

FORMING AN ONLINE RELATIONSHIP: A STUDY OF WHY TELEVISION NETWORKS
SHOULD USE SOCIAL MEDIA

by

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(Under the Direction of Itai Himelboim)

ABSTRACT

Increase of multi-platform television viewing forces television networks to seek a way to engage and form a beneficial relationship with their viewers. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between television program's social media use and television fan social media use. A content analysis of Twitter messages showed fans are more likely to retweet informative messages by television programs' Twitter pages, as compared to interactive messages or messages offering prizes. Fans are also more likely to "reply" to messages from television programs' Twitter pages that directly interact with fans, as compared to informative messages or messages offering prizes. This study also showed that fans are more likely to talk about a television program after the program airs, as compared to before or during a program's airing. Additionally, fans are more likely to use television program's promoted hashtags instead of creating their own.

INDEX WORDS: Television fans, Connectedness, Social Media, Audience Activity,
Television Network, Media Use

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DEDICATION

To my family, for supporting every step I have taken in my life. I love you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Television networks' most important goal when producing a television series is reaching an audience (Diffley et. al, 2011). This audience determines the monetary value of the television series. With the rise of new media technologies such as social media, media companies change what they value and how they adapt to changes in audience (Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007). As audiences are now active on social media sites, television networks struggle to decide the cost and benefit of becoming an active member in these online communities. The first important question television networks face is to what extent, and in what ways, social media use makes a difference in gaining audiences or attaining greater economic benefits. The other important question is what types of social media use are most beneficial to television networks, if social media truly is beneficial to television networks.

In social media literature, there is a lack depth regarding the relationship between use of social media by television networks and their fans' use of social media. Although there are studies based on general benefits by companies, a more detailed approach specifically about television networks is not as readily available (Geierhos, 2011). This study is going to bridge the gap in literature by looking at a specific social media site, Twitter, and examining specific uses by both fans and television networks. The reason Twitter was chosen was the favorability shown to Twitter by television program on-air formatting. There is an increasing abundance of hashtags being placed on the screen during television episodes. Due to the high majority of social media campaigns based around Twitter, it was chosen as the focal point of this study. By looking at

specific Twitter uses, a more detailed picture of social media benefits can be discovered for television networks.

This study contributes to media economics literature by looking at the cost and benefit of social media participation by a television network. Additionally, literature regarding social capital theory is applied when exploring television fans' use of social media and the network of followers for a television show's official Twitter page. Lastly, investigating the relationship between fans and a television program will contribute to literature regarding community, as this type of direct relationship with fans has not been previously studied in a thorough manner.

The topics of media economics, social capital, and community are explored through literature. In order to investigate these topics, data collected for this study included tweets by both television programs and fans of these television programs. The association between different types of social media use by fans and television programs will be explored through an analysis of these tweets.

In order to integrate literature regarding television and its users' social media use, a review of previous literature on the topic of television and social media must be investigated. First, the benefits and costs of a television network becoming involved with social media are explored. Doing so will provide examples for why television networks wish to be a part of the social media landscape.

Through exploring benefits of television networks using social media, different types of social media use will be investigated. These uses that will be discussed are providing informative messages, providing incentive for fans to participate, and acting as a public relations tool. Looking at each of these uses will define how television networks wish to be a part of this online community and what benefits are gained playing a role in social media.

Next, online fandom will be explored through the topics of conversations with compatible fans, direct messaging to companies, and sharing messages. These fan groups will be studied as a way to determine their functions and what purpose they can serve for television networks desiring to reach these audiences. This leads to the preferred outcomes for how television organizations aspire for fans to use social media. Studying audience use of social media will help connect their use with how television networks use social media. By identifying the types of social media use occurring in these online communities, television networks will know what use is most prevalent among the members of these communities and what messages lead to the television network's preferred outcome. Knowing the prevalent audiences uses will enable media companies to gain the most benefit from social media participation in order to gain the results expected from participating with these fan groups.

The last section will then concentrate on an investigation of a relationship between television viewers using social media and television programs using social media and how these two types of users relate to one another. Finding a relationship between the two will allow the desired audience social media use to be cultivated by television networks.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The definition of social media used in this study is from Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), who defined it as “a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (pg. 61). It is therefore established as an area for sharing and two-way relationships.

Investigating relationships between television networks and fans is the primary concern throughout this study. Through a television network’s online interactions with audiences, a stronger form of community can be created (Wise, 2006). Investigating how television networks can influence how these communities interact can lead to a gain in audience and eventually economic gains through advertising (Schiano, Nardi, Gumbrect & Swartz, 2004). One study on media companies interacting with social media communities demonstrated that brands’ social media use had a positive effect on customers’ relationship with a product. It was also discovered that these positive effects led to brand trust and brand loyalty (LaRoche, Habibi & Richard, 2012).

According to literature about customer loyalty, trust is one of the main qualities before a customer can become loyal (Chiu, Huang & Yen, 2010). With regards to online communities that television networks wish to influence, there can be effects on trust and loyalty through such networks and fan interactions (Ba, 2001). Improving relationships in the community focused on a specific television program can lead to an increase in trust in the product, therefore leading to loyalty from the audience (LaRoche, Habibi & Richard, 2012). Television networks that

participate on social media can enhance trust and loyalty in their products by improving audience's relationship with the products and with other audience members (Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

Additionally, the rise of online communities participation by loyal audiences can be more noticeable and an increase in the population of an online fan community can be seen more easily (Morrison & Krugman, 2001). As online communities are usually the most vocal audience members, engaging with this audience can provide positive word of mouth that can increase viewership in the long run (Hampton & Wellman, 2003). Television networks engaging these communities can lead to a stronger bond. This study will examine the relationship between a television program's social media use and a fan base's social media use.

Both television programs and audience members use social media to form relationships in an online community (Ha & Chan-Olmstead, 2004). These relationships will be studied to see how each group uses social media. Through studying both fans' and television program's use of social media, finding relationships between the two is the primary purpose of this study. Finding relationships between the uses will be beneficial to television networks for determining the best course of action when interacting with fans and expanding audience reach (Diffley et al, 2011).

After finding the relationships, understanding what induces audiences to participate with television programs in social media will be apparent. We will also see the best way for television programs to use social media to achieve their goal of reaching and engaging audiences. Knowing this information will be beneficial to both television programs and audiences because both will receive the information and benefits that they look for while participating in online communities (Aikat, 2009).

Benefit of Social Media Use for Television Networks

This section explores the benefits of television networks using social media. The benefits begin with attracting and maintaining an audience. With the rise of new media technologies such as social media, industries must change what they value and how they adapt to changes in how television communities are now formed (Geierhos, 2011).

Defining communities such as that for a television program, Muniz and O'Guinn's definition of a brand community is relevant. They (2001) define a brand community as a "specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand." Applying this to television programs, the fan communities are based around the same factors. Television fan communities are made up of its members, their relationships, and how these members share resources with each other (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

The shift of audiences to online services signifies that television networks need to make the same shift to succeed. Research has demonstrated the significance of this shift as marketers focus more on new media as consumers spend more time in social media (Edelman, 2007). As their target audience is more likely to adopt new media as related to the diffusion of innovations theory, becoming more active online is necessary for television networks (Kang, 2003).

When adapting to television audience behavior, cross-media development is essential due to the migration of viewers to online media (Greer & Ferguson, 2011). This cross-media development is defined as using multiple media platforms to distribute the same message. Because media content continuously evolves and changes based on audience, there is room for expansion into social media that complement television series that are offered (Lin & Peña, 2011). By being an active member or facilitating content that elicits discussion, television series

can enhance their relationship with online communities based on their programming (Lee, 2010).

Loyalty Fostered Through Social Media

Research by Hart (2011) determined that there are five attributes that define social media: authenticity, transparency, the decentralization of authority, the ability to release information quickly, the ability to release information consistently, and the ability to engage users to collaborate (Hart, 2011). Through examining audiences that participate in these social media communities, a conclusion that members of these communities prefer an organization's social media presence to engage the community in a humanistic way is apparent (Wise, 2006). Messages from a company that are only one-way are not responded to in a positive way (Byrd, 2012).

These social media audiences expect businesses that they interact with on social media to be transparent and honest through their social media use. If fans cannot trust a company, the relationship will rarely be beneficial (Culnan, 2010). In addition, social media is meant to increase two-way communications between a company and its consumers. By providing useful information or other products that consumers desire on social media, there will be a beneficial and collaborative relationship between fans and a television network (Diffley, 2011).

A study by LaRoche, Habibi, and Richard (2012) showed that facilitating consumers to trust brands through community relationships leads to brand loyalty. However, other issues may arise as some social media users consider brands and media products as invading their personal space if trying to become involved with consumers through social media (Fournier & Avery, 2011). It is important for television networks to take this into consideration when reaching out on social media to gain more loyal and beneficial viewers.

Creating and maintaining a social media presence requires an abundance of effort and dedication. Therefore, a television network must determine the benefits of undertaking such a task before committing to this marketing strategy. Benefits such as gaining social capital, receiving direct audience feedback, fostering customer loyalty, generating awareness, managing a reputation, promoting products and services, seeking or creating media opportunities, hearing about trends or breaking news, launching viral marketing campaigns, networking with customers, enhancing your company's impact at events are reasons that media companies such as television networks profit from utilizing social media (Tariq & Wahid, 2011; Carter, 2009).

Word-of-Mouth

Each of these types of use is important for building and maintaining a long term and beneficial relationship with online communities. Promoting services, providing breaking news, and generating awareness keep consumers educated about what the company has to offer. In the case of television series, this includes new series or upcoming episodes of current series. The highest quality of communication in an online community is defined by its relevance, frequency, duration, and timeliness of the information exchanged (Adjei et. al, 2010). Therefore sending messages with these qualities is important for having an impact.

This word-of-mouth from social media users can benefit television networks much more than other types of word-of-mouth (Tariq & Wahid, 2011). Even when critics deem a program to be worthy of watching, audiences may not pay attention. Instead, audiences often trust their peers and play a prominent role in influencing the reputations of organizations (Eighmey & McCord, 1998). These audiences are given the power to determine the reputation of a brand or television product.

In addition to using social media to see an audience's opinion of a product, many solutions are put forth by audiences on a social media site. Instead of guessing what audiences want, there is now a direct line for fans to tell what they want and what they expect (Stephen & Galak, 2012). Therefore, a social networking site can be a way of generating new ideas and provide additional material for research and development units (Durakan, 2012).

Using these new innovations, especially through online communities, gives television companies an advantage when competing in the expanding television market (Rosen, 2011). These same innovations involving social media change audience behaviors, which make it necessary for television companies to be aware of the shift in audience preferences (Burwell, 2010). By being aware of audience preferences online, television networks can help facilitate online communities based on their programming (Lee, 2010).

The value of a fan can be determined through these relationships on social media sites. Although a monetary value cannot be placed on each individual, a user who has a large network and is active in voicing his or her opinion is more desirable than a static audience member (Culnan, McHugh, & Zubillaga, 2010). Social media allows these "active fans" to be singled out and attained. Users such as these will follow a brand or television product and be eager to voice their feelings and experiences with such a product (Booth & Matic, 2011). Thus, using social media to listen to their opinions and act on their complaints is economically viable.

Television viewers use social media to express opinions and feel more involved with their favorite programs (Kim, Joo, & Yang, 2011). The Internet has led to the building of relationships, thus demonstrating the importance of online services such as social media (Bhanot, 2012). The more users are involved in a program, the more likely they will spread the message to other people in their community. Social media have been studied and shown to enable people

to communicate with more extended networks than ever before (Porter et. al, 2011). When a television network interacts with their customers via social media, then the company gets a better view of its audience and its audience's network (Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007).

When a person is highly connected to others in a social network, the size of their overall network is increased based on connections of their friends. These networks can provide an ideal location for television marketers hoping to generate word-of-mouth about their television series (Bhanot, 2012). A study about such consumers showed that more trust is put in information obtained from a fellow consumer than by an organization (Porter et. al, 2011). This type of "consumer-to-consumer" marketing can be much more economically viable than traditional television advertising.

A television network facilitating this social media use allows a message to be spread faster than other old media techniques (Ha, 2002). Since audiences are already conversing about a television program, a television network joining the conversation can impact the discussion (De Vries et. al, 2011). By influencing fans through social media, television networks can benefit from generating positive word of mouth through information sharing and accelerating the diffusion of information that the network wishes to share with fans (Joo, Kim, & Yang, 2011).

By actively participating in this online conversation, television networks can receive direct criticism and also reward fans with content that is only available to users currently communicating with the television show (Ha, 2002). One study has shown that online users have much broader social circles than nonusers; therefore rewarding an online fan base increases the potential of creating a larger audience (Ha & Chan-Olmstead, 2004). This increased audience would provide a growth in monetary gain, acknowledging the potential of using social media as an economic benefactor. The consumer will expect to receive something of value in return for

their participation so television networks need to supply enough entertainment and information to match the fans' demand for this material (Stephen & Galak, 2012).

Brand Management

Another reason for a television show's online presence is the need for brand management. By branding a television show to online communities and catering to those communities' needs, the value of the television series increases (Lee, 2012). Studies done on television programs' websites show that developing brand advocates through websites and online communities lead to increases in fans of a television program (Porter et. al, 2011).

When television networks participate online through social media, the benefits drawn from audiences will occur if television networks provide an experience that delivers a return for a customer's attention and endorsement (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). Providing this return to customers is important because of how close these social media sites allow companies to get to customers. Becoming closer to customers allows more efficient marketing and increased revenue through direct contact with these users.

However, television networks may find it difficult to become a part of these fan communities, as television networks have issues being in control of the relationship that is meant to be cultivated. Members of social media fan communities are the ones who have control and often use their personal influential social network to control conversation. This may cause companies to struggle getting their own message out as the fans' personal networks may overshadow a television network's message.

To overcome these personal networks, it is important for a television network to find what a consumer values. It is also important to know what causes a customer to follow a

television program on social media. Doing so may lead to a richer experience for the consumer and a beneficial relationship for the television network.

One such study by Baird and Parasnis (2011) that researched why consumers interact with businesses on social media discovered that “getting discounts or coupons” and “purchasing products” as the top two activities. Consumers also ranked “reading reviews” third, which is why television networks need to facilitate positive word of mouth to help gain new audience members. In addition, a community based on a brand or program needs to provide benefits to these members of the community. This may include sharing information and enhancing relationships with the company’s specific brand. It has been discovered that enhanced relationships can lead to enhanced brand loyalty (Pearson, 2010).

Each of these benefits for television networks using social media needs to be explored to find the best way to use company resources (Booth & Matic, 2011). Therefore, a deeper exploration of each type of potential social media use by television programs is necessary. These types of beneficial social media uses include: promoting services, forming a dialogue with fans about trends, offering incentive for fans, and managing a reputation. Each type of social media use provides a different form of benefit to a television network. By understanding each possible usage, television networks will utilize social media for their greatest possible benefit (Edelman, 2007).

Promoting Services

The first form of social media use by a television network is promoting services. Online communities are a means of improving communication with the public and a way for companies to market their businesses (Greer and Ferguson, 2011). By communicating directly with the

public, social media can be used as a tool for gaining ongoing information for any member of the public who is connected to an event or a program (Pagini, 2011).

Television networks can use social media as a way to reach a “subscribed” audience (Carter, 2009). One such use of social media focusing on task as a way to provide information to an audience. By employing task, television networks are motivated by pushing social media users into watching their programming and increasing viewership (Lin and Peña, 2011).

Dialogue with Fans about Trends

Another important part of a television network forming an active relationship in an online community is networking with consumers directly (Aikat, 2009). By directly interacting with consumers, television networks can determine positive and negative opinions of which consumers wish to voice. Reacting to these opinions is part of fostering customer loyalty since they now have experienced a firsthand account that the company is actually listening. Maintaining a dialogue with fans can help maintain, or gain, a positive opinion about the television programming from consumers (Lin and Peña, 2011).

A company participating in this online community through dialogue with fans can have a positive effect, as there is a positive relationship between Internet participation and the creation and maintenance of social capital (Huffaker, 2010). Participating with members of a fan base can build a deeper relationship with this community while also increasing social capital through positive relationships (Lipsman et. al, 2012).

This involvement through dialogue with fans is important as changes are made in the television industry regarding fan influence (Ferguson, 2003). Viewers use social media to express opinions and feel more involved with their favorite programs (Deller, 2011). Television networks facilitating these relationships are important as studies also have shown the Internet has

led to the building of relationships, thus demonstrating the importance of social media (Lin and Cho, 2010). By reaching consumers directly, consumers will be more likely to feel a benefit from this relationship with television networks (Summa, 2011).

Television networks hope to use social media as an extension of television programming that encourages conversation among viewers. By putting focus on this conversation, television networks are implying that viewers are “missing out” on additional coverage from social media sites, such as Twitter, if programs are not being watched live (Summa, 2011). Viewers not only become part of a larger conversation, television networks can receive instant feedback during episode (i.e. a joke falling flat or shock from audience about dramatic twist), and therefore this social media use benefits each involved party.

Through this social media dialogue between television networks and fans, the goal for television networks is viewers talking positively about a program equals free advertisement (Huffaker, 2010). By reaching the largest possible amount of fans through social media, positive word of mouth from these same fans reaches their friends. By reaching these friends, people who were not previously aware of a program now have a positive testimony from a friend they trust, leading to a potential new fan of a program (Aikat, 2009).

Enabling this larger online fan base demonstrates the “value of a fan.” These fans in online communities are able to influence their own friends to convince them of the benefits of products or programming. They also create a more in depth discussion and greater loyalty through friends’ influence (Lipsman et. al, 2012). Before the television programming can create customer loyalty, friends of these individuals are more likely to create loyalty; therefore reaching those social influencers is crucial, through a positive television network and fan dialogue on social media (Adjei et. al, 2010).

When a company is trying to reach these online communities, the fans with the greatest value are the leaders of these communities. Leaders are defined as those who have the ability to start larger conversations in the community, elicit feedback from the community, or shape the way members of the online community talk about a given topic (Huffaker, 2010). These online influentials use more certainty, confidence, and assertiveness in their online messages so if a television network wants to reach these leaders or become a leader itself, these types of messages are necessary (Shaw, 2012).

Reaching this audience can be done through personal communication with this online community. By being sociable through dialogue with fans, television networks are becoming a part of the conversation instead of acting only as a facilitator of information (Rosen, 2011). The type of message shared with the online community is important, as that will shape the way fans see the company. More frequent and well-written messages will receive a more favorable reaction (Shaw, 2012). A study showed that that the number of posts and replies issued in an online community is related to the ability to influence others (Huffaker, 2010). Therefore, dialogue between fans and a television network is one of the positive benefits of television networks participating on social media. The relationship between fans and a television network leads to the next benefit of television networks using social media to reach fans.

Offering Incentive for Fans

Another important benefit of television networks using social media is offering incentive for fans to participate on social media. Television series can provide exclusive content to their fans, thus rewarding the fans that follow the series on social media or stay involved with the interactive process of an online community (Lipsman et al, 2012).

Rewards for fans participating in social media with television programs include content that is only available to users currently communicating with the television show online (Ha & Chan-Olmstead, 2004). Studies have shown that online users have much broader social circles than nonusers; therefore rewarding an online fan base increases the potential of creating a bigger audience (Hampton & Wellman, 2003).

Reaching and keeping this “subscribed” audience can be difficult. Providing a prize incentive for fans that participate with television program on social media gives the fans validation for participating with the program in the first place. By providing a prize, viewers feel appreciated for their fandom. Since program choices are so expansive, showing viewers how appreciated they are can help keep these viewers active online and more likely to give a favorable review of the television programming (Lipsman et al, 2012).

Incentives such as autographs or the chance to meet the cast of a program gives audience members an opportunity for a one on one connection that is desired from following celebrities on social media in the first place (Purohit, 2011). In addition, how fans receive a prize can be another benefit. Many times the marketer asks a question to decide who wins, such as name your favorite part of an episode or write your own ideas. Television programs are able to benefit from the feedback of seeing which moments are most popular, while also providing a creative outlet for their fans (Greer and Ferguson, 2011).

For a fan to follow a television program or any other company on a social media site, there must be reason for fans to join (Adamovic et. al, 2011). If a follower is supportive of the television program or network, rewarding these fans for their loyalty should be necessary. Providing exclusive content for fans rewards them for going beyond the television screen to become a more influential part of the programming. Outtakes, sneak peeks, or behind-the-scenes

allow the program's followers to feel more important (Lipsman et. al, 2012). If exclusive content is only provided to followers of a program on social media, then the most loyal and passionate fan base will do what is necessary to attain this content (Summa, 2011). Rewarding fans through social media not only benefits the fans. Television networks benefit by gaining customer loyalty and gaining a stronger reputation, which leads to the next benefit of television networks using social media.

Managing a Reputation

Another important benefit of a television network using social media is the ability to be aware and manage a reputation. Social media can be a public relations tool with the public. By reacting to audience messages with their own responses, companies can keep in touch with their consumers so these same consumers will not feel ignored (Lin and Peña, 2011). Interacting with these consumers demonstrates television networks' value in the social media communities. A study of relationships between companies and users on Twitter verified that consumers respond more positively to messages that are tonally positive (Eckler and Bolls, 2011). These positive messages are what influence fans and drive them to share messages (Lin and Peña, 2011). By managing a television program's reputation through positive messages, television networks can react to, and hopefully improve, public opinion.

Although television networks use social media to provide information and suggestions, fans have been more active when receiving a social message such as a joke or a direct comment to a user (Carter, 2009). In previous studies, a more personal message system is expected to gain followers' attention much more than just a regurgitation of information that can be found in a television listing. A company's message can encourage social interaction, whether it is a response or an informational post (Adjei et. al, 2010). This personalized brand management is a

way for television networks to improve reputation in the eyes of fans in a social media community.

The type of message television networks use to manage its reputation should relate to the audience the network is trying to reach. A study done regarding a television program's use of Twitter showed that genre type could affect the type of message because a show is catering to individual types of fans' preferences (Lin and Peña, 2011). A preference for a certain genre leads to television networks predicting viewing patterns, therefore choosing a particular type of message to reach these audience members. Lin and Peña (2011) also showed that emotional messages were more common with drama programming while reality and comedy programming posted task-oriented messages (Lin and Peña, 2011).

By understanding what different fans desire from messages, television networks can benefit greatly from social media use. Whether television network messages promote services, dialogue with fans about trends, offer incentive, or manage reputation, there are many benefits of using social media. Each of these uses relate to a relationship between television networks and fans. However, being aware of the costs involved in using social media emphasizes the overall benefits.

Cost of Social Media Use for Television Networks

As with any strategy for gaining audience, there is a cost with using social media as a form of attaining economic gain.

One such cost of using social media is need for hiring employees to run these websites. While creating a social media page on Facebook or Twitter is free, maintaining and updating the page is a task that needs full time employees (Kim, Joo, & Yang, 2011). Having a social media page without being active can be worse than not having a page at all, as fans will see just how

little a television program cares about having an online presence. Specific employees must be paid to develop a social media presence. These employees must also expend resources to develop strategies for social media use.

Although employees are paid to specifically develop social media strategies, there are some limitations with posting on social media websites. Less control of what appears on the page is possible since fan interaction and engagement is desired (Durakan, 2012). This allows freedom for fans to post any type of comments on the site. Also, only registered users on a social media site can become fans of a television series. Reach may be large, but only those registered will be seen in a metric to determine fan support (Culnan, McHugh, & Zubillaga, 2010).

The occurrence of negative fan reactions is a cost of participating on social media. Just as a television series advocate can help spread the reach of a show's fandom, negative word of mouth through online communities can also occur. Negative comments can spread through social media much faster than negative word of mouth before the Internet's existence, but these negative comments are also visible to producers. By searching through negative responses to television series, television networks and producers can see specific mentions of what fans are not liking about a series (Aikat, 2009). After finding out this information, networks and producers have the ability to address these concerns and win back their target audience.

The relative ease of spammers posting on a television show's fan page is a more extreme version of negative audience reaction. Although criticism of a show is expected in the free speech on the Internet, excessive spamming of offensive comments can and will occur on many pages (Varini & Sirsi, 2012). These abusers can be deleted and banned, but creating new profiles on social media requires little time.

Overall, utilizing social media is necessary because of target audiences being active on these platforms (Durakan, 2012). However, there are positives and negatives and there is no absolute way of measuring monetary benefits of a media company using social media (Lee, 2012). Even if the television network's presence is well received, a dollar amount cannot be placed on the good will received from fans on a page. Positive externalities, such as creating and maintaining a brand that online users trust, will be the reward of undertaking an online presence through social media (Diffley et. al, 2011). The next step, after considering the benefits and costs of social media, is understanding the online fandom of television audiences.

Online Fandom of Television Programs and Fan Base

Defining fandom is quite complex, as there are multiple meanings and types that can be discussed. However, there are common components that exist in all types of fan communities. This includes individuals gathering based on a connecting trait that they determine (Gradinaru, 2011). Communities were previously solely based on geographic location and direct face-to-face relationships, but that is no longer necessary. A fan community of individuals can now exist from all around the world due to technological advances (Kolb, 2008).

With the lack of geographical restrictions, communities now consist of groups based on content instead of the members themselves (Edelman, 2007). Through the growth of virtual fan communities, there is more fluidity of membership based on interests instead of geographic locations or face-to-face meetings (Kendall, 2002). Contemporary fan communities are able to be more broad, mobile, and individualized. This is because of specialization of groups due to specific interests (Gurevitch, 2009). These specific interests allow people to be a part of multiple groups while still being active in all the communities. In addition, there are no time and space restraints limiting the community participation by individuals (Kendall, 2002).

Online Fandom as a Form of Community

An online community is defined as a social group on the Internet that shares an identity through a common value (Muller, 2010). Online communities can become a tool for supporting and improving the offline communities (Eckler, 2011). Members of this community are included if following this shared value. Online communities are used as tools for maintaining relationships and building new relationships that never would have been possible without this technology (Rosen, 2011). A virtual community, such as social media, can serve similar purposes as previous manifestations of community because they still function as a way of building and fostering relationships among people (Wise, 2006).

Before the Internet, a community was formed based on common components that a group of individuals shared, whether it was interests, social bond, etc. (Hillary, 1955). Gradinaru explained how communities evolved, especially those based online, as they are created for the purpose of conveying messages (Gradinaru, 2011). The delivered messages of these online communities can be the major ideology expressed by a majority of the group. This ideology is then spread to the rest of the group, exerting its influence on those who see these messages (Muller, 2011). By using a community to convey messages, changes can be felt in the community should these messages prove to be influential. Therefore, the community has potential positives and negatives in its ability to convey messages (Pagini, 2011).

A problem with online communities is their lack of durability of membership. Anyone can join or leave the community with ease, so the bonds are potentially less strong than other types of communities (Kolb, 2008). An important aspect for television networks to understand about these online communities is why fans participate. Understanding the core value of online communities for fans can lead to television networks becoming part of these communities.

Reasons for Participation by Fans

The reasons that people interact in online fan communities are based on how relevant the content of the community is to his or her individual interest (Wise, 2006). If interested in the content, information exchange is one of the basic components of an online community. By exchanging information, online communities such as blogs or social networks provide the opportunity to interact with other individuals who also find the content relevant. Activity online depends on the intention of the users whether it be for fun, intellectual stimulation, or some other use (Becker, 2010).

Through an online community, individuals who share interests can unite even if they have different cultures, geographic locations, or languages. Now fans can reach these individuals in one community since there are less technological restrictions preventing this community from existing. By reaching these online communities, television networks can influence some of the most vocal members of a fan base (James, 2011).

When examining fan communities in particular, they can be described as functional communities. This means that there is something to be gained by participating in these types of communities, whether it is gaining knowledge or an outlet for discussion (Muller, 2011). Even if individuals join these online communities for personal reasons, uniting to give a television series more exposure or speaking out to save a television series that might be cancelled are ways that the individuals work together to function as a community (James, 2011).

After understanding the reasons fans participate in these online communities, television networks must decide their own reasons for participation. Online communities provide an arena for direct contact with fans so television networks need to weigh their options and determine what reasons to join such a community.

Reasons for Community Participation by Television Networks

Just as individuals can work with each other to achieve goals as a fan base, individuals having the ability to communicate with television programs online can also be mutually beneficial. Using the online fan community as a platform, ideas and fan made projects can be noticed by television networks (Rosen, 2011). Being acknowledged by a television series of which they are fans can reward these individuals. Also, networks can use fan projects or fan ideas as a way of promoting their own series (Pearson, 2010). Overall, the relationship between a television network and its fans can be mutually beneficial through participating with each other in an online community (Adjei et. al, 2010).

One reason for becoming a part of the community is the ability for television networks to influencing this online fan community. A television network can become a spectator, actor, or scriptwriter of the community it is attempting to reach (Becker, 2010). As a spectator, television networks can view what is being said about their company or see what interests their target audience. As an actor, television networks become a part of the community and post messages while also participating in the discussion. When a television network is a scriptwriter, it directs the discussion of the community towards what the topics it wants to talk about (Gradinaru, 2011). As an example for a television network, this could be a particular television show or specific event.

Besides influencing this community through its own actions, television networks benefit from positive marginal value for each additional member of an online community (Becker, 2010). The additional users benefit the members of the community as the community adds new perspectives (Huffaker, 2010). For television networks trying to reach these online communities, these additional users also provide a larger audience to reach.

For a television network, reasons for participating in such communities involve how the information is shared. If information shared by members of this community is positive, there is a stronger possibility of influencing purchase behavior (Adjei et. al, 2010). Also, online brand communities can be a successful way to retain customers and gain new customers (Eckler, 2011). Through acting as part of an online fan community, television networks can better understand individual fan reactions and desires. As a more in depth look at television fans, the next section explores their use of social media.

Television Fan Social Media Use

For fans of television, a personal decision is made to become a part of social media or else television networks will not be able to reach this audience. Certain features such as building fan relationships, crowd sourcing ideas, direct contact with companies, and sharing information are ways that fans use these sites. (Purohit et. al, 2011).

Building Fan Relationships

Relationships being built online through social media and webpages devoted to audiences' interests provide forums for people to discuss topics of mutual interest, just as communities acted before the Internet (Greer and Ferguson, 2011). Studies have shown television viewing can lead to a feeling of isolation, but social media devoted to television programs aim to nullify that effect by forming an online community that encourages conversation instead of individual isolation (Putnam, 2000).

Socializing through online communities has been explored by other studies that illustrate online content leads to socializing and entertainment among its users. New media such as television series' webpages lead to new interactions among users (Schiano, Nardi, Gumbrecht, Swartz, 2004). The more users are involved in a program, the more likely they will spread the

message to other people in their community (Enli, 2012). As television previously involved the communal nature of physically watching programs as a group, online communities of social networks and webpages for specific programs create a way to connect viewers to each other on the Internet when not able to physically be together (Bellman et al, 2010).

Engaging other users through these online sites forms a “digital water cooler” of shared experiences. Watching television on your own time does not provide shared experience like on social media, and therefore there is less interactive and engagement if viewing alone (Arduser, 2011). Through this “digital water cooler” viewers can participate in speculation about plots of TV more than with a finished product since their own predictions and wishes have a place to be heard (Summa, 2011).

Social sites provide greater sense of community and more reason for fans of a television series to participate in online forums (Marletta, 2009). Social networking sites, such as Twitter or Facebook, become forums for fans to discuss television shows. A study by Baym (2000) indicated that a large portion of fans find the most pleasure out of talking about a television series. Even before the Internet, television was seen as a medium for “water cooler” conversation and social media sites facilitate this necessity through a digital means. One trend arising from new “digital water coolers” is the ability to providing instant feedback through a social networking site.

In one study about Twitter use, it was discovered the different types of social media uses were for entertainment, passing time, social interaction, information seeking, information providing, and professional advancement (Kim & Lee, 2010). Each of these uses can be related to a fan of a television show’s use. Through an audience member’s use of Twitter, his or her own thoughts can be shared with anyone else who is using Twitter. This provides a voice to

every user, including one who wants to be heard by fans and the television shows of which they are fans (Lin & Peña, 2011).

Relating to providing a voice for every fan, a study by Greer and Ferguson (2011) discovered users of Twitter were categorized by type as a way to show the differences among active members. The three categories of users were information source, friends, and information seeker. They also found that intentions of users were associated with four factors. The predominant content was daily chatter, followed by conversations, sharing information/URLs, and reporting news. These different intentions depict the types of relationships each fan wants to build. Even if fans do not always wish to interact with each other, fans can directly contact companies through social media. The next section goes into greater detail about this type of social media use by fans.

Direct Contact with Companies

Through social media, fans are given the opportunity to directly contact companies. Doing so can report personal experience, direct conversation, send information, and send encouragement (Dann, 2010). Instead of calling a company's phone line or trying to go through customer service, customers are more likely to communicate with the companies via Facebook and Twitter if the customer is currently an active social media user (Geierhos, 2011). This direct contact can be applied to television programs as well, as viewers now have a direct outlet to communicate about any specific positives or negatives in a program.

Sharing Information

Should a social media user want to share another person's message, they can do so. This may be done to relaying valuable content, such as info or news, or just share a message he or she found enjoyable. Sharing messages provides a user's endorsement of a particular user or topic.

By sharing a message from a television program, every follower of an individual can see the television program's message, even if those followers do not interact with that same television program at all. Sharing messages can be done to create a conversation about an existing message and for personal reasons of friendship (Dann, 2010).

When specifically looking at sharing on Twitter, many different categories of retweeting occur depending on a user's intentions. These include retweets containing URLs, hashtags, reply retweets where a person replies to the person retweeting a message (Dann, 2010). Each of these serves a purpose, should it be sharing information to a larger social circle or directly corresponding to an individual.

Retweeting can also show support for television programs. The type of message will determine if a user is likely to retweet. Fans decide what type of message to share and often are encouraged by television shows to share certain messages for prize incentives. This incentive benefits the fans so they are often encouraged to participate (Geierhos, 2011). Since sharing leads to more users becoming aware of the television program's message, it can shape the conversation of the online community (Kim & Lee, 2010).

Through investigating different types of social media use by fans, discovering their reason for using social media can be understood. Previously, reasons for television networks to use social media were also explored. The next literature covered regards these two types of social media users interacting.

Television Network and Fan Interaction

After exploring both a television program's use of social media and a fan's use of social media, the interaction between the two can be examined. A television program's use of social media includes: promoting services, dialogue with fans about trends, offering incentive for fans,

and managing a reputation. As a comparison, fans' use of social media includes: building fan relationships, direct contact with companies, and sharing information.

Each type of use by fans and a television program facilitates a mutually beneficial community existing. In a study by Greer and Ferguson about using the social media website Twitter to promote a television station, social network systems were found to provide added connection to their audiences (Greer & Ferguson, 2011). This connection to the audience helps promote a television station, or television series, and also benefits the consumers of the television series. The two types of television network and fan interactions that will be explored are “feedback and reaction” and the “relationship between fans and programming.”

Feedback and Reaction

The ability for television networks and fans to interact through fans giving feedback and television networks reacting to this feedback, and vice versa, is an important interaction. By branding a television show to online communities and catering to those communities' needs, the value of the television series increases (Chan-Olmstead & Kim, 2001). This is beneficial for fans in the community because they know their opinions are being heard and these fans can help encourage positive changes (Enli, 2012).

One study on television programs' websites showed that developing brand advocates through online communities led to increases in fans of a television program (Lin & Cho, 2010). Due to success of a television program's official website, spreading this idea through their official social media sites has the potential to result in the same positive effect of creating a larger online community. Social media use also has the potential to maintain a positive relationship with those that are already part of the viewing audience (Rose, 2011).

A study by Costello and Moore (2007) also explored the value of feedback and reaction to this feedback. It studied the differences between a corporately owned fan site and a fan site created by the fans. Through their study, the site was moderated more often when owned corporately. Fans do not want to be moderated when speaking about their favorite show. Discussion sites and forums should encourage interactions and function as an open community (Menon, 2007). Therefore, a television series should enable online communities that have free range of conversations. By opening itself up for any type of feedback, the television series will be seen as a more trusted part of the community (Rosen, 2011). The understanding of feedback leads to the relationship between fans and programming.

Relationship between Fans and Programming

Forming a positive relationship between fans and programming is a crucial and difficult part of participating on social media. Deciding which audiences to target and attract is another difficult task. When television series wish to attract younger viewers, social media is useful since many of its users are usually of a younger age (Deller, 2011). This younger audience is more active in media consumption so they are a desirable community of which to become a part (Summa, 2011).

In order to cultivate a relationship and provide incentives for watching television shows, many shows partner with websites to offer attractions, such as badges, which are a way to encourage fans to watch shows in real time and participate with the series itself and other users. These kinds of extra content are meant to reward devoted fans in an online community (Lin & Cho, 2010). Providing this content causes the television series to have a more relevant and beneficial voice in the community (Wise, 2006).

In a study about television programs' use of the social media website Twitter, there was a discussion of which type of messages were retweeted by followers more often. Followers of television shows were much more likely to retweet messages that responded to users or directly related to fans, instead of those that were informative about a television program airing (Lin & Peña, 2011). This is another case of viewers preferring a two-way relationship rather than a one-sided relationship. The two-way relationship encourages the development of the online fan community, while also showing the television program's willingness to become a part of the discussion (Lin & Cho, 2010).

When looking at the relationships in an online community, the response rate and message interactivity is important (Wise, 2006). Responding to other members in the community in real time boosts the credibility and involvement of the speaker (Nowak, Watt, & Walther, 2005). This is necessary for a television network wishing for its message to be heard as an extension of its brand (Shaw, 2012).

This engagement with viewers has the ability to mend any poor relations between a television series and its fan base. Through interaction between fans and a television series, negative feedback on Twitter has the potential to make changes in a television show's online strategies. One case involved fake Twitter accounts made for *Mad Men* characters. This was a way for fans to create their own story lines and interact with the series in a way that was not possible previously. AMC was not happy with this unauthorized use of their characters and shut down the accounts. Because this outraged fans, AMC reversed its decision and realized these fake Twitter accounts acted as free advertising for the show (Rose, 2011).

In addition to improving interaction with television series based on negative feedback, fans in these online communities also have created special content for each other. This special

content provides incentive to stay a part of the community since there is added value from its users (Shaw, 2012). One such case of user content is when a fan created its own *Lostpedia* page based on the series *Lost* (Rose, 2011). Seeing what its fans desired, *Lost* also created its own online game that provided plot details about the show's mysteries. After the game's success, *Lost's* television viewership increased (Rose, 2011).

Websites and social media sites are used by television series as a way of promotion for the show online. Often these shows hope to engage with viewers through polls, promotional contests, and other forms of interactive entertainment. By promoting their television series online and their website on television, the show is hoping to create a flow back and forth through old and new media (Carton, 2001).

Research Questions

When creating a social media setting for fans to interact, sites are designed for usability and sociability. The easier the site is to use, the more often fans can interact and show their ideas (Lekakos & Chorianopoulos 2007). Another important aspect of the site is the allowance for the audience to control the conversation. A two-way conversation makes the audience feel more involved with an online community than reading one-way statement from the supplier (Bucy, 2004). Understanding what kinds of messages fans interact with the most is the first question that will be studied.

RQ1: What type of messages from a television program's official Twitter page are followers more likely to retweet/reply to?

Besides the messages fans respond to, specific terms used by fans to talk about a program are important as a way to measure the importance of a television network in a fan community and investigate these conversations. By using terms promoted by the television series itself, fans

indicate the television network's influence. This research question will discover whether fans embrace the terms used by television shows to promote their series or if fans prefer talking about a television show based on their own terms.

RQ2: Which type of hashtag, one promoted by a television program's official Twitter page or one created uniquely by fans, will fans use most when tweeting about the television series?

The next important question relates to the activity of television networks on social media. Even though fans are active on social media regardless of television network activity, this question investigates if fans are more active based on a television program's output of messages. This is important in seeing if a television program's incorporation into a community will yield a higher result of fan conversation directed at the television program itself.

RQ3: Is the quantity of posts from a television program's Twitter page associated with the quantity of mentions from Twitter users?

After determining if the television program's social media activity leads to more response from fans, determining the importance of interaction is key. Interaction fosters a two-way relationship that leads to a more active community. By examining the amount of interaction by television networks on social media, this question will determine if fans are more active based on level of interaction.

RQ4: Is the quantity of replies to followers' tweets by a television program associated with the number of mentions from Twitter users?

Instead of owning these sites that contain online communities, television producers can monitor the sites and use them as virtual focus groups. These communities promote television shows and publicize events and promotions related to the series (Menon, 2007). Although

television producers already know viewership based on Nielsen ratings, online fan communities act as a way for fans' views to be heard (Costello & Moore, 2007). Interaction with fans in these communities can lead to more knowledge of a series' information (Menon, 2007). The different types of messages that television programs can interact with by fans are messages without mentions or replies, responses to a television show's post, and messages that mention a television show's official Twitter tag. By determining what type of message is most interacted with on social media, the reasoning for television network interaction with fans can be understood.

RQ5: What type of messages from followers (i.e. post without mention or reply, post mentioning TV show's Twitter tag, response to TV show's post) are most likely to be retweeted/replied to by a television program's official Twitter page?

By pushing audiences to be more active online, a television show wants users to have more engagement in the show. A viewer posting about a television show leads to those in the viewer's social circle finding out about the show (Purohit et. Al, 2010). After pushing users to become more active, using creative digital tools is helpful to see what works and doesn't work. Twitter is a conversation so a network letting people know that they are available is necessary to facilitate conversation.

When facilitating conversation, it is important that the page becomes an extension of the program in which the audience has interest. By aligning the page's identity with the program's personality, viewers feel more engaged with the program itself (Summa, 2011). This engagement facilitates the idea of television fans and television programs uniting to create a community of mutual benefit.

One part of the television program's page is the inclusion of hyperlinks that lead to more content for fans. This content links to other websites where more discoveries about television

programs can be found. The next question asks if including this content will lead to more conversations about a television program.

RQ6: Does a television program's official Twitter page posting more hyperlinks associate with a greater amount of mentions from its followers?

The final question relates to when fans are talking about a television series online through the social media website Twitter. Determining when fans are most active through the site may lead television networks to focus their social media efforts during times of most active use. Finding this answer may facilitate social media strategies.

RQ7: When are fans tweeting the most about a television series: a half hour to an hour before, during the episode, or a half hour to an hour after the program airs?

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

General Research Design

This study focused on examining the social networking activity of television programs during the 2012-2013 programming season through content analysis. In addition, it focused on the use of social media by the fans of these programs. Doing so determined what types of use each subject utilizes and if there is a relationship between television programs' use and audience members' use.

Data

As the Fall 2012 television series began, studying a sample of the currently airing television series determined the different tendencies of television series on social media. The first unit of analysis for this study was each television show. Next, individual tweets from audience members and the television series are other units of analysis that were coded to analyze the television shows as a unit of analysis.

First I looked up twenty-four of the top rated programs of the year premiering in Fall 2012 on the networks of ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox. I deleted any sporting programs or programs not running during the Fall 2012 schedule, since a weekly occurring episode is a requirement for measurements. Then, I deleted any programs that did not have an official Twitter page. The remaining television shows are not a complete representative of every television show's social media activity, but the sample used provides a large enough demonstration.

Based on these criteria, a list of twenty-four programs was selected: *Once Upon a Time*, *Revenge*, *Bones*, *NCIS*, *Last Resort*, *666 Park Avenue*, *Nashville*, *Grimm*, *Elementary*, *Amazing Race*, *Dancing With the Stars*, *The X Factor*, *Survivor*, *Bob's Burgers*, *2 Broke Girls*, *Family Guy*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *New Girl*, *The Mindy Project*, *Two and a Half Men*, *Modern Family*, *Parks & Recreation*, *Malibu Country*, and *Go On*. There are nine hour-long dramas, four reality television series, and eleven comedy series. There are also seven new series premiered in Fall 2012, selected to measure how these television series build a fan base.

To study these television programs' use of Twitter, focus was placed on each program's official Twitter account. Therefore, I searched the @ name of each television series when examining each series. Each of the twenty-four television series' official Twitter pages were studied from five to eight weeks based on data collection capability. This social networking activity included the use by both the television series and the fans of the series. Social activity for the television show was classified as number of postings on the official Twitter site and the type of message for each post to the audience.

Because Twitter does not keep an open archive of all messages, "Twitter Analysis Google Spreadsheet" was used to collect the most recent 1,500 Twitter messages that are posted about a specific topic. Even though this isn't a complete list of all messages, data collection was still possible and an accurate representation of Twitter as a whole. Each data set collected by these programs included a listing of the last 1,500 Twitter postings containing searched keywords so coding was allowed.

Measurements

Content Analysis

During each week of the television's season run, the messages all the television shows posts on Twitter were counted and analyzed based on the type of message. Also, the tweets that were collected from individuals who talk about each show were collected.

The first variable that was studied is based on the type of messages from a television program's Twitter that is most likely to be "replied to" or "retweeted" by followers of the Twitter page. A reply is defined as a direct response by a fan to a specific message posted by a television program. A retweet is defined as a fan reposting a television program's message for his or her followers. The dependent variable is a follower retweeting or replying and the values of this are a retweet or reply. The independent variable is the type of message from a television program's Twitter page. The values of this are (a) an informative message regarding airing time, (b) incentive for viewers to tweet such as prizes or contests, (c) a retweet of fan comment, (d) a reply to fan comment, (e) mentioning a specific fan, and (f) a hyperlink with extra content, such as interviews or outtakes. An informative message is a message by a television program that explicitly mentions the next airtime of its episodes. A prize/contest message is defined as a message that specifically offers a form of gain to a fan through fan participation. This includes physical prizes such as signed scripts, shirts, or vacations. A mention is defined as a direct message to a specific user, including the @ symbol followed by the individual user's Twitter name. Finally, a hyperlink is defined as a link from a hypertext file or document to another location or file, activated by clicking on a highlighted word or image. When activated, typically hyperlinks send the user to content on a separate website.

The second variable that was studied is whether or not a follower of a television program is likely to use a hashtag promoted by a television series, when talking about the television program. A hashtag is defined as a word or words with the symbol “#” preceding. Hashtags provide a simple search function. The dependent variable is the inclusion of a hashtag and the values of this are if a follower uses a hashtag, and if so then what type of hashtag do they use. The independent variable is each message about a television program that is being studied.

The next variable studied relates to association between a television program’s social media activity and that of its followers. The dependent variable is followers specifically mentioning, while using the @ feature, a television program they are discussing. The values of this variable are the number of mentions of the program’s official Twitter page. The independent variable is a television program’s Twitter messaging its followers. The value of this variable is the number of messages sent to followers.

For the next variable, the television program’s two-way relationship with followers was studied. The dependent variable is the followers mentioning the program. The values are the number of mentions (@) on a program’s official Twitter page. The independent variable of this concept is the television program directly replying to followers’ messages. The values are the number of replies to followers by the television program’s Twitter food.

Another variable relates to the extra content offered by television programs and how followers respond. The dependent variable is followers specifically mentioning a program and is measured by the number of mentions (@) of a program’s official Twitter page. The independent variable is a program’s Twitter page sending messages that contain hyperlinks. The value of this variable is the number of messages from a television program’s official Twitter page that contain hyperlinks

When looking at the variable of a television program having a two-way relationship with fans, studying the response of television shows to followers is necessary. The dependent variable is a television program's Twitter page reacting to a message from followers. The values of such a message are retweeting or replying to the follower's message. The independent variable is the followers' message about a television series. The values included in this variable are the type of message which is either a post with mention or reply, a post mentioning the television show's Twitter tag, or a response to a television show's message.

The variable of when fans are most likely to use social media to talk about television programs was also studied. The dependent variable is when fans are tweeting. The values are either a half hour to an hour before a program airs, while a program is airing, or a half hour to an hour after the program. The independent variable is followers tweeting about a show so this includes all collected tweets through the searching of key terms.

By looking at how both the audience and television series uses social media, the intent is to determine if Twitter use by a television series is associated with audience use of Twitter, or vice versa. Determining if Twitter use by a television series associates with the use of audiences can help a network focus on what kinds of messages to send as a way to create a more active and expansive audience.

Coders and Intercoder Reliability

Two coders coded the messages of each television series and the sample of Twitter fans. The coding included for followers (a) the name of show that will be coded numerically instead of as name, (b) the genre of the program (drama, comedy, reality), (c) who is tweeting about the show (fan, television program's official Twitter page), (d) when the message was posted (before airing, during airing, after airing), (e) the inclusion of hashtags (yes, no), (f) the type of hashtag

(one used by television programs official television show’s Twitter page, original hashtag), (g) the type of message by a fan (original post, reply to television program’s tweet, retweet of television program’s tweet, mentioning of television program’s twitter page, and did the television program respond).

For a television program’s official Twitter page this will include (i) time of television program’s tweet (before episode, during the episode, after episode), (j) type of message to followers (informative message regarding airing time, incentive for viewers to tweet such as prizes or contests, interaction with specific comments, hyperlink with extra content), and (k) if interacting with fans what kind of response (retweet, reply, mention).

Two coders were trained to be able to perform content analysis. In order to confirm intercoder reliability, each coder recorded 10% of the other coder’s messages. Doing so gave the results higher validation.

Table 1: Intercoder Reliability of Variables

Coding Category	P/L Index
TV Show	1.00
Genre	1.00
User Type	1.00
Type of Message	0.92
Time of Message	0.95
Hashtag	0.98
Type of Hashtag	0.98

Data Analysis

Data collected from Twitter was analyzed using several factors. After coding each of the twenty-four television programs' tweets, the data were inputted into SPSS as a way to study the data more closely and test for relationships among the different variables. After testing for relationships, significance of the results was determined.

Testing for significance through statistical analysis determined if the numerical results of the data collection are a pattern instead of a random occurrence. Through SPSS, statistical tests such as a one-sample t-test, a one-way ANOVA, and a linear regression are used to study each of the research questions that are proposed in this study.

For RQ1, the first step was distributing the data normally in order to keep a consistency in the analysis. After distributing the data normally, the "retweet" and "replies" variables were transformed and computed into a scale to prevent outliers from affecting the results. Once the "retweets" and "replies" were transformed, a one-way ANOVA and linear regression was run on each to test for significance.

For RQ2, the type of hashtag was studied by coding each fan tweet as including a hashtag or not. If the message included a hashtag, the type of hashtag was coded based on whether it was an original hashtag or a hashtag promoted by the television show's official Twitter page. After inputting this data into SPSS, a frequencies analysis was run in order to see the frequency of each hashtag occurrence. Then, a one-sample t-test was run to determine the significance of the results.

The study of RQ3 compared the quantity of posts by a television program with the quantity of fan mentions of the same program. Due to the disproportionate number of messages for each post, the percentages of each type of message were compared through a through a

bivariate correlation, specifically a Pearson's Correlation. Doing so determined if there is a relationship between the number of posts a television show makes and the number of times a television show is mentioned.

When performing data analysis of RQ4 and 5, enough data were not provided to run a statistical analysis. Each question relied on quantity of replies and retweets from a television program's official Twitter page. Unfortunately, there was not a large enough quantity of these messages to run a statistical analysis.

Analysis of RQ6 was through a cross-tabulation comparing hyperlinks to fan mentions. In addition, a Chi Squared test was run to find the significance of the results of this test.

RQ7 required the analysis of when fans were most likely to tweet about a television series. Each tweet was coded based on if it was before, during, or after a program's airing. After inputting this data into SPSS, a frequencies analysis was run in order to see the frequency of each before, during, or after occurrence. Then, a one-sample t-test was run to determine the significance of the results.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Sample Overview & Descriptives

The collection of tweets using Twitter Analysis Google Sheet yielded 7883 tweets from twenty-four television series. The collection of tweets was limited only to the time periods of a half hour to an hour before an episode's airing, during an episode, and a half hour to hour after an episode aired.

The stratified sample of 7883 tweets was made up of data collected from twenty-four television shows. It was selected out of all the tweets containing the name of the show, the official Twitter hashtag of a show, and the official Twitter handle for each show. Data were collected between five and eight weeks of the show's run, depending on technical issues regarding the collection method. The tweets included in the data were split based on user type. Of all the tweets collected, 97.8% were from fans (N=7681) and 2.2% were from a television show's official Twitter page (N=171), illustrating how active fans of television series are compared to the television shows themselves.

When exploring the data collected, the type of message used by fans was important to see the tendencies of television fans on social media. Fans used an original message about a television show that was not a reply, retweet, or mention 38.4% of the time (N=2951). Of all the collected messages, only 0.9% of the fan messages were replies (N=72). Fans also retweeted 25.1% (N=1928) of the time. Separately, fans mentioned the specific television show's official Twitter page 35.5% of the time (N=2729).

Of the messages by an official Twitter page that incorporated interaction (N=56), 87.5% were retweeting (N=49) of other Twitter messages by fans. The second most used form of interaction was replying to messages (N=6), which were 10.7% of the collected tweets. Lastly, 1.8% of the messages involved mentioning particular users without replying to a message (N=1).

RQ1: What type of messages from a television program’s official Twitter page are followers more likely to retweet/reply to?

Each message from a television program’s official Twitter was coded based on the type of message (informative message, prize/contest, interaction with fans). Then, each message from the television programs’ official Twitter pages was found online. After each message was found, the quantity of replies and retweets by fans was counted.

One-way ANOVA tested for relationship between these retweets and replies by fans. The variable distribution was skewed, therefore the retweets and replies were coded to fix this issue. The retweets was coded by 0=no retweets, 1=one to ten retweets, and 2=more than ten retweets. Due to the lower number of replies, the coding for replies was different than that of retweets. For replies, 0=no replies, 1=one to five replies, and 2=more than five replies. This was done to balance the disproportionate number of retweets and replies for each message, while providing a more accurate representation.

After the data were categorized, a one-way ANOVA was run for each type of message compared with “replies.” Through the one-way ANOVA, the significant result of more fans “replying to” a certain type of message more often was a message from a television series’ official Twitter page that was interaction. This result with significance ($P < .001$) provides an example of the content of which social media users are more likely to interact as well.

Table 2: Percentage of replies for each television message type

Number of Replies	Informative	Prizes/Contests	Interaction
None	19.3% (n=27)	30.8% (n=4)	17.5% (n=10)
1-5	68.6% (n=96)	69.2% (n=9)	63.2% (n=36)
6+	12.1% (n=17)	0% (n=0)	19.3% (n=11)

Table 3: Percentage of retweets for each television message type

Number of Retweets	Informative	Prizes/Contests	Interaction
None	0.7% (n=10)	0% (n=0)	3.5% (n=2)
1-10	25.7% (n=36)	61.5% (n=8)	29.8% (n=17)
11+	73.6% (n=103)	38.5% (n=5)	66.7% (n=38)

The same method was used for studying which type of message is most likely to be retweeted by fans. After normalizing its distribution and transforming the retweets into a standardized variable, a one-way ANOVA was applied. This determined that the most significant result was related to informative messages. With a significance ($P < .001$), this result showed that informative messages were the most likely to be retweeted by fans.

In summary, significant findings occurred after completing one-way ANOVA tests for both retweets and replies. The messages most likely to be replied to by fans were messages of interaction by television Twitter pages. The messages most likely to be retweeted by fans were informative messages.

RQ2: Which type of hashtag, one promoted by a television program’s official Twitter page or one created uniquely by fans, will fans use most when tweeting about the television series?

The two categories were the official hashtag that was chosen by the television program or a unique hashtag that was created by fans. In order to study this question, the frequencies of each type of Twitter hashtag were calculated through SPSS. After calculating the frequencies of each type of hashtag, a one-sample t-test was calculated for the hashtags.

The official hashtag promoted by each television show’s official Twitter page was the overwhelming favorite. Of the collected tweets that included hashtags, 74.2% (N=3651) included the official hashtag that was promoted by the official Twitter page of each television show. 25.8% (N=1269) of the tweets included hashtags that were originally created by users. The one sample t-test recorded a significance of ($P < .001$), signifying that the official hashtag promoted by the television series was the hashtag most used by fans.

RQ3: Is the quantity of posts by a television program on Twitter associated with the quantity of mentions of shows from Twitter users?

RQ3 evaluated whether the quantity of messages a television show posts on Twitter would correlate with the quantity of mentions by fans on Twitter about the program. Since the number of messages for each television program was not even, a percentage of each type of message was studied instead.

The data were aggregated by the categories of user type and by type of fan messages. After aggregating the data, a bivariate correlation test was applied. Once a Pearson’s Correlation was run results were shown to not be significant.

RQ4: Is the quantity of replies to followers' tweets by a television program associated with the number of mentions from Twitter users?

The purpose of RQ4 was to determine any significant relationship between the quantity of replies to fans by a television show's Twitter page and the quantity of mentions by fans using Twitter. Unfortunately, the data collected did not provide enough "reply" messages from television shows to determine any form of relationship through statistical analysis.

There were only six total messages sent by a television show's official Twitter page that were classified as a "reply" to fans. The lack of data did not allow this issue to be delved into more detail. All the data collected, only three of the twenty-four television programs sent a message that was a "reply" to a fan's message. This is 12.5% (N=3) of the total television programs studied and 3.4% (N=6) of the total messages sent by television programs' official Twitter pages.

RQ5: What type of messages from followers (i.e. post without mention or reply, post mentioning TV show's Twitter tag, response to TV show's post) are most likely to be retweeted/replied to by a television program's official Twitter page?

With the abundance of messages directed at particular television shows, a response by the show cannot happen for each and every message. Deciding which type of messages to "reply" and "retweet" signifies to fans which type of message is considered most worthy of interaction.

Unfortunately, there were not enough data collected from television programs' official Twitter pages through the data collection process. When using "Twitter Analysis Google Sheets" to collect tweets, the abundance of fan tweets overshadowed the number of television show tweets. Even when searching through each individual television Twitter page for the dates of data collection, enough data were not collected to provide any significant results.

Overall, the television shows’ official Twitter pages posted on average about three to five messages on each air date. Rarely did these messages contain a form of interaction, leaving a lack of data about interactivity between television shows and their audiences. When studying “replies,” only three television programs had any “replies” to specific audience members. These television shows received the same percentage of mentions from their fans as other programs so the results are not able to be called significant.

RQ6: Does the number of hyperlinks posted by a television program’s official Twitter page associate with the number of mentions from its audiences?

To determine if there were any significant results for this question, a Chi-Squared test was run. After completing a cross-tabulation analysis with a Chi-Squared test included, there were no significant results of audience users responding more to messages by television programs that included hashtags. Hyperlinks were included in 65.9% (N=114) of messages put out by television shows, with 34.1% (N=59) of television messages not including hyperlinks.

Table 4: Percentage of television tweets that included hyperlinks

Hyperlinks	Percentage
Yes	65.9% (n=114)
No	34.1% (n=59)

RQ7: When are fans tweeting the most about a television series: a half hour to an hour before, during the episode, or a half hour to an hour after the program airs?

Of the sample of user tweets that were collected, 29.3% (N=2305) were before the episode aired, 32.1% (N=2523) were during the episode airing, and 36.3% (N=2852) were after

the episode aired. According to the one-sample t-test, the most often tweeted time period is after the episode airs. After running a t-test, a significance of below ($P < .001$) was determined. A correlation ($R^2 = .865$) was also found. This significant result demonstrates that fans are most likely to tweet about a television series after a program has aired. The result is interesting as audience members demonstrated that they were most likely to hold their reactions until seeing the entire episode.

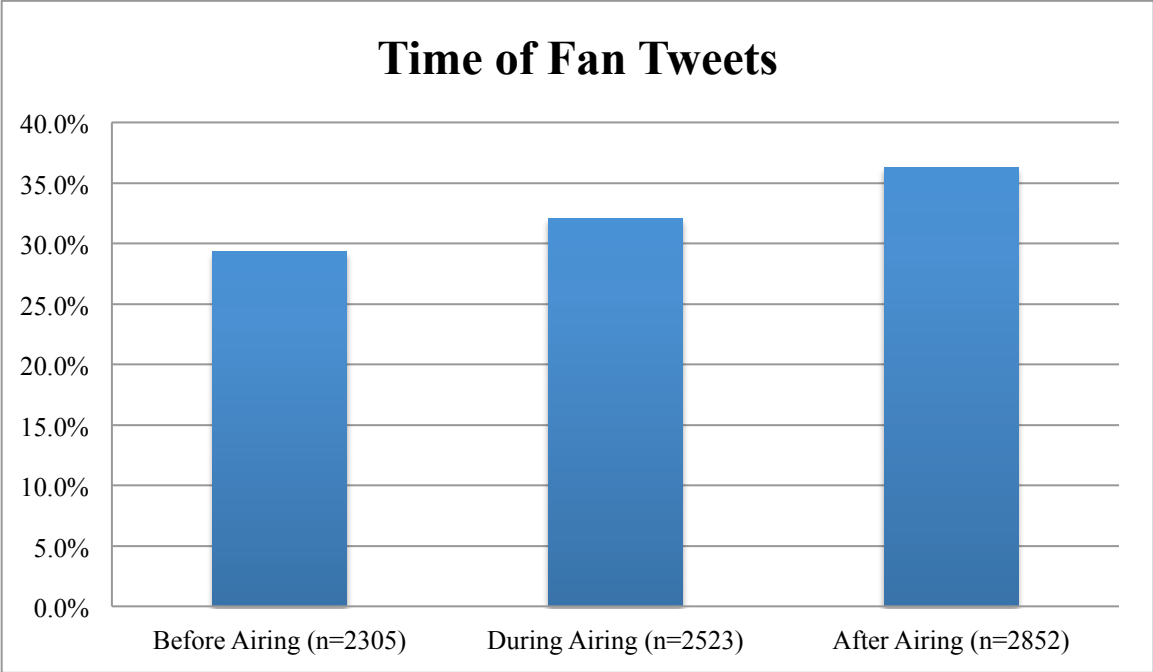


Figure 1: Time of Fan Tweets by Percentage

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between social media use by a television program and social media use by fans of a television program. By looking at fans' social media use, television networks are able to see what types of messages are most well received by fans and what types of messages are most likely to be posted by fans (Bellman et. al, 2010). The benefit of this information for television networks is gaining an understanding of what messages fans are most likely to evoke response with on social media. Additionally, by identifying what types of messages fans post, television networks are able to have a better understanding of how to participate and influence fan conversations (Adjei et. al, 2010). Television networks understanding how to participate in fan conversations will benefits fans as well. By providing content fans desire when fans desire it, television networks provide a service that can benefit these fans (Greer & Ferguson, 2011).

Through each of the research questions, different facets of the television and fan relationship were explored. The findings related to each of these questions can benefit television by providing benefits from using social media that are not readily apparent. Although television networks continue to use social media to keep up with trends, clear answers to each of these questions will provide these networks with a basis for their use of social media (Pearson, 2010).

Understanding Social Media Use by Fans

When evaluating television fans' type of message most used, the statistics regarding the kind of message most used by fans suggest a greater tendency for fans to create their own

message about a television show. Both mentions and original messages are not usually responses to another person's message like retweets and replies. This supports the idea of using social media to express one's own opinion about a television show, more than as a reaction to another message (Wise, 2006).

However, the relatively high percentage of 25.1% retweets is important for television networks to take notice. By retweeting, fans are spreading television program messages to a larger network of social media users. Creating messages that are more likely to be retweeted provides more benefit than other types of messages, even if those have more replies, as a larger amount of potential audience members are exposed to these messages through highly influential audience members (Aikat, 2009).

In addition to looking at fans' most used messages, knowing what type of message by a television network receives the most fan interaction is important for a network starting to become involved with social media. In this category, significant results were found. The message most likely to be retweeted by fans is an informative message, supporting the television programs' desire to most often post informative messages. This may be due to informative messages being posted most often by television networks. However, the success of informative messages might influence the number of informative messages being posted as well. This should be studied in more depth for future research.

Informative messages by television programs' Twitter pages are often the most important messages that can be shared with their followers, as these messages state when the program airs. By keeping audiences notified of this information, interested followers are more likely to view the program (Rose, 2011). This is important for television networks to receive higher ratings. These informative messages that are most often retweeted include details about a television

program's airdate and airtime so fans will not miss out on important information. This is important should fans desire to watch the series during its original timeslot. Also, because audience members often trust their personal contacts more than unknown persons, the television program's messages can have a higher impact from these personal sources sharing their messages (Hampton & Wellman, 2003).

Another important form of sharing is when fans retweet informative messages from a television show. Through this action fans are not only demonstrating loyalty, they are also distributing a television show's messages to those who would not normally be exposed to the message (Adjei et. al, 2010). Since the message features informative information about airdates, non-viewers have an improved chance of watching the series since they now know the date and time of the program's airing. These non-viewers are a potential new audience if they trust the opinion of the fans that retweet informative messages (Arduser, 2011).

By retweeting messages, fans also spread messages that contain information about the original airtime of a television program. Even though many television audiences are tech savvy and often a proponent of time shifting, this result demonstrates the occurrence of watching a program as it airs. By promoting the original airtime, Twitter users are signifying that they prefer watching the show live (Bellman et. al, 2010).

Watching a television program live makes loyal users more likely to "live tweet" a television program. Doing so provides benefits to audience members and to the television network. Fans watching live will spread their views of a television program and increase awareness. As a form of benefit to television networks, live viewing leads to higher Nielsen ratings, which will bring in more revenue for the television network (Hampton & Wellman,

2003). When advertisers notice an influx of live viewers, the advertisements also gain importance since they are more likely to be watched (Bhanot, 2012).

Knowing when fans tweet is important information when considering fans' spreading of messages. In the research about social media use, there were different reasons included for why Twitter users tweet during certain times. Before a show airs, users are most likely to talk about potential happenings for the soon to air show. During the episode, users are most likely to provide reactions instantly and form theories about what will happen next. After the episode airs, Twitter users are most likely to provide reactions to the episode as a whole and comment on what will occur during the next episode (Porter et. al, 2011).

This study showed that fans converse about a program more after a program airs than before or during an episode's airing. This occurrence contradicts the "second screen" participation scenario. Instead of "live tweeting" a television program, this study showed fans of a program more often tweet their reactions after an episode airs. Should this trend be true, television networks need to study the "second screen" experience in greater depth and see what features determine when fans are having social media conversations about a television show. In addition, the types of messages television shows post on social media that influence fans are important to know.

Knowing which types of messages fans choose to interact with is important for reaching this audience. The messages from a television program that were a form of interaction with fans received the most "replies" from fans. This supports research that fans are more loyal to a company if there is a two-way form of communication (Diffley, 2011). Since fans are more likely to respond to messages of interaction, a relationship can be formed instead of each user sending out one-way messages with no response (Carter, 2009).

However, the high number of fan tweets directed at a television program without reply demonstrates that people will still converse about a television show without a program's interaction (Carter, 2009). Even though a more personal and deep relationship can be formed with interaction, not using resources to reply with audiences is shown to still generate responses from fans (Joo et. al, 2011). The question that needs to be addressed by television programs is how involved with the fan conversation they want to be. By demonstrating value to the fans through interaction and desirable messages, television programs' social media use can become more ingrained with the community of fans (Pearson, 2010).

After a television program demonstrates value to fans, loyal fans that have had a positive experience are more likely to become brand advocates with people they come in contact (Greer & Ferguson, 2011). Since only followers of each television show on Twitter are able to see the television show's updates, loyal customers are integral to growing a television show's popularity (Varini & Sirsi, 2012).

Keeping track of the messages from brand advocates is possible through searching for hashtags. When this study explored hashtag use by fans, a significant result showed that the official hashtag by a television program's Twitter page was the most likely for fans to use. The official hashtag's significant advantage over any other hashtag provides important information for television networks' social media use. Because of audiences largely preferring a hashtag that was influenced by the television show's decision, a program is able to monitor conversations much more easily (Kim, Joo, & Yang, 2011).

Through a simple search, any conversations about a series can be viewed. By acquiring this knowledge, television networks can limit focus their resources in a more manageable way (Bhanot, 2012). Also, the television program itself becomes a major player in the conversation

about itself. This leads to a television program having more influence on topic discussions (Lee, 2012).

Fans of social media sites are influenced most by incentive to participate, whether it is incentive through conversation or incentive through another form of positive externalities (Bellman et. al, 2010). With this guidance, television networks need to take a closer look at what messages work and do not work when trying to reach these fans. According to this study, informative messages are most likely to be shared by followers. This provides twice the benefits for television networks as they can provide information that can lead to more viewers, while also having their message spread (Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007).

Response by Television Programs on Social Media

Looking at the television program side, a television program retweeting their fans' messages allows fans to feel like part of a conversation without the television show making an exorbitant amount of effort per fan. The second highest percentage was television program's replying to fan comments. Replying to a message takes more effort, but also creates a conversation on Twitter instead of two groups sending one-way messages. By replying to certain messages, television shows can provide a reaction that demonstrates their valuing of fans (Purohit et. al, 2011). Mentioning a fan specifically in a post takes the greatest amount of effort, as an entire original message is necessary. Therefore, "mentions" having the lowest percentage of interactions appears valid.

Choosing the type of message to send to fans is important for television networks using social media. In this study, the informative type of message was the most posted by television programs by a high margin. This fact adds credence to the expectation that television shows most desire awareness for their audiences (Varini & Sirsi, 2012). Instead of providing the

personal connection that many people expect on Twitter, these television series prefer informing audiences when the television show airs and what to expect from the program.

Besides sending informative messages, another way of reaching audiences is by interacting with fans directly since social media provides this means. Although this focus is narrow, a television program providing messages of interaction has proven to cause viewers to reply to a message from the television series (Lipsman et al, 2012). This replying to a television series' message creates a continuous stream of conversation and allows the reach of a television program's messaging to increase in scope (Petty, 2012).

Focusing on interaction in this study, the data collected regarding direct "replies" by television programs to fans suggests the lack of interaction by television programs since there were only six total messages that were "replies." The lack of replies may be due to the abundance of fan messages directed at a television program. This oversaturation makes it difficult for television series to choose which messages to specifically reply (Booth & Matic, 2011). If the television programs wish to have a greater amount of two-way interaction, interacting directly with fan messages is necessary, as proven by fans replying most often to messages of interaction by television programs. Fans posting more often after a program airs, as compared with before or during an episode, provides a more focused arena for television networks to start a two-way conversation about the program. However, the multitude of fan messages about each program, regardless of replies from television programs, showed that two-way interaction is not always necessary.

The economic cost and benefit of social media is on display in the result of fans talking about television shows regardless of direct interaction. Perhaps a greater amount of data would signify a different result, but this data show that audiences will mention a show regardless of a

two-way relationship. Although there have been studies that show a deeper relationship between companies and consumers will provide more benefits to the company, fans on social media will talk about a television show no matter the circumstance (Geierhos, 2011).

As another type of message to send to fans, the inclusion of hyperlinks is another a notable discussion point. However, in this study the use of hyperlinks in messages to fans did not end in a significant result. Nevertheless, hyperlinks are necessary for the medium of Twitter. With the limited number of characters in each message, hyperlinks provide depth that these messages may lack (Lin & Peña, 2011). An audience responding to these hyperlinks is also essential due to the links often taking audiences to a television show's official website (Kolb, 2008).

Even if there was not significance of users specifically mentioning television programs' Twitter messages based on inclusion of hyperlinks, the high percentage of hyperlinks included in messages does illustrate how important hyperlinks are when participating on social media (Summa, 2011). No matter the television show, the percentage of posts that included a hyperlink was disproportionately higher. This is a tendency on Twitter overall and television programs are adapting to this trend. As a visual medium, television shows benefit from including hyperlinks instead of limiting themselves by using only words (Adamovic et. al, 2011). The statistical significance was not great, but users did respond to these messages.

Not only are television programs receiving Twitter exposure, using hyperlinks can direct fans to other forms of media that gain even more coverage for the television program (Hart, 2011). By linking to other websites about the program, more profit can be accrued. This may occur if fans decide to purchase any sort of memorabilia that would not have been seen without

the television program linking to a separate site through their Twitter account (Booth & Matic, 2011).

In addition to the type of message and inclusion of hyperlink, the frequency of sending messages to followers is a difficult decision for television networks to make when participating on social media. Studying the relationship between how often a television program posts a message and how often a television program is specifically mentioned is important. The importance of this question is due to prior research that showed the influence a company's social media activity can have on consumers (Adjei et. al, 2010).

Previous research indicated that if a company desired to cultivate a supportive community of fans, participation with these same fans is important (Wise, 2006). However, this study showed that there is no relationship between frequency of posts and how often fans are talking about the television program. This may indicate that the type of message being sent by a company is more important than the number of messages, as supported by previous research (Tariq & Wahid, 2011). The belief that the type of message can indicate the amount of audience response is supported by the previous research question regarding type of message by a television program that fans interact the most.

All of these types of uses are important, but if television networks are only able to participate during a certain time period, they need to know when the most cost effective time period will be. Television networks are able to capitalize on these results by participating with the conversation after the episode airs (James, 2011). They can do so by prompting response through particular questions directed towards viewers. Official Twitter pages can also retweet audience messages as a way to encourage response. Doing so will provide an economical means of instant reaction from a keen focus group of fans (Enli, 2012).

Each of the research questions in this study answered key inquiries in the further understanding of why television networks should participate in social media. Although not every question received significant results, there were enough findings to indicate the importance of social media use in a television fan's viewing habits. The second screen continues to provide a means for expression by fans (Kim & Lee, 2010).

Through the overwhelming results of Twitter data collected, there is proof that fans use social media in abundance when deciding to participate in conversation about a television program. This conversation can be influenced by television programs providing the type of messages that mesh with the conversation being promoted by fans (Bhanot, 2010).

Overall, there is a relationship between fan and television program social media use (Porter et. al, 2011). Although this study did not provide exact details on how to benefit economically from this relationship, it did provide a base for choosing which measures to implement on social media. Understanding how to benefit economically from social media will never be easy, but these questions provided sample data from users. Television networks face the issues of how, when, and why to use social media each day so this study offered a few answers to these complicated questions. Even though understanding what fans of a program want is a continued effort, cultivating this relationship is a necessity for the future (Culnan et. al, 2010).

Implications for Mass Communication Theory

The implications of this study provide benefits to multiple fields of mass communication theory. One such important application of this study is regarding media economics. With the increasing use of social media by television networks, understanding the economics of such an endeavor will benefit these networks. This study's results will serve as an example of what can

be gained when television networks use social media use. The gains include monitoring fans' social media use, promoting the television program, and the positive externality of fan loyalty through interaction with fans (Tariq & Wahid, 2011).

One of the gains that television networks can benefit from is the social capital of their television fans. Social capital theory relates to this study because of the desire to determine the benefits of social media use by television programs. By taking a deeper look at social media use by fans, more knowledge is attained for determining positive reasons for using social media. The social capital of the television fans is through their networks of followers (Deller, 2011). Through significant result of fans most retweeting an informative message, the television network benefits from social capital theory (Purohit et. al, 2011).

Additionally, interaction with fans provides implications in the theory of online communities. Regarding the community aspect of this research, this study's results could be beneficial, as television networks have not previously had the type of direct relationship with fans as they do now. In this study, interaction was studied to see if television programs were able to engrain themselves into this television-based community. By showing the most replies from fans occurred when a television program was interactive, the television programs engrained themselves into the community of the television fandom (Costello & Moore, 2007).

Implications for Mass Communication Industry

Practical implications of this study include how television networks can use social media to reach and benefit fans. Although most television programs have a social media presence, there has not been a great deal of evidence for how to use social media to most benefit the television network (Arduser, 2011). Providing a base for the cost and benefit of using social media is the most important implication from this study.

All of the benefits discovered in this study were regarding fan outreach and influencing these fans. The major part of this study is the idea of social media being a direct communication line to fans (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). As seen through “mentions,” “retweets,” and “replies by fans,” direct contact by television programs with fans is quite prevalent.

This direct contact with fans was shown to influence fans. This influence was specifically noticeable through fans retweeting messages (Deller, 2011). According to the results, fans were most likely to retweet messages that mentioned the original airing time of the program and specifically asked fans to retweet. This evidence shows that audience reach can become much greater than just the fans that follow a program on social media (Byrd, 2012). By prompting social media influencers to share a television program’s message, the scope of the message is increased exponentially (Costello & Moore, 2007).

The importance of reaching social media influencers also relates to the focused messaging that needs to be done by television networks. According to the results of this study, interacting with specific fans and distributing informative messages yields the most audience retweets and replies. Instead of guessing which kinds of messages to use, research such as this need to be done so resources are not wasted. These focused messages will provide the most benefit for television networks while costing the least (Geierhos, 2011)

Besides knowing what type of message to post, a television program knowing when to post messages is also important. The results showed that fans post the most after a program airs so some ideas, such as live tweeting after an episode’s airing or prompting a specific area for discussion, may benefit television programs the most (Huffaker, 2010).

After knowing when to post and the best messages to post, receiving direct and instantaneous feedback from fans is the other most important implication of this study (James,

2011). As a captive audience, these fans have the ability to send unfiltered feedback to television programs that can be seen directly. Through the result of this study that stated fans are most likely to use a television program's official hashtag, television programs can easily see audience reactions to specific scenes and episodes all in one location (Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007).

Limitations

One limitation in this research is due to the method of data collection. Through Twitter Analysis Google Spreadsheet, a large number of data from users can be collected. However, the television programs' official Twitter pages are overshadowed by the larger percentage of fan messages. This lack of television program Twitter messages led to an insignificant amount of data for two of the research questions.

As a limitation, selection bias may have occurred as each official hashtag was one of the three search criteria used for each television show. Therefore, the official hashtag has a slight advantage, as other hashtags were not included as unique search criteria. Nevertheless, as only one of three different search criteria there was still a big enough difference to warrant a closer look. Additionally, each television program chose hashtags for the year instead of specifically for each episode. Should the hashtag be a general term, there is no guarantee that every person using this hashtag is watching that specific television episode.

Another limitation is the time frame of the study. A five to eight week period for each television program resulted in thousands of tweets, but a larger time frame is necessary for fully understanding the relationship between fans and a television program. By studying a larger time frame, changes over time could also be measured. Doing so would provide more complete data on how different social media use by television programs can change how fans use social media.

One more limitation is how there is not an ability to know how fans personally feel about each type of social media use by television shows. The personal experience of individuals would provide insights that a content analysis could not provide, regarding motivation and influence. Additionally, not knowing television networks' strategic goals limits the ability to study their social media use. Different networks may have different strategic goals, therefore this study is limited by the lack of inside information about each network's social media department.

Directions for Further Research

Future research regarding social media use by television networks could take a more in-depth look at personal motivations of television fans. Although this content analysis studied social media use by the numbers, interviews and surveys of a sample of fans could provide insights and philosophies that are not easily distinguished by numbers.

In-depth interviews of individuals who run a television program's official Twitter page could also provide a plethora of information. This information includes the planning and implementation of messages that are sent to fans. By recording in-depth interviews and surveys of each type of user, a greater awareness of how these two sides can work together will be apparent.

Further research should also include studying other types of social media since this research only included Twitter. Investigating all types of social media will provide knowledge of what messages are most effective in each scenario and more depth of how different social media websites have different uses.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CODE BOOK

1. Name of show (coded numerically instead of as name)
 - a. The name of each television show studied was placed in alphabetic order and coded numerically from 1 to 24.
2. Genre
 - a. Reality: defined as an unscripted television show that is an hour long
 - b. Drama: defined as an hour long dramatic series that does not feature comedic elements
 - c. Comedy: defined as a half hour long television series with comedic elements featured
 - d. (Reality=1, Drama=2, Comedy=3)
3. Who is tweeting about show
 - a. Fan: defined as a Twitter user that is not a television program's official Twitter page
 - b. Official TV Program's Twitter page: defined as one of the twenty-four television show's verified official Twitter page
 - c. (Fan=1, Official TV program's Twitter page=2)
4. TV Show attention to fan
 - a. Time of posting
 - i. Before episode: defined as the half hour before a television show's air date if the show is a half hour long; defined as the hour before a television show's air date if the show is an hour long
 - ii. During episode: defined as the time during an program's airing
 - iii. After episode: defined as the half hour after a television show's air date if the show is a half hour long; defined as the hour after a television show's air date if the show is an hour long
 - iv. (None=0, Before episode=1, During episode=2, After episode=3)
 - b. Type of Message
 - i. Informative Message: a message that mentions specific air time of the television program
 - ii. Prize/Contest: a message that mentions incentives for fans that includes either something that can be won by fans
 - iii. Interaction: a message that directly interacts with fans as a retweet, reply, or mention to a specific fan
 - iv. (None=0, Informative=1, Prize=2, Interaction=3)
 - c. Type of Interaction
 - i. Retweet of fan comment: a fan's Twitter message shared by a television show's Twitter page
 - ii. Reply to fan comment: a response to a fan's comment that was directed at the television show's official Twitter page
 - iii. Mention specific fan: a message that includes a fan's Twitter user name without being a reply or retweet
 - iv. (None=0, RT=1, Reply=2, Mention=3)

- d. Hyperlinks
 - i. Hyperlink: the inclusion of a link that sends the person who clicks to a separate website
 - ii. (No hyperlink=0, Inclusion of hyperlink=1)
- 5. Fan attention to show
 - a. Type of message
 - i. Original post: not mention, reply, RT, just message about program (with Official TV show's Twitter)
 - ii. Reply to TV tweet: specific response to TV twitter page's tweet
 - iii. Retweet: sharing of TV twitter page's tweet
 - iv. Mention: (@) of TV twitter page included in a fan's post
 - v. (Original Post=1, Reply=2, Retweet=3, Mention=4)
 - b. When message was posted
 - i. Before episode: defined as the half hour before a television show's air date if the show is a half hour long; defined as the hour before a television show's air date if the show is an hour long
 - ii. During episode: defined as the time during an program's airing
 - iii. After episode: defined as the half hour after a television show's air date if the show is a half hour long; defined as the hour after a television show's air date if the show is an hour long
 - iv. (Before=1, During=2, After=3)
 - c. Inclusion of hashtag
 - i. A hashtag is a word preceded by the # sign
 - ii. (No=0, Yes=1)
 - d. If yes, Type of hashtag
 - i. One used by official TV show's Twitter page: the hashtag promoted by a television show's official Twitter page
 - ii. Original hashtag: a hashtag generated by fans instead of a television show's Twitter page
 - iii. (Official Hashtag=1, User generated hashtag=2)