (para. 3).

Burgdorfer (2009) shared how much pull this Millennial Generation has on automakers with their iPods. Burgdorfer outlined how the 16 to 31 year old age group will constitute the largest class of drivers in the United States in 2010. Hence, automakers are listening to what this age group wants and needs, and at the top of their list are iPod hookups. Burgdorfer explained, "Carmakers said that to appeal to these consumers, their new entry-level or small-car models are emphasizing such features as e-mail capabilities, hookups for iPod, laptop computers and other gizmos, many with easy-to-use controls" (p. 1). The iPods are making such a large splash in the Millennial market that even automakers must adapt.

Company competitors in the MP3 market include SanDisk, Zune and Sony (IntelliReview, 2009). Although each has distinct advantages over the others, the Apple iPod continues to receive high marks and considerable attention based on its variety of features. For some it is the great graphics, for others the applications, but Apple iPod continues to remain a fierce competitor within the MP3 market (IntelliReview, 2009).

#8—MTV. Number eight on the list is MTV (music television). Launched on August 1, 1981, this brand was born with the Millennial Generation. According to The Museum of Broadcast Communications' Web site (Burns, 2009), MTV is the oldest and most influential American cable network that specializes in music-related programming. In MTV's early days, the channel was dedicated to music videos that ran on a continuous flow, similar to a top 40 radio station. Now the channel has spawned into numerous sister channels that all operate under MTV Network and each with its own specialty. According to MTV's (2004) Web site, music and pop culture brands target the 18 to 34 age range of both sexes.

In recent years there have been several analysts who suggest youth brands need to position themselves to capitalize on the social media tools. Newser (2007) predicted the youth

culture would soon care less about media cable channels, such as MTV, instead, preferring a media hub. Newser predicted in 2007 that the idea of letting Millennial viewers decide and sometimes create what they want to see would be an emerging trend. Brown (2008) spoke specifically of MTV and the mobile cell phones, challenging MTV to resolve the problems with its partner industries in order to move forward with successfully marketing to the Millennial Generation. Brown argued that MTV is still stuck in the thinking that they are big enough not to need the mobile market, yet he asserts that a successful partnership can be made. In turn, dollars can be earned from both the mobile and MTV standpoint.

Although the Millennial Generation seems to be supportive of MTV, their parents are not always as enthusiastic. Her article cites specific examples of programming that is on MTV and its sexual dialogue and innuendos. Hagelin (2009) states, "I've previously written about how MTV seeks to manipulate America's children and how broadcast networks are targeting America's youth. Just thought you might want to know it ain't getting any better" (p. 2).

#9—Sony. Sony is ninth on the list of the most social brands of 2008. Headquartered in Tokyo, Japan, the Sony Corporation is one of the top manufacturers of audio, video, communication, and information technology products. According to Sony's (2009) Web site, the company recorded consolidated annual sales of approximately $88.7 billion worldwide for the 2008 fiscal year and employed 180,500 people worldwide. The variety of Sony products ranges from co-developers of CD, DVD, and Blu-Ray discs to the developer and manufacturer of the PlayStation 2, 3, and PSP video game consoles. On the Fortune Global 500 Web site (2009), Sony is ranked fifth behind competitors Siemens, Hitachi, Matshushita Electric Industry, and Samsung Electronics in the Electronics and Electrical Equipment Industry.

Sony has adopted some of the social media tools, but to what extent is unknown. In a 2008 article by Butcher, he explained that Sony has attempted to target the youth market through mobile marketing efforts. Sony is also known for its connection to youth through its highly marketed portable video console PSP. For instance, Sinclair (2005) spoke of a competition that invited multi-media artists to submit work that utilized the audio-visual capabilities of the PSP.

#10—Dell. Number 10 on the list of most social brands of 2008 is Dell. The Dell company was founded in 1984 by Michael Dell. According to the company's Web site, it was founded on a simple concept: selling computer systems directly to consumers by understanding and meeting their needs. Now a worldwide company, Dell has expanded over the past 25 years to become, according to its company facts on its Web site, the number one PC provider in the United States and number two worldwide. In Lee's (2007) article that discussed how Dell was refocusing its marketing and public relations efforts, marketing chief Mark Jarvis is quoted as saying, "customers are focusing on cool. Consumers are increasingly conscious of the brand itself" (p. 24).

Dell is currently in a reorganizing state. Hoping for an economic turn around, Dell is banking more so on companies than individual consumers. According to Vance (2009), "More than any other major computer company, Dell depends on sales to businesses rather than consumers and has typically benefited the most from surges in corporate spending coming after downturns" (para. 3). While they wait for the economy to make an upswing, Dell has had to make other adjustments. In December of 2009, Dell announced a deal to sell one of their personal computer factories. Scheck (2009) states, "The deal is the latest example of how Dell has abandoned its once industry-leading strategy of building PCs to order in its own factories.

While that structure helped Dell become the world's largest PC maker by volume at one time, the company has struggled in recent years" (p. 1).

Participating universities

Students from two Midwestern universities were selected to complete the survey. Location, proximity of universities, and similar demographics of the student body at both universities provided an opportunity for a larger number of Millennial students to be surveyed.

Bowling Green State University (BGSU). Bowling Green State University, located in northwest Ohio, is one of 13 public, four-year universities in the state of Ohio. Established in 1910, BGSU began as a teacher-training institution. BGSU has approximately 15,600 undergraduate students enrolled in its more than 200 undergraduate majors and programs. According to BGSU's Institutional Research Web site page, demographic information from 2008 provides insight on the Millennial students who would be surveyed. Data found an almost equal male-female ratio on campus with 53.6% female and 46.4% male, respectively, and an average age of 20-21 years old. The majority of campus consists of white, non-Hispanic students (80.7%), followed by African-American (10.1%), International (4.3%), Hispanic (3.3%), Asian/Pacific Islander (0.9%), and American Indian/Alaskan Native (0.6%). Most students, 88.2%, who attend the public university hail from Ohio, the state in which BGSU is located. When looking at parental income of the students, 28% have parents who make $100,000 or more a year. Results also showed 20% of students' parents make between $75,000-$99,999 a year, 26% of students' parents make between $50,000-$74,999 a year, 15% of students' parents make between $30,000-$49,999 a year, and 12% of students' parents make below $30,000 a year.

Ohio Northern University (ONU). Ohio Northern University is a private coeducational, residential institution affiliated with the United Methodist Church. Founded in 1871 in northwest

Ohio and enrolling approximately 3,700 students in the Colleges of Arts & Sciences, Business Administration, Engineering, Law and Pharmacy, the undergraduate colleges offer baccalaureate degrees in roughly 60 major areas. According to ONU's Institutional Research Web site page, demographic information from 2008 provides insight on the Millennial students who would be surveyed. The student body has almost an equal male to female ratio on campus with 51% female and 49% male, while the average age of an undergraduate student is 20 years old. The majority of campus consists of white, non-Hispanic students (90.3%), followed by African-American (3.6%), International (2.4%), Asian/Pacific Islander (2.1%), Hispanic (1.3%), and American Indian/Alaskan Native (0.4%). Most students who attend the private university come from Ohio (81.8%). When looking at parental income of the students, 31% earn $100,000 or more a year. Results also showed 18% of students' parents make between $75,000-$99,999 a year, 17% of students' parents make between $50,000-$74,999 a year, 15% of students' parents make between $25,000-$49,999 a year, 2% of students' parents make below $10,000-$24,999 a year, and 9% of students' parents not reporting.

Participants

The population of this study consisted of Millennial students from both Bowling Green State University and Ohio Northern University. Participants were selected because most fit the Millennial demographic. Those students who noted they were 17 or younger (n=1) or 25 or over (n=3) in the demographic section of the survey were eliminated from study. Those 17 and under were eliminated because legal consent was not granted from a parent or legal guardian to complete the study. Those 25 or over were eliminated because they did not fit the Millennial definition outlined in this study. A total of 1,062 participants completed the survey. The break down of gender for the sample was consistent with the demographic makeup of both campuses

as a whole with 43.6% male (n= 463) and 56.4% female (n= 599) completing the survey. With

the age of students at both universities averaging 20 years old, it was not surprising that the

largest percentage of respondents were 20 years old (26.7%). Of those who completed the

survey, the break down of age included: 18 years old (19.7%), 19 years old (20.4%), 21 years old

(22.3%), 22 years old (7.0%), 23 years old (2.2%), 24 years old (0.9%), and 25 years old (0.5%).

The break down of race ran parallel to overall campus demographic information of both

participating universities: white, non-Hispanic students (84.3%), followed by African-American

(5.3%), International (1.1%), Asian/Pacific Islander (1.7%), Hispanic (1.8%), and American

Indian/Alaskan Native (0.6%), and (5.2%) preferred not to answer.

Participants were provided a detailed informed consent form (Appendix A) in the initial

page of the survey. This consent form addressed the purpose of the study, researcher contact

information, participant conditions, and benefits/risks associated with the study.

Data collection processes

At both universities, participation was elicited through a cluster sample of classes that

had enrollments greater than 25 students. Because of the large number of participants needed to

have strong sample size, only classes with enrollments greater than 25 were used to draw from

for the cluster sample. A list of classes that met this criterion for Bowling Green State University

was obtained through the Institutional Research office. At Ohio Northern University, the list that

met this criterion was obtained from the Registrar's office. After classes were chosen, e-mails

were sent to faculty members of each of the classes to describe the study and ask for their help in

obtaining the data. Each faculty member was asked if the primary researcher would be granted

access to his or her class the first week of fall quarter/semester in order to present the study and

ask students to participate in the study by completing the survey. At Bowling Green State

University, 15 faculty members granted the researcher access, and at Ohio Northern University,

17 faculty members granted the researcher access, for a total number of 32 classes. Surveys were

gathered during the week of August 24, 2009, at Bowling Green State University and during the

week of September 8, 2009, at Ohio Northern University.

Survey instrument

A self-administered paper survey was utilized (Appendix B). Used to collect answers

from a set of standardized questions, the questionnaire aimed to gather information from the

respondent to gain a deeper understanding to a question. After the researcher defined the goals

and objectives that were set out to answer in the study, a set of standardized questions was

written in order to develop the questionnaire. Brace (2004) speaks of the importance of a good

questionnaire. "If those question are the wrong questions, poorly phrased, or in the wrong order,

the answers obtained may be worse than meaningless: they may be misleading" (p. 1). Although

every researcher would like to think that he or she can construct a perfect questionnaire to gather

all the information deemed necessary, most need to concentrate on getting the most out of a

single questionnaire that is not too extensive for a respondent to complete in a reasonable amount

of time. Rea and Parker (1992) proposed, "The researcher must use experience and professional

judgment in constructing a series of questions that maximizes the advantages and minimizes the

potential drawback" (p. 33).

Measurement in organization-public relationships can be done through a variety of

instruments. One of these instruments included a scale investigating relationship outcomes of

trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction (Grunig and Huang, 2000). Another scale

included Kim's (2001) relationship scale looking at dimensions of trust, commitment, local or

community involvement, and reputation. For this particular study, Bruning and Galloway's

(2003) organization-public relationship scale was selected. This scale was chosen as the instrument because of its appropriateness to the topic. Questions posed in the Bruning and Galloway (2003) scale lend themselves to not only the company/brand investigation of relationships, but also relationships between Millennial students and social media tools better than other organization-public relationships instruments. In particular, the questions pertaining to commitment were better suited to this study.

Bruning and Galloway's (2003) 24-question scale aims to measure the respondent's relationship with a particular organization, in this case the relationship between the Millennial college student demographic with the top 10 social media brand organizations. The scale is composed of five dimensions; (1) anthropomorphic—the degree to which Millennials assign human qualities to one or more of the top 10 organizations, (2) personal commitment—the level of individual dedication that the Millennial student exhibits toward one or more of the top 10 organizations, (3) professional benefit/expectation—the level of assurance that one or more of the top 10 organizations will engage in responsible actions and provide benefit to the Millennial students served, (4) community improvement—the confidence of Millennial college students that the actions taken by one or more of the top 10 organizations will improve the communities in which an organization operates, and (5) comparison of alternatives—the process by which Millennial college students evaluate the attractiveness of one or more of the top 10 organizations in comparison with competitor organizations. Although all dimensions provide useful information, the personal commitment dimension was the focus for this particular study. Coefficient alphas were calculated by the developers of the scale for each of the five dimensions in two separate studies (Bruning, Castle, & Schrepfer, 2004; Bruning, Dials, & Shirka, 2008) and were reported accordingly (see Table 1): anthropomorphic dimension (.84, .84), personal

commitment dimension (.87, .86), professional benefit/expectation dimension (.85, .72), community improvement dimension (.87, .80), and comparison of alternatives dimension (.72, .78). The overall coefficient alpha for the entire scale was not reported in the 2004 study, but was reported as .90 in the 2008 study (Bruning, Castle, & Schrepfer, 2004; Bruning, Dials, & Shirka, 2008).

Respondents were asked to specify their level of agreement with each of the 24 questions on the scale by indicating their preferences on a 7-point Likert scale anchored from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Bruning and Galloway's (2003) scale was selected because of its ability to measure the relationship between an organization and each organization's public or target audience. The researchers expanded their scale to include two dimensions of personal relationship commitment, both personal and structural, to provide a complete examination of organization-public relationships. In the current study, Bruning and Galloway's (2003) complete organization-public relationship scale was used asking questions related to the quality of organization-public relationship including:

Anthropomorphic dimension questions

1. I feel that I can trust (Company/Brand Name) to do what it says it will do.

2. (Company/Brand Name) seems to be the kind of organization that invests in its customers.

3. I think that (Company/Brand Name) takes into account my convenience in all of our interactions.

4. (Company/Brand Name) demonstrates an interest in me as a person.

5. (Company/Brand Name) understands me as a customer.

6. (Company/Brand Name) is open about its plans for the future.

Table 1

Bruning and Galloway's (2003) Organization-Public Relationship Scale Coefficient Alphas

Dimension	Bruning, Castle, & Schrepfer 2004 study α	Bruning, Dials, & Shirka 2008 study α
Anthropomorphic	.84	.84
Personal commitment	.87	.86
Professional benefit/expectation	.85	.72
Community improvement	.87	.80
Comparison of alternatives	.72	.78
Overall for the entire scale	n/a*	.90

Note. *No overall coefficient was reported in this study

Anthropomorphic dimension questions (continued)

7. (Company/Brand Name) shares its plans for the future with customers.

Personal commitment dimension questions

1. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with (Company/Brand Name).

2. I feel very strongly linked to (Company/Brand Name).

3. I want my relationship with (Company/Brand Name) to continue for a long time.

Professional benefit/expectation dimension questions

1. (Company/Brand Name) is NOT involved in activities that promote the welfare of its customers.

2. (Company/Brand Name) does NOT act in a socially responsible manner.

3. (Company/Brand Name) does NOT see my interests and its interests as the same.

4. I think that (Company/Brand Name) is NOT honest in its dealings with customers.

5. (Company/Brand Name) is NOT willing to devote resources to maintain its relationship with me.

Community improvement dimension questions

1. I feel that (Company/Brand Name) supports events that are of interest to its customers.

2. I think that (Company/Brand Name) strives to improve the communities of its customers.

3. I think that (Company/Brand Name) actively plays a role in the lives of the communities it serves.

Comparison of alternatives dimension questions

1. I find other providers of similar products to (Company/Brand Name) to be very appealing.

2. It would be too complicated for me to change providers of the brand that (Company/Brand Name) represents.

3. The alternative providers of the service or product of (Company/Brand Name) are excellent companies.

4. I feel I would lose a great deal if I were to switch providers of the product or service of (Company/Brand Name).

5. I would NOT feel upset if (Company/Brand Name) were no longer my provider of the product or service.

6. I think other providers of the product or service of (Company/Brand Name) could fulfill my needs.

Because the personal commitment dimension is so closely linked within the relationship scale, this particular dimension will be used to determine if the Millennial relationship with the top 10 social media brands is significant.

In addition to Bruning's 24 questions, six additional questions were asked to help address the research questions and hypotheses. Two questions were asked in order to gain insight from students regarding their familiarity with social media tools in general and the top 10 organizations in general. To gain a more specific point of view, one question was asked to discover student familiarity with one or more of the top 10 organizations' interactions with themselves as Millennial students via social media tools. The final three questions were asked in order to collect demographic information about the Millennial students who completed the survey. Questions about sex, age, and race were asked in an effort to provide the study with demographic statistics.

Operationalization

According to Singleton and Straits (1999), "An operational definition describes the research operations that will specify the value or category of a variable on each case" (p. 101). Operational definitions for variables used in the study are provided for clarification and possible replication of study. The following paragraphs list the different variables used in the current study and operational definitions are provided. Although some variables have been defined previously in this study, each may be defined again here.

Millennial students. Although there are a variety of descriptions of what birth year qualifies for the Millennial Generation (1977 to 1985), for this study those born after 1982 are defined as the Millennial or Y Generation. This birth year was chosen because it is the birth year selected by Howe and Stauss (2000) who have done extensive studies on this generation and are said to have coined the term "Millennial." Students who participated in the study have self-declared, through question 29 on the survey (Appendix B), his or her age.

Social media tools. Eyrich, Padman, and Sweetser (2008) gathered information from practicing public relations practitioners and discovered that; "overall, practitioners have adopted nearly six different social media tools professionally" (p. 413). These six tools included e-mail, Intranet, blogs, videoconferencing, podcasts, video sharing, and personal digital assistants (PDA's). McLaughlin (2009) argued that Facebook and Twitter needed to be added to the social media must-have list. After consideration, the researcher defined the social media tools for this study as e-mail, blogs, microblogs (e.g.; Twitter), video sharing (e.g.; YouTube), personal digital assistants (e.g.; mobile phones), and social networking sites (e.g.; MySpace/Facebook).

Ad Age top 10 most social brands. Brands were chosen based on the conversation volume on a variety of social networking, blogging and microblogging sites according to

Klaasen's (2009) article. "This survey stuck to a pretty rudimentary metric—it measures mentions, not the sentiment of those mentions or the word parings" (Klaasen, 2009, p. 1). Sheer volume of conversations on social media tools is what caused each of these top 10 companies/brands rise to the top of the list. The brands/companies that comprised the top 10 included: iPhone, CNN, Apple, Disney, Xbox, Starbucks, iPod, MTV, Sony and Dell. For the simplification of companies and brands, as well as to make the survey less cumbersome, Apple, iPhone and iPod were combined to make one entity (see Appendix B).

Committed relationship. Rather than focusing on all dimensions of the organization-public relationship (anthropomorphic, personal commitment, professional benefit/expectation, community improvement, and comparison of alternatives), this study specifically concentrated on the personal commitment relationship to the company/brand. The indicator used for determining commitment was question 18 on the survey (Appendix B), *I am committed to maintaining my relationship with (company/brand name).* Furthermore, Bruning and Galloway's (2003) have concluded that this question falls within the personal commitment relationship dimension of the organization-public relationship.

Maintaining a relationship. Similar to committed relationship, the indicator used for determining maintaining a relationship was question 18 on the survey (Appendix B), *I am committed to maintaining my relationship with (company/brand name).*

Favorable perception and satisfaction. The indicator used for determining both favorable perception and satisfaction was question 25 on the survey (Appendix B), *I want my relationship with (company/brand name) to continue for a long time*. Through the 7-point Likert scale, participants were able to chose from strongly disagree to strongly agree with the statement. Those Millennials who chose strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, or just disagree were said to

have a non-favorable perception. Those Millennials who chose strongly agree, somewhat agree, or just agree were said to have a favorable perception.

Relationship with the top 10 social brands via social media tools and social media outlet. In order to determine if Millennials had interacted with social media tools and had a personal interaction, question 27 was posed on the survey (Appendix B). The question asked; *Which, if any, of the following social media tools have you personally had interaction with (company/brand name).* Each company/brand was listed in rows and columns listed each of the seven social media tools that were outlined in the study. An option of none was also available.

Active social media behavior. The indicator to determine if Millennials were interacting with social media was gathered from question 26 on the survey (Appendix B). Each of the seven social media tools that were selected to further investigate in the study was listed, as well as the option *none*. Participants were asked to check all social media tools that he or she interacted with and were allowed to select as many as applicable.

Gender. Students who participated in the study self-declared his or her gender through question 28 on the survey (Appendix B), which asked whether he or she was a male or a female.

Ethical consideration

As in the practice of public relations, ethics need to be taken into consideration when conducting a survey. Rudestam and Newton (1992) stated, "The two main ethical issues that pertain to using subjects in social science research are the need for fully informed consent to participate and the need to emerge from the experience unharmed" (p. 196). Both universities that were used in this study have institutional review boards whose main task includes making sure researchers take the proper steps to protect the rights and well-being of participants. Before collecting the data from Millennial students, the researcher submitted a proposed protocol to both

Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) and Ohio Northern

University Institutional Review Board (IRB), which both approved the study to be conducted.

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it was important that participants

read the explanation of this study, which was provided to them in a cover letter form attached to

the front of the survey. This informed consent page described the purpose, procedures, benefits,

risks, discomforts, and precautions of the program. It also described the alternative procedures

available to the participants, as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any time. No

guarantees or assurances were made to participants as to the results of the study.

To protect the participants and ensure that their experience would not be any more

harmful than a typical day, participants' responses were anonymous. Only basic demographic

information (i.e., sex, age, and race) was asked of each participant. Informed consent forms were

removed survey cover and separated from the questionnaire in order to maintain confidentiality

of participants.

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the current investigation. Conclusions and implications of the study are discussed in the final chapter. This study was conducted to understand the relationship between Millennial students and the 2008 top 10 social brands via social media tools. All findings are organized in the order of the four research questions and three hypotheses proposed in chapter two. SPSS was used for data analysis. Frequency, chi-square test, Pearson's correlations, and a t-test were all used in order to analyze the data.

Research question and hypothesis #1

The first research question posed aimed to answer with what, if any, social media tools Millennial students interact. The responses to this close-ended question were categorized and the frequencies of the responses were aggregated. The percentages for each of the categories were calculated relative to the total set of responses generated. As indicated in Table 2, the most popular response was e-mail (97.2%), followed closely by social networking sites (94.1%). Other social media tools which participants reported for interacting included personal digital assistants (79.1%), video sharing (69.0%), blogs (21.1%), micro blogs (15.4%), and podcasts (11.2%). Only 0.5% of participants reported never using any of the social media tools listed.

The first hypothesis states, "Millennial students who indicate they interact with company/brand e-mail will generate the most committed relationship over all other company/brand social media tools." First, an independent samples t-test was run for each social media tool with a usage response over 50% of the sample who had been engaging with social media tools (yes/no) and wanting their relationship to continue with each company/brand (1 = strongly wanting the relationship to continue, 7 = strongly not wanting the relationship to continue). Results in Table 3 indicated that hypothesis one is partially supported.

Table 2
Response Frequency of Millennial Interaction with Social Media Tools

Social Media Tool	f	% of Total
E-mail	1063	97.2
Social Networking Site (e.g., MySpace/Facebook)	1030	94.1
Personal Digital Assistants (e.g., mobile phone)	865	79.1
Video Sharing (e.g., YouTube)	755	69.0
Blogs	231	21.1
Micro Blog (e.g., Twitter)	169	15.4
Podcasts	122	11.2
None	5	0.5

Note. Participants were asked to select all social media tools with which they interact. Several could have been selected by one participant. n=1094

Table 3

Differences Between Millennial Interaction With and Without a Social Media Tool and Wanting Relationship With Brand/Company to Continue for a Long Time

Brand	Social Media Tools Used			No Social Media Tool Used			
Social Media tool	n	*M*	*SD*	n	*M*	*SD*	*t*
Apple							
E-mail	416	2.30	1.28	660	3.18	1.48	-10.058***
Video	231	2.41	1.38	846	2.96	1.48	-5.123***
PDA	230	2.47	1.42	847	2.94	1.47	.477***
Social Networking	282	2.35	1.29	795	3.02	1.50	-6.692***
CNN							
E-mail	62	3.39	1.42	1015	4.01	1.46	-3.292**
Video	129	3.60	1.54	948	4.03	1.44	-3.164*
PDA	27	3.74	1.61	1050	3.98	1.46	.561
Social Networking	48	3.33	1.59	1029	4.01	1.45	.033*
Disney							
E-mail	77	1.18	2.30	1000	1.39	3.33	-6.346***
Video	169	2.67	1.34	908	3.37	1.39	-6.052***
PDA	20	2.55	1.76	1057	3.27	1.39	-2.285***
Social Networking	82	2.46	1.29	995	3.32	1.39	-5.411*
Xbox							
E-mail	150	2.47	1.37	927	3.76	1.33	-10.987***
Video	121	2.44	1.28	956	3.73	1.36	-9.869***
PDA	43	2.28	1.24	1034	3.64	1.39	-6.282***
Social Networking	84	2.31	1.24	993	3.69	1.37	-8.905***
Starbucks							
E-mail	87	2.84	1.45	990	3.59	1.44	-4.651***
Video	19	3.11	1.63	1058	3.58	1.45	-1.276
PDA	14	2.86	1.29	1063	3.53	1.45	.-1.738
Social Networking	86	3.66	1.47	991	3.51	1.45	.915
MTV							
E-mail	55	4.16	1.62	1022	3.97	1.49	.955
Video	161	3.91	1.51	916	3.99	1.50	-.577
PDA	30	4.03	1.77	1047	3.97	1.49	.213
Social Networking	101	4.01	1.76	976	3.97	1.47	.240
Sony							
E-mail	151	3.18	1.20	926	3.47	1.32	-2.533*
Video	98	3.21	1.39	979	3.45	1.29	-1.698
PDA	63	3.33	1.27	1014	3.43	1.31	-.589
Social Networking	69	3.33	1.46	1008	3.43	1.29	-.618
Dell							
E-mail	378	3.60	1.61	699	3.55	1.50	.496
Video	156	3.63	1.57	921	3.55	1.54	.623
PDA	80	3.55	1.58	977	3.56	1.54	-.082
Social Networking	202	3.70	1.62	875	3.53	1.52	1.428

Note. Lower numbers in mean category indicate wanting the relationship to continue more.
***$p < .000$ **$p < .01$ *$p < .05$

Apple (e-mail: t = -10.058, df = 1075, p < .000, video t = -5.123, df = 1075, p < .000,

PDA: t = -4.411, df = 1075, p < .000, social networking: t = -6.692, df = 1075, p < .000), Disney

(e-mail: t = -6.346, df = 1075, p < .000, video t = -6.052, df = 1075, p < .000, PDA: t = -5.411, df

= 1075, p < .000, social networking: t = -2.285, df = 1075, p < .05), and Xbox (e-mail: t = -

10.987, df = 1075, p < .000, video t = -9.869, df = 1075, p < .000, PDA: t = -6.282, df = 1075, p

< .000, social networking: t = -8.905, df = 1075, p < .000) results indicated a significant

difference between those Millennials who had interacted through all social media tools and those

who had not for wanting their relationship to continue with each company/brand.

For CNN, results indicated a significant difference between those Millennials who had

interacted through three of the four (e-mail, video and social networking tools) social media tools

and those who had not (e-mail: t = -3.292, df = 1075, p < .001, video: t = -3.164, df = 1075, p <

.05, social networking: t = -3.137, df = 1075, p < .05). If participants had interacted through an

e-mail, video, or social networking tool they rated wanting their relationship to continue with

CNN more strongly than if they had not. However, for CNN, results showed no significant

difference between those who had interacted through PDAs and those who had not (t = .851, df =

1075, p > .05).

For Sony and Starbucks, only one social media tool, e-mail, indicated significant

differences. Results for Sony (e-mail: t = -2.533, df = 1075, p < .05) and Starbucks (e-mail: t = -

4.651, df = 1075, p < .000), indicated a significant difference between those Millennials who had

interacted through e-mail and those Millennials who had not. Those Millennials who had

interacted through e-mail rated wanting their relationship to continue with Sony and Starbucks

more strongly than if they had not interacted through e-mail. Sony (video: t = -1.698, df = 1075,

p > .05, PDA: t = -.589, df = 1075, p > .05, and social networking t = -.618, df = 1075, p > .05)

and Starbucks (video: t = -1.276, df = 1075, p > .05, PDA: t = -1.738, df = 1075, p < .05, and

social networking: t = .915, df = 1075, p > .05) social media tools all found no significant

difference between those who had interacted through the social media tool and those who had

not.

For both MTV (e-mail: t = .955, df = 1075, p > .05, video t = -.577, df = 1075, p > .05,

PDA: t = -.213, df = 1075, p > .05, social networking: t = -.240, df = 1075, p > .05), and Dell (e-

mail: t = .496, df = 1075, p > .05, video t = .623, df = 1075, p > .05, PDA: t = -.082, df = 1075, p

> .05, social networking: t = 1.428, df = 1075, p > .05), results indicated no significant difference

between those Millennials who had interacted through all social media tools and those who had

not for wanting their relationship to continue with each company/brand.

Secondly, in order to determine if having contact via social networking tools had varying

effects on wanting the relationship with each company to continue, a series of factorial analyses

of variance (factorial ANOVA) were run.

Results for Apple will be reported first. A factorial ANOVA was run for interacting with

e-mail from Apple (no/yes), by interacting via video from Apple (no/yes) on Millennials wanting

their relationship to continue with Apple. Results indicated significant main effects for e-mail

and video for wanting a relationship to continue (which confirms results of previous t-test

analyses, see Table 3), e-mail: F =35.934, p < .001, video: F = 4.252, p < .05. A significant

interaction effect was not observed between interacting through e-mail and interacting via video

on wanting the relationship to continue, F = 3.187, p = ns. Therefore, there were no differences

between Millennials interacting via e-mail and those interacting via video for wanting their

relationship to continue with Apple. Similarly, a significant interaction effect was not observed

between interacting through e-mail and interacting via PDA (F = .612, p = ns), between video

and PDA (F = .575, p = ns), between social network and video (F = .140, p = ns), or social networking and PDA (F = .282, p = ns) for Millennials wanting the relationship to continue. However, there was a significant interaction effect observed between Millennials interacting via e-mail and those interacting via video on wanting their relationship to continue with Apple (F = .029, p < .05). The next step was to go back to the t-test to check the means to determine which of the two social media tools or if the combined interaction had the strongest relationship. Mean scores from the t-test found e-mail (m = 2.30) and social networking (m = 2.35) individually were not as strong as when Millennials indicated they had interacted with both social networking tools (m = 2.09)

For CNN, a significant interaction effect was not observed between most of the social media tools. The following results were not significant: e-mail and video (F = .168, p = ns), e-mail and PDA (F = .656, p = ns), video and PDA (F = .133, p = ns), video and social networking (F = .140, p = ns), PDA and social networking (F = .808, p = ns). However, there was a significant interaction effect observed between Millennials interacting via e-mail by those interacting via social networking for wanting their relationship to continue with CNN (F = .017, p < .05). The next step was to go back to the t-test to check the means to determine which of the two social media tools or if the combined interaction had the strongest relationship. Mean scores from the t-test found e-mail (m = 3.39) to be the strongest followed by social networking (m = 3.33) and combination of both e-mail and social networking (m = 3.69) to be the least strongest of the three.

Next, Disney was analyzed for results. A significant interaction effect was not observed between most of the social media tools. The following results were not significant: e-mail and video (F = .553, p = ns), e-mail and PDA (F = .501, p = ns), video and PDA (F = .901, p = ns),

video and social networking ($F = .222$, p = ns), PDA and social networking ($F = .124$, p = ns).

Similar to Apple and CNN, there was a significant interaction effect observed between

Millennials interacting via e-mail by those interacting via social networking for wanting their

relationship to continue with CNN ($F = .011$, $p < .05$). As with the previous two

companies/brands outlined, the researcher returned to the t-test to check the means to determine

which of the two social media tools or if the combined interaction had the strongest relationship.

Mean scores from the t-test found e-mail (m = 1.18) and social networking (m = 2.46), while the

combined mean resulting in 2.36. Unique of all the previous two companies, Disney is shown to

have the strongest relationship with using e-mail to build relationships with Millennial students,

followed by combining e-mail and social networking and lastly, social networking individually.

As indicated in Table 4, all other top 10 social media companies/brands (Xbox,

Starbucks, MTV, Sony and Dell) resulted in no significant interaction effect for any of the

comparisons between the social media tools and strongly wanting the relationship with the

company to continue.

Research question and hypothesis #2

Chi-square analyses were calculated for the second research question. "The chi-square

test of statistical significance is based on the assumption that the randomly sampled data has

appropriately described, within sampling error, the population's proportions of cases falling into

the categorized values of the variables being tested" (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 1998, p. 167).

Research question two asked, "What is the relationship between a Millennial student's

commitment to maintaining a relationship with one of the top 10 most social company/brand and

the interaction of the Millennial student with a social media tool of that company/brand?"

Table 4

Factor Loadings for Millennial Interaction with E-mail, Video, PDA, and Social Networking for Wanting Relationship With Company/Brand to Continue for a Long Time

Brand	Factor Loadings			
Social Media tool	E-mail	Video	PDA	Social Networking
Apple				
E-mail		.074	.612	.029*
Video	.074		.575	.140
PDA	.612	.575		.282
Social Networking	.029*	.140	.282	
CNN				
E-mail		.168	.656	.017*
Video	.168		.133	.140
PDA	.656	.133		.808
Social Networking	.017*	.140	.808	
Disney				
E-mail		.553	.501	.011*
Video	.553		.901	.222
PDA	.501	.901		.124
Social Networking	.011*	.222	.124	
Xbox				
E-mail		.054	.359	.132
Video	.054		.398	.720
PDA	.359	.398		.356
Social Networking	.132	.720	.356	
Starbucks				
E-mail		.504	.766	.365
Video	.504		n/a	.627
PDA	.766	n/a		.880
Social Networking	.365	.627	.880	
MTV				
E-mail		.109	.401	.334
Video	.109		.202	.919
PDA	.401	.202		.063
Social Networking	.334	.919	.063	
Sony				
E-mail		.924	.368	.541
Video	.924		.207	.934
PDA	.368	.207		.738
Social Networking	.541	.934	.738	
Dell				
E-mail		.245	.481	.365
Video	.245		.227	.644
PDA	.481	.227		.919
Social Networking	.365	.644	.919	

Note. n/a = SPSS not having enough participants to run test
*$p < .05$

A chi-square test was run for exposure to company/brand social media outlet (yes/no) and commitment to that social media company/brand. Results indicated that out of the eight social media companies/brands, six had significant differences between the participants who had and those who had not been exposed to the company/brand social media outlet and his or her level of commitment to that particular social media company/brand.

For CNN, there was not a significant difference between interaction with CNN and commitment to the company [χ^2 (7, n = 1093) = 8.33, p = ns]. Therefore, commitment to maintaining a relationship with CNN was not different for those who had been exposed to social media and those who had not. Similarly, there was not a significant difference between those who had been exposed to Dell and those who had not on his or her commitment to the brand [χ^2 (7, n = 1093) = 7.42, p = ns]. Therefore, commitment to maintaining a relationship with Dell was not different for those who had been exposed to social media and those who had not.

For Disney, there was a significant difference in the commitment level between those who had been exposed to Disney and those who had not on their commitment level [χ^2 (7, n = 1093) = 113.2, p < .001]. Thus, commitment to Disney differed depending on whether or not the participants had been exposed to social media. For Xbox, a significant difference was observed between individuals who had been exposed to Xbox and their level of commitment [χ^2 (7, n = 1093) = 259.9, p < .001] to the company/brand. Thus, commitment to Xbox was different for those who had been exposed to social media and those who had not been. For Starbucks, a significant difference was observed between those who had been exposed and those who had not on their commitment to the brand [χ^2 (7, n = 1093) = 137.0, p < .001]. Thus, commitment to Starbucks differed depending on whether or not the participants had been exposed to social media. Again, for MTV, there was a significant difference between those who had been exposed

to social media and those who had not on his or her commitment to MTV [χ^2 (7, n = 1093) =

18.70, p < .01]. Thus, commitment to MTV was different for those who had been exposed to

social media and those who had not been. There was a significant difference for exposure to

Sony and commitment to its brand [χ^2 (7, n = 1093) = 17.66, p < .05]. Thus, commitment to Sony

differed depending on whether or not the participants had been exposed to social media. Finally,

for Apple, there was a significant difference in commitment to brand for those who had been

exposed to social media and those who had not [χ^2 (7, n = 1093) = 113.9, p = ns]. Thus,

commitment to Apple was different for those who had been exposed to social media and those

who had not been.

      The second hypothesis in the current study states, "Those Millennial students who have

had a relationship with the top 10 social brands via social media tools will be more likely to have

a favorable perception of that company/brand." An independent samples t-test was run for

interaction with a brand/company through social media tools (yes/no) and wanting a relationship

with the brand/company to continue for a long time. Results indicated that there were significant

differences for six of the eight media brands/companies for exposure to the brand/company

social media tool and wanting the relationship to continue with the company (see Table 5). For

all companies/brands except CNN and Dell, results indicated that as participants' usage of social

media tools increased, their wanting to continue a relationship with the company/brand also

increased. For Apple, there was a significant difference between those who had interaction with

the brand through media and those who had not on their level of wanting their relationship to

continue (t = 11.479, df = 1091, p < .01). Students who had interacted with Apple through social

media (m = 2.40, sd = 1.394) reported wanting the relationship with Apple to continue more so

than those who had not been exposed to Apple through social media (m = 3.42, sd = 1.453).

Table 5
Differences Between Interaction With Brand/Company Through Social Media Tool(s) and Wanting Relationship With Brand/Company to Continue for a Long Time

	Social Media Tools Used		No Social Media Tool Used		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*
Brand					
Apple	2.40	1.394	3.42	1.453	11.479**
CNN	4.00	1.633	3.89	1.494	1.96
Disney	2.46	1.389	3.46	1.377	10.483**
Xbox	2.46	1.469	3.87	1.300	14.831**
Starbucks	2.55	1.567	3.66	1.419	9.473**
MTV	3.74	1.634	3.98	1.533	2.178*
Sony	3.18	1.384	3.44	1.346	2.832**
Dell	3.49	1.676	3.53	1.517	.449

Note. n = 1091 **$p < .01$ *$p < .05$

For CNN, there was no significant difference between those who had interaction with the brand through media and those who had not on their level of wanting their relationship to continue (t = .983, df = 1091, p > .05). Interestingly, those who had not interacted through social media with CNN (m = 3.89, sd = 1.494) reported wanting the relationship with CNN to continue more so than those who had been exposed to CNN through social media (m = 4.00, sd = 1.633).

Similar to Apple, Disney statistics indicated that there was a significant difference between those who had interaction with the company/brand through media and those who had not on their level of wanting their relationship to continue (t = 10.483, df = 1091, p < .01). Students who had interacted with Disney through social media (m = 2.46, sd = 1.389) reported wanting his or her relationship with Disney to continue more so than those who had not been exposed to Disney through social media (m = 3.46, sd = 1.377).

For Xbox, there was a significant difference between those who had interaction with the company/brand through media and those who had not on their level of wanting their relationship to continue (t = 14.831, df = 1091, p < .01). Students who had interacted with Xbox through social media (m = 2.46, sd = 1.469) reported wanting the relationship with Xbox to continue more so than those who had not been exposed to Xbox through social media (m = 3.87, sd = 1.300).

Starbucks also reported a significant difference between those who had interaction with the company/brand through media and those who had not on their level of wanting their relationship to continue (t = 9.473, df = 1091, p < .01). Students who had interacted with Starbucks through social media (m = 2.55, sd = 1.567) reported wanting the relationship with Starbucks to continue more so than those who had not been exposed to Starbucks through social media (m = 3.66, sd = 1.419).

For MTV, there was a significant difference between those who had interaction with the company/brand through media and those who had not on their level of wanting their relationship to continue (t = 2.178, df = 1091, p < .05). Students who had interacted with MTV through social media (m = 3.74, sd = 1.634) reported wanting the relationship with MTV to continue more so than those who had not been exposed to MTV through social media (m = 3.98, sd = 1.533).

The last to report a significant difference between those who had interaction with the company/brand through media and those who had not on their level of wanting their relationship to continue was Sony (t = 2.832, df = 1091, p < .01). Students who had interacted with Sony through social media (m = 3.18, sd = 1.384) reported wanting the relationship with Sony to continue more so than those who had not been exposed to Sony through social media (m = 3.44, sd = 1.346).

Finally, for Dell, there was no significant difference between those who had interaction with the brand through media and those who had not on their level of wanting their relationship to continue (t = .449, df = 1091, p > .05). However, similar to most companies/brands, those students who had interacted with Dell through social media (m = 3.49, sd = 1.676) reported wanting the relationship with Dell to continue more so than those who had not been exposed to Dell through social media (m = 3.53, sd = 1.517).

Research question and hypothesis #3

The third research question asked is, "To what extent is a Millennial student's favorable perception of the organization positively associated with his or her active social media behavior?" Pearson's product-moment correlations were used to analyze this research question. Pearson's product-moment correlations are used in situations were the independent and dependent variables are interval or ratio level measures (Reinard, 2008). In this study a

correlation was run for active social media behavior (number of tools used: no tools = 0 to all

tools listed selected = 7) and wanting a relationship with a brand/company to continue for a long

time (strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 7). Results indicate that there are significant

correlations for all eight media brands/companies between active social media behavior and

wanting the relationship to continue with the company/brand. Table 6 presents the correlations

between active social media behavior and Millennial students wanting their relationships with

each company/brand to continue for a long time. Correlations were significant at the .001 level.

The third hypothesis in the current study states, "Millennial students' satisfaction with the

relationship they have with one of the top 10 social brands will be positively associated with the

company/brand through a social media outlet." A correlation analysis was run for the number of

social media tools (e.g., 0 = no tools, 1 = 1 social media tool contact, etc.) to which participants

were exposed by each company/brand and wanting their relationship to continue for a long time

(1 = strongly agree to 7 = strongly disagree) with each respective company/brand. Results

indicated no significant correlations for the number of social media tools that participants were

exposed to by each company/brand and wanting their relationship to continue with that

company/brand for a long time. As indicated from the results in Table 7, the number of social

media tools Millennials were exposed to by each of these companies did not relate to those same

Millennials wanting to maintain a relationship with the company/brand for a long time.

Research question and hypothesis #4

Research question number four asked, "To what extent, if any, is there a difference

between gender and each social media tool?" A chi-square test was run for gender (male/female)

and each of the seven media tools. As shown in Table 8, results indicated that out of the seven

Table 6

Pearson Correlation Matrix for Millennials Favorable Perception and Active Social Media Behavior

	(r)
Apple	.032
CNN	.036
Disney	.009
Xbox	.063*
Starbucks	.019
MTV	.074*
Sony	.061*
Dell	.057*

Note. n = 1094 *$p \geq .05$ (one-tailed)

Table 7

Pearson Correlation Matrix for Personal Interaction with Social Media Tools of Company/Brand and Millennial Students' Desire to Continue a Relationship with Each Company/Brand

Brand	Social Media Tools Interaction	
	r	*p*
Apple	.524	ns
CNN	.125	ns
Disney	.077	ns
Xbox	.541	ns
Starbucks	.911	ns
MTV	.125	ns
Sony	.055	reached significance
Dell	.464	ns

Note. n = 1091

Table 8

Differences Between Engagement of Social Media Tools Among Male and Female Millennial Students

Social Media Tool	χ^2	$\underline{p}$
Blogs	1.002	ns
E-mail	1.120	ns
Micro Blog (e.g., Twitter)	1.431	ns
Podcasts	.000	ns
Personal Digital Assistants (e.g., mobile phone)	.838	ns
Social Networking Site (e.g., MySapce/Facebook)	.312	ns
Video Sharing (e.g., YouTube)	.483	ns

Note. Female: n = 598, Male: n = 463

social media tools, none had significant differences between the gender and each particular social media tool that was explored in the study.

Hypothesis four posits, "Millennial males will be more likely to interact with social media tools than Millennial females." As shown in Table 8, chi-square test results were run for gender (male/female) and each of the seven media tools. It is important to note for this study, 598 females (56%) and 463 (44%) males participated in the survey, close to an equal distribution. Millennial males were not found to interact with any of the seven media tools more than the females, hence not supporting hypothesis four.

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine links between organization-public relationships and Millennial students' active social media behavior. This study uses survey research to assess this relationship. Bruning and Galloway's (2003) organization-public relationship scale lent itself to not only the company/brand investigation of relationships, but also relationships between Millennial students and social media tools better than other organization-public relationships instruments.

Key messages to target publics have been at the foundational level of effective public relations for years. Franklin *et al.* (2009) states, "Derived from excellence theory, the key messages identify your core purpose; elaborate on how you will achieve it; and then build in a facility to evaluate the results" (p. 123). Furthermore, key mediums to reach the target public with the message becomes yet another dimension in the public relations puzzle. This study aims to look at how the top 10 most social media companies/brands are building a relationship with Millennials via social media tools. In this chapter, important findings regarding the four research questions and three hypotheses are elaborated upon. Next, limitations of this study are discussed. Then, suggestions for future research are presented. Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion of the significance of the current study.

Overview of findings

Research question #1. The first research question aimed to answer with what social media tools Millennial students interacted the most. A list emerged by asking Millennial students to select all social media tools with which he or she would interact. Because students were allowed to select more than one type of social media, the question did not force participants to select one tool over another, allowing for multiple social media tools to emerge as highly

interacted with by Millennial students. Relatively consistent with Lenhart & Fox's (2009) study

for the Pew Internet data, which reported that 94% of those from age 18 to 32 use e-mail, this

social media tool was also selected as the most highly interacted social media tool by participants

at 97.2%. Closely following at 94.1%, social networking as a social media tool was also reported

as highly interacted with by Millennial students. The popularity of the social networking social

media tool did not come as a surprise, especially after recent research on social networking sites

such as Facebook has proclaimed its rising popularity (Outlaw, 2009; Vasquez, 2008). Knowing

that Millennials are using social networking tools is encouraging to those public relations

practitioners who are considering or are beginning to reach out to this key audience through this

social media tool.

　　　Most interesting, inconsistent with what others have found, is the interaction Millennials

reported with both blogs and podcasts. Jones and Fox (2009) report that 43% of this generation

engage with blogs. In this study, only 21.1% of Millennial students reported interacting with

blogs. Because this percentage is rather low, the finding raises several questions. One significant

question is whether blogs are becoming less popular within this Millennial Generation. This

finding suggests that blogs are not as popular as others have reported. Another question is what

characteristics make blogs more or less engaging? Possibly because of the recent growth of blogs

as reported by Technorati (2009), information is becoming not only overwhelming but also

difficult to trust. Although some research has found that Millennials are suited for blogging

because of its unique capability of allowing for content contribution, being leery of where their

information is being posted and who is accessing that information is becoming more of an issue

(McConnell & Hubba, 2007).

Another noteworthy finding that emerged in the study is the 11.2% of Millennial students who reported interacting with podcasts. Recent studies suggest that the audio podcast is one of the rising social media tools that is expected to have exponential growth in upcoming years. Indeed research says that 25% of Millennials are already using podcast, which contradicts the finding of this study. (EMarketer, 2008a; Jones & Fox, 2009). Similar to blogs, questions arise about this significant decline of Millennials who report interacting with podcast. As a teacher who not only encourages students to listen to podcasts, but also requires students to produce their own, this statistic is intriguing. Findings suggest that podcasts as a social tool are not the best way to target this generation. Besides the 0.5% of participants who reported not interacting with any social media tool, podcasts were reported as the least interacted with social media tool.

One note of interest pertaining to the first research question regards those participants who selected interacting with no social media tool. Only five of 1093 students who participated in the study reported that they did not engage with any social media tool. This finding supports the idea that Millennial students are indeed interacting with a variety of social media tools. Public relations practitioners should find this result encouraging while thinking strategically for ways to reach this target audience through these different social media tools. Although all social media tools did not register with above-average percentages of interaction, most Millennials reported interacting with a variety of tools.

Hypothesis #1.

Millennials are using social media tools, some more than others as supported by research question and hypothesis one, to receive messages from companies and organizations. As discussed previously, Millennial students are bombarded with millions of messages. Targeting those messages through the appropriate tool is essential to the success of a positive relationship.

Windahl, Signitzer and Olson (2009) stated, "When a sub-audience is defined as a segment, the communication planner must find channels and messages that fit it. But not all segments can be reached through matching channels, that is, through channels whose audience equals the planner's target group" (p. 231). In order to investigate further if Millennials were gravitating more to e-mail than other social media tools of the particular company/brand while also staying strongly committed to a particular company/brand, hypothesis one was advanced. To find a thorough answer, both t-tests and a factorial ANOVA were run. T-tests were run to find if there were significant differences between each of the top social media tools as discovered in research question one. The four social media tools (e-mail, video, PDA, social networking) that were investigated all had over 50% of participants report that they had interacted with the social media tool. Apple, Disney, and Xbox reported significant differences for all four social media tools between those Millennials who had interacted with the company/brand's social media tool and wanted their relationship to continue and those who had not interacted. CNN reported significance for all but PDA. Sony and Starbucks reported significance for only e-mail. MTV and Dell reported no significant difference between any of the four social media tools. Only guesses can be made at this time as to why some companies/brands reported significant differences between those Millennials who had wanted their relationship to continue and those who had not. One guess could be that perhaps some may do better than others at being authentic. Authenticity is crucial within social media. Take, for example, the Wal-Mart blogging incident that happened in 2006. The public relations firm Edelman had three of their public relations practitioners write and take pictures and then post on the *Working Families for Wal-mart* blog site with no transparency that they were being paid to contribute to the blogging site. According to Kane (2006), "The incident caused both old and new media to shake their heads. Traditional

media analysts focused on the ethics of a photographer working for a company that he may be required to cover, and many bloggers were outraged over the creation of a 'fake' blog" (p. 1).

The issue of transparency and authenticity continues to be a relevant issue in social media. As Scott (2007) discussed previously in the literature review, some companies attempt to pull off corporate generated material as consumer generated material. Millennials can detect this issue of authenticity and often feel betrayed and belittled when companies or brands try to blur the social media authenticity lines. Before the emergence of social media tools, the brand had to build itself. Breakenridge (2007) spoke of how, with social media tools, Millennials can build a brand themselves. If the company/brand is not being authentic, credibility for the company/brand is damaged. If Millennials do not trust the company/brand, it is inevitable that they are not going to want to continue their relationship with the company/brand for a long time.

Yet another guess as to why some companies/brands reported significant differences between those Millennials who had wanted their relationship to continue and those who had not could revolve around the issue of the differences between traditional and social media tools. Millennials may prefer to see more traditional communication (television or radio) instead of social media communication from particular companies/brands. MTV was one of the companies in which no significant difference between any of the social media tools was found and Millennials wanting to continue their relationship with MTV for a long time. This could be due to the fact that MTV, as it states in its name, is known for its more traditional form of communication—television. Millennials may prefer building their relationship with MTV through more traditional means rather than social means. This is not to say that Millennials are not interacting with the social media tools, but rather that their preference for this particular company may still lie in more traditional tools. However, without additional studies focused on

this particular brand, only speculation can be made. Further studies with each company are needed in order to determine why the social media tool did make a difference with Apple, Disney, and Xbox with all four social media tools and no social media tools made a difference with MTV and Dell between those Millennials who had used the tools and those who had not against wanting their relationship to continue with MTV and Dell.

Although a variety of the social media tools reported main effects between tools (the significant t-test results), a factorial ANOVA was run in the current study to explore those tools that were considered highly engaged in by Millennials (e-mail, video, PDA, social networking) and their wanting the relationship to continue with each of the top 10 most social companies/brands. In looking at each social media tool individually compared to the combination of two of the top four social media tools, results indicated that only in the case of Apple, CNN, and Disney did the combination of multiple tools have significant interaction effects between e-mail and social networking, social media tools, and wanting their relationship to continue with Apple, CNN, and Disney. After examining the data, the researcher went back to the t-test means to compare each individual tool mean with the combined mean to determine which was the lowest. This helped determine which tool, or combination of the tools, provided the strongest relationship. Interestingly, Apple, CNN and Disney all reported different results for the strongest relationship. Yet, because e-mail (97.2%) was advanced as the social media tool to generate the most committed relationship between the company/brand and the Millennial student, hypothesis one is partially supported. Again, hypothesis one stated, "Millennial students who indicate they interact with company/brand e-mail will generate the most committed relationship over all other company/brand social media tools." Even though the Apple, CNN, and Disney results of the current study all reported different preference of company/brand social

media tool(s) for Millennials, of the tools that were significant, e-mail was part of those that Millennials responded to as interacting with the most while remaining the most committed to the company/brand. Furthermore, the t-test serves as a guide for both the companies/brands and public relations practitioners who question using social media tools to attract Millennial students. E-mail showed a significant difference between Millennials who had received an e-mail and those who had not and wanting their relationship to continue with each company/brand in six out of the eight companies/brands. PDA showed the least promise to commitment to the company/brand of the four social media tools looked at in this hypothesis, having only three of eight companies/brands show significance between those who had interacted with PDA and those who had not.

This study provides public relations practitioners with a guide to what social media tools Millennials are engaging with the most, while also providing encouragement to those practicing public relations that most Millennials generally are engaging with some type social media tools. This is good news to those in public relations who ponder venturing into social media tools. Interestingly, the social media tools that the study has identified as being the most closely tied to relationship and commitment are, for the most part, the social media tools that have been in existence for the longest time. E-mail was identified in the study as the most interacted social media tool, yet compared to the rest of the tools, it has been in existence the longest amount of time. Tools that were relatively new to the social media toolbox (podcast, microblogging) were found to be the least interacted with social media tools. Could this be because Millennials have not had adequate time to properly engage with these innovative tools? Future studies could find a higher interaction response from Millennials as they become more comfortable using the social media tools.

Research question #2. The second research question asked about the relationship between a Millennial student's commitment to maintaining a relationship with one of the top 10 most social company/brands and the interaction of the Millennial student with a social media tool of that company/brand. Results indicated that out of the eight social media companies/brands, six had significant differences between the participants who had and had not been exposed to the company/brand social media outlet and his or her level of commitment to that particular social media company/brand.

The current study reports Apple, Disney, Xbox, Starbucks, MTV, and Sony all having significant difference in the commitment level between those who had been exposed to company/brand social media tool and those who had not. Results support the argument that those Millennial students who had indicated that they had personally interacted with a company/brand via a social media tool(s) were more committed to maintaining a relationship with that particular company/brand than those Millennials who reported never having interacted with the company/brand via social media. Those Millennials who had actually interacted with the company/brand by using the social media tools most likely had some type of vested interest with the company/brand, thereby already establishing some type of relationship with the company/brand. It would suggest that if Millennials are interacting with companies, these users desire some type of relationship, usually positive, with that particular company/brand.

Interestingly, this study found that for CNN and Dell the reverse proved to be true in exploring the relationship between a Millennial student's commitment to maintaining a relationship with one of the top 10 most social company/brands and the interaction of the Millennial student with a social media tool of that company/brand. Commitment to maintaining a relationship with CNN and Dell was not different for those participants who had been exposed to

social media and those who had not. The researcher can only speculate why this finding emerges.

CNN is a company that supplies news to millions worldwide. Millennials may interact with

CNN's social media tools, but not be committed to maintaining a relationship with the company

because of the nature of news and how it can be communicated in a variety of ways. For

example, although the researcher in this study follows CNN on Twitter, the researcher is not

strongly committed to maintaining a relationship with CNN because of the preference to get

news through the local television news channel for a local angle or national news from the NPR

podcast so one can run while listening (multi-tasking Millennial).

The lack of relationship between Millennial social media use and Dell computers remains

a mystery. Further inquiry needs to occur to find out why a disconnect exists. One speculation

for there being no difference between those Millennials who have had and those who have not

had interaction through one of these companies/brands social media tools is that the interaction

possibly was not pleasant. A non-pleasant interaction could originate from an array of reasons.

One speculation is the quickness of response rate from Dell through their social media tools. The

ability to access information at a quicker pace is an advantage that social media tools have over

more traditional means. When this advantage is not upheld by the company/brand, the loss of

interest among Millennials is likely. Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith (2007) pointed out

public relations practitioners must understand the need for timely and up-to-date information.

What this means for public relations practitioners courting the Millennial Generation is never

having a day off. Trends and fads come and go quickly. If Dell's social media tool cannot

provide a quick response, Millennials will find another company/brand who will provide and fill

their need for timely information.

Furthermore, the results of this study raise additional questions about why Dell and CNN have different experiences with Millennials than other top companies/brands. This is very interesting data for public relations practitioners who work for both CNN and Dell, two widely respected companies. These top companies are reaching this Millennial market via social media tools, but questions addressing why there is no commitment to some companies with whom Millennials are engaged via social media tools needs to be further examined.

Hypothesis #2. The second hypothesis posited that Millennial students who have had a relationship with the top 10 social companies/brands via that particular company's/brand's social media tools would be more likely to have a favorable perception of that company/brand. Hypothesis two was partially supported for all of the companies, with the exception of CNN and Dell. Results indicated that as participants' usage of media tools increased, Millennials wanting to continue a relationship with the company/brand also increased. Millennials indicating that they somewhat agreed to strongly agreed that they wanted to continue their relationship with the company/brand for a long time was used to determine if they had a favorable perception of the company/brand. Apparently, according to the data, those students who have had a relationship with CNN and Dell via that particular company's/brand's social media tools do not have a favorable perception of CNN or Dell. Even after interacting with CNN and Dell via social media tools, it is surprising that those Millennials did not have a favorable perception. Reasons for this disconnect are unknown; however, the data clearly indicate a lack of relationship with Millennials for these two companies. What makes CNN and Dell the anomaly to the list of top 10 most social brands is unknown and intriguing. The support for hypothesis one is especially positive news for public relations practitioners who aim to engage this niche market of Millennials via social media tools. If, for the most part, Millennials have favorable perceptions of

those companies/brands with which they interact via social media tools, public relations practitioners need to look at ways to interact with the Millennial target audience in order to build stronger, more favorable relationships.

Windahl, Signitzer and Olson (2009) stated, "The communication planner who provides information perceived as valuable at the right point in time via the right medium has the greatest chance of affecting the individual to whom the information is addressed" (p. 264). When public relations finds this connection between delivering content when and where it is needed, key publics brand the organization as a leader (Scott, 2007). Findings in the current study tell us that Dell and CNN are somehow missing the target as a leader with the key Millennial public. Although Dell and CNN are said to be using social media tools, Millennials still do not want to continue their relationship with the company, even after engagement with their social media tools. This speaks volumes of the poor relationship that is occurring between the company and the Millennial student.

Yet another possible explanation for the disconnect between Millennials and Dell and CNN could be the sexiness of the company. As previously discussed in the literature review, trendiness is key in reaching this demographic that is online (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007). It is possible the Apple product overpowers the Dell product in popularity. This is a definite possibility since Apple as a company and two of its products have taken three spots on the top 10 most social brands list. CNN is news source that, while popular among the business community, may not be as 'hip' within the Millennial population.

Public relations practitioners can take this research and apply it to future conversations and plans to implement social media tools. In order to engage the Millennial Generation with social media tools, first public relations practitioners need to establish if social media is the best

tool to reach their target audience. If not, similar results to Dell and CNN may arise. What happens when social media tools are in place, yet this channel is not the best way to reach this demographic? A variety of things can occur. One obvious guess is loss of revenue with declining sales. With Millennials turning to other companies/brands to fulfill their needs, revenue is lost when they look elsewhere. However, possibly more importantly, a relationship is lost. A mutually beneficial relationship between the organization and the Millennial student serves as a key opportunity for public relations practitioners. When that organization is not fulfilling the needs and wants of the Millennial by not targeting key messages through specific tools, an opportunity is lost.

Research question #3. The third research question asked to what extent Millennial students' favorable perception of an organization was positively associated with their active social media behavior. Results indicated that there were significant correlations for all of the media brands/companies studied between active social media behavior and wanting the relationship to continue with the company/brand. This question did not look at the social media usage from each particular brand as in research question two, but instead Millennials' social media usage in general. The significant correlations support the idea that the more these technological Millennials interact with social media, the more they tend to favor the top 10 social companies/brands. Based on the results from research question two, this positive correlation was somewhat expected. The companies/brands that were selected as the top 10 most social brands were selected because of their innate use of engaging audiences with social media. Those Millennials who use social media should seemingly positively correlate with these brands based on the simple fact that they are engaging with tools that have made these companies/brands rise to the top of the list. The more tools with which Millennials engage, the more opportunity they

have to exposure to one or more of these companies. Furthermore, the more social media tools that Millennials use, the more comfortable they likely are with interacting with each company/brand because of the company's/brand's extensive use of the social media.

Hypothesis #3. The third hypothesis stated that Millennial students' satisfaction with the relationship they had with one of the top 10 social companies/brands would be positively associated with the company/brand through a social media outlet. Hypothesis three was not supported. Although the results for Sony reached significance, none of the other companies/brands indicated a significant correlation between the number of social media tools that participants were exposed to by each company/brand and a desire for their relationship to continue with that company/brand for a long time. This finding supports the literature (Flanagin and Metzger, 2008: Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007; Mazzarella, 2006) on the Millennials in regard to finding the fine line between engaging and tuning out completely. Attracting and maintaining their attention continues to be a challenge for public relations practitioners who are desperately trying to reach this key market. While Millennial students have a more favorable perception of most of the top 10 social companies/brands if they have had relationship with them through a social media tool, as borne out by hypothesis two, as those social media tool interactions increase, it does not necessarily increase their satisfaction with that particular company/brand. Data from the current study support the idea that more types of social media usage does not increase user satisfaction with the relationship with a company/brand. These results are consistent with existing research that encourages public relations practitioners to engage in only those social media tools that they are willing to devote the time, resources and effort into making succeed (Gillin, 2007; Li and Bernoff, 2008; Scott, 2007). This study further supports the recommendation of engaging in only those social media for which public relations

practitioners are ready because engaging in multiple social media tools does not seem to increase the chances of successfully establishing a mutually beneficial relationship with the Millennial Generation.

Research question #4. Debates have ensued over gender differences with technology over the ages. Social media tools are emerging as a new technology on the public relations forefront as discussed in the literature review. This naturally led to research question number four which asked, "To what extent, if any extent, is there a difference between gender and each social media tool?" Results indicated that no significant difference exists between males and females and their use of social media tools. This supports other scholars (Dresang, Gross, & Holt, 2007; Li, Glass, & Records, 2008; Rainer, Laosethakul, & Astone, 2003) who argue that this gap has drastically narrowed over time and is in some cases non-existent. This is good news for public relations practitioners who are trying to target the Millennial market with social media tools and have concerns about gender differences. Each of the seven social media tools was examined for gender differences, and all data gathered indicate no difference between gender for any of the seven social media tools.

Hypothesis #4. In looking at communication technologies, specifically social media, very few studies have been conducted for each tool individually in regards to gender preference. Many studies have shown that females have lagged behind in many aspects of new technology from their use to their confidence or ability to use the technology (Dempsey, 2009; Spotts, Bowman, & Mertz, 1997; Wood & Li, 2005). Based on previous research, hypothesis four was advanced, "Millennial males will be more likely to interact with social media tools than Millennial females." Results found that Millennial males were not necessarily more likely to interact with any of the seven social media tools set forth by the study than Millennial females.

Although this finding is surprising, it should be also promising to public relations practitioners that are trying to reach the Millennial demographic. Constructing key messages to send through the best social media channels can be difficult enough, let alone trying to utilize different channels to reach different genders. Results from the current study support others (Dresang, Gross, & Holt, 2007; Li, Glass, & Records, 2008; Rainer, Laosethakul, & Astone, 2003) who argue that the gender/technology gap is narrowing, or in some cases, disappearing. Millennials are known for their tech savvy ways, and these findings assert that gender does not make a difference on which social media tools Millennials will use and not use.

Limitations and considerations

Even with such illustrative findings, some inherent limitations impeded the current study. The first limitation was the population studied. Even though only those students who fit Howe and Stauss's (2000) definition of Millennials were surveyed, all students were college students seeking higher education, and thus were more educated than some of their peers within the Millennial Generation. This study examines a very specific niche market of the Millennial Generation and the results possibly are not generalized to the entire Millennial Generation. However, the value of this study is still extremely relevant to public relations practitioners as it does offer valuable insight into Millennials' use of social media tools, as well as their relationships with particular companies/brands through those social media tool interactions.

Secondly, because all participants were on a college campus, each student participant was provided e-mail access to his or her particular school through that campus's e-mail service. Also provided at each campus was access to computers. Such ready access could partially account for the reason e-mail was named as the most used social media tool by the demographic studied. Although many Millennials are granted access to these social media resources through public

libraries and such, Millennials in this particular study are not only granted access, but also are required to use them to get pertinent information about campus events to homework assignments.

A final limitation of this study was that social media tools were outlined and defined for those participating in the study. As discussed in the literature review, trends and fads come and go quickly in this world. Those social media tools, which were outlined for participants to select from as a social media tool, may have been incomplete in the participants' eyes. It is possible that other tools could have been important to the Millennials, yet remained unexplored in this study. Since no option was presented for subjects to contribute their own ideas of additional social media tools, subjects could only select from the provided list or select none of the options.

Future research directions

Although the current findings respond to a need to conduct original research in the area of public relations, this study only begins to address the void in the communication and marketing literature. At the annual International Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) conference in October of 2008, it was apparent that the public relations field is evolving and that social media is at the heart of the movement. In an attempt to assist public relations practitioners, specifically those who are or thinking of using social media tools, this study intended to both add to the communication and marketing literature as well as assist current practitioners in the field.

The current investigation looked at only one dimension—personal commitment—of Bruning and Galloway's (2003) public-organization relationship scale. However, as previously mentioned, the scale is composed of five dimensions: anthropomorphic, personal commitment, professional benefit/expectation, community improvement, and comparison of alternatives that could be further examined. Solid findings from the current study offer a more complete understanding into an individual's personal commitment with a company/brand, yet much more

information can be gleaned from looking at each of the different dimensions individually and collaboratively.

In addition to Millennials, several other generations exist. A follow-up study examining the personal commitment of each of the other generations could offer public relations practitioners insight into building relationships with not only the Millennial Generation, but also how those relationships with Millennials differ from the other generations via use of social media tools. Millennials are labeled as being technologically savvy (Phillips, 2009; Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007; McConnell and Huba, 2007; Neuborne and Kerwin, 1999); however, does this mean that all other generations would not build mutually beneficial relationships in the same way Millennials do through social media interaction? By comparing and contrasting the behaviors of all generations, future studies could help answer this compelling question.

This particular study looked intently on channel usage related to indentifying social media use and the way that this relates to brand loyalty and continued interest in continuing relationships. What it doesn't look at is message content that is disseminated through those channels. Additional research should be conducted in order to analyze messages that are sent through these social media channels and how those messages relate to Millennials wanting to continue their relationship with the organization.

Finally, while this study allowed the researcher to investigate Millennials' interaction with social media tools of specific companies, research is also needed to investigate *what* makes Millennials engage with one particular social media tool over another. The current study found that Millennials heavily engage with social networking sites (e.g., MySpace and Facebook). What makes Millennials engage with social networking sites more than other social media tools such as blogs, micro-blogs, or podcasts? To extend the current study, a future qualitative study

could divulge a better understanding through open-ended questions as to why Millennials prefer

social networking sites and e-mail to microblogging and podcasts. Likewise, researchers might

also examine the various social media tools that Millennial engage with the most and how those

tools change over time.

Conclusion

In recent years, economic cuts have been made in order for organizations to stay afloat.

Public relations departments across the board have provided evidence that not only are their

skills desirable, but also are warranted. Consequently, professionals and scholars alike in the

field of public relations have turned to the foundational block of relationship building in order to

establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between the public and the organization.

Hallahan (2008) asserted that one way to demonstrate a company/brand commitment to key

publics was to make technology-based access available. In an effort to expand the knowledge in

building key relationships, the current study looked at a particular technology-based medium,

namely social media, to understand better what effect these social media tools have in

establishing relationships. Because of its extensive use of technology, the Millennial Generation

was chosen as the target public. Although others have looked at key publics through the

relationship management lens (Yang, 2005; Banning & Schoen 2007; Brønn, 2008; O'Neil,

2007; Ristino, 2007; Hong, 2008; Vorvoreanu, 2008), none have looked specifically within a

generational demographic.

Beneficial relationships with the public are important for the survival of an organization.

Public relations practitioners must build and maintain strong relationships between the

organization and its public to lead to a desired behavior of the public for the organization and

vice-versa. Rather than focusing on all dimensions of the organization-public relationship

(anthropomorphic, personal commitment, professional benefit/expectation, community improvement, and comparison of alternatives), this study specifically concentrated on the personal commitment relationship to the company/brand. Hence, the current study contributes to a theoretical body of knowledge in the public relations field by providing acute in-depth understanding into the personal commitment relationship dimension, specifically with a younger demographic, the Millennial Generation.

In addition, this dissertation is important to the field of public relations because of its contribution to the body of literature focusing on social media tools and contribution to the knowledge of public relations practitioners. The literature review for this study sufficiently exemplifies the growth of social media within the field. The current study enhances that body of literature by supporting other's testimonies (Gillin, 2007; Hallahan, 2008; Li and Bernoff, 2008; Scott, 2007) of the importance of a social media presence for organizations to build relationships with key publics. Currently, the literature supports organizations being familiar with and using many social media tools, but current findings indicate that organizations that utilize one tool well is more essential than using several social media tools. As this study showed, Millennial satisfaction does not increase with the variety of tools, yet for most companies/brands a social media presence did matter with Millennials' favorable perceptions of that particular company/brand.

Public relations practitioners are yearning for in-depth knowledge of social media tools and how they can best play into their relationship building with key markets. In October, the cover of *PRWeek*, a monthly magazine targeted to practitioners, read *Social Media Survey 2009*. The seven-page article by Maul (2009b) outlined important issues in social media such as what was being used most frequently industry-wide (social networking) to ethical issues of using

social media. One focus of the article discussed the importance of being able to accurately measure how social media impacts an organization. This dissertation helps practitioners fulfill some of this need, particularly within the Millennial market. Findings from this study can help public relations practitioners allocate resources to social media tools that are most frequently being interacted with by Millennials. For the companies/brands that were emphasized in the study, further knowledge can be gleaned from public relations practitioners from those particular organizations in regard to social media tool usage and their company/brand. Lessons in which social media tools are being used and even which combination of tools is strongest for each company/brand can be gathered and used for future allocation of time and resources.

Communication scholars of the early 1900s remember the days of media effects with terms as "magic bullet theory" or the "hypodermic needle theory" to describe the times when mass communication was assumed to have great effects on the public through one message through one medium to the entire public (Windahl, Signitzer & Olson, 2009). Findings in this study suggest that Millennials demand specific mediums to have their messages arrive to them. When public relations practitioners do not take into consideration targeting their messages, those messages fall upon the mass society as a blanket with only hopes of the targeting audience being able to pick up the message. Millennials are unlike any other generation in the way they that they have surrounded themselves with new ways to build relationships: through a communications medium (Tapscott, 1996). Social media tools have provided new ways for key publics to build and maintain relationships with companies/brands. Much work remains to be done in the academic realm to further examine the variety of relationship dimensions that can all work to the organizations' advantage in building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with key

publics. However, the current study helps shed some light on how public relations practitioners are using social media tools to effectively reach the Millennial audiences.

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APPENDIX A. HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW BOARD CONSENT FORM

BGSU.

BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

School of Media and Communication

You are invited to be in a research study on millennial students relationship with the top 10 social companies/brands of 2008 via the use of social media tools. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study.

Explanation of Procedures As part of the research for my dissertation in the School of Media and Communication, this study is being conducted to investigate the relationship between you and the top 10 social media companies/brands of 2008 (i.e.; Apple, CNN, Disney, Xbox, Starbucks, MTV, Sony, and Dell) via social media tools (i.e.; e-mail, blogs, twitter, YouTube, Podcasts, Mobile Phone, Facebook, etc.). The approach of the research is through the use of a survey. I estimate that your participation in this survey will take approximately 15 minutes.

Benefits Information gained from this study will be used to better understand millennial students relationship with the top ten social companies/brands of 2008 via the use of social media tools. Your participation is needed to discover what social media tools are used, as well as the relationship between the organizations and yourself. There will be no cost for participating in the research. Also, you will not be paid to participate in this research project. There is no guarantee that you will receive any benefit from answering the survey.

Risks and Discomforts The anticipated risks to you are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life.

Confidentiality All information gathered from the study will remain confidential and your identity will not be revealed. I will protect the confidentiality of you as a respondent and your response throughout the study and publication of study results. Data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet with only members of the research team having access to the data you provide. Your identity will not be revealed in any published results, as results will be presented only in summary manner.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal Without Prejudice Participation in this study is voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no penalty. If you chose not to complete the study, you may leave the classroom without penalty and without prejudice while others take the survey, as class is over for today. You are free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time. If you decide to participate and change your mind later, you may withdraw your consent and stop your participation without penalty or explanation.

Questions If you have any questions or comments about this study, you can contact me, Alisa Agozzino, at 419-772-2054 or alisaa@bgsu.edu or Terry Rentner, my dissertation advisor, at 419-372-2079 or trentne@bgnet.bgsu.edu.

Agreement By completing and returning this survey you are indicating your consent to participate in the study. Your decision to participate or not participate will have no impact on grades, class standing, or relationship to the institution in any way. You are making a decision to participate or not participate in this study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had all your questions answered, you are of 18 years of age, and have decided to participate. You are also giving the investigator authorization to record your responses and to use the information for research and publication. By completing and returning the survey with this consent form, you are indicating your consent to participate in the study.

_____   _____

Signature of participant (must be of 18 years of age)   Date

School of Media and Communication   Bowling Green, Ohio 43403-0280   fax 419-372-0202
 302 West Hall   419-372-8349   www.bgsu.edu

APPENDIX B. SURVEY INSTRUMENT

For the following survey questions, please darken the appropriate circle for each answer. Thank you.

1. I am familiar with the following company/brand

	Yes	No
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	◯	◯
CNN	◯	◯
Disney	◯	◯
Xbox	◯	◯
Starbucks	◯	◯
MTV	◯	◯

Survey

* 2. I feel that I can trust (Company/Brand Name) to do what it says it will do

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
CNN	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Disney	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Xbox	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Starbucks	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
MTV	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sony	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Dell	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 3. (Company/Brand Name) seems to be the kind of organization that invests in its customers

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
CNN	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Disney	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Xbox	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Starbucks	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
MTV	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sony	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Dell	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 4. I think that (Company/Brand Name) takes into account my convenience in all of our interactions

	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	○	○	○	○	○	○
CNN	○	○	○	○	○	○
Disney	○	○	○	○	○	○
Xbox	○	○	○	○	○	○
Starbucks	○	○	○	○	○	○
MTV	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sony	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dell	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 5. (Company/Brand Name) demonstrates an interest in me as a person

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
CNN	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Disney	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Xbox	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Starbucks	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MTV	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sony	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dell	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 6. (Company/Brand Name) understands me as a customer

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
CNN	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Disney	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Xbox	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Starbucks	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MTV	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sony	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dell	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 7. (Company/Brand Name) is open about its plans for the future

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
CNN	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Disney	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Xbox	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Starbucks	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
MTV	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sony	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Dell	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 8. I feel that (Company/Brand Name) supports events that are of interest to its customers

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
CNN	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Disney	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Xbox	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Starbucks	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
MTV	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sony	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Dell	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 9. I think that (Company/Brand Name) strives to improve the communities of its customers

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
CNN	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Disney	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Xbox	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Starbucks	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MTV	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sony	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dell	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 10. (Company/Brand Name) shares its plans for the future with customers

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
CNN	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Disney	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Xbox	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Starbucks	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MTV	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sony	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dell	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 11. I think that (Company/Brand Name) actively plays a role in the lives of the communities it serves

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
CNN	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Disney	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Xbox	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Starbucks	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MTV	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sony	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dell	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 12. (Company/Brand Name) is NOT involved in activities that promote the welfare of its customers

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
CNN	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Disney	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Xbox	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Starbucks	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
MTV	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sony	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Dell	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 13. (Company/Brand Name) does NOT act in a socially responsible manner

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
CNN	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Disney	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Xbox	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Starbucks	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
MTV	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sony	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Dell	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 14. (Company/Brand Name) does NOT see my interests and its interests as the same

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
CNN	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Disney	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Xbox	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Starbucks	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MTV	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sony	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dell	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 15. I think that (Company/Brand Name) is NOT honest in its dealings with customers

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
CNN	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Disney	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Xbox	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Starbucks	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MTV	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sony	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dell	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 16. (Company/Brand Name) is NOT willing to devote resources to maintain its relationship with me

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
CNN	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Disney	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Xbox	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Starbucks	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
MTV	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sony	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Dell	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 17. I find other providers of similar products to (Company/Brand Name) to be very appealing

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
CNN	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Disney	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Xbox	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Starbucks	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
MTV	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sony	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Dell	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 18. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with (Company/Brand Name)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
CNN	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Disney	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Xbox	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Starbucks	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MTV	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sony	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dell	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 19. It would be too complicated for me to change providers of the brand that (Company/Brand) represents

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
CNN	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Disney	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Xbox	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Starbucks	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MTV	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sony	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dell	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 20. I feel very strongly linked to (Company/Brand Name)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
CNN	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Disney	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Xbox	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Starbucks	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MTV	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sony	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dell	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 21. The alternative provider of the service or product of (Company/Brand Name) are excellent companies

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
CNN	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Disney	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Xbox	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Starbucks	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
MTV	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sony	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Dell	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 22. I feel I would lose a great deal if I were to switch providers of the product or service of (Company/Brand Name)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
CNN	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Disney	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Xbox	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Starbucks	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
MTV	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sony	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Dell	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 23. I would NOT feel very upset if (Company/Brand Name) were no longer my provider of the product or service

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
CNN	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Disney	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Xbox	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Starbucks	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MTV	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sony	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dell	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 24. I think other providers of the product or service of (Company/Brand Name) could fulfill my needs

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
CNN	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Disney	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Xbox	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Starbucks	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MTV	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sony	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dell	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

* 25. I want my relationship with (Company/Brand Name) to continue for a long time

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
CNN	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Disney	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Xbox	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Starbucks	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MTV	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sony	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dell	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

26. Please check all social media tools that you interact with

☐ Email

☐ Blogs

☐ Micro Blog (e.g.; Twitter)

☐ Video Sharing (e.g.; You Tube)

☐ Podcasts

☐ Personal Digital Assistants (e.g.; Mobile phone)

☐ Social Networking Site (e.g.; MySpace/Facebook)

☐ None

* 27. Which, if any, of the following social media tools have you personally had interaction with (Company/Brand Name)
Please check all that apply.

	Email	Blogs	Micro Blog (e.g.; Twitter)	Video Sharing (e.g.; You Tube)	Podcasts	Personal Digital Assistants (e.g.; Mobile phone)	Social Networking Site (e.g.; MySpace/Facebook)	None
Apple, Inc. (including iphone and ipod)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CNN	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Disney	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Xbox	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Starbucks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
MTV	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sony	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dell	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

28. Gender

○ Male

○ Female

29. Age

○ 17 or Younger

○ 18

○ 19

○ 20

○ 21

○ 22

○ 23

○ 24

○ 25

○ Older than 25

30. Race

- ○ African-American
- ○ American Indian/ Alaskan Native
- ○ Asian/ Pacific Islander
- ○ Hispanic
- ○ International
- ○ White/Non-Hispanic
- ○ Prefer not to Answer

Thank you

Thank you for taking this survey. I appreciate you help in conducting this research for my dissertation.

~Alisa Agozzino