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Social Media as a Branding Tool in Heterogeneous Organizations: A Collective Case Study Approach

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SOCIAL MEDIA AS A BRANDING TOOL IN HETEROGENEOUS ORGANIZATIONS: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY APPROACH

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Professional Communication

by
Heather Marie Dunn
May 2010

Accepted by:
Dr. Sean Williams, Committee Chair
Dr. Jan Holmevik
Dr. Tharon Howard
Abstract

The concept of branding can be applied to an endless list of topics including products, organizations, and individuals. Just as a product line can have a brand identity, so can a university, business or non-profit. This thesis details a study on universities, businesses and non-profits and how they use social media as a branding tool. In this thesis, I provide a brief literature review, describe my methodologies, describe in detail the research of each of the three cases and finally, draw conclusions and suggest future research. This thesis ends with a list of references and additional readings that provide insight into my prior and current relevant research. My goal is to communicate that social media should be viewed as a valuable branding tool, not just frivolous communication. I hope to show the power social media can wield when used appropriately.
Acknowledgements

Thank you to my committee, who provided valuable feedback and guidance throughout this entire process. I appreciate the knowledge and suggestions shared by Dr. Sean Williams, as well as Dr. Jan Holmevik and Dr. Tharon Howard. Without their help, this study would not be half of what it is today.

I also want to thank the four interview participants from Clemson University, Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County and Iced: The Upstate Cupcake Cafe, who volunteered their time to discuss branding and social media. Being able to visit their place of work and get a first-hand feel for the brand they help represent and promote was a great benefit to my research. I truly enjoyed speaking with each of them and hearing their unique opinions.

Finally, thank you to my friends and family who dealt with me over the past few months as I unnecessarily worked the topic of social media in to nearly every conversation. Your patience and willingness to entertain my questions and comments helped develop this study, more than you will ever know. For your support, I am incredibly grateful.
Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title Page</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Purpose of this Thesis</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branding Defined</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Defined</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branding and Social Media Focus</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Analysis</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branding Theory</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Network Analysis</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Marketing</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation Management</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure and Organization</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Methodology</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives of Research</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for the Three Cases</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Collective Case Study</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Interview</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Collegiate Branding</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Non-Profit Branding</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Business Branding</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6: Conclusions</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory versus Reality</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of this Study</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for Future Research</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Readings</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.1</td>
<td>Clemson University Prospective Students Page</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.2</td>
<td>Iced Homepage</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.3</td>
<td>Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County Homepage</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1</td>
<td>Clemson's 3-Step Branding Strategy</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.2</td>
<td>Clemson's Brand Attribute Pyramid</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.3</td>
<td>Clemson University Facebook Page</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.4</td>
<td>Clemson University Twitter Page</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.5</td>
<td>Clemson University iTunesU Account</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.6</td>
<td>Clemson University YouTube Page</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.7</td>
<td>Clemson World Magazine Online</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.8</td>
<td>NetCommunity Logo</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.9</td>
<td>Log-in Landing Page for NetCommunity</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.1</td>
<td>Habitat for Humanity Logos</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures (Continued)        Page

Figure 4.2: Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County Homepage .......... 62
Figure 4.3: Habitat for Humanity of The Netherlands Homepage .......... 63
Figure 4.4: Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County Facebook Page .... 64
Figure 4.5: Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County Twitter Page ........ 65
Figure 4.6: Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County Photoblog .......... 66
Figure 5.1: Iced Logo ........................................................................ 80
Figure 5.2: Iced Homepage ................................................................. 81
Figure 5.3: Iced "About Us" Page ......................................................... 82
Figure 5.4: Iced "Cupcakes" Page ......................................................... 83
Figure 5.5: Iced Blog .......................................................................... 84
Figure 5.6: Iced Facebook Page ............................................................ 85
Figure 5.7: Iced Twitter Page ............................................................... 86
Figure 5.8: Photograph of Iced Storefront ........................................... 87
Chapter 1: Introduction

People around the globe are quickly becoming acquainted with social media and all of its different forms. For some, social media has the reputation of being frivolous, but recently, it has been proven that social media can hold its own with other forms of communication. A great example of social media as a reputable information source can be found in the crisis of the January 2010 earthquake that took place in Haiti.

The 7.0 magnitude earthquake and the powerful aftershocks it produced brought much of the nation of Haiti to the ground. With such devastation, it was difficult for aid to get there quickly, but in the mean time, the world had already begun raising funds. According to one online article,

"The biggest amount of response is in thanks to the power of Twitter, Wyclef Jean, a Haitian musician has managed to raise $1 million by appealing to his 1.3 million followers. Facebook has also paid their part, hundreds of thousands of people signed up to awareness groups to help give hope to those people affected by the devastation" (Chubb).

The most impressive social media strategy in the situation was a charity text message campaign. According to CNN, within 5 days, the text message campaign raised more than $10 million for Haiti victim relief (Parr). This situation shows that social media is a powerful tool that should be studied as such, instead of disregarded as a trivial technology that is for entertainment purposes.
Just as social media can help spread information about an event, it can also spread information about brands. Whether they are Fortune 500 companies, non-profits, institutions of higher education, or a local company just around the corner from where you live, social media allows each of those entities to have a voice in the ongoing conversation on the Web. Social media can help place a new, budding business on the map, and it can allow loyal customers to discuss their preferences regarding a company's product line. It can help a good reputation spread, or a negative one thrive. What is amazing is that when social media is involved, a brand can be built or destroyed in a matter of minutes.

**The Purpose of this Thesis**

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the use of social media as a tool for creating brand identity. I read numerous books that preached the way of the Internet and the use of social media as the key to success. The suggestions and tactics sounded logical and clever in print, but I was interested in finding out if these books of advice were speaking the truth. The majority of businesses and organizations now have a presence on the Web and many of them are using social media. I wanted to know if their Web presence and social media efforts were working. Were social media tactics truly beneficial to building a brand identity? I wanted to learn how social media was being used, why those specific forms were being used, what the business's goal was, and if they had reached their goal or were well on their way.

Throughout my research, I explored the above-mentioned questions by performing a collective case study. I identified three cases to focus on:
1. University: Clemson University

2. Non-profit: Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County

3. Business: Iced - The Upstate Cupcake Cafe

The criteria for being a part of my research as well as the reasoning behind my choices is further detailed in Chapter 3. I performed face-to-face interviews with representatives from each case to learn about their social media tactics regarding their brand identity. The people interviewed were strongly connected with their business or organization's implementation of social media. I spoke with the people who wrote the blogs, Tweets, and Facebook messages; who upload the photos and videos; and who have a hand in designing the brand's logo and other components. I also spoke with those who made the decision to involve social media with their brand. By performing these interviews, my hope was to gain an understanding of how each case used social media as a branding tool.

**Branding Defined**

How exactly is branding defined? According to Marty Neumeier’s book *Zag*, branding is “a company’s effort to build lasting value by delighting customers” (19). Restated, branding acknowledges what potential customers want and attempts to give them just that. Personally, I define branding as the act of creating and developing a brand identity that represents the desired way consumers perceive a brand. Branding can be applied to anything, including products, services, and people.

Neumeier also believes that brands cannot be fully controlled, but their perception can be influenced (78). Some people still believe in brand management and that your
audience's beliefs about your specific product, organization or personality can be controlled, but in today's world where information is everywhere and everyone seems to voice their opinion, brand management has been pushed to the side. The release of information by your business can be managed in an attempt to portray the business in a specific way to the public; but it is important to remain aware that people may form opinions different than what was expected.

It is also important for a business to understand their audience and how that audience is willing to contribute to a conversation. The Cluetrain Manifesto touted the controversial phrase, "The end of business as usual" (Levine et al.). This phrase is in reference to the use of social media and the return to conversation in the business world and today's ever-changing market. Rick Levine et al. continued to explain that the Internet and everything that has come with it has revolutionized the current market, and if people don't accept that as a fact, their businesses will likely suffer. This is a terrifying concept to many conglomerates who have been putting into production what they think their customers want and need. While traditional tactics worked in the past, the age of the Internet and social media is here, and customers no longer want to buy what is produced without their involvement.

When assessing brand identity, the constituents of Lloyd Bitzer’s rhetorical theory are applicable and should be taken into consideration. According to Bitzer, the first part of the rhetorical situation, exigence, is defined as "an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done" (6). The exigence is what sparks a speech or action into being. An example would be a Clemson alumni event. The event cannot be successful if alumni are not notified of it and encouraged to participate. This
leads to Bitzer's second constituent, audience. "A rhetorical audience consists only of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change" (7). In the case of a Clemson alumni event, the audience would be Clemson alumni. They are the ones to be influenced by the announcement of the event and will be the ones to take action and attend the event. The way in which the Clemson alumni are influenced and mediate change is controlled by the situation's constraints or "persons, events, objects, and relations which are parts of the situation because they have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence" (8). The desired action of the Clemson alumni would be for them to attend the event to make it a success, yet travel distance, availability of vacation time, prior commitments and cost of travel all constrain the outcome of the event.

For this study, I briefly analyzed all three cases using Bitzer's constituents of rhetorical theory because with each case, at times, a rhetorical situation was present. There was one common exigence shared by each case: communicating brand identity to a desired audience. Chapters three, four and five identify the exigence, audience and constraints of each case according to Bitzer's terminology.

**Social Media Defined**

Social media technologies help businesses and other organizations communicate and promote their brand identities using many different channels of communication. What is social media? Three main trends appear in the literature:

1. Online content
2. Intended to start or continue a conversation
Common forms of social media include blogs, social networks, wikis, forums, bookmarks, RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds, virtual worlds, and microblogs. It is not necessary to use every form of social media when influencing the identity of a brand; instead, the most appropriate channels should be chosen based on the desired goals of social media use. To connect with numerous people, social networking sites are helpful. To allow others to remain informed on distributed information, a blog or RSS feed would be best. To quickly obtain feedback, a microblogging site, such as Twitter would be optimal.

Although the concept of microblogging has already been mentioned and established in this study as the newly coined classification for the action performed using Twitter, it is a definition that has been debated. The act of blogging typically entails an individual typing a paragraph or more on a specific topic or opinion in a narrative fashion. Readers are then able to comment on each blog post and in turn, start a conversation with the blogger. Twitter only allows the user to enter 140 characters at a time. This is a much shorter post length than blogging and does not allow much room for personal opinion. The posts on Twitter are similar to Facebook's status update or an away message seen on instant messaging (IM) systems. According to Twitter's Website, the notion of the site was in fact "inspired by the concept of an 'away message' merged with the freedom and mobility of SMS." What is this form of communication? It is not a blog, nor is it a "micro" form of a blog. It is not a status update or an away message. As defined by Twitter, the action performed on their site is "an evolution of mobile messaging, not
replacing SMS, IM, or email but introducing a new public dimension to messaging.” In my personal opinion, this statement solidifies the fact that Twitter is not a microblog, but a form of technology yet to be named.

Regardless of which social media technology is employed, Li and Bernoff made an excellent point in their book, *Groundswell*: “Concentrate on the relationships, not the technologies” (18). It is much more productive to think of what needs to be communicated (the brand identity) and to whom than of which social media technology should be used.

Although the concept of social media has been around for years, the different types of technology used, as well as the specific programs used, have continuously changed. For example, instead of focusing on one particular program, focus on the concept of blogging or social networking. It is impossible to predict when one specific program will gain or lose popularity, which is why it is important to focus on the general technology instead of the specific program. The brand-related content of the social media will be what attracts an audience.

With millions of people making use of multiple social media technologies on a daily basis, it is wise to realize that these technologies can be quite influential. Educational institutions thinking about using social media to manage their brand identities are already thinking one step ahead of their competing institutions. Barnes and Mattson made an excellent point in their study, “Social Media and College Admissions:”

This world of interactivity and hyper-communication has fundamentally changed how teenagers and young adults receive, process and act on information. How can
a university reach the eyes and ears of an audience that is largely responsible for the over one billion text messages sent per day in the United States? Furthermore, how do you capture the attention of a generation entirely raised on broadband Internet and instant gratification? (1)

Based on Barnes and Mattson’s above questions, it appears that if an institution’s brand identity is to be communicated to potential students, it must be taken into consideration how those students communicate and what technologies they favor. Students should not be the only audience with which universities desire to communicate. Current students, faculty, staff, alumni, and even local and national media all turn to universities' websites for information and to make connections.

In Li and Bernoff’s *Groundswell*, it is communicated that customers desire to have their voices heard and needs met. They have begun speaking up in product reviews and on Twitter, as well as in personal blogs. If customers are not happy about a product or service, whoever produced that product or service will hear about it (6). Wouldn't it be more pleasant if the customers were listened to and they didn't have to make a public uproar about their dissatisfaction? This is all the more reason why businesses, whether they are large, small, or non-profit, need to accept the role of the Internet and social media in their product development cycles. As recommended by Li and Bernoff, listen to customers, communicate with customers, and social media can and will work in your favor (9). They also state that listening is "perhaps the most essential neglected skill in business (93).

Jeff Jarvis also discusses the importance of listening and collaboration in his book: *What Would Google Do?* Jarvis tells the story of Dell and how people blogged
about their computers and products, yet Dell ignored the posts. After approximately a year of ignoring what was being said about their brand, Dell began to listen to bloggers, began to blog in response, and actually sent out technicians to help users solve their problems. Instead of creating products and communications that were pushed on their customers, Dell realized that to build successful connections and a better brand identity, they needed to allow two-way communication and have conversations (Jarvis).

**Branding and Social Media Focus**

Why focus on social media? Why be concerned with how a brand can be supported or tarnished using these technologies?

A large section of the online world has become amazed by the power of social media. It is a way of communicating that has been around for a few years, yet up until recently, it seemed to be kept underground. With popular forms of social media springing up everywhere - Facebook and Twitter - social media has become something fun and entertaining. It has also become a platform for virtually anyone's voice to be heard. Social media has allowed people to meet those needs, and all in the blink of an eye. It is fascinating to see the channels of communication open up. When a search is performed using Google, not only do the usual results appear, but now, there are results pulled from blogs, as well as a continuously updating feed of messages posted to Twitter. Social media has allowed conversations to flow freely, and the world enjoys listening. At the same time, social media appears skeptical to many businesses and organizations because of its speed and power. This fear is often fueled by a noticeable gap in literature regarding the use of social media and whether or not it can be effectively used as a tool for branding. It is important to these businesses and organizations that the gap in
information be bridged to provide a better understanding of social media and its use. This study begins to bridge that gap by reporting on the effectiveness of brand identity created through social media efforts.

The creativity that goes into building a complex brand identity, and the power that identity can have on customers is an intriguing concept that research has only begun to explore. It is an idea that can be expanded upon and is why the main focus of this thesis is on the concept of branding, including brand identity and brand management. The term "brand management" is used lightly, because it was once believed that brands could be managed, but now that social media has given customers a voice, managing the identity of a brand is extremely difficult, if not impossible. This study looks to address the concept of communicating a brand identity and how it is maintained across multiple social media channels.

**Literature Analysis**

Throughout the course of this study, influence was provided by numerous concepts, theories, suggestions and previous research. This section is dedicated to the four main theories kept in mind as this research was performed: branding theory, social network analysis, social media marketing and reputation management.

**Branding Theory**

Branding deals most closely with the concept of identity. A brand consists of many components, from a logo and color scheme to a particular "feel" or "look," to intrinsic values including morals and values. The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding
describes branding as a way to differentiate one product from all other products, even if all of the products appear similar (Ries and Ries ix). Also, "successful branding programs are based on the concept of singularity. The objective is to create in the mind of the prospect the perception that there is no other product on the market quite like your product" (ix). The concept of branding or branding theory involves applying a unique brand identity to all components of a business, organization or entity. According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, branding is "the promoting of a product or service by identifying it with a particular brand." This theory was a driving concept behind my research, due to the fact that my study focused on social media as a branding tool and how social media can aid in the development and promotion of a brand identity.

**Social Network Analysis**

Stanley Wasserman and Katherine Faust define social network analysis in their book, *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*. Wasserman and Faust state,

Social network analysis is based on an assumption of the importance of relationships among interacting units. The social network perspective encompasses theories, models, and applications that are expressed in terms of relational concepts or processes. That is, relations defined by linkages among units are a fundamental component of network theories (4).

Placed in layman's terms, social network analysis focuses on the ties and relationships between multiple units, which in the case of this study applies to the businesses and organizations and their customers and users. This type of analysis examines: 1) how connections are built using social media, 2) why the social media is
used in that specific way, 3) why the technologies were chosen to build relationships, 4) and how well or poorly the connections between business and customer are facilitating conversation.

This form of analysis was also used to examine the relationships between the forms of social media used in each case. Aside from analyzing each social media technology independently, I was curious as to why each business or organization decided to use a certain combination of social media technologies. For example, why did Clemson decide it needed a presence on YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn, iTunesU, and Twitter? Why those specific technologies, and how did Clemson create consistency between all five? How do Clemson’s social media networks connect with and relate to one another? These questions stem back to the initial concept of social network analysis, which is the reason I kept the theory in mind over the course of my research as I looked at how social media were cross-referenced.

Social Media Marketing

Tamar Weinberg described social media marketing (SMM) in her book, The New Community Rules: Marketing on the Social Web. Weinberg stated,

Social media marketing is a process that empowers individuals to promote their websites, products, or services through online social channels and to communicate with and tap into a much larger community that may not have been available via traditional advertising channels (3).

She also noted that social media marketing focuses on the concept of collective rather than the individual (3). The idea is to listen to multiple communities online via
social media and to interpret what they are saying about a specific product, service, or brand. Social media marketing is a way of making a connection between a business or organization and its audience. Five main goals of social media marketing are to 1) increase traffic to the brand's website, 2) drive relevant links to the website, 3) raise the number of people who follow the brand, 4) expand brand awareness to other audiences and 5) drive and trigger conversations (Weinberg 4-6).

Using social media marketing effectively can lead to creating a movement amongst a business or organization's customers, which can prove beneficial in building a brand identity and creating conversation. Seth Godin addresses the concept of creating a movement in his book, Tribes. Godin states that "movement happens when people talk to one another, when ideas are spread within the community, and most of all, when peer support leads people to do what they always knew was the right thing" (23). He also mentions that good leaders create movements by empowering their followers to communicate with one another (23). This concept of community and conversation compliments the idea of social media marketing, because the purpose of the theory relates to empowering users to create strong relationships and to learn from those interactions.

Social media marketing is also known as social media optimization, a term first used by Rohit Bhargava. In a 2006 post to his blog, "Influential Marketing," Bhargava described the concept behind social media optimization (SMO): to "implement changes to optimize a site so that it is more easily linked to, more highly visible in social media searches on custom search engines (such as Technorati), and more frequently included in relevant posts on blogs, podcasts and vlogs." Just as search engine optimization helps increase the visibility of a site within typical search engine results, social media
optimization uses the same concept, only with a specific focus on social media searches.

In that same blog post, Bhargava also introduced his five rules of social media optimization:

1. Increase your linkability - Do not limit your brand to having a boring, static website. If you want to increase the linkability of your site, add interesting content. Also, it is important to ensure that your brand's site is constantly up-to-date so that viewers know that they are looking at fresh information.

2. Make tagging and bookmarking easy - Place social tagging and bookmarking icons directly on your website. A quick button to del.icio.us or Digg would make it more convenient for users to share your content. Also, include a list of relevant tags so that when someone does bookmark your site, they already have an idea of what category to place it under.

3. Reward inbound links - When someone links to your brand's site or blog, reward them by listing their site or blog on your website.

4. Help your content travel - If you have portable content, for example, PDFs, video and audio files, you can submit them to other relevant sites. The intention of this is to drive links back to your brand's website.

5. Encourage the mashup - You want people to talk about your brand and link to your site. Creating easy access can encourage this behavior. Allowing people to subscribe to your RSS feed and share videos of your brand are two ways you can encourage the spread of your brand's reputation and potentially drive traffic to your site.
Reputation Management

Tamar Weinberg defined reputation management as "responding to negative mentions of your company or product on the Web" (13). This is a common practice that practically anyone with a Web presence has taken part in. Customers will talk about your product, service or business, and it won't always be positive. As Weinberg stated, "With social media monitoring and conversation tracking, companies can turn negative past incidents into positive growth experiences for companies and their brands" (27). It is smart to have a plan for how to handle negative or difficult situations, and being quick to comment using social media is a good way to be prepared. Join the conversation. Whether you are defending your brand against negative remarks or promoting your new product, just by joining the conversation, you are building a better brand.

Some brands find it difficult to hand over control to their customers and users. When this happens, negative comments can quickly begin to ruin a previously positive brand. As mentioned earlier, the case of Dell is an example of reputation management that began to go wrong. As the public's view of Dell began to worsen, the company finally realized that to improve its reputation, it needed to participate in social media (specifically, blogging) to have conversations with customers and learn what the problems were and how to fix them. Once Dell began to listen to its customers, the public started to view the brand in a more positive light (Jarvis).

Weinberg goes on to say that she sees social media as a "cost-effective and beneficial way to combat these (negative) kinds of reputation management fiascos" (76).
Reputation cannot be controlled, but the popular interpretation of a brand can be influenced by social media conversations.

The four topics discussed in the above analysis of literature are all present throughout my research. Some theories played a strong role in my research, while others served as insightful references and provided helpful background information and support. The concept of reputation management was mentioned in both the Clemson University and Iced cases. Clemson focused on an instance where their brand was in danger of being tarnished by feedback while Iced discussed the importance of avoiding potentially offensive topics such as religion and politics. Branding theory was addressed by each case when I asked them to define their business or organization's brand identity. Social media marketing and social media optimization were both theories that the three cases struggled with. After performing this study, the importance of understanding social media marketing and how to effectively promote a brand identity was made abundantly clear. The theory of social network analysis and building relationships through which conversation could be encouraged was also present in each case, although the influence and success of social network analysis was not properly achieved.

The four theories mentioned above also play a role in the development of my theory for how social media should be used effectively. The three social media trends mentioned towards the beginning of this chapter, are also an integral part of my definition. Social media should consist of:

1. Online content
2. Intended to start or continue a conversation
3. Allows users to openly communicate and interact with one another.
With the four theories of branding theory, social media analysis, social media marketing and reputation management taken into consideration, as well as the three criteria listed above, I define the proper implementation of social media as an online conversation that:

1. Allows users to openly communicate and interact with one another
2. Has an authentic voice
3. Allows two-way communication (turn-taking)
4. Creates sustainable relationships.

Allowing users to openly communicate and interact with one another is crucial to the creation of conversation. Conversation cannot develop with one person, so each case's use of social media will be examined for a two-way communication process. I also think it is important for the voice that creates the personality of the brand to be authentic. For example, if a business has a blog that is defined as their CEO's personal blog where he or she writes to connect with customers, yet that blog is written by a ghostwriter who was hired from a random staffing agency, the voice of the CEO's blog is not authentic. If the CEO himself wrote the blog, the social media's authenticity would be intact. Finally, it is important that social media create sustainable relationships so that the connections between business and customer can continue to grow stronger. By developing lasting relationships, a sense of trust in the business can be created. Each of the three cases in this study were analyzed using these four criteria of using social media effectively. If all four criteria were met, their social media efforts were considered a success.
Structure and Organization

To research the use of social media as a branding tool, a collective case study was performed. The collective case study focused on three different entities that used social media to broadcast their brand identities. The chapter on methodology details the ways in which the research was performed. Three chapters - one for each case - analyze and explain the use of social media as a branding tool. The conclusion revisits each case and synthesizes the findings. The benefits and limitations of the use of social media are discussed, as well as the limitations of the research. Finally, future research concepts are suggested.
Chapter 2: Methodology

Objectives of research

The action and process of branding can involve myriad tools. The tool used depends solely on the situation in which the branding will occur, as well as on what is being branded. I feel that social media technologies are well qualified to be added to that list of tools. Precisely how can they be used? More importantly, how are they being used? Answering that question was one of the goals of my research. I also sought to learn why universities and businesses are turning to social media. Is it merely to follow others in their field, or is it to reach out to their audience and start a conversation? I proposed to explore and identify the significance of social media in the field of branding by meeting the following objectives:

• Address a gap in knowledge by detailing the use of social media as a branding tool.

• Demonstrate how influential brand identities are to businesses and organizations and their success.

• Conduct interviews with three entities that are currently using social media technology to communicate their brand identities.

Criteria for the three cases

All of my research focused on three different entities: a university, a business, and a non-profit. I focused on three specific cases:

1. University: Clemson University
2. Business: Iced - The Upstate Cupcake Cafe

3. Non-Profit: Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County

I chose these three entities based on five qualifying criteria. The university, business, or non-profit being studied must:

1. Seek to create a conversation with their audience and potential audience.
2. Use social media to promote brand identity.
3. Use at least three different social media platforms or technologies
4. Place an emphasis on being a forward-thinking and modern university, business, or non-profit.
5. Be in the Greenville, South Carolina area so that I can easily visit each location and perform face-to-face interviews.

The five criteria listed above were developed based on my research goals. I specifically desired to target businesses and organizations that were using social media to reinforce or promote their brand identity since social media and branding are the main focus of my research. I also wanted to target entities that were actively using their social media to create conversation. This became part of the criteria so as to avoid a business that created social media accounts in the past but has since let them become stale. With no current conversation, I would have had less to analyze. The criterion regarding the use of three or more social media platforms was developed to ensure that I had a wide variety of social media interaction to observe and analyze for each case. My goal was to compare all three of my cases and by ensuring those cases incorporated multiple social media channels, I felt that I was provided with more data. The fourth criterion regarding the
How exactly did each of my cases fit the criteria listed above? That is addressed in detail in chapters 4, 5 and 6, but for now, I will provide three brief descriptions of how each case uses social media to promote their brand identity.

Clemson University has gone to great lengths to introduce social media to its students, faculty and alumni. The university has divided its website into specific pages dedicated to Clemson's multiple audiences. Those audiences include prospective students, students, faculty and staff, visitors, and alumni. Clemson also has a section known as the "CU Newsroom," which provides up-to-date information to all of the audiences listed above, as well as the outside media. All six of these pages showcase the use of at least two types of social media. The same Facebook account is linked to all of Clemson's audiences, but the Twitter pages are different. There is a specific Twitter account for prospective students, students, faculty and staff, and the CU Newsroom. It seems that Clemson realized that each of their audiences desired to participate in very different
conversations, and having only one voice represent all of Clemson on Twitter would not suffice. The university also makes use of RSS feeds, multiple Flickr accounts, iTunesU, YouTube, Google Apps, and multiple online communities and networking sites specific to Clemson.

Figure 2.1: Clemson University Prospective Students Page
Iced - The Upstate Cupcake Cafe sounds like a fun and whimsical place, but they are serious about projecting and promoting their brand identity using social media. Iced has developed a very attractive visual identity using its logo and custom color scheme. That identity has smartly been applied to Iced's webpage, blog, Facebook page, and Twitter page. This sort of visual unity over multiple social media platforms is beneficial because it lets the viewer know that if they are looking for anything related to Iced, they are in the right place. Aside from their blog, Facebook page, and Twitter account, Iced also boasts an online photo album of the bakery and its products. The cupcake cafe was also featured in a video created by GTV-15 City of Greenville Television. Although Iced doesn't have their own channel on YouTube, they were wise to place a link on their website that leads to GTV-15's video.

![Figure 2.2: Iced Homepage](image-url)
The website for Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County has a subtle, but strong social media presence. The local chapter of Habitat hosts a Facebook page where they are categorized as a "cause" and people can make donations. They also maintain a Twitter account with a regular posting schedule. A third form of social media employed by Greenville's chapter of Habitat, is a photo blog. Each post to the blog includes a title and brief description, followed by multiple images. Almost every post shows a recent house Habitat built or refurbished. The photo blog is a smart way for Habitat to showcase their work and how it is making a difference in their community. Aside from the social media that is geared specifically towards the Greenville area, Habitat Greenville's website includes a link to Habitat for Humanity International. There, one can find links to Habitat International's Facebook group, Twitter account, Flickr account, LinkedIn profile, and YouTube channel.

Figure 2.3: Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County Homepage
The Collective Case Study

Case studies have long been an acceptable way to perform qualitative research. According to Robert Yin in his book, Case Study Research: Design and Methods, case studies "are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (9). This definition is precisely why I chose the method of case study to examine social media as a branding tool. I asked how the university, business or non-profit was branded, as well as how social media was being used and why it was being used. Also, I could not have been farther from having any sort of control over the events I examined. Clemson University, Iced, and Habitat for Humanity were the ones in control of the events, which being social media, are considered a contemporary phenomenon and are most definitely located in a real-life context.

A second definition of case study can be found in Patricia Goubil-Gambrell's article on research methods. "Case study, as its name implies, is research about a particular individual or a small group of individuals" (587). The subjects of a case study are not randomly selected, but instead, "purposeful sampling" is practiced. This form of sampling allows the researcher to select participants who will yield information-rich responses. Finally, the researcher is usually a participant-observer in the case study (588).

The research I performed did correspond with Yin and Goubil-Gambrell's specifications; however, the research was technically not a case study, but a collective case study. That is, I looked at three small cases and examined them together as one large
collective case study. In his work on qualitative inquiry, John Creswell addresses the concept of collective case study as mentioned in his definition of case study: "...a 'bounded system' or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (73).

A collective case study was the best method to use because I was looking at multiple cases, and standing alone, they would not function as suitable case studies. Analyzing each case and discovering the themes and contradictions between them, however, provided a much more in-depth method of research. Performing a collective case study allowed me to analyze each entity’s website, use of social media and branding strategy via observation and interview, and to understand why certain choices were made regarding the promotion of brand identity.

**The Interview**

Interviews can provide essential and valuable information to support case studies. I chose the interview as my main research tool because I felt that the method would allow me to obtain precisely the kind of information I was looking for: rich and in-depth. When discussing face-to-face interviews, Daniel Murphy states: "the face-to-face interview has the potential to yield some of the richest data because a trained and experienced interviewer can guide the conversation to get to points that might be overlooked" (107). Performing a survey would have likely returned decent results, but more detail was needed, and so a conversational interview emerged as the most desirable method. Although face-to-face interviews are more costly in terms of time and can take longer to
conduct than other qualitative forms of inquiry, the invested time yielded desirable results.

In regards to the use of face-to-face interviews within a case study, Yin states:

Case study interviews are of an open-ended nature, in which you can ask key respondents about the facts of a matter as well as their opinions about events...you may even ask the respondent to propose his or her own insights into certain occurrences and may use such propositions as the basis for further inquiry (90).

The explanation in Yin's book is precisely the way my interviews were performed. I prepared a set of questions beforehand, but did not ask each of the interview participants the exact same questions. The premeditated questions served as a basis for the conversation that took place during the interview, but the direction of the conversation was dictated by the participants' responses. Yin makes note of this concept:

Throughout the interview process, you have two jobs: (a) to follow your own line of inquiry, as reflected by your case study protocol, and (b) to ask your actual (conversational) questions in an unbiased manner that also serves the needs of your line of inquiry (89-90).

Suzan Katz identified this type of interview as "preparatory" in her work on ethnographies (31). Although she was referencing interviews performed during her own ethnographic research, the same concept can be applied to interviews performed during case study research. According to Katz, preparatory interviews are fairly informal and are constructed of semi-structured questions. Their goal is to reveal primary background information (31). In the case of this study, the desired primary information revolved
around the background of the individual being interviewed, their involvement in social
media at their place of employment, their opinions on multiple aspects of branding, as
well as their opinions on social media used as a branding tool.

Although interviews are an excellent method for providing supporting
information for case studies, it is important to keep in mind that there are pitfalls to the
method. One thing to keep in mind is to not rely too much on one interview or source of
information. You may interview someone who gives you great information, but don't take
everything they say to be for certain. It is necessary to obtain multiple perspectives on a
particular subject to avoid bias. You may receive one side of an issue from one interview
participant, and an entirely different perspective from another. When using interviews to
perform research, it is important to remember that there is likely more than one side to an
issue. When performing face-to-face interviews, the interviewer should keep in mind that
their body language and facial expressions, no matter how subtle, could influence the
way the interview participant responds to questions. For example, if you pose a question
and then roll your eyes at the participant's answer, it would not be surprising if the
participant spoke up and altered their answer until you exhibited a more pleasant
expression. Another potential pitfall of performing interviews lies within the questions
themselves. By asking leading questions, you would not fulfill your duty as a researcher
and would create bias. So that you obtain the true opinions of your interview participants,
it is important that your questions be straightforward and non-leading.

The interviews I performed were aimed at those who were responsible for
producing content for the brand's social media. I also spoke with individuals who made
the decision to use social media to support the business or university's brand identity. My
goal was to identify each entity’s “go-to social media person.” This could have been someone who had an extensive knowledge of social media, or even someone who developed and maintained the social media accounts. The purpose of performing interviews with knowledgeable social media specialists was to gain a full understanding of how each brand uses social media and why.

In the following three chapters, each of the three cases are addressed. All three chapters begin with an examination of the university, business or non-profit's brand identity or branding strategy. Next, the social media specialists who were interviewed are introduced and their role with social media is explained. Finally, each chapter moves through the interview questions and reports the answers retrieved from each interview participant.
Clemson University is currently going through a five-year re-branding process. The University began the implementation in 2008 and intends to reach all set goals by 2013 (Sams 4). The department of Institutional Advancement was charged with the responsibility of developing a strategy to do a number of things, including enhancing Clemson's national reputation, increasing resources, maintaining premium brand position in the state of South Carolina, and providing ongoing marketing and communications services. In a report to Clemson's Administrative Council members, Cathy Sams, Clemson's Chief Public Affairs Officer stated,

The charge is challenging but doable, provided Clemson adopts the practice of integrated marketing communications. It is challenging because it will require internal culture changes, staff reorientation and a more disciplined, strategic and comprehensive approach to marketing and communications. It is doable because Clemson has many brand assets, a great story to tell and a strategic plan with agreed-upon priorities (4).

In the above statement, Sams brings to the attention of the Administrative Council that branding is not a concept to be taken lightly. Although some may see branding as coming up with creative slogans and fun advertisements, it is much more and if it is to be done correctly, a brand strategy is necessary.

Clemson realized the importance of having a brand strategy and hired an outside marketing firm to assess the current Clemson brand and then develop suggestions for re-
branding. The research was conducted using a variety of methods including surveys, focus groups, one-on-one interviews and brand development workshops (Sams 5). Once the research was complete, the university officials who were assigned to the re-branding used the suggestions of the outside marketing firm to develop the concept of Clemson's new Brand and Position Strategy, as well as Clemson's Brand Architecture. The purpose of the strategy is:

1. To establish a tone and manner that captures Clemson's personality in words, images and graphic elements that are true and relevant to its constituents, and

2. to create a set of tools for University marketing and communications professionals that provides greater richness, variety and flexibility, while consistently reflecting the overall University brand (35).

A branding strategy is essential when performing any level of branding. It provides an end goal to work towards and can help keep the branding efforts on track. Without such a strategy, Clemson's re-branding efforts may have never come to fruition. Imagine the difficulty university officials would have if none of them knew what the others were thinking and they all attempted to brand Clemson in their own way. It would likely result in multiple brand identities, which when presented, would confuse Clemson's audiences as to which brand was the true Clemson. In fact, without a known strategy, it would be less likely that a re-branding would happen at all. Disorder and chaos are not the way to successfully implement a re-branding effort.

Clemson's branding strategy research resulted in a three-step plan consisting of:

1. Brand marketing (aims to create awareness)
2. Direct marketing (aims to generate a desired response)

3. Internal communication (faculty and staff being informed of the branding so that they are able to deliver on Clemson's brand promise) (7)

The graphic below illustrates the three-step plan visually. The arrow that passes through each step is identified in the report as Clemson's Brand and Position Strategy. It is this strategy that holds the three components together and allows them to be carried out in a re-branding effort for the university.

![Image of Clemson's 3-Step Branding Strategy]

*Figure 3.1: Clemson's 3-Step Branding Strategy*

To successfully complete each of the three components, the officials involved with Clemson's re-branding further developed an Integrated Marketing Communications Plan. This plan broke down the larger components of the Brand and Positioning Strategy and examined how to approach each segment. By focusing on internal communication, the Integrated Marketing Communications Plan conveyed the message and goals of the brand strategy to all departments across the university. From the President of the university to the admissions office, from athletics to student affairs and the graduate school, key people who were responsible for any aspect of Clemson's combined image
were contacted and informed about the process of the re-branding. Aside from ensuring that all departments were on the same page, the Integrated Marketing Communications Plan conducted a logo study, developed tools that could be used by those participating in the re-branding effort, developed training for those who were to help build brand awareness, and conducted story mining sessions to determine key stories that exemplified Clemson's brand. The Integrated Marketing Communications Plan also detailed the implementation of how the re-branding strategy was to be carried out. There would be an internal launch as well as an external launch of Clemson's new, revised brand.

The outside marketing firm also developed what they considered to be Clemson's key brand attributes. These attributes were to serve as the basis for an entire branding vocabulary that could be carried throughout anything Clemson related to create a sense of consistency. The graphic below identifies Clemson's brand attributes according to the outside marketing firm:
Figure 3.2: Clemson’s Brand Attribute Pyramid
The Brand and Positioning Strategy, as well as the Integrated Marketing Communications Plan exhibit great detail regarding precisely how Clemson's re-branding is to be carried out. The majority of the strategies are traditional in form and involve types of media that communications professionals are familiar with. Elements of the re-branding will be introduced through:

- National academic conferences and meetings
- Conferences and seminars at Clemson
- Professional organization magazines and journals
- News media (academic and top-tier national)
- Direct mail/e-mail
- Internet (Sams 20)

Use of the Internet to support Clemson's re-branding efforts is the focus of my study, and so as I read through Cathy Sams' report, I paid close attention to when social media (or as it is commonly referenced in the report, "new media") was mentioned and how it would be used as a tool for branding. I found it very interesting that new media or the Internet was not mentioned as often as I expected it to be. With the recent surge of social media use by Clemson, I was under the impression that I would find an entire section of the branding strategy detailing how the university planned to use social media as a branding tool. Instead, I found it mentioned sparingly throughout the report. In one section regarding public relations tactics, the only mention of the use of any online media, let alone, social media, is categorized in the "Other" section in the form of "Build more academic content on key Web sites" (22). In a section on direct marketing tactics, an e-mail campaign is suggested in regards to recruiting individuals to attend
conferences. This was a strange find because it is a fact that Clemson has assembled a team of "social media experts," or "new media experts," specifically to develop strategy for how to communicate the Clemson brand via social media. Later in the report, an implementation timetable for the integrated marketing and communications plan appears. For the 2008 - 2009 school year, "Appoint a project team to assess and make recommendations to improve use of new media," is mentioned (32). This is a direct reference to the group of experts I mentioned above, but it is the only place the team is mentioned throughout the entire report.

As with any major project, it is important to have some sort of assessment or way to measure the success of your efforts. Clemson's Integrated Marketing Communications Plan states that a campus-wide communications audit will be conducted during the 2009 - 2010 school year, as well as during 2010 - 2011 (33). Depending on their funding, those implementing Clemson's re-branding will also conduct a national poll in 2011, as well as a statewide poll in 2010 and 2012 (33). These polls will help those involved with the re-branding gauge whether or not Clemson's new brand is being accepted on a local level, and also a national level. The results of these audits and polls will serve as benchmarks that can be evaluated and the next appropriate steps can be determined.

With a firm understanding of Clemson's intentions regarding the re-branding process including the Brand and Position Strategy and the Integrated Marketing Communications Plan, my research turned to its interview phase. Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I will detail the conversations I had with members of Clemson's New Media Project team. The focus of the discussions were on branding, but centered on the use of social media as a branding tool and how it was being used to
communicate Clemson's desired brand identity. The following section of this chapter first introduces the team members who participated in the interviews, and then is partitioned into sections based on the topics discussed during each conversation.

**Description of Job Position and How Social Media is Involved**

Dave Dryden holds the title of Director of Information Services and works within the Publications and Promotions Department at Clemson. His office focuses on many of Clemson's audiences because they are responsible for the content and publication of *Clemson World* magazine. *Clemson World* is a print publication that targets alumni, but also potential students, current students and parents. According to Dave, it is really more of a university magazine, than an alumni magazine. Now that Clemson is involved in the realm of social media, it was critical that the magazine have an online presence. *Clemson World* currently has a Facebook page, of which Dave is one of the primary contributors. Although not officially a member of the New Media Project team, he does communicate with them in terms of advising, pitching new ideas and brainstorming. Because of his unique job position, Dave is involved in both sides of social media - he creates content and posts, but he also works on the Facebook page from a strategic standpoint.

Michele Cauley is the Director of Marketing and Communications for the Clemson Alumni Association and is an active member of the New Media Project team. Because she works for the Alumni Association, Michele focuses on communicating with Clemson's 116,000 alumni all across the globe. In general, she is responsible for all external communication representative of the Alumni Association, but specifically, she is focused on electronic forms of communication. Whenever someone at Clemson needs to
send a message to the alumni audience, Michele is the person who coordinates the communication. During her interview, she commented that within the past year, she has noticed that more and more people are communicating via the Web, especially using social networking. She sees two main reasons for this shift:

1. Roughly 75% of Clemson's alumni graduated in 1993 or after, which means there is a large population of what she terms "young alumni." With older alums passing away, the younger segment is growing disproportionately so people are using the Web more often to target those young alumni.

2. The cost is much more friendly to those who are on a budget (the university). Michele gives an example of using expensive direct mail pieces to invite alumni to a reunion weekend. The invitations are expensive and planning an in-person reunion for hundreds of people isn't friendly to the Alumni Association's bank account. Alternatively, the Alumni Association has a Facebook page where alumni can reconnect for free any time they would like.

**Definition of Social Media**

When asked what her definition of social media was, Michele replied: "I define social media as a conversation." She then went on to explain her perceived value of social media, saying that people seem to flock to social media and embrace it, but there are some people who do not approach it with strategy and so they are afraid of the loss of control of the conversation.

"I think my biggest challenge is to remember that it's not something that we can control. The best we can do is try to keep engaged in the conversation, direct the
conversation through certain questions and discussion posts, and keep people connected...and for the first time ever, it's definitely a two-way conversation where everyone is on an equal platform. It's not the Alumni Association communicating to you the alumni and you have no form of response...we might as well all be sitting in a room together carrying on a conversation."

When asked what his definition of social media was, Dave replied in a similar way: "I think of it as an ongoing conversation. It's a tool or vehicle where we can have an ongoing conversation with our constituent groups, which are most important to us."

**Why Clemson Decided to Get Involved with Social Media**

Dave and Michele both mentioned that the main reason Clemson became interested in social media was because other universities were participating. Dave also mentioned that it was seen as an opportunity to connect with younger audiences because traditional media seems to be getting more expensive and doesn't reach the younger demographic as well or as quickly as social media. Dave also mentioned Clemson's recent re-branding and said that when people were asked how they view or feel about the university, they tended to talk about how personal it is and that they enjoyed one-on-one contacts. In Dave's words, "Social media and Clemson, it really makes sense, because people already view Clemson as personal and friendly, and social media is a very personal tool."

Michele spoke about the rush for universities to have a social media presence, but mentioned that Clemson realized the sense of urgency, but decided to wait before diving in to unknown territory. "I will say that with us, we waited a while...but when we did, we
had two or three of us set up to know that we were going to keep people engaged and we were going to keep fresh posts out there daily, weekly, but not just let it sit." This is a prime example of Clemson's integrated marketing communications plan at work.

**Why Clemson Decided to Get Involved with Specific Platforms**

Dave Dryden responded to this question with the answer, "To some extent, out of convenience and popularity." Below are his reasons for Clemson's involvement:

- Facebook: Originally due to popularity. It was the "hot" thing so Clemson looked at it and after getting involved, realized that it was working for Clemson and that it was an effective tool.

*Figure 3.3: Clemson University Facebook Page*
• Twitter: Popularity. *Clemson World* initially had a Twitter page, but decided to eliminate it because it was not a proper fit. Clemson's News Services, however, has a Twitter account that is highly successful.

![Clemson University Twitter Page](image)

*Figure 3.4: Clemson University Twitter Page*
• iTunesU: Popularity. It is also a useful way to supplement classroom material because lectures can be posted and listened to at any time.

Figure 3.5: Clemson University iTunesU Account

Michele's answer to this prompt focused on the use of Facebook:

"We thought, 'Well this social networking is for younger alumni.' Now we know with Facebook particularly, the demographics are flipping and you've got more of our older alums who are reading about things there and we're having to move to things like Twitter to keep up with our younger alums."

She also mentioned that Clemson created a presence on YouTube because it allowed the university to communicate with all of its audiences. YouTube has allowed all areas of Clemson to consolidate their videos into one convenient channel. As a third platform, Michele mentioned LinkedIn. The account she referenced was the Alumni
Association account, and she said that it was established to provide alumni with a way to connect back to their alma mater and find networking opportunities.

![Figure 3.6: Clemson University YouTube Page](https://example.com/clemson-youtube.png)

**Social Media Research and Strategy**

When asked about Clemson before social media and who performed the research, Michele was quick to bring up the New Media Project team that was discussed in the integrated marketing communications plan. The team was described as a small group consisting of individuals from across the university, who met to discuss what they wanted to accomplish with the Clemson University brand identity. Dave elaborated on this by saying that the team studied what other institutions were doing with social media and then tried to determine the best practices and whether or not those techniques would be useful at Clemson. The team's first step was to establish a Clemson University Facebook
page, and then a presence on YouTube. The team takes into consideration who is going to update any social media and if users should be allowed to post their own information or just to comment on items posted by the university.

**Clemson's Desired Brand Identity & Goal of Social Media Use**

Dave answered this question by referencing *Clemson World* magazine. He said that when asked, people responded that traditions, heritage, family, academic reputation and quality of the university's programs were important to them, so those are the brand attributes he focuses on when posting content to the *Clemson World* Facebook page. Concerning Clemson's goal of social media use, "We want to have that conversation with folks via social media, but we want to make sure that in that conversation...that we're conveying those brand attributes, that we're being true to the brand."

Michele answered this question by referencing the Alumni Association. The Alumni Association wants to be seen as the Clemson family. Michele mentioned that the Alumni Association in particular had just made some changes to its brand identity by changing its logo, as well as its tag line. The change was to create a more fun, relaxed, friendly, and family-related feel. The old tag line, "Your Clemson Connection," became outdated and so now the Alumni Association is represented by "Hear us Roar." The idea is to gather stories about Clemson alumni across the world and educate other alumni on how their peers are making a difference all over the globe. Michele thinks that the new tag line is "much more personal and approachable, which we think is perfect for colleges." She stated that the main goal of the Alumni Association's use of social media is to help alumni establish connections. She commented that "the one place where we really
are networking and are doing exactly what we want to do are through these social networking outlets, like Facebook, like Twitter, where folks can get engaged in the conversation."

Figure 3.7: Clemson World Magazine Online

**Social Media Employed**

Clemson's list of social media is thorough, and for good reason. As illustrated in the previous sections, Clemson has put forth a lot of time and effort to create a successful brand and social media strategy. Below is a list of the social media platforms used by Clemson University:

- Facebook - eight official pages referenced on the university website: Clemson University, *Clemson World*, Alumni Association, Graduate School, Clemson University, *Clemson World*, Alumni Association, Graduate School, Clemson University,
University Library, Michelin Career Center, College of Agriculture Forestry and Life Sciences, and College of Health Education and Human Development

- Twitter - nine official feeds referenced on the university website:
  BeAClemsonTiger (prospective students), CUGradSchool (graduate students), ClemsonStudents (current students), InsideClemson (faculty and staff), ClemsonAlumni (alumni), ClemsonAFLS (College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences), ClemsonHEHD (College of Health, Education and Human Development), solidgreen (Clemson Solid Green campaign) and ClemsonNews (Clemson newsroom).

- YouTube - one channel for all audiences

- LinkedIn - official Alumni Association page

- iTunesU

- Flickr - three photostreams: prospective and current students, faculty and staff, and the university library

- Vimeo - Clemson Libraries account

When asked about Clemson's current use of social media, Michele responded,

"I will tell you that we're probably strongest in the Facebook area right now. We have the Alumni Association page, we have the University page, and we have the Clemson World page, and all three of them have different purposes and goals in mind. The University communicates a lot of university headlines news, the Alumni Association promotes a lot of stories or press releases, or things going on with alums, and also we promote a lot of our activities and events where alums can get engaged at their local level. The Clemson World magazine does a lot with
the posting of Web extras on Facebook where you don't read it in *Clemson World* magazine, but you can go to their Facebook page and read more about it."

She also elaborated on Clemson's YouTube presence and stressed that so far, it is a form of social media where the university has the most collaboration. There are multiple Facebook accounts, as well as Twitter accounts, but Clemson's YouTube channel brings everything Clemson-related together in one place.

Michele and Dave both expressed their hope for a more unified social media effort in the future. Because Clemson was a little slow to get involved with social media, people desired Clemson Facebook pages and LinkedIn accounts and created them themselves, unofficially. Now that Clemson does have an official social media presence, they are working to connect with the unofficial groups and to ask them to turn over the reins to Clemson. The Alumni Association recently reclaimed its identity on LinkedIn. Fortunately, the person who started the account was more than happy to turn it over to Clemson. They commented that they were fine with not being in charge of the account any more; they only started it because Clemson wasn't on LinkedIn yet and alumni were looking to connect and network.

**Multiple Social Media Channels, Multiple Writers**

Due to Clemson's recent re-branding and focus on their identity, I thought it would be likely that across the university, those contributing to social media would attempt to write related posts or write in similar styles, but after discussing the issue with Michele, she confirmed that the opposite was true. She mentioned that Twitter was probably the channel that was the most disjointed, because "people have just started their
own thing because they see a need for it, like how Admissions has theirs, News Services has theirs, they all operate very independently.” Recently, with the implementation of Clemson's brand strategy, Michele mentioned that the majority of the people behind various accounts were coming together in a more unified voice, but it won't be a change that happens immediately.

**Spotlight Example: Net Community**

Clemson has its own version of a social networking site that is solely branded and owned by the university called Net Community. Net Community is a password-protected site that is available only to Clemson University alumni. Once logged in, alumni can access additional pieces of information that would not otherwise be available, including:

- Signing up for a life-long e-mail forwarding account
- Updating their personal information
- Searching for other alumni (who have registered as a Net Community member)
- Looking for professional contacts
- Making a gift to the Alumni Association
- Obtaining tax receipts for your past gifts

*Figure 3.8: NetCommunity Logo*
When logged in to the community, as long as the alumnus has their personal information updated, the site may greet them with prompts to check out Clemson events that are going on near their location. Having alumni maintain updated profiles is also beneficial for the Alumni Association due to a software plug-in connected to the alumni database. The plug-in allows the database to constantly update with the correct alumni contact information, in turn, allowing the Alumni Association to keep in touch with Clemson graduates.

Michele did mention one downside of using Net Community: "We have a lot of folks who register one time and never come back. They register because they want to get their life-long e-mail forwarding account or to search for a long lost friend. They look once and never come back." Because of this, she feels that Facebook is a much more viable and sustainable social media tool because alumni are more familiar with it and are able to carry on two-way conversations with one another. Currently, Net Community does not have a way for people to post messages back and forth, so until that feature is developed, Facebook seems to be preferred. Without the ability to create and continue conversation, NetCommunity does not fulfill the definition of appropriate social media use. This is not to say that Net Community serves no purpose. The Alumni Association feels that it does benefit from the updated contact information received from alumni, however, conversations and relationships are nonexistent.
Figure 3.9: Log-in Landing Page for NetCommunity
Interviewee Opinion: Is Social Media Useful for Communicating a Specific Brand Identity?

"I think so, I think it can be. I think you have to be willing to know that unlike many forms of marketing, that you can't control the brand as much through social networking. For instance, Facebook, people have talked a lot about this recently, particularly with Facebook, but I also think about YouTube. The further you get drilled down into YouTube, you lose any type of branding opportunity. If you're linking over to things, everything is branded "YouTube," or "Facebook." Sometimes on Facebook you get a corporate sponsored ad over to the right that may not be the type of advertiser that you would potentially hire or that you would potentially partner with or feel comfortable being associated with your brand, but you have no control over that. So, can it be successful? It can, but I think the only way that it can be successful is through your conversation threads and your postings that you put out there. There are a lot of things that you have to let go of the control over, particularly with Facebook or YouTube, where you've got other brands competing. I think some people are so afraid of losing control of their brand that they don't even venture into the water, and I think that's even more dangerous because you have to have a presence and you just have to know that there's more risk involved." - Michele Cauley
Interviewee Opinion: Was Getting Involved with Social Media the Right Choice for Clemson?

"I think so. I think in the terms of admissions and recruiting, I think it's been beneficial. I think the Alumni Association has had success with it and I think from this office's (Publications & Promotion) standpoint. With the magazine (Clemson World) we had to cut an issue due to budget cuts from four down to three issues a year, so it's been an opportunity for us to stay connected during the longer period between issues. The YouTube stuff has been successful and positive. It's just another vehicle, and the staff time is pretty minimal in terms of cost, so I think considering the budget situation we're in, it's been a nice fill-in, another way for us to get messaging out." - Dave Dryden

Positive and Negative Impacts of Social Media on the Clemson Brand

Clemson's involvement with social media is still fairly new, but as of yet, they haven't had any truly negative experiences that reflected poorly on Clemson's brand identity. Michele could only think of one situation in Clemson's social media history that came close to a negative experience and it involved the Alumni Association Facebook page.

"A person was venting some personal opinions on things that just weren't warranted, and we didn't censor it. I could have removed the post, but didn't, and amazingly, the rest of the community defended the university's position on things much more than we ever had to, so we posted a few response questions to continue the conversation."
Instead of seeing the comments and deleting them, Michele made the decision to let them stay posted to see how the Alumni Association community would react. In her opinion, the worst thing she could have done was deleted the comments after a number of people had seen them. Such an action could be misunderstood and fans of the Facebook page may have thought the Alumni Association was censoring its discussion so that no one could disagree with the opinions of the university.

Concerning the benefits of using social media, there were plenty of constructive comments. A number of people in Clemson's social networking community, whether they're fans on Facebook or followers on Twitter, have applauded the use of social media because it allows them to have constant access to information that they may not have been able to get otherwise. Examples include learning about an event on campus, such as a weather warning or a death, or hearing a newsflash as soon as it happened. Clemson's young demographic prefers this type of instant communication rather than waiting hours or an entire day for an official e-mail to be issued. People enjoy being in the know, so the more accessible information is and the faster it can be retrieved, the better.

Another positive impact due to Clemson's use of social media involves the direction of communication. Dave and Michele both mentioned that in the past, the flow of information between Clemson and its audiences was mainly one-way. Traditional media such as print, or even an e-mail blast do not invite conversation. Because Clemson's goal is to connect with its audience, the university is seeking ways to have two-way conversations where they can easily collect feedback. Social media is the perfect tool for collecting feedback and learning whether or not Clemson is communicating the brand identity and message they are intending.
Measuring the Success of Social Media

This question seemed to be the most difficult to answer for both Dave and Michele. Dave commented that measuring the success of social media was the hardest part of being involved with the technology. "It's so fluid and there doesn't seem to be a lot of industry standards out there, but we try to watch." In terms of the Clemson World Facebook site, he said they view success as whether or not they can get a conversation going. If there are people responding to his posts, then he knows that the community is actively participating with the Facebook page and is interested in what the Clemson World has to say. He also mentioned an unofficial Clemson Facebook page that was discovered, and although Clemson didn’t sanction it, it was viewed as a successful venture into the world of social media:

"Last year (2009) there was a Class of 2014 Facebook page, which was hugely active, but it wasn't a university owned site. Some students got together and started it and there were thousands of kids that had become fans of the page and were extremely active. One of the things we saw was someone posted, "I accepted Clemson over...." Soon, kids were listing their other schools, like Harvard, Stanford, and others. We saw that and we used that as a way to show the caliber of students that are selecting to come here. So we may not even be developing or driving some of these sites, but we're trying to watch them so when there are opportunities, we can use them to market and build reputation."

Although there is no way to place a number or any sort of measurement on the activity involving the Class of 2014 Facebook page, the positive comments and
references to Clemson were enough for it to be considered a successful representation of Clemson's brand identity.

Michele noted that the Alumni Association has developed a way to measure their social media success. There is a monthly metric report issued that details the number of e-mail sent out by the Alumni Association, the delivery rates of those e-mails, the click-throughs on Clemson-related ads or links, bounce rate, and unique hits to certain Web pages. Specifically concerning social media, the Alumni Association keeps track of their number of Facebook fans, their LinkedIn contacts, and once their Twitter account is activated, they will keep track of their followers. Higher fan and contact numbers, more frequent and engaging conversations, and more connections and networking opportunities mean greater success in the eyes of Clemson University's New Media Project team.

After conducting interviews with both Dave Dryden and Michele Cauley, I knew that researching Clemson University's use of social media as a branding tool was a beneficial addition to my study. The university did meet all five of my case criteria, but unfortunately, it did not meet all of the criteria of effectively using social media as a branding tool. As earlier stated, the purpose of social media is to start or continue a conversation and to allows users to openly communicate and interact with one another. Clemson's audience has the tools it needs to communicate and form relationships, yet the university's New Media Project team has not been able to facilitate or encourage consistent and information-rich conversations, which means they have yet to fill the fourth criterion of creating sustainable relationships. The only criterion Clemson successfully met, was that of authenticity. For example, Dave Dryden works directly with the Clemson World magazine and he is the voice behind all of the Clemson World
Facebook updates. Unfortunately, when measured against my four criteria concerning the effective use of social media, the Clemson University case fails in three of the four criteria.

In regards to Bitzer's constituents of a rhetorical situation, analyzing the Clemson case revealed two situations. The first situation's exigence was the announcement of Clemson's new branding strategy by the department of Institutional Advancement. To achieve the adoption of the new strategy, everyone at the university involved in posting material representative of Clemson to either the Web or a printed publication needed to take action, accept and begin to implement the new strategy. However, there were multiple constraints, the most prominent of which is that many people at the university are accustomed to the current branding strategy and perhaps do not agree on making the change.

The second situation's exigence was communicating Clemson's brand identity using social media. To achieve the communication of identity, potential students, current students, alumni, faculty and staff, parents of students, as well as the media, both local and national, needed to be accepting of Clemson's branding efforts and open to the concepts, values and ideals behind the Clemson brand. Numerous constraints modified the way the audience dealt with the exigence, including a lack of familiarity with social media or the specific technologies used by Clemson, lack of willingness to participate in the social media efforts, lack of convenience (older populations without computers), encroaching outside brands (ex. the Facebook brand or YouTube brand vying for attention on Clemson-related social media pages), as well as negative comments posted on Clemson-related social media pages.
Clemson University, its New Media Project team and related employees have fully embraced the concept of using social media as a serious and legitimate communication tool, yet the technology is not being used properly. As described in both of the interviews, social media is seen as a conversation and a way to build a more personal relationship with Clemson's audience. Unfortunately, those connections and conversations have not developed in all aspects of Clemson's social media use. The alumni network, NetCommunity is an example of Clemson's failed good intentions. The concept of the community is great, but the university has struggled to encourage alumni to actually participate. Unfortunately, if the audience is not willing to participate, two-way conversations cannot be developed, no matter how good the initial idea. The next chapter examines an example of a non-profit and its use of social media as a branding tool.
Chapter 4: Non-profit Branding - Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County

Habitat for Humanity is a non-profit organization with chapters all across the globe. There is one overarching organization, Habitat for Humanity International, and there are roughly 3,000 affiliate organizations, one of which is Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County - whose brand and use of social media is the focus of this chapter.

Habitat, as the non-profit is commonly called, is described as:

"A Christian ministry dedicated to eliminating poverty housing. Habitat has built more than 200,000 homes and more than one million people now live in Habitat homes. All families help build their homes and purchase the homes through non-profit, zero-interest mortgages" (Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County Website).

The Greenville County chapter was chartered in 1985 and since then, has built more than 250 homes. Through the hard work and dedication of community volunteers, as well as future Habitat homeowners, the non-profit helps build relationships between the volunteers and homeowners. Achieving this strong, local bond is one of the goals of the Greenville County chapter.

**Habitat's Brand Identity**

The Habitat International brand identity is strong and can be easily recognized around the world due to its consistency. Each Habitat affiliate, no matter where they are
located, uses the Habitat International logo and color scheme and adds their personal, local touch. This visual consistency leaves no question that Habitat's nearly 3,000 affiliates are related directly to Habitat International. Below: the International logo and four variations.

Figure 4.1: Habitat for Humanity Logos
As shown in the above five logos, the visual representation of Habitat consists of a compact and square-shaped logo depicting three people under the roof of a house. The words "Habitat for Humanity" are located near the image either stacked vertically or written lengthwise horizontally. All Habitat logos make use of the non-profit's signature colors, blue and green, although the precise shades vary.

Habitat's distinctive logo is not the only place that the brand's identity holds strong and consistent. Every Habitat affiliate's website can be reached through Habitat International's site, and when looking at a variety of them, it is clear that they are all related. No matter the continent or the language spoken, each Habitat website uses the trademark Habitat logo, the colors blue and green, and a similar site structure. In his book, *Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability*, Steve Krug discusses website design, specifically, page layout and navigation. He asserts that when looking at a website for the first time, you should not have to analyze it before understanding what the site is about and how to navigate it (87). Krug describes a number of components that are present in the majority of websites including site IDs, page names, local navigation, "You are here" indicators and search fields and discusses why those components should be placed in specific locations on a site (88). Krug would be satisfied with Habitat for Humanity's International brand identity and how it is carried over onto nearly every Habitat affiliate's website. The Greenville County's site, as well as the example of the Habitat The Netherland's site, both of which are pictured below, ascribe to Krug's common sense website guidelines.

As illustrated in the two screenshots below, Habitat's distinctive logo resides in the top left-hand corner of each site, which communicates to the viewer that they are
looking at an official Habitat International-related site. A smaller subtitle under the logo lets the viewer know precisely which Habitat affiliate's site they are looking at. According to Krug, the upper left-hand corner of the website is the most appropriate place to locate the site's identification, which usually consists of a logo (64). Both sites use the same basic color scheme of blue, green, and white, which shows the affiliate's desire to remain in tune with the international brand identity.

Another common characteristic shared by numerous Habitat affiliate sites, including Greenville County and The Netherlands, is the employment of a horizontal navigation spanning the width of the page. Krug would also be pleased with this navigation bar because it identifies the many sections of the websites and is present on every page of the site. According to Krug, there are six purposes of navigation including:

1. To help us find whatever it is we're looking for
2. To tell us where we are
3. To give us something to hold on to
4. To tell us what's there
5. To tell us how to use the site
6. To give us confidence in the people who built it (the site) (59-60).

The similar-styled Habitat websites communicate brand identity consistency amongst all Habitat affiliates, but also allow the viewer to navigate the site faster and with less confusion. For instance, if a volunteer is familiar with Habitat International's website, and they log on to their local chapter's site for the first time, there is a fair chance that the horizontal navigation will be the same, if not identical. This would allow
the volunteer to be familiar with the layout and be able to find the information they need without having to hunt around the local affiliate's site. Even if the affiliate site is in a language you do not understand, at a glance you would be able to recognize that the navigation was located across the top of the page.

Figure 4.2: Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County Homepage
Figure 4.3: Habitat for Humanity of The Netherlands Homepage
Habitat for Humanity International has done an excellent job of communicating its brand identity to all of its affiliates, and has emphasized the importance of maintaining a consistent identity. Now that the overarching international brand has been discussed, the remainder of this chapter will focus on the specific case of the Greenville County chapter of Habitat for Humanity and how it has made use of the international brand identity and communicated that identity to its local audience.

The Greenville County chapter has taken the initiative to apply as much of the Habitat brand identity as possible, not only to their website, but to all of their social media accounts as well. Their Facebook page is a great example, although conforming to the Habitat brand identity was made simpler thanks to Facebook's own brand identity. Habitat is not the only entity to use the colors blue and green as part of its signature look. Facebook's blue header and green buttons fit well with Habitat's identity. Habitat of Greenville County customized its Facebook page with their local logo, and with the subtle help of Facebook's own identity, created a well-branded Habitat page.

Figure 4.4: Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County Facebook Page
Recreating a strong sense of brand identity on Twitter proved more challenging for Habitat of Greenville County. The account name is custom (HFHGreenville) and the Greenville County logo is displayed, but overall, the site appears more Twitter than Habitat for Humanity. It is evident that Habitat of Greenville County altered the typical Twitter color scheme, which allowed a color similar to Habitat's signature green to be displayed on a portion of the page. With the recent popularity of Twitter, the site has created options that allow for account owners to customize their page and make their identity known, but so far, Habitat of Greenville County has yet to take the next step. This lapse in brand identity could be remedied by uploading the Greenville County logo as a background image. That change would allow Habitat of Greenville County's Twitter page to be more in sync with their website, as well as their other social media pages and would help to reinforce their already strong brand identity.

Figure 4.5: Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County Twitter Page
Although Habitat of Greenville County's Twitter brand identity is not as strong as it could be, their identity holds well on their photoblog powered by Wordpress.com. Titled "Habitat Greenville's Photoblog," the affiliation with Habitat for Humanity is clearly established and is supported by the use of the Habitat blue and green color scheme. The blog is populated with numerous images of previous builds, which further confirms that the site is in fact a site for Habitat. The horizontal navigation also agrees with the Habitat identity established on other sites.

Figure 4.6: Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County Photoblog
When looking over all of the Habitat-related pieces mentioned above, it is evident that Habitat of Greenville County is aware of their visual brand identity. It also seems that they are putting forth good effort to maintain consistency in their image so that their audience is able to recognize what is and what isn't associated with the non-profit organization.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County's use of social media and how they have portrayed and conveyed their brand identity using Facebook, Twitter and a photo blog. This section of the chapter is based on the interview of an employee of Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County, Claire McCoy, an AmeriCorps Volunteer Services Assistant.

**Description of Job Position and How Social Media is Involved**

Claire McCoy holds the title of AmeriCorps Volunteer Services Assistant, which means she does whatever is necessary to promote the services of Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County. Although she is not the first Habitat of Greenville County employee to work on social media, she is currently the sole person responsible for the job. On a daily basis, she monitors the local chapter's Facebook page, as well as their Twitter account and makes posts as frequently as possible. When Claire was first appointed to the position of supervising Habitat of Greenville County's social media, she noted that their Facebook page was set up as an individual, instead of an organization. It was her decision to close down the already existing Facebook page and to create two new pages: a "fan" page, as well as a "cause" page.
When a Facebook page is set up as an individual, it is more personal. When set up as a fan page, people elect to become "fans" of the organization rather than "friends" as they would on an individual's page. Designating Habitat of Greenville County as a fan page also communicates to the Facebook community that it is an organization, not an actual person. The cause page also communicates to Facebook users that Habitat of Greenville County is a non-profit organization, but the main difference is that it allows people to become members of the cause and also to raise money for the cause. In fact, it is the cause style page that is linked to the Habitat of Greenville County website, which directs the viewer's attention towards making a charitable donation instead of merely becoming a fan of the non-profit. Claire felt that the format of a fan page and a cause page versus an individual page would benefit the non-profit, so she took the initiative to make the switch. Aside from posting to and maintaining the Facebook and Twitter accounts, Claire also updates Habitat of Greenville County's photoblog and ensures that the online newsletter is distributed properly.

**Definition of Social Media**

When asked what her definition of social media was, Claire responded, "It's a way to interact with other people and to have a conversation over the Internet...to engage various people whether it's using Facebook for individuals or an organization communication with customers." She also admitted that she was still fairly new to the world of social media and that the majority of her knowledge was learned through personal experience with her own personal accounts. Claire mentioned that she did not feel people needed to be professionally trained to work with social media because it is mainly common sense. This was an interesting comment, because some businesses and
organizations pay other companies to ghostwrite their social media content. According to Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, to ghostwrite is "to write for and in the name of another." One would think that those who ghostwrite for others would have to have some sort of training or instruction on how to identify with the business' brand and to write as if they were in fact, an employee, CEO or expert of that business.

**When and Why Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County Decided to Get Involved with Social Media**

Although Claire was not employed with Habitat of Greenville County when they first implemented social media, she was familiar with when and why the non-profit made the decision to become involved. According to Claire,

"About two years ago, another AmeriCorps volunteer mentioned to our Director of Administration that he thought social media was something Habitat needed to be involved with. He was a young guy, just out of college, so I think it was something that appealed to him. He knew how it (social media) worked, and he thought other people would appreciate Habitat reaching out to people in that way."

Since that time, Habitat of Greenville County's Director of Administration has become an avid supporter of social media and feels that it is necessary for the non-profit to have a strong presence on multiple platforms, especially Facebook. This interest in social media participation likely stems from the encouragement of Habitat International for all of its affiliates to reach out and connect with their communities in many different ways.
Why Habitat of Greenville County Decided to Get Involved with Specific Platforms

Claire explained that in her opinion, Habitat of Greenville County chose its specific social media platforms based on the audience they desired to reach, and also due to popularity. Facebook and Twitter were chosen because of their popularity and the number of people who are familiar and comfortable with the technology. Claire stated that,

"A lot of people use MySpace, but it's targeted more towards the music community. We're looking to connect with a much broader audience, the general population of Greenville County, and so we felt that Facebook was the better technology to choose because of its range of users."

She went on to mention that the photoblog was implemented because Habitat of Greenville County did not want to just write about their accomplishments, but they wanted to show their audience what a difference they were making in the community. The photoblog allows Habitat of Greenville County to post pictures of all of their current and past builds, as well as any other events they participate in. It creates a more personal feel and a sense of community when someone can participate in a build, then log on to the Internet and share pictures of their accomplishments with others.

Claire mentioned that the online newsletter was used because of convenience and being cost-friendly. Having someone design, print, and mail out a monthly multipage newsletter is time consuming and expensive, but having someone update an electronic template and send it out via e-mail takes little time and is free. It also allows Habitat of
Greenville County to communicate with their audience faster. There is no need to wait for printed newsletters to be delivered over the course of a week or more, when the recipients can have the same information within seconds when sent electronically.

**Habitat of Greenville County's Desired Brand Identity**

The response from Claire on this subject was very honest. She admitted that she did not necessarily know the desired brand identity that Habitat of Greenville County was trying to portray through social media, but that their focus was centered on developing an online presence. "It's mainly about getting our name out there and letting the people of Greenville County know that we're online and that they can get information from us and contact us in that way (using social media)." Claire went on to mention that the majority of her social media posts dealt with volunteer opportunities, recent Habitat-related news, and ways to make donations.

The way Habitat of Greenville County is using social media does not align with the chapter's own goals. It was mentioned earlier that Habitat desired to reach out to their audience and create conversation, yet the tactics described by Claire in her interview focus solely on pushing information out to the audience, and not encouraging a response. As previously defined, the use of social media is intended to start conversations and to allow users to openly communicate and interact with one another. The Greenville County chapter of Habitat is not using social media in this manner. Instead, they are focusing only on moving information from the chapter out to its audience.
Social Media Employed

Habitat of Greenville County makes use of four main types of social media. Each account is updated as frequently as possible, although posts are typically sparse throughout the winter when Habitat is not in a "building season." Below is a list of the social media used by Habitat of Greenville County:

- Facebook
- Twitter - HFHGreenville
- Photoblog - powered by Wordpress
- Online Newsletter - e-mailed out monthly to subscribers

Each of Habitat of Greenville County's four social media channels are used to support one another. The online newsletter communicates in-depth and specific member-related information to the non-profits members, while Twitter serves to update the public on Habitat of Greenville County's recent events and happenings. The photoblog expresses the non-profits building efforts through image and focuses mainly on builds, while the Facebook pages supply general information and ways to become involved with Habitat of Greenville County. Each form of social media communicates a slightly different angle of the overall Habitat of Greenville County picture, yet they all compliment one another. Although the content of the social media accounts support one another, the purpose served by each account is to strongly push information out to Habitat's online audience.
Multiple Social Media Channels, One Writer

Habitat of Greenville County makes use of four different social media channels, but employs only one person, Claire, to provide the content. When asked about her responsibilities, Claire replied that maintaining the multiple channels of social media was not an overly difficult task and that by being the sole person to post content, it was easier to maintain consistency across all channels. If she makes a post on Facebook, generally, she makes a related one on Twitter, as well as on the photoblog. She does not always cross post due to the aforementioned reasons - the photoblog focuses on images and builds, the Twitter account focuses on recent events and links to articles, Facebook encourages involvement and donations. Claire realizes that each member of Habitat of Greenville County's audience could potentially participate in only one of their social media channels. Because of this, it is important that similar information be distributed across all channels, so that if an individual checks Twitter and not Facebook, they are still able to find the same information.

Interviewee Opinion: Is Social Media Useful for Communicating a Specific Brand Identity?

"It's a good tool because there are so many people who are active on social media. Although one problem that we face is a lot of our donors and volunteers are older. Some of them don't even have e-mail, so that makes it a little more challenging. In the same sense, it's also positive because social media makes it possible to engage a new, younger group of people and to interest them in Habitat. I'd say that social media is definitely
important in communicating our brand. Also, it's free to use Twitter and Facebook, and we (Habitat of Greenville County) like being cost-efficient." - Claire McCoy

**Adoption of Social Media**

When asked if she thought adopting social media was the right step for Habitat of Greenville County, Claire stated, "I would say so. I haven't seen any negative impact since we've been using it." She continued to say that social media has been a great way to help get the Habitat name out to the Greenville County community. Claire also commented, "We're not spending any money on it and it's very user-friendly, so really, why not use social media?" Based on her response, it appears that Habitat of Greenville County sees no reason not to be involved in social media, and that they feel the adoption of such communication is something that they should be involved in, if not for the sole reason of it being cost-efficient and user-friendly.

**Measuring the Success of Social Media**

In regards to measuring Habitat of Greenville County's social media success, Claire stated that they pay attention to their number of fans on Facebook, as well as their number of followers on Twitter. Within a week of creating Habitat of Greenville County's new Facebook fan page, Claire noticed that their fan count was above what their previous friend count had been. Such a noticeable improvement in numbers indicated to the Greenville County chapter that they were successfully reaching a fair amount of their audience. While witnessing a fast spike in a fan or member count can be encouraging, it does not mean that every single one of those fans are willing to actively participate in a conversation via Facebook. Based on Claire's interview, it did not seem that conversation
was the goal of Habitat of Greenville County's social media use, so when they noticed an increased number of fans, they were satisfied with their social media efforts and considered the fan count a success.

Posting links on Twitter allows another form of measurement for Habitat of Greenville County. Claire commonly posts a brief description, followed by a shortened link. To do this, she uses a Web service known as bit.ly, whose tag line is "Shorten, share, and track your links" (Bit.ly). Once she has used bit.ly to create and post a link to Twitter, Claire can log on to her bit.ly account and view the link's tracking information. Bit.ly allows users to see how frequently their shortened links are clicked on, as well as how often their link is mentioned in another post.

**Social Media Benefits and Pitfalls**

Concerning the benefits of using social media, Claire was quick to mention cost. "Sending out mailings is really expensive, as is running an ad on television. Twitter, Facebook, the photoblog, and the online newsletter cost nothing to update and share. That's definitely a plus of using the technology." Claire also mentioned that having an already strong brand identity made using social media easier. As described in the first section of this chapter, Habitat for Humanity has a strong international reputation, and is easily recognized on most local levels. With such an identifiable logo and look, users are quick to identify the Habitat for Humanity brand online.

When asked about the pitfalls of social media use, Claire could only think of one and it was not the fault of social media, but an issue of content supply.
"We're not in a build season right now (winter), so there's not as much to put out there. Basically, we don't have pictures of build sites or much new information because this is the season in which we plan future builds with our partners and we start working on our schedules. It's really a dead time, so during the winter, I'd say our presence is a little weaker than usual. This will all change in the spring."

Claire did speak about Habitat of Greenville County's efforts to continue posting as much information as possible during the winter, even though it is often difficult. The online newsletter continues to be distributed, and focuses on motivating volunteers to start thinking about the time they can give to future builds. She also works hard to populate Habitat of Greenville County's Twitter page with new tweets, whether it be linking to the most recent online newsletter or discussing a Habitat-related news story.

Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County may be fairly new to the world of social media, but based on the responses of AmeriCorps volunteer, Claire McCoy, the local chapter of the non-profit is interested in participating in the online community. The strong and recognizable Habitat International brand identity has proved beneficial to the establishment of the Greenville County chapter's online presence, but the chapter continues to work hard to improve their communication tactics. In the future, Habitat of Greenville County plans to continue implementing the same forms of social media (Facebook, Twitter, photoblog, online newsletter), but desires to find a way to engage more people. Their hope is that the inhabitants of Greenville County begin using social media to connect with the Habitat brand identity and become more active online, hopefully through the action of volunteering and making donations via multiple social media channels.
In regards to Bitzer's constituents of a rhetorical situation, analyzing the Habitat case revealed one major situation. The exigence of the situation was communicating Habitat of Greenville County's brand identity using social media. To achieve the communication of identity, the local Greenville community, potential volunteers, current volunteers, other Habitat chapters and the media, both local and national, needed to be accepting of Habitat of Greenville County's branding efforts. Multiple constraints affected the manner in which the exigence was modified, including the audience not being familiar with social media or not having access to the technology (older and lower-income populations), lack of willingness to participate in the social media efforts, encroaching outside brands, and a lack of current information supplied by Habitat of Greenville County.

After concluding the interview with Claire McCoy and reviewing her responses to my set of questions, it was clear that the Habitat of Greenville County case was nearly opposite of the Clemson University case. Clemson's focus was on using social media to connect with their multiple audiences and to create conversation whether through posting images and having people comment or creating YouTube videos to educate the alumni audience on the new alumni branding. Habitat of Greenville County is using social media, but for different reasons. Habitat's social media goal is to create a presence. The non-profit does communicate its brand identity across its multiple social media channels, but it does not engage its audience in any form of conversation. The best attempt at creating conversation is with the photoblog where volunteers may feel compelled to comment on pictures of a build in which they participated. Apart from the photoblog, the
main purpose of social media appears to be to push information, although Claire emphasized that the non-profit was still working on ways to engage their online audience.

Claire's definition of social media - "It's a way to interact with other people and to have a conversation over the Internet...to engage various people whether it's using Facebook for individuals or an organization communication with customers" - although promising, falls apart when the non-profit's use of social media is examined in detail. According to my four criteria needed to effectively use social media described earlier in this thesis, social media should revolve around the concept of creating conversation, engaging users and encouraging interactions. Habitat of Greenville County has attempted to use social media, but has struggled to use it effectively. Conversation is not happening and sustainable relationships are not being built. As with the Clemson case, the Habitat case succeeded in only one of the four criteria: having an authentic voice. Claire is a representative of Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County and she is very aware of what is going on around the local chapter's office. She would be the ideal contact person for people wanting to converse about the local chapter of Habitat online, yet instead of allowing two-way communication, information is merely being pushed out to the audience. In conclusion, when measured against my four criteria for effectively using social media, Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County failed in three of the four areas and cannot be considered a successful case of properly using social media.

The third and final case, as detailed in the next chapter, focuses on an example of a local business and its use of social media as a branding tool.
Chapter 5: Business Branding - Iced: The Upstate Cupcake Cafe

For an example of business branding, I looked at Iced: The Upstate Cupcake Cafe. Iced is located outside of Greenville, South Carolina and is a locally-owned business. It was incorporated in July of 2007 and was the dream of a mother-daughter team. Ellen (the mother) was inspired to open a cupcake shop in Greenville while on a trip to Chicago. She saw a shop there and thought it would fill a nice niche in the South Carolina upstate area. Courtney (the daughter) already worked in the culinary arts business and held degrees in business management, as well as entrepreneurship. Starting a local cafe was something she had dreamed about since she was a child, and with her mother's advice, Courtney set out to create Iced.

Iced's Desired Brand Identity

When questioned about the beginning of the Iced brand, Courtney replied, "Basically, our branding is our cupcake, it's all about the product and about how the product is provided, as well as the service behind it." She wanted to create a brand that embodied the concept of Iced, whether someone was looking at the logo, storefront, webpage, or a flyer. To Courtney and her mother, Iced is family-friendly. It is something fun, something different, and of course, it is centered on cupcakes. With the help of a graphic designer, an appropriate color pallet was created, along with an iconic cupcake logo and a custom typeface. The goal was to create something that would be recognizable, like McDonald's Golden Arches. Courtney wants people to look at the Iced
cupcake, whether it has the word "Iced" below it or not, and know that that logo is representative of Iced. Below is Iced's cupcake logo, custom typeface and color pallet (consisting of lavender, brown, white and green).

![Iced Logo](image)

Figure 5.1: Iced Logo

The hard work that was invested in building the Iced brand has paid off and the business has already seen some results within the nearly three years of their existence.

"A lot of people think that we're a big franchise...and that's what we like because it brings people in the door to try something and when they find out that we're not a big franchise, it's a little bit more heartwarming because local businesses are supported by their community."

Courtney attributes this big franchise reputation to brand quality and consistency. Based strictly on observation, it is clear that Iced is incredibly consistent in the way the brand identity is presented. When viewing Iced's website home page, the background
pops with their unique color pallet. On the top left of the screen, their iconic cupcake logo and "Iced" written in their custom font are evident. The entire website has a fun, inviting, and family-focused feel, which is precisely what Courtney stated she was aiming for as the brand identity of Iced.

Figure 5.2: Iced Homepage
The brand identity carries over onto all of the other pages of the website, each time reinforcing the key qualities represented by the Iced brand. The "About Us" page especially, illustrates the concept of family. The cafe was brought into being by a mother-daughter team, and by visiting the "About Us" page, you can see them, as well as other family members proudly representing their passion that turned into a career.

Figure 5.3: Iced "About Us" Page
A variation of Iced's brand identity can be seen on the page dedicated to cupcakes. The variation can be seen in the cupcake logo located in three large panels across the screen. Although none of the three cupcakes shown are identical to Iced's logo cupcake, the brand consistency is easily achieved by using variations from Iced's color pallet. It is this sort of play on logo variation that demonstrates the Iced brand's ability to be versatile, yet cohesive simultaneously.

Figure 5.4: Iced "Cupcakes" Page
Moving beyond Iced's personal website and onto their use of social media, it is clear that Courtney and those involved with the Iced brand identity are dedicated to maintaining its consistency. From Iced's homepage, viewers are prompted to visit the blog, Facebook page, Twitter account, and photo gallery, and even view a promotional video featuring the cafe. Each link redirects the viewer to an entirely different website outside of Iced's personal domain, yet it is immensely clear that what is viewed is related to the Iced brand identity. Even though the blog is powered by Wordpress, the Iced branding aficionados took care to place the brand's color pallet in the background, as well as Iced's iconic cupcake towards the top of the screen where viewers are most likely to view the image and realize that they are clearly on an Iced-related page.

Figure 5.5: Iced Blog
Due to Facebook's own strong brand identity and rigid page structure, Iced's Facebook page looks a little less consistent than the other pages, but still does a good job of bringing Iced's unique brand identity into focus. The Iced logo is displayed in the upper left-hand corner of the page and thanks to its large size and color pallet; it is easily visible and identifiable. In this case, it is Iced's colors that help set it apart from the Facebook brand identity. Because Facebook and Iced's colors are very different, it is easy to tell what is representative of Facebook and what is representative of Iced on the page. The differentiation in color also announces to the viewer that they are seeing information specific to the Iced brand and that Courtney and the Iced brand officially endorse it.

Figure 5.6: Iced Facebook Page
The social media platform Twitter allows users to customize their pages more so than Facebook does, and Iced has taken full advantage of that opportunity. With its recognizable colors as well as its easy-to-recognize logo and descriptive username (ICED_For_You), it is unmistakable to viewers that they are on a page branded for and representative of the cupcake cafe.

Figure 5.7: Iced Twitter Page
While Iced's website and social media outlets are excellent places to showcase the cafe's brand identity, it is important to mention that their branding exceeds online content. Courtney's dream was to create an iconic logo that could be identified in practically any situation and recognized as something related to Iced. Just as the Golden Arches hovering over the tree line alert drivers that a McDonald's is just around the corner, Iced's cupcake logo is able to stand on its own without the word "Iced" and alerts individuals that if they are looking for the Upstate Cupcake Cafe, they are in the right place. For this reason, the storefront of the cupcake cafe boasts a square cupcake logo, as well as the custom typeface that is seen on Iced's website and all other brand-related materials.

Figure 5.8: Photograph of Iced Storefront
As mentioned earlier, the above description of Iced's brand identity was based solely on observation, resulting in a description of the cafe's visual brand. Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I focus on the discussion I had with Courtney during her interview. The visual aspect of Iced's brand identity is addressed as well as the cafe's non-visual component. A description of how Iced defines its brand identity and how the cafe attempted to communicate that brand identity using social media is reported.

**Social Media Defined**

When asked her opinion on social media and specifically how she defined the technology, Courtney Tessler replied, "Social media to me, is anything that can be shared between people in a way of more than just word of mouth." She went on to clarify that social media gives people the ability to express their selves and communicate with others with or without the use of words. It is the second type of communication that she focused on when discussing social media. Courtney referenced sharing pictures and videos to communicate an experience.

**When and Why Iced Begin Using Social Media**

Iced began using social media shortly after the business was incorporated. The reason behind the involvement was that "everyone else is doing it and if you don't do it, you're losing out on that customer base." Courtney noticed the shift in communication and advertising forms and realized that people want instant information and they want it on their cell phones and laptops. In order to connect with Iced's audience, Courtney knew it was undeniable that the cupcake cafe required a presence online. She also knew that people were using social media to discuss practically everything in their lives, including
product reviews. In order to tap into that pool of people and give them the opportunity to talk about, recommend and discuss her brand, she knew Iced needed to be online.

**Social Media Research and Strategy**

When asked about social media research and strategy, Courtney explained that she did next to no research before getting involved with social media. She knew a lot about social media due to her personal use of some of the technologies and felt comfortable working with the different channels. On the topic of social media strategy, Courtney stated that she didn't think there was one right or wrong way to use social media.

"I think there's a lot of trial and error. Every business is going to be different and every brand is going to be different. What works for me will probably not work for the children's consignment store next door. It's a different target customer, it's a different income level that they're targeting, so in the big picture, yes, it (social media) can be used for many, many things, but each individual is going to have to try different things to find what's really going to work for them."

Aside from a natural knowledge of social media and a trial and error strategy, Courtney felt that a dose of general marketing research was beneficial when promoting the cafe's brand identity via social media. Knowledge of basic marketing and advertising skills, including how to identify your target audience and how to word an advertisement, can help businesses make the decision as to whether it is profitable to hand out free promotional items or not, as well as other risky situations.
**Goal of Social Media Use**

By promoting Iced's brand identity through social media, Courtney hoped to communicate the business' core qualities: family-friendly, fun, unique and quality. Her goal was also to drive people into the cafe. She mentioned an event held in downtown Greenville called Saturday Market. During this event, the downtown area roads close and vendors set up along the street to promote their goods and create a market-like atmosphere. Iced hosted a booth at a previous Saturday Market and noticed that their Facebook fans and Twitter followers increased afterwards. They also had numerous new customers appear in the store days later. Courtney believes that many of those new in-store customers were there solely because of social media. She explained that if Iced had hosted a booth at Saturday Market and not had a web presence, people would have Googled Iced, not found any information and would have soon forgotten about the cafe. Instead, people Googled Iced, found the website, the Facebook page, or the Twitter page and were able to learn more about the cafe and all of its services. Iced's online presence allowed people to learn more about the business and thus made them more likely to use the cafe's services. Courtney stated that the response described above was precisely what she hoped to achieve when she introduced the Iced brand to social media.

**Social Media Employed**

Iced's use of social media is thorough, and for good reason. As illustrated in the previous sections, Courtney and those at Iced have put forth a lot of time and effort to create a successful brand identity and use of social media. Below is a list of the social media technologies used by the cupcake cafe:
Facebook
Twitter - ICED_For_You
Blog - hosted by Wordpress
Photo gallery
YouTube - video posted by GTVchannel15 (the local Greenville channel who hosts Saturday Market)

Iced's Social Media Voice

When asked who was in charge of creating the content for Iced's numerous social media outlets, Courtney responded that due to the cafe's small business size, she was the sole voice behind Iced's brand identity. At the time of the interview, she had time to run the cafe, update the blog, and make posts to both Facebook and Twitter. Although it keeps her very busy, she mentioned that she was happy to update Iced's social media personally. In fact, she mentioned that this is one of the benefits of using social media with a small business. If one person had the passion for cupcakes and baking them and another person created the content for social media, Courtney believes that there would be a disconnect in communication. She feels that the person writing about the brand on the blog or on Facebook should be someone who is involved first-hand with the product or service. It helps form a personal bond between the social media user and the brand because when the user makes a trip to the cafe, they actually get to meet the person they have been listening to and reading about.
Measuring the Success of Social Media - Tracking Traffic

When asked how she measured the success of Iced's social media use and whether or not the brand identity was communicated properly, Courtney responded with, "We don't really have a way, and to be honest with you, we're still working on getting a regular routine to set those (accounts) up and update our pages and make sure that we're giving the most accurate information and at the same time, not overwhelming people." A follow-up question asked whether or not she used any sort of tracking to monitor click-throughs and visits to a specific site. At that prompt, Courtney mentioned that she does have a way of tracking Iced's brand identity across social media platforms. The company that hosts Iced's website provides Courtney with statistics related to the website, e-mails, and blog. Among the feedback, Courtney can see

- If someone posted about Iced on their blog and another person clicked on the link back to Iced's website
- How many key word searches Iced appeared in
- How many clicks from a specific site (Facebook or Twitter) led to Iced's website
- How many people opened e-mails and visited Iced's website from the e-mail
- Independent IP addresses that have visited Iced's website or blog

She mentioned that while it is useful to see how many independent IP addresses visited Iced's website, it will never be a 100% accurate depiction of how influential social media is with encouraging new customers to visit Iced's cafe in person.

"You could have a unique visitor from California who just stumbled across Iced's site or was doing research, but just because they're on the site or participating in
the social media, it doesn't necessarily mean that they're going to walk through our doors and make a purchase."

**Benefits and Pitfalls of Using Social Media**

In Courtney's opinion, the main benefit of using social media in regards to building a brand identity is direct communication. According to her, direct communication means that the person doing the blogging or Twittering is someone who is closely connected with the brand and its product or services. She mentioned that she would not feel it was a very personal or meaningful communication if a larger business hired someone to manage or ghostwrite their social media accounts. What could be beneficial about speaking to someone who has no direct contact with the product you're concerned with? Whereas with a small, local business like Iced, a social media post is going to mean a lot more because when that person comes into the store, they can actually meet the person they have been communicating with online and it is a more personal experience and they feel a connection with the brand.

Regarding social media pitfalls, Courtney cited the use of too much information. With social media, anything can be posted, but just because you can, doesn't mean you should. Courtney advised that it was wise to maintain a certain amount of control over how personal posts are. "When you start bringing politics and religion into anything you alienate a certain group of people, and so the tough thing is keeping the bias out of your postings." She stated that she believes a certain amount of censorship is important so that customers are not alienated. In the case of Iced, Courtney intends to keep the posts fun,
informative and personable without mixing in things that people do not need to know or that may make them feel uncomfortable.

**Impact of Social Media on Iced's Brand Identity**

Iced has only been using social media for a few years, but so far, it has worked as a successful and positive branding tool. Iced made the right choice by building a strong brand identity with their logo, colors, and unique font, but that strong brand identity was promoted even further and made stronger with the help of social media.

"Having a strong logo and a strong website brought people to us that happened to find us that weren't seeking us out. If we hadn't had those things, no one ever would have had that opportunity to stumble across us...If we were just to have opened up and picked out a name the week before we opened and not been listed online or not been on Google search, or not been on Facebook and all of those other accessible places, we wouldn't have stood near a chance of survival."

As her final comment on social media's impact on Iced, Courtney stated, "Branding, and now social media, has a lot to do with the success of a small, local business - that's my opinion."

**Iced's Choice in Social Media Participation**

When asked if she thought adopting social media was the right choice for Iced's brand promotion, Courtney responded, "I do. I think every business needs to have a presence on the Internet and that's how you acquire a presence in more than one location." She mentioned that she believes the more places you put your business' name,
brand, product, or service, the better off the business will be. In the case of social media, when a business places its name strategically throughout a few channels, there is the potential that others will see the information and re-post it elsewhere and many times over. Courtney also mentioned her young business' budget and that social media was low in cost compared to other forms of advertising, so it really was a great fit for the cafe.

**Future Social Media Endeavors**

To close the interview, I asked Courtney if she had any future plans for implementing social media. "We'll continue with it the way we have been," she responded. As the cafe continues to use social media, she did mention that there was one thing she would always keep in mind, and that was to not overwhelm her audience with information. Instead of sending out multiple e-mail blasts a week or updating Twitter every five minutes, Courtney would rather send an e-mail or two every month, Tweet once or twice a day, and allow fans of Iced to go looking for more information if they desire. She said that people were busy enough and have so much going on in their lives; she does not want to distract them from their lives by having social media alerts going off every few minutes. Courtney's social media tactic is different from others, because more often than not, people involved with social media believe that more is better. The more updates, the more current the information, the happier your users will be. Courtney disagreed with this and would rather Iced's brand identity be one that is consistent and friendly, not in the customer's face. Although she enjoys working with Facebook and Twitter, Courtney mentioned that she appreciates blogging.
"With Facebook and Twitter, if you make a post, people are going to be notified immediately. Blogging is a little bit less in your face because you can choose to subscribe to the feed or you can just bookmark the page and check back whenever you want more information."

It is this friendly, yet personal identity that Courtney hopes customers associate with the Iced brand.

After conducting the interview with Courtney Tessler and analyzing her responses to my set of questions, I drew the conclusion that Iced had successfully created an attractive brand identity that was easily transferred across all social media channels. I also concluded that the cupcake cafe was doing its best to engage its audience and create conversation, but that conversation was slow to start. Some information was being pushed, as happens with many businesses and social media so that viewers can learn about the business. The goal of posting images of the cafe's cupcake creations was to showcase the business' talents, but was also an attempt to get people commenting on and talking about the confections. By supplying people with information about the cafe, the hope was to spark a conversation that would carry the business' brand around the Greenville area and farther. Iced has posted a survey to its Facebook page to encourage its customers to speak up about how the cafe can better serve the locals, and has had slight success developing conversations on Twitter. Customers are now posting thank yous to the cafe on their Twitter page and linking to images of their Iced cupcake creations. On both Facebook and Twitter, customers have also posted questions about the cafe and Iced has reached out to those individuals and posted answers. Customer posts have ranged from questions whether or not the cafe delivers cupcakes to a request for a
phone call regarding suggestions for the cafe. Although their start was slow, Iced: The Upstate Cupcake Cafe has improved its social media functions and appears well on its way to many successful social media connections. In fact, the cafe was noticed by The Food Network and in response, created another YouTube video as an application for an upcoming Food Network show, all about cupcakes.

Although the cupcake cafe has good intentions and is putting forth a great deal of effort in hopes to create conversations, they have yet to create truly sustainable relationships between the cafe and its customers. When analyzed against my four criteria of effective social media use, Iced does have an authentic voice and has allowed a slight flow of two-way communication, but the cafe has not successfully allowed users to communicate openly and to interact with one another. The main focus is on the cafe interacting with customers, but little to no emphasis has been placed on helping those customers develop relationships with one another in order to create a community and sustainable relationships. Iced may meet two of the criteria, but overall, fails to fulfill my definition of effective social media use.

In regards to Bitzer's constituents of a rhetorical situation, analyzing the Iced case revealed two situations. The first situation's exigence was the founding of the cafe and the development of its brand identity. To successfully create a recognizable brand identity, Courtney Tessler needed to take action and identify the brand's core concepts as well as what was to be its physical portrayal. However, there were two main constraints: Courtney's lack of experience in creating brand identities as well as the uniqueness of the business venture (cupcake cafes are not common in the Greenville area).
The second situation's exigence was communicating Iced's brand identity using social media. To achieve the communication of identity, the local Greenville community, potential customers, current customers, the media, as well as the boutique bakery community needed to be accepting of Iced's branding efforts and open to the concepts, values and ideals behind the Iced brand. Multiple constraints modified the way the audience dealt with the exigence, including a lack of familiarity with social media, lack of willingness to participate in the social media efforts, lack of convenience (older populations without computers), as well as potential conflicting personal opinions posted on Iced-related social media pages.

The next and final chapter addresses the connections and gaps between earlier mentioned theory and the actual findings of this study. The limitations of the research as well as suggestions for future research are also discussed.
Chapter 6: Conclusions

"How is social media used to create a brand identity?" and "Is social media really as useful as its supporters claim?" These basic questions are what fueled my thesis research. With so many businesses and organizations having a presence on the Web, and a rising use of social media, I wanted to know if merely having a Web presence and using social media was an effective way to create a brand identity. I also wanted to identify which social media tactics were being used, if any, and which social media technologies were implemented and why, as well as what goals were set. Lastly, I wanted to learn if those goals had been reached or if efforts had failed.

After conducting the interviews for all three cases and analyzing each response, I discovered the answer to my research question of "How are universities, non-profits and businesses using social media as a branding tool and are they successful?" The answer compiled from my research is: Social media is being used to communicate brand identity, but the use of social media to create conversation was not achieved in any of the examined cases.

Theory versus Reality

Performing this study revealed consistencies as well as gaps between social media-related theories and reality. It was my hope that these consistencies and inconsistencies would surface through research, in order to prove or disprove the strategies and suggestions supplied in popular social media books.
After performing the interviews and analyzing the responses from each case, it was clear that the university, non-profit and business all shared common opinions on multiple branding and social media-related topics. Interestingly, although each entity runs its business or organization in its own distinct way, all three agreed on the majority of their branding and social media tactics.

All three cases stated that they became involved with social media because it was the popular thing to do and they wanted to "keep up with the times," as well as their competitors. This is a common concept that can be found in numerous readings, including Levine et al.'s *The Cluetrain Manifesto*, which urges and encourages businesses to accept social media and other forms of technology produced by the Internet, or else be left behind. All three of the cases in this thesis were consistent with the above concept by realizing the urgency of creating an online presence in order to grow their brand identity. It is important to mention that just because an online presence was created by each case, it did not warrant the successful use of social media.

Clemson University and Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County both agreed that social media was best described as a conversation. This definition of social media coincides with the definition established earlier in this thesis. I stated four criteria for the effective use of social media:

1. Allows users to openly communicate and interact with one another
2. Has an authentic voice
3. Allows two-way communication (turn-taking)
4. Creates sustainable relationships.
Multiple cases stated that they viewed social media as a conversation, yet it was not reflected in their actions during their implementation of social media. The concept of two-way communication is discussed by Weinberg in her book by stating that "social media marketing builds strong relationships," and "social media marketing is a cheap alternative to traditional marketing" (7). The concept of using social media to build strong relationships includes the idea of using a more direct and personal form of interaction, as well as two-way communication versus one-way communication. Two-way communication also implies that feedback is occurring. Listening to feedback is a powerful tool that can help a brand become stronger. The concept of the "groundswell" emphasizes listening and states that it is "perhaps the most essential neglected skill in business" (Li and Bernoff 93). Each case in this study stated that they desired two-way communication and in fact, all cases cited two-way communication as a benefit of social media. Unfortunately, very little conversation is actually taking place for all three cases, which means that none of the cases are using social media as defined by my four-part description.

A different definition for social media that does not match the earlier mentioned description was recorded by Iced. In this case, social media was described as a way to communicate without words (this comment is in reference to using logos, images and video). This definition reveals a different perspective on social media that was not found in my review of literature. The definition should not be ruled entirely incorrect, due to the fact that much of social media is visual. Each social media technology has a unique visual identity, and a portion of content communicated via social media is visual, including
shared images and video. This definition, however, does not coincide with my four-point definition of social media.

The concept of conversation was also described as one of the benefits of using social media. In total, three benefits of social media were agreed upon by all three cases:

- Direct communication and more personal interaction with the audience
- Two-way communication versus one-way
- Cost of social media for promotion is less than that of traditional media.

The first benefit was mentioned by each case as one of their goals of social media use. Clemson, Habitat and Iced all mentioned that they desired to connect with their audience in a more personal manner. This is an ironic finding due to the fact that only two of the cases (Clemson and Iced) slightly achieved their goal of making communication more personal. The concept of making personal connections relates back to Li and Bernoff’s *Groundswell*, where advice is given to focus on relationships instead of technologies (18). Although considered a goal by each of the cases, relationships and developing more personal interactions were not successfully achieved.

The Clemson case made the strongest attempt to align with Li and Bernoff’s theory, as the interviews revealed that the university was focused on human-to-human and human-to-university connections, not on which social media technologies to use. Clemson had the intention of placing relationships before technology, yet when examining their entire case, they were not consistent with their actions. While developing relationships was their goal, Clemson did not succeed in developing the type of personal...
connections they desired. The alumni site, NetCommunity serves as an example of a failed attempt at two-way communication.

Going against the theory of placing importance on relationships, Habitat appeared more concerned with which technologies were being used and how they could communicate volunteer opportunities and announce recent achievements. Habitat focused on pushing information out to their audience rather than reaching out to establish relationships. This concept of information pushing is not an appropriate use of social media.

In regards to social media strategy, each case described a unique approach. Clemson became involved with social media only after performing research and assembling a New Media Project team. Their entrance into the realm of social media was very much in line with the POST method detailed in Groundswell. The acronym stands for people, objectives, strategy, and technology (67). As evidenced in the Integrated Marketing Communications Plan, Clemson developed a detailed plan revolving around their multiple audiences and from there, created objectives, a strategy and identified which social media technologies to participate in.

Instead of developing their own strategy, Habitat looked for a quick entrance into social media and opted to take advice developed by Habitat International's "social media guru." This is not an appropriate way of implementing social media, due to the fact that one strategy cannot be simply "plugged in" and become successful. Being under the umbrella of the already established Habitat for Humanity brand, the Greenville chapter made the decision not to perform their own research on how social media could be best
used for their local chapter; they merely followed suit. Numerous difficulties result from this strategy, specifically, the local Greenville chapter did not take their audience into consideration. They do not address their audience, but instead supply them with information in a way suggested to them by an advisor who has no familiarity of their chapter. The focus was not on creating relationships and conversations, but on the concept of creating an online presence and pushing information across multiple social media platforms.

The trial and error strategy chosen by Iced carried high risk and when measured against my four-part definition of social media, the effort is not considered a success. Although initial social media efforts consisted of pushing information, the cafe learned from its experience and portions of conversations began developing. Unfortunately, making a post on Twitter and receiving one reply does not constitute a successful or sustainable conversation. Many of Iced's customers have begun to communicate with the cafe using social media, but the connections and relationships lack in strength.

Numerous pitfalls of social media were agreed upon by all three cases, the most prominent of which revolved around the concept of measuring success. This has been a common theme across multiple pieces of social media related literature. Due to the fact that there are many forms of social media technology and each technology is used for different purposes and operates differently, it is impossible to develop one overarching way to measure success.

Despite the difficulty of measuring success, Weinberg suggests five metrics that can be used to develop an estimate of social media return on investment: 1) reach, 2)
frequency and traffic, 3) influence, 4) conversions and transactions, and 5) sustainability.

By identifying the number of Facebook connections or Twitter tweets, how often people are visiting a Website, the number of influential conversations, how often people make a purchase or register to be a member of a Website, and how long users remain loyal, an overall sketch of social media success can be determined.

Portions of Weinberg's five metrics were employed by each case. Clemson attempted to measure social media success by counting their number of connections (reach), as well as tracking which links were clicked on and which pages were visited (frequency and traffic). They also noted the number of alumni who signed up for accounts with NetCommunity (conversions and transactions) and how often those alumni used the site (sustainability). Because Clemson takes an interest in its social media activity, those involved with the university's social media are aware of where social media efforts are struggling. Although the Alumni Center finds information gathered from NetCommunity to be useful, it has been noted that the community has not performed as desired.

Habitat focused on only two of Weinberg's metrics: reach and frequency and traffic. A rising number of fans on Facebook, or an increased following on Twitter would be considered success by the Greenville chapter's standards. Also, a rise in the frequency of clicked links and the number of reposted links on other sites would constitute success by Habitat's standards, but in actuality, no meaningful connections are being made and no valuable conversations are developing. In actuality, the Greenville county chapter of Habitat is not meeting its own definition of social media: to interact with people and to have a conversation over the Internet.
Iced made use of three of the metrics. Reach is measured by the number of followers on Twitter or fans on Facebook. Frequency and traffic are monitored by click-throughs on the Iced website and how often people opened emails sent by Iced. The cafe does attempt to track conversations by performing key word searches and learning where the cafe has been mentioned on blogs or other websites. However, monitoring these three metrics does not mean that Iced is effectively using social media to meet their goals. As stated in her interview, Courtney Tessler hoped to communicate the business’ core qualities using social media technologies. The way social media success is currently being measured does not help Courtney determine if she is actually meeting her goals. If there were more of a focus on creating conversations, communicating the cafe’s brand identity and values would potentially become easier.

Weinberg's idea of how to broadly measure the success of social media use relates well to Wasserman and Faust's concept of social network analysis. The concept asserts that the analysis of social media, specifically, social networks, should focus on the relationships between units (4). This reinforces Weinberg's suggestion of focus on conversation, connections, and sustainability, which has been discussed throughout this section.

**Limitations of this Study**

Due to restrictions of time and resources, this study examined three distinct cases and four face-to-face interviews. Because only one or two individuals represented each case, the conclusions cannot be generalized. The number of interview participants was further restricted by the lack of social media-related positions employed by Clemson,
Habitat and Iced. Iced employed only one individual to participate in social media, as did Habitat. Clemson was the only case that employed multiple social media strategists or contributors. The Clemson participants were chosen via word-of-mouth recommendations from other university employees, thus excluding other potential participants that were not recommended.

The depth of each participant's involvement with building brand identity, as well as their involvement with social media both provided additional limitations on the data collected. While some participants were familiar with and involved in the creation of branding, others were far removed. This resulted in varied opinions of branding and of specific cases' brand identities. The amount of social media experience and participation of each interviewed individual also contributed to the collected opinions.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

In regards to future research on social media as a branding tool, many options are possible. If I were to maintain my current study, I would continue to contact the four interview participants of this study to see how their social media efforts fair, as well as whether their brand identity is maintained, harmed or benefited by the use of social media. It is also possible that each case could take on new employees or team members dedicated solely to social media and branding. If that were to happen, I could reach out to those employees and interview them with the same set of questions that I used to perform my initial research. For further understanding regarding how to use social media as a branding tool, multiple other perspectives on this study could be developed.
One such angle related to my study that could be explored would be the ethical implications of social media on a brand identity. Whether the brand be representative of an individual or a product, or as in this study, a university, business or non-profit, the complications that could potentially rise from providing unfiltered information to the public using social media could be discussed. Privacy has become an issue, especially when dealing with the personal information of an individual. Facebook has placed the power in the hands of its users and allows them to grant access to what the social networking site makes public. Other sites, such as Twitter, have no privacy in regards to posting information. If a post is written in 2010, it will still be available for viewing in 2015, unless Twitter adopts a deletion policy in which old messages are removed after a specified period of time. If an individual or business created a post consisting of a strongly biased opinion on a controversial topic, years later, that post could potentially be brought up and create fresh problems.

The concept of social construction through social media was present in this study, but not fully addressed. Although each of the three cases desired to communicate with their audience and receive feedback, they did not necessarily use that feedback to further develop their brand identities. Future research could focus solely on the topic of the social construction of a brand identity using social media. This future study could focus on feedback mechanisms, the information they provide and how that information could be used to develop a continuously adapting brand identity.

In addition to a focus on the social construction of brand identity, the concept of capturing information from the bottom of the communication spectrum and having that information influence the business’ use of social media could be addressed. Instead of
focusing on the suggestions and requests of the President, CEO or managers within a business, the study could focus on how to effectively listen to lower-ranked employees as well as those in the businesses outside audience, including users of the product or service or students at a university. This study could focus on tactics that would be useful in tapping into the wealth of information provided by what Li and Bernoff call the Groundswell. User feedback in the form of comments, suggestions and product ratings would be the main forms of data to collect.

My study of social media as a branding tool progressed just as I hoped it would. I confirmed a few concepts that I thought to be true, including the fact that just because a university, business or non-profit has a social media presence, it does not necessarily mean that they developed a full strategy for how to go about their social media endeavors. My study also raised new and interesting points that I had not expected, such as the varying definitions of social media.

To condense what has been learned during this study: the concept of social media is still not understood by many who practice its technologies. Although there are numerous publications and resources to pull from, businesses and organizations are not necessarily using their advice. Even with well-developed strategy and a firm definition of what social media is, businesses are not effectively acting on their own statements. The concept of effectively using social media to create a brand identity is still not understood and unfortunately, all three of the cases examined in this study serve as examples of the difficulties encountered when using social media.
Appendix A - Thesis Interview Questions

1. How do you define the term "social media?"
2. Why do you think social media is an appropriate tool for creating a brand identity?
3. What is your brand identity?
4. Which social media technologies do you/your company/organization use?
5. Why do you use those technologies instead of others?
6. Who are you aiming to influence with those technologies?
7. How do you measure the success of your use of social media as a branding tool?
8. How have you determined if the use of social media has positively or negatively impacted your brand identity?
9. What are the benefits of using social media instead of traditional branding strategies?
10. What are the pitfalls of using social media instead of traditional branding strategies?
11. Why did your company/organization decide to use social media? Who made the suggestion? Who made the decision to implement?
12. Who at your company/organization is involved in the implementation and maintenance of social media? One person? A designated team?
13. Before deciding to use social media, did your company/organization perform research on the topic? If so, what books/references impressed you and convinced you that social media was right for your company/organization?
14. Do you feel that the current books preaching the benefit of social media are accurate? If you do what they say, do you truly think it will benefit your company/organization?
15. Why do you think adopting social media was the right choice for your company/organization?
16. How have your customers/outside audiences adapted to your use of social media?
Appendix B - Interview Transcript - Dave Dryden

Jan. 22, 2010
Dave Dryden
Publications and Promotion Dept.
Director of Information Services

Why did Clemson decide to get into social media, for what reasons, and what Clemson is looking to accomplish.

We're relatively new, of course social media is not that old, so, I would say compared to other universities, we're probably, from what we've seen, we're at least equal to or a little ahead of some. We got into it, partially, to be honest, because it was the type of thing to do. There was some pressure from administration to start getting more actively involved. But we also saw it as an opportunity to connect with younger audiences in particular, using it as an opportunity to connect with them because some traditional media, print and TV and other items, don't tend to reach a younger demographic. Plus, it's cheap. And with budget cuts and budgets getting smaller and smaller and Clemson doesn't have a centralized marketing budget. It was a way we could market ourselves and connect with a younger audience without a lot of cost. We have, we're getting a more coordinated, we're developing a more coordinated effort within Public Affairs, which is the unit we're in. There's actually a group, which Jacob Barker kind of leads, and that group has been looking at how to maximize the use of social media for primarily reputation building, admissions recruitment.

OK, so it's not just your department that is implementing Clemson's social media, it's multiple departments coming together.

Right. Public Affairs is a part of Advancement that includes alumni, the development fundraising area. Public Affairs and Media Relations and then we're Creative Services, so traditionally we do the majority of the print publications the university puts out. We've had responsibility for the Web for about 10 years now, and some of those groups have all come together.

Who actually does the implementation and the maintenance of the social media?

I do the majority of Clemson World magazine on Facebook, I do the majority of that, plus our photographer will put up images. And we do Clemson World magazine the hard copy, the print version, out of this office, so it made sense that we do that. Christine Prado, who's on the staff, she was doing admissions print material and now has shifted over and is kind of helping direct what admissions is doing from a social media standpoint. Working with the admissions office. The Alumni Association has their marketing person, does the majority of their Facebook. And then Jacob Barker is responsible for the YouTube site, so there's individuals in different departments and it's somewhat coordinated, although probably not as much as it could be.
If you had a definition of social media or an agreed upon definition supported by Clemson University, what would it be?

I think of it as an ongoing conversation. It's a tool or vehicle where we can have an ongoing conversation with our constituent groups, which are most important to us. In the case of Clemson World magazine, you put out a print version and you might get a few letters back, but there not that ongoing back and forth conversation going on, and now we can post stuff and get feedback for in between issues if we think something is important and we want to get information out to folks, we have the opportunity to get the information out there in a quick, easy way that from what we hear is the, folks are very open to it and like having that kind of stuff, that contact with the University. Plus, I think it's a more, Clemson as an institution, we just went through a couple years of branding research and one thing when you interview folks and ask them how they view or feel about the university, they always talk about how personal it is and the one on one contacts. So social media and Clemson, it really makes sense for Clemson, because people already view Clemson as personal, friendly and social media is a very personal tool.

Why do you think Clemson chose the specific platforms of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)?

To some extent, out of convenience and popularity. ItunesU, that was just kind of "the" thing, and there were a lot of other universities involved with that. We in this office don't have a lot to do with that. I think we could be better branding or IDing our content that's out. You see other schools, that I think have done a phenomenal job, but with content, I think we could do a better job there. Facebook, probably, originally, due to popularity. It was kind of the hot thing so we looked at it and got involved with it and it was working for us, so the tool was actually effective. Twitter, I think some areas have seen it as being a useful tool and some haven't. Clemson World at one point had a Twitter page, but it just didn't make sense. Eventually, because we had one for a couple months and it just didn't go right, it wasn't working, so we actually eliminated the Twitter feed for the magazine. But I know New Services and Media Services have a Twitter feed. So I think people are jumping in because it's the thing to do but then as they use the tool they realize that it may or may not be working.

I've noticed on the Clemson home page, if you go to the current students page, there's a Twitter account for that specific audience, or for prospective students, different accounts. Do you know who is in charge of those conversations?

There are multiple people. And a lot of that ended up happening organically, and when we find Twitter feeds out there or Facebook pages, we'll see number one, who's the administrator and if they're connected either as staff or faculty or a student who has some credibility, then we'll adopt them as an official page of the university. And we're also, one good example, last year there was a, I think it was the Class of 2014 Facebook page, which was hugely active, it wasn't a university site. Some students got together and started it and there were thousands of kids that had become fans of that page and were extremely active. One of the things we saw was some one posted, "I accepted Clemson over..." and then kids were listing their other schools, like Harvard, Stanford. So we saw
that and we used that as a way to show the caliber of students that are selecting to come here so we may not even be developing or driving some of these sites but we're trying to watch them so when there are opportunities, we can use them to market and build reputation.

**How have you been able to consider your use of social media beneficial or harmful? How do you measure your success?**

To me measuring is the hard part because they're really, so fluid and there doesn't seem to be a lot of industry standards or things out there, but we try to watch. I guess we've viewed success as if we can get conversation going like in terms of Facebook, like if you can get some back and forth feedback so you know that folks are responsive to what you're posting. We look at the number of followers or fans or folks viewing videos on YouTube, but that to me is one of the hardest things, is really to measure how successful some of these things are. And so as a manager, you kind of struggle, how much of your resources do you put in to something that you really don't know what you're getting back out of it?

**Have you had any instances that could have hurt Clemson's reputation that have popped up?**

Not really, there have been things on websites that have been posted about the University, that we'll monitor, and depending, my boss, the Chief Public Affairs Officer, actually started her own blog to counter some of the negative things, there were...this past year there were things about administrative salaries. And a lot of misinformation gets put out by folks to start blasting the university for whatever reason, so she started a blog to counter some of the misinformation that was out there.

**Is that Cathy Sams?**

Yes. And the President started a blog, not so much to counter anything negative or misinformation that's out there, but for him to have an ongoing conversation and for folks to get a little more of a personal feel for who he is. But I'd say really, we've been very lucky so far. There was a site that popped up on Facebook about all of the new branding, that was against the branding. It came to our attention, we just kind of monitored and were watching it, but if it really would have started growing, then we would have jumped in and got into the conversation, but I think it got up to around 60 people and then it started dropping. So you've got to make those judgment calls about the conversation.

**Before Clemson began getting involved with social media, was there any person or group of people who did research on what Clemson should be involved in or any strategies Clemson may want to use?**

That's what the New Media team did, the team that was formed under Jacob Barker, that's what they did. They studied what other institutions were doing and tried to see what was out there about best practices and then tried to see what made sense for the university to be involved in.

**Do you think going the route of social media was the right step for Clemson?**
I think so. I think in the terms of admissions and recruiting, I think it's been beneficial. I think the Alumni Association has had success with it and I think from this office's standpoint, I think with the magazine we had to cut an issue due to budget cuts from four down to three issues a year so it's been an opportunity for us to stay connected during the longer period between issues. The YouTube stuff has been successful and positive, it's just another vehicle, and the staff time is pretty minimal in terms of cost, so I think considering the budget situation we're in, that we'll probably be in for a few years, it's been a nice fill-in, another way for us to get messaging out.

You personally, what is it you've been doing with social media at Clemson? What is your role? Do you do more posting or are you more behind the scenes?

Both, I'm one of the primary people on the Clemson World Facebook site, I'm involved to some degree with this New Media Team, in terms of advising and pitching ideas and brainstorming, so I'm part of that. So both posting and from a strategic standpoint.

Is there anything regarding Clemson's brand or use of social media that you consider significant that we haven't already talked about?

Well one thing I want to say is that we did go through a branding exercise and research, with everything we're doing in social media we're trying to make sure that that voice, those, we determine what Clemson's brand attributes are. We want to make sure that, we want to have that conversation with folks via social media, but we want to make sure that in that conversation from our standpoint that we're conveying those brand attributes, we're being true to the brand and so all that brand research is really informing what we're doing in terms of social media, both visually and messaging.

What would be the attributes that you're striving to portray for Clemson, or for Clemson World?

In terms of the magazine, when we did the research, what people mention when asked what was important to them about Clemson, or relevant, was traditions and heritage and family and academic reputation and quality of program, so the type of stuff we'll post will be, we might post a video about the Scroll of Honor that's being built in terms of a landmark or a tradition or we'll talk about things our students are doing recently, about research our faculty has been doing connected to what's going on in Haiti and what our students are doing so we like those brand attributes and then try to connect actual things that are going on with the university and when there's a match between that and the stuff that we're posting and trying to talk about. And we try to balance it out of all those attributes.

So for Clemson World do you focus more on the alumni side of Clemson's audience or do you consider current students as well?

Most universities have an alumni magazine and we won't call ours an alumni magazine, but really it's more of a university magazine, so alumni are our primary audience but current students, potential students, parents, we view those as valuable audiences too. And we're actually using, we have a Clemson World Tiger Facebook site that we're using to attract people in the 14 - 15 year old to college age demographic and we've seen
success in getting those folks to become fans of the magazine page, which most high school kids, especially typically would not become fans of the Clemson World magazine page. We've seen Facebook has given us an opportunity to connect, like I've said, at the beginning with an audience that we probably never would have otherwise. And that gives us an opportunity not only to talk about cool things the faculty and staff are doing but, an opportunity to get admissions information out, campus tour information, that would appeal to them. The admissions staff are looking younger, younger, younger and we don't have, from a university standpoint a database that can track a lot of kids that come here to summer camps and things like that and they'll have an ongoing relationship with the university, but we don't have a way to track something like that. You know if you have a kid who comes here for baseball camp and then they come back for something else...so they're individuals who have a high interest in the university, it'd be great if we could track someone like that, but we're looking younger down the pipeline because there's so much competition between colleges and universities now we need to get someone young and start building that relationship with them to when they get to the age when they're looking at colleges, we're the number one pick. That's what we're aiming for. Cell phones are one area that we haven't gotten into, but we know we're probably going to have to start shifting to formatting for...and with campus tours we're looking at how to format items like that for mobile devices. There's something new every 3 to 4 months, you think you're catching up and then you realize that there's something new all the time.
Appendix C - Interview Transcript - Michele Cauley

Jan. 27, 2010
Michele Cauley
Alumni Association
Director of Marketing and Communications

Please give me a description of your position here at Clemson, what you do and how you're involved with social media.

My position is Director of Marketing and Communications for the Alumni Association. We have approximately 116,000 active, and when I say active I mean living, alums. And an alum is defined by Clemson University as someone who has a completed 12 credit hours or more. So a lot of folks are surprised to hear that. You're in our audience and target market even if you never graduated, but if you completed 12 credit hours. In my role, the types of things that I do generally, I'm responsible for all of our external communications, that could be overall branding, which we've just gone through a great initiative to help further and better define our brand promise to the 116,000 alumni across the globe. It can also be specific communications methods like when, direct mail, contributions to Clemson World magazine on behalf of the Alumni Association, marketing information for events, major events that we promote each year, our reunion event, a distinguished service award banquet in March, student activities like the ring ceremony. So any kind of external communication to our target audience helps communicate the opportunity for them to connect with each other or back with their university is my responsibility area. Specifically, as we talk about electronic forms of communication, we focus in more on web and e-mail marketing, in my role, when people want to communicate with an alumni audience, they would come through me. And I have found that more and more in the last year that folks tend to be sending more communication via e-mail or on the web, in particularly, as we start talking more about social networking, they are using social networking a lot more for that reason, to target this growing segment of young alums.

However, the other big reason I think we're getting involved with social media is costs, budget strain. Direct mail costs a lot more, which if you look at an example of our reunion event where we spend a large portion of our budget, we allocate a lot of our time and resources into planning a in-person reunion that happens on site here every June for let's say 300 or 400 people tops, max, most of which will be 50 years old or older. Yet, we start a Facebook page and we're up to 3,000 fans at this point, and it's kind of like what's the return on investment here? So just like we do, I think many others in the
university and throughout the United States right now that are trying to communicate with their target audience are finding that it just makes a lot more sense to go the electronic route where the resources and time investment, you know time investment can still be strenuous taking into account your strategy building and the hours that you put in, however, it's a lot more cost effective to do something on the Web or to do some type of social networking thing, as it would be to go print a thousand brochures. But that's a lot about kind of what I do and social media in our case has become a large part of our communications plan to communicate to those alumni because of the fact that we have such a large segment of young alums and we feel like that's a good place to target them, through social networking outlets and then also because of the budget constraints where we just don't have the funding to do as much print media as we would have in the past.

I don't know how long Clemson has been using social media, do you know when it all started and why Clemson decided to get involved?

I'm going to tell you the angle that I know, mostly for the Alumni Association and what I know about the university, and I will encourage you to talk to Jacob Barker. He will give you a little more information about that, but I'm on a small committee that has been formed, it's sort of our social networking team, so I'll give you the perspective that I've heard from them and then Jacob may want to clarify that some. The University itself, started a social networking presence probably in early 2009. But Clemson Alumni Association started a social networking presence in the fall of 2009, so we literally just got to the table August of last year, and a little sooner, we launched our Facebook page around July 2009 for the Alumni Association. Right now, we have three major outlets for Facebook. One for social networking, and I will tell you that we're probably strongest in the Facebook area right now. We have the Alumni Association page, we have the University page, and we have the Clemson World page, and all of these fan pages, all three of them, really have different purposes and goals in mind. The University communicates a lot of university headlines news, the Alumni Association we promote a lot about good stories or press releases, or things going on with alums, and also we promote a lot of our activities and events where alums can get engaged at their local level. The Clemson World magazine does a lot with the posting of a lot of Web extras and that kind of stuff on Facebook where you don't read it in Clemson World magazine, but you can go to their Facebook page and read more about it. But those were the earliest entries into the social networking realm for Clemson, with the university and the Clemson World probably being at the forefront of that, like I said probably being during 2008 or early 2009, really getting going and then with the Alumni Association coming in to the picture about summer of 2009. Since then, we have added other central portals. One of the biggest challenges, I think is that with social networking is the struggle between losing control. We were for so long, on our website, we could control our messages, we could control what we put out there, we control the fact that it is the official Alumni Association web page, because other people don't have access to it, the University servers and our domains and all that to put their stuff out there, but one of the first things we had to do with LinkedIn, we found out that someone else had the Clemson Alumni Association LinkedIn page, and we had to go to them and say, "Hey, we're really the Clemson Alumni Association, don't you think we should manage this?" And of course they said, "Sure, you just weren't here yet." So they turned over those rights and that
access to us to kind of manage that group. We had similar type things happen with our Facebook pages where you can go out and find thousands of what I would say are unauthorized Facebook pages associated with Clemson, but you can also find many that are, that we absolutely know about and we just haven't figured out quite yet how to link all of us together as fans of each other's pages, but under the Alumni Association umbrella, we have approximately 55 local Clemson clubs throughout the United States, everywhere from San Francisco to Birmingham, Alabama, to a New York club, to a D.C. club, so we have them all over the place and most all of these have their own fan pages on Facebook. Many of them also, not many, a couple of them might also have LinkedIn pages, but predominately they have Facebook pages. Then as another subset of the general alumni population, we have what we call Special Interest groups. So we have the Black Alumni Council, they have their own Facebook page. We have Women's Council, they have their own Facebook page, so I will tell you that I bet you, a lot of those were started well before there was any organized university authorized pages that came out like I was telling you about the Clemson University page, the Clemson World page and the Alumni Association page. I can almost guarantee all of these other little subgroups were working through their own individual pages because an individual has the power to say, "Hey, I can go out here and create my own group or fan page and others can join." And use that as their form of social networking. So that's when things started for us, for the university, and the university may answer differently from their perspective, but from our perspective, why we got in to it was really those two reasons I mentioned earlier: the growing number of young alumni, and at some point I'm sure we thought, "Well this social networking is for younger alumni." Now we know with Facebook particularly, the demographics are flipping and you've got more of our older alums who are reading about things there and we're having to move to things like Twitter to keep up with our younger alums. So, but at the time, it was more, "Well we've got to get out there because everybody seems to be out there." And there was kind of this rush to get out there. I will say that with us, we waited a while to get into the game, but when we did we had two or three of us set up to know that we were going to keep people engaged and we were going to keep fresh posts out there daily, weekly, but not just let it sit, and I find that a lot of times people create a page because they think they have to have one and then nobody really ever pays attention to it from the administrator side. So does that help? So we were like early fall 2009 with the Facebook page, since then, we have reclaimed our LinkedIn presence, if you will, and then also, just as a note, many of our subgroups have had a Facebook page, probably well before we had one as an Alumni Association, so one of our big goals right now is to figure out how to best reference each others' pages on all of our sites. So on ours, I would love to have a page where you could go and look at all of our subgroups that we say are authorized groups, like MBA Alumni Society, Black Alumni Council, Women’s Council, all of these alumni groups, young alumni, and be able to reference or link to their fan page.

Who or what group of people did the research or developed any sort of strategy building behind social media at Clemson?

Good question and actually, I've got some great documents I can give you. I could not get here on the team since I came from the private sector, from the company Rockwell in Greenville, for years, I came here in May of 2009, and when I got here, one of my first
meetings was with Jacob Barker, who if anyone on campus has a true official title that would make them a social media specialist, it would be him. He's the New Media Manager or New Media Director, it's supposed to be kind of social networking, video, new digital type stuff and he had just completed a project that I would say spanned 3 to 6 months where he, someone from our Graphics department, and about 2 or 3 other people, and someone from our News Services group, formed a small group and said basically, what is our strategy? And I'll print this off for you. Discussing what do we want to do as Clemson University, and from there, they established a few things. They established the university page, they established a YouTube presence, and for the first time yesterday, Jacob and I had been working on and he sent it out to this mini group that was kind of just an ad hoc team that had come together and said we all care about social networking so we'll try to support each other, and it wasn't really one main department, we were all over the University trying to do our own thing, let's come together and form some strategy so yesterday I got a note from him about new YouTube guidelines. We have a YouTube channel for the University. I think that's been thus far the best effort to truly consolidate everything on one channel, and I know YouTube is different than Facebook and everything else where maybe there you just let everybody do their own thing, but YouTube we have one channel for the University and we funnel all of our videos to Jacob who uploads them all there for us. If you go to our Alumni site or to the University main page, you're going to get the same YouTube link and it will take you to that same page. A couple things that might be of interest, the YouTube page, I got guidelines for that yesterday and I can send those to you, at least that has really evolved as a truly collaborative effort throughout the university that when anyone goes out to search for Clemson University, they're going to find all kinds of things, but that will be the main channel, and you'll see things from the Alumni Association there, the university there.... But the strategy behind it, I'd ask you to probably look at the overall university strategy and compare that to the Alumni Association strategy. When I came in May, Jacob felt, and one other web person got together and said, what do we want to accomplish with our Alumni Association page. What is our strategy there? What do we expect? Who's going to update it? Who's going to add the events? Who's going to add the wall posts? Are we going to, do we want to open the risk, the liability of letting other people post topics? Or are we just going to let them comment, and in our case we chose to just let people comment on the posts that we made. We don't let people post their own things, nor do we let them post their own pictures at this point. We have to ask them to submit them to us. So we have a little bit of strategy development, we sat down and talked through some of those things, again, that was mostly for the Facebook page. Now next week, interestingly, we have a LinkedIn presence, it's just been kind of lame and I really want to get that back up and work on our strategies for that. And we're going to be launching for the first time.... So at this point we have a very good YouTube presence where we are in collaboration with the university, Facebook we handle all ourselves and we.....working on a Twitter account. Currently it links to the Clemson News Room Twitter account and that's a really good one. That's our strongest university Twitter account right now. They put all the new press releases and headlines out there. For us, right now, we're tagged on to that one, but in the future, when we launch ours, I would update the Twitter link on our main page to go to the one that we create and start using as the Clemson Alumni Association, not as the News Room, but I think for Twitter particularly and the character
limitation, I think news headlines are pretty cool for that unless you're going to use it to say, "Hey we're at this event, check out the pizza we're eating," and take a picture type thing. I think otherwise, the news headlines are what people are going to look for, and links to link back. So we've been talking about that, and next week instead of us tagging on to the university's social networking presence and positions that are already there, we're going to step out on our own with Twitter, LinkedIn we're trying to again, try to bring that back. Right now we have a lot of activity going on between certain alums, but they've kind of taken over that LinkedIn account to talk about things related to jobs and that's great, but they're taking up the majority of the presence and you're not hearing from the Alumni Association on LinkedIn.

If there were a brand identity for the Alumni Association, what would it be? What’s the message, or the way you want people to view the Alumni Association?

We definitely want people to look at the Clemson Alumni Association as the Clemson family, that is our goal, our promise, if you will. We've just gone through a very intense brand study about who we are, but how we present ourself is very different from that and we came up with a new look and feel for our logo from what you see today that's very dry and more university official, we said, "Hey, we really want to set ourselves apart and we want to do this not only through our direct mail pieces and our brochures, but on our Web site as well. So what you'll see soon is a new logo and brand identity which I think speaks more to, you know, this is the Tiger Rag, you can see a lot in the Clemson World magazine that alumni all over the globe hold up in their pictures and this is more of a playful, I think approachable type of logo. This will be taking the place of the more dry one out on our Facebook page and also in all of our other areas. And our tag line we've used for years is, "Your Clemson Connection," because we want people to think about our biggest promise to them is we want you to connect with each other through all the club events, through everything in your local community, and we want to help you connect back to your Alma Mater. And so we have a new tag line that is a lot more emotional and I think fun than the "Clemson Connection," and it's "Hear us Roar." We are going to be gathering stories, more stories about, and tacking on to that brand, you know, how do others hear Clemson alumni, hear the Clemson family roar across the world? What are ways that that happens? So here's a story about an alumni who's done a great job at helping Haitian relief efforts, or here's an alum who's gone on and got his PhD in something and is helping with the cure for cancer, or whatever it may be, you know, hear us roar, and the things that we're doing. Today if you go out there we have a touch of that, but this is where, in our case, our new brand identity is going to be driven through our social networking outlet, but this is just now, this is going, the development of that is driving the social networking in, it's not like we had it in place and this stuff is already out there. We're going to be updating some of the images we have out there, that tone, the types of stories we post will all be centered around that Clemson family concept and "Hear us Roar." It will be much more personal and approachable, which we think is perfect for colleges, I'm sure CBBS they, I'm sure have a Facebook page probably, but, you know their stuff is probably going to be about the headlines, the news of the college to the downtown Greenville building and the MBA program moving there, that kind of stuff is going to be their headlines. We want to have more stories about alumni doing good. We want to have news from campus, we want to provide those connections, we
want people to hear about events where they can get connected with each other and with the university. So those are the kinds of things. And we feel like out of all the things we do, amazingly, most of the things are one-way communication. Like the direct mail, we send it out and we may hope for a response or some kind of call-to-action, but the one place where we really are networking and are doing exactly what we want to do are through these social networking outlets, like Facebook, like Twitter where folks can get engaged in the conversation. Like Facebook where they can comment on things that go out there. It really is more of a family environment that is the perfect fit for the type of branding we want to roll out there and it's not about just posting all of our headlines, it's about hearing back from the Clemson family and what they like and what they're doing in their local communities to make a difference.

When you go to the Clemson website and click on "Alumni," you see Net Community - can you tell me a little about that?

Sure, good question there and I continue to struggle with this. It's almost, first of all it's very unique to the Alumni world. If you go out to almost any alumni association website, amazingly, and this was new to me because I didn't come from an alumni association background, as far as employment, and so I started looking at other alumni associations, and almost all had a little link to their community. And I was like, "What does this mean?" You know, ultimately what it is a way for them to register and with a log in and password that they can get if they're an alum. They have access to additional pieces of information that they would not otherwise have. They can find things like a directory of other alums that have signed in to the site, they can share information online, it's Clemson Alumni Association's own social networking opportunity, really. The only problem I see with it is we don't have a means as of yet for folks to post messages back and forth, like any bulletin board ability, and so we really lack that, and so I really don't see this in any way taking the place of Facebook, but there's about four or five key pieces of information they get when they log in, and that's a real value add. They can sign up for a life-long email forwarding account, they can check the directory to see where other alumni might be to get their contact information, they can look for professional contacts by looking up, you know, all of the attorneys in Philadelphia, you know they can search for that in the directory, but it's only open to, and the data is only in there for those who have registered for the community. We have about 25,000 of our alums, or about a quarter, a little less than a quarter of our alums, who have, who use the vehicle called Net Community. So it's just a, it's a version of a social networking outlet, but it's solely branded and owned by us. I again, I don't see it, we have a lot of folks who register one time and never come back. They register because they want to get their life-long email forwarding account, or they register because they want to search for their long lost friend and they look at it one time and never come back, where I think Facebook is much more viable and sustainable because they continue to have a conversation there, which they're not doing in the Net Community area. It's a true, password protected area where you get more access to alumni information if you log-in. It helps us then because we're able to get updated contact information once they log-in. And then also from a giving perspective, which is our friends across the street, once you log in to the Net Community, you can get receipts on your giving history, you can make a gift if you would like but you have to register obviously so you're in a secure area to make a gift. It's an area that provides
special information for those who log in. It seems to be very common to all alumni associations, they all have something like this. We have a particular software program that's tied to our alumni database, and it's just a little plug-in tool, that allows, once you log in, it allows you to see your personalized information, as I've mentioned, you can update your contact information there, that's a big one that I probably did not mention, but all of the sudden it would say, "Hi, Heather. Here's the latest events going on in your local Clemson club." And it will list what it is, mine is the Fort Hill Clemson club because I live in Pendleton and I'm an alum. So I can see that and click on Fort Hill club to see my stuff, I could click on "Check the Directory," "Get a life-long email forwarding account," "Update my contact information," "Make a gift," "Check my tax receipts for gifts," so all of that again is that little VIP area and when I hit "Update my contact information," transparently, the information is pulled from our alumni database and it will say, "Michele, here's all of your address information, here's your current employer information, your email address, your husband's name, and on and on. So then I could go in and update that and the great news is that it updates our database seamlessly.

Back to a basic question, how would you define social media, or how do you think Clemson or the Alumni Association would define it?

I define social media as a conversation. And that's really my one word answer for that, but I will tell you one thing that's very intriguing to me, as someone who, at my age I've seen the introduction of social media and I've seen the popularity of it and the folks just rush to be a part of social networking. Some with strategy, some with no strategy behind it, and interestingly, I find that some folks, I really, embrace it, and I kind of understand that you can't control it, but I think that many marketing and communications professionals come from a background if you've been in the business for some time and you're not newly graduated and just hitting the scene, where people feel very, very afraid of it because the conversation can't be controlled and it can't be necessarily, although you can censor it in some way, it's not censored so things aren't polished and most people in our field who, again, are 35 or older are used to coming from a place where you do a video and it's not done on a flip phone or flip camera, you do a video and you have the chance to edit and can kind of control the message. Well that's not the case anymore, and I would say we're to a point where I think a lot of times when you get the posted, edited video that has been produced, people almost don't believe it, because it looks way too polished. You know, give me the raw footage from the local event and I know that that's somebody that's real and it's true data. So I think it's a conversation, we think that is the heart of what the Alumni Association does is try to have a conversation with alumni, so it's a perfect media outlet for us. I think I, my biggest challenge is to remember that that is all it is. You know, it's not something that we can control. The best we can do is try to keep engaged in the conversation, direct the conversation through certain questions and discussion posts, and keep people connected, so making sure that we have a means of joining the conversation, you know, from linking the Women’s Council page to ours or from making sure people are aware that our Facebook page is there or that they know our LinkedIn opportunities are there so they can do some professional networking, but it's all about different forms of conversation, and for the first time ever, it's definitely a two-way conversation where everyone is on an equal platform, it's not the Alumni Association
communicating to you the alumni and you have no form of response, it's, "Hey, we might as well all be sitting in a room together carrying on a conversation."

**Do you think social media is a good way or is useful for communicating a specific brand identity?**

I think so, I think it can be, I think it's, you have to be willing to know that unlike many forms of marketing, that you can't control the brand as much through social networking and for instance, Facebook, people have talked a lot about this recently, particularly with Facebook, but I also think about YouTube, you know, the further you get drilled down into YouTube, you lose any type of branding opportunity, if you're linking over to things, you know, everything is branded "YouTube," or "Facebook," and sometimes on Facebook you're out on the Clemson Alumni page and you click on somebody else's conversation or you get a corporate sponsored ad over to the right that may not be the type of advertiser that we would potentially hire or that we would potentially partner with or feel comfortable with being associated with our brand, but we have no control over that. So, can it be successful? It can, but I think the only way that it can be successful is through your conversation threads and your postings that you put out there. There are a lot of things that you have to let go of the control over. And that particularly with Facebook or YouTube, where you've got other brand competing, and the master brand is to me, really YouTube, or Facebook, it's not Clemson Alumni Association, we again, are on the same equal footing as any individual even though we're kind of an organization, you see the same kind of branding there as you would see elsewhere. But again, through posting of the right message, through showing that, you know, I think some people are so afraid of losing control of their brand that they don't even venture into the water, and I think that's even more dangerous because you have to have a presence and you just have to know that there's more risk involved, where as in the older days where you could have a lot more control over your brand.

**How has social media had a positive or negative impact on the Alumni Association or Clemson brand? Have there been any times where you've had to jump into a conversation that had already started?**

Sure, that's a good question. Most of the time I would say that it's extremely positive. We have had one situation in the almost full year that we've been live and very actively engaged with our Facebook page, and in that case, a person was venting some personal opinions on things that just weren't warranted and we did not censor that. We posted a couple response questions, we didn't censor them any, I could have removed the post, but at that point I didn't. And amazingly to me, the rest of the community defended the university's position on things much more than we ever had to, so we posted a few almost rebuttal questions. Ultimately we could have taken the path to say, "We're going to delete it." We could have taken the path to ignore it, but what we did was we said, it is what it is, someone has this opinion, others may. Now if it had been something very off the wall or crude or something that we really shouldn't have, I would have deleted it immediately, and luckily I've never had to do that. In this case I felt like the worst thing to do was for people who had seen that it was out there and then we just deleted it like we were censoring it because people can't ever disagree with the university or the Alumni Association. So instead, we posted a few questions back and amazingly, again, the
community members were the ones that came to the table and defended the position of the university in that case. We've had a lot of I think very positive responses where folks have rallied around certain situations. Folks have also said, "I would have never known about that death as soon as it happened or this particular newsflash as soon as it happened, if it hadn't been for my Facebook alert. So I think in the new world of social networking it definitely gives people constant access to information that they did not have before. It would have taken them, maybe the next day to read it in the paper or to get an email later that night. But this has been, I think for the most part, very positive and has brought people together and interestingly too, one thing that I didn't think about until you started asking me these questions, is though we are an organization and we try to keep our things very topical to the Alumni Association events and goals and objectives, I think one of the neat things is that you can learn more personally about each of their alumni members so if I'm reading a post from one of our alumni, I could click on her personal page and say, "Wow, I didn't know this about so-and-so." So we're getting a lot more interconnected and I think that's a very positive thing. It just helps build the sense of true family, which we believe is very unique about the Clemson Alumni Association and the alumni body, that we're more of a family than just a lot of individual people.

Do you have a way of measuring the success of your social media use?

We do keep track of those things. We have a monthly metric report, much of that is about the number of emails we send out, for instance last month we sent out about 42 different emails to different groups and subgroups, 6 of those probably went to all alums, which we have about 46,000 email addresses, and then below that they would have gone to a smaller subset just for the Greenville Clemson Club or Women’s Council, so we measure those kinds of things and then we read delivery rates and we measure click-throughs, we measure bounce rate, and then on a Web perspective, we measure unique hits to certain pages or key pages. And then for our social networking we have the just real basic stats, so we measure fan numbers for Facebook, do we measure anything else? I'll tell you, when we do a little promotion, like this year one very positive thing is we wanted to get a more collaborative message out about homecoming. We found that in the past, student organizations did their thing, the Black Alumni Association planned something, oh yeah, the graphics department is going to have an alumni event, CBBS is wanting to do something and everybody does their own thing, sends out all separate communication. This year, we taped our director, Will, off the cuff out on Bowman Field saying, "Hey behind me in just a few short weeks we're going to see all of the floats. I bet you can remember pomping the floats." So we did a two minute video and we sent it out over Facebook and we created an event called "Homecoming 2009" and it was a virtual event, because you know there's a million things you could have done, asking things like, "Are you coming to Homecoming?" And we had an overwhelming response, so many people responded that they were coming, some people said they weren't or they were going back and forth, you know, do you know if so-and-so is going to be in town, so that was a neat opportunity for us. So those specific things, we would also measure the number of hits to the landing page where that video was. So specific to Facebook, just the fans, but if we do a targeted promotion like that, we try to look at how many people clicked through to that video and we know they're coming from Facebook, so it's kind of a measurement of the success of that media as well. And what we did to help make it a collaborative effort
is we had a little downloadable PDF off of the event page on Facebook that had all of the
events summarized so I sent out an all call, "Hey tell me what ya'll are doing. Who's
having events for alums?" Everybody emailed it to us and we put it in a one page PDF
that they could link to all the stuff, everything from Tigerama to when Habitat builds, the
floats on Bowman, to all the alumni tailgates, so it was kind of a neat way to get the word
out. A lot of people said, "Hey, I used that sheet to plan our weekend. And we knew
everything that was going on Friday night through Saturday."

What do you see as benefits and pitfalls of using social media?

Benefits, I think return on investment is huge. Very, very low cost and time and resources
allocation involved with I think a great way to get messages out to people and contact our
people and our alums. That's one of the greatest benefits, to me. Another benefit is it's
just so easy. There's no other way, I have a hard time downloading pictures in emails
from people, Facebook and Twitter, and YouTube, they make it so easy to get images,
data, files, documents uploaded and put out to such a large number of people that
otherwise you don't have that opportunity. Another benefit, I think is that in all of our
other communication, there's not the opportunity for instant response and engagement,
and I think that interaction element is just critical, and I think that's why this has become
so popular because people want to have a voice and want to have their opinion heard.
You can't always do that when you send an email and you get to respond back to one
person. Here, you're in the conversation, you're sitting around a table and everyone hears
your point, so that is a benefit and sometimes a pitfall, but I think that's a benefit. And
there was one more key benefit that just crossed my mind.... The pitfalls, I would say,
that you can't control the message and you have to just be ok with that, you have to know
that's the new world of communication and you can do so many things. You can put your
right brand, feel, and look out there, you can do your best to help drive the conversation,
but for the most part, you just have to accept that you're along for the ride and to be open
to the fact that there will be different opinions from yours as an association or as an
organization and you have to learn how to deal with those. I think the other thing that's
critical and could be a pitfall, is you have to be very vigilant with this new networking, I
mean, they're instant, you have to be up to speed on what's going on in your social
networking outlet at all times because one day, if you miss one day of checking in on
what's going on out there or being a part of that conversation, number one, people start
losing interest because you're not putting anything new out there, and number two, you
could be missing something, a conversation going in a direction you don't want it to go
and it could very easily not be able to be brought back if you can't stay on top of these
things, so that can be a pitfall for some who are used to sending out a brochure once a
month or an email. And that's the other thing too, this is all instant communication so I
think again that could be a little bit of a pitfall and a little bit of a benefit. It's a great,
cheap, cost-effective way to get your message out as long as you understand that you're
not the owner of the response. You have to be able to be open to different forms of
responses. And also you have to be Ok that it's not the perfect, you know, you don't have
two weeks to prepare copy like you do a brochure, you have to understand that this new
form of media doesn't have to be perfect, well, yeah you need your words spelled right,
but I've heard people say, "Heck, if I have a typo out there at least it shows that there's a
real person behind this." But we do try to get our grammar and words right, but
otherwise, you know, you've got to off the cuff be able to post new information and not really wordsmith it to death or not have time to edit a video to perfection and produce it and put it out there. You have to go with the more raw footage or copy and text and, I think for some that could be a pitfall, because sometimes you are doing it a little more rushed so you could potentially have a mistake, on the other hand, I think it's a huge benefit because I think people really trust the stuff that gets put out there because it's honest opinion, it's usually done, again, with the video, being able to see something that's just been posted from an event that just happened. It's not being polished and edited and censored so people really get the true sense of what just happened at some type of event or some type of an engagement. Again, it may not always be perfect, or you may say, "Oh, I wish I would have said that differently," but you know, you just have to move forward and know that it's more about, you have to put more priority on the timeliness of the information, than on the editing of the information.

**Because there are so many channels that Clemson is using, who comes up with the information for each unique channel and audience?**

All different people, and at least now some of these people are coming together. So Twitter, is probably where we may be the most disjointed, where people have just started their own thing because they see a need for it, like how admissions has theirs, New Services has theirs, they all operate very independently. Facebook, we've got the three major pages, but there are thousands of subpages, but for the three major ones, we work very closely together, and where we get out content oftentimes, in my case, alums will send us information, or I'll see a release that just went out so I know it's going to be on the site, but everybody doesn't come to our site everyday so I'll post it because I think it would be newsworthy. Clemson World does a very good job, I think they're doing the best right now, of creating conversation and creating opportunities for engagement. Ours are a little more still in the old school "here's some news we thought you might like" or "hey look at this Tiger that's done good." They're doing more, "Hey, here's a photo we just took of Tillman Hall after the snow. Could you post any pictures of snow days you had at Clemson?" Or "Hey, here's a picture we just took of the beautiful sunset over Lake Hartwell. Send us your recommendations of pictures you'd like to see around Tiger Town and we'll go out and take the photos and post them here." So they're doing more things like that that we really haven't gotten into yet.
Appendix D - Interview Transcript - Claire McCoy

Jan. 25, 2010
Claire McCoy
AmeriCorps Volunteer Services Assistant
Habitat for Humanity of Greenville County

What is your involvement with Habitat's social media?

It wasn't my idea, necessarily to develop it, but I have implemented it. Our Director of Administrations is really into social media and wanted Habitat to be a part of it and I think they hired a new public relations firm and had a specific person who's in charge of that, so they put me on that, so I've been the one who has been updating the Facebook page. We had it where it was just set up as an individual, and so I switched it to a fan page and moved all the stuff and have been putting pictures up and making updates and I'll update stuff on the Twitter. We have a newsletter that we send out, and I don't put that together, but I make sure that it's getting sent out to all those. We also have a photoblog that's on our website and then our website. And I know they're working on setting it up to where the website is different, I haven't seen it yet.

Are you the person who comes up with the content?

I am.

Where do you draw from for that kind of information?

We had a meeting with me and the Director of Administration and the social media point person at the marketing firm and she was really good about sending articles and that kind of thing, so I did a write up on that. I've gone to a conference where they have Habitat's international social media experts there. That was a really good informative session. She had some things that I used her ideas and that kind of thing, that was really helpful. And then just whatever I thought people would be interested in.

What is the brand identity that Habitat is trying to communicate?

I don't necessarily know that specifically, I guess, but more just getting the name out there, letting people know we're out there. Also for volunteer opportunities, so people know how to become involved that way, and then I'll also post kind of news and updates so people will know what's going on, as well as, I know in our last newsletter there was something about donations so there's also a way for people who want to be involved that way, they know how to get information. But it's more about developing a presence online so that people can see what we're doing. And to get our name out there.

Are you the only person here in Greenville that is doing this for Habitat?

Yes, I'm the only one for Habitat of Greenville.

What is your definition of social media?
I guess, just from what I've picked up, and I'm really new at this, is, I guess it's kind of a way to interact with other people and kind of have a conversation over the internet to engage various people whether it's Facebook for individuals or an organization communication with customers or something like that.

**Do you think social media is a good tool for creating a brand identity? Why?**

It's a good tool because there are so many people who are active, I think one problem that we face is a lot of our donors and volunteers are older. Some of them don't even have e-mail, so that makes it a little more challenging, but in the same sense, it's also possible to engage a new, younger group of people to be interested in Habitat because that's kind of a smaller part of our...so I'd say it's definitely important in that way, and it's free to Twitter or to have a Facebook page, and so it's really cost-efficient.

**Why did Habitat decide to use Facebook and Twitter as opposed to other social media technologies?**

That was what we had when I came (to Habitat), so that's how we stuck with that. But at the same time I feel like those are the most widely used of the social media outlets so it makes sense to kind of plug in that way. And that's more like, we're kind of going for the normal average, Greenville County, because I know a lot of fans use MySpace and stuff like that because that's more targeted with the music and makes that easier for people to access, but we're going for more of a broad base (so we use Facebook).

**Does Habitat have a way of measuring the success of your social media?**

Kind of, but at the same time, we haven't really done it before, so there's not like really, a benchmark to judge from. As far as numbers go, we look at the number of fans we have on Facebook and we started out at zero when I switched it over (from an individual page to a fan page), and within a week we were above the number of friends that we had before, and now I think we're around 815 fans or something like that. And then I'll also use the link shorteners. That site will measure, so whenever I put a link in something, I'll run it through there and that will track how many views we're getting.

**Is it some sort of program you're using?**

Yep, bit.ly.

**What do you think are the benefits of using social media to promote a brand identity rather than using traditional means?**

Definitely cost is one, because sending out mailings is really expensive. Same with running an ad on television. I think Habitat is lucky just because the name is so recognizable that no matter what you do, people are going to recognize it so we don't necessarily have to try as hard as someone who doesn't carry that reputation. So it is easier to be established through social media.

**Has Habitat experience any pitfalls of social media?**
Not really. It's kind of been, I guess it's slow to pick up. We'll sometimes get people to comment, so, because it all is so new, I don't think so. I mean, I'm still figuring stuff out so I probably don't update as much as I should, especially with Twitter because, and I'd say a downfall is definitely, we're not in a build season right now and so there's not as much to put out there basically because we don't have pictures of the build sites and we don't have information about what's going on and we're still planning with partners and working on schedules and that kind of thing, so it's kind of a dead time. So it's seems like we don't really have a presence at the moment, so I guess that would be a downfall as far as the way we run, but it should pick back up in the spring.

You mentioned that Habitat was already using Facebook before you started to work on it, do you know when Habitat of Greenville started using social media or why they decided to jump in and get involved?

No, I think someone maybe two years ago had set it up. I mean, maybe, just because, I know it was a guy who was an AmeriCorps member and he was young, just out of college, so I think that's something that would appeal more to him and he probably just thought it was good to get involved. I can find out for you and see.

Do you think that adopting social media was a good thing for Habitat to do?

I mean, I would say so. I don't really see a negative so far that's come with it, I mean, it's getting our name out there in one other outlet, and there don't seem to be really any negatives because we're not spending any money on it and it's not that hard. It's user-friendly, so it's like, why not?

Is there anything else about Habitat of Greenville's brand identity or social media that you would like to speak about?

Not that I can think of. I feel like because ours is so new, that it's hard to tell if it's working, but I do know that the Habitat International person who is in charge of social media for all of Habitat said that a lot of chapters have had a hard time transitioning...people are responding on Facebook and commenting and being involved in the site to actually volunteering or doing something like that. And I'll link to the registration system, but there's no way for me to know if someone found that on the site and just decided to volunteer.

Is that just one person, or do they have a team for Habitat International?

I think they just have one person, but that's her job, complete social media, that's all she does. I can e-mail her name to you and I can e-mail you the contact information for the Director of Administration if you have any other questions.
Appendix E - Interview Transcript - Courtney Tessler

Jan. 25, 2010
Courtney Tessler
Founder and Owner
Iced: The Upstate Cupcake Cafe

I know Iced has a really fun brand, so I was wondering if you could tell me how you created that identity.

It really started with our logo. We knew we wanted to include "Iced" somewhere in our logo and in our name, and we had a graphic designer come up with our logo and that kind of set everything from there. Once we had that, we used those same colors and everything, and we used the image from that logo with the name "Iced" to pull everything together so it was one thing that people would think of, one thing that related to, very similar to McDonald's an their Golden Arches, you know, keep it simple where, an independent font, something people haven't seen before, it was a custom created font for us, so that was where it started.

Why did Iced decide to get involved with social media?

Really because everybody's doing it and if you don't do it you're losing out on that customer base. People who are very connected with their phones, everything being so connected now, as far as Facebook and Twitter and those things being accessible from things like iPhones and Blackberries, you don't have to use a computer to see those things. The same pictures pull up. So when people like something, they let other people know about it and if there's not a way to link to that business, you're less likely to see traffic from that comment or from that referral. It just really goes back to people seeing things repetitively as the best way to get people to come in the door.

Who decided to get involved with social media?

It was me. And a lot of that came back to, again, it's another place that people are always on. They have their own advertising avenues, as far as Facebook, you can place ads on pages and market to people within your group or within a fan page, so there's a little bit of targeting that goes along with that. Just like doing a phone book advertisement that only targets a certain area, like Greer, or doing a magazine, which only targets a parent, or a bride-to-be, so it's the same idea, just using the Internet.

Who implements the social media at Iced? Whose voice is it?

It's me, it is right now, yes.

How would you define social media?

Social media is, to me, anything that can be shared between people in a way of more than just word of mouth. We're talking about being able to share a picture of the cupcake they had, for example, or share a picture of the party that they had, or being able to share a
video. People can express themselves without having to use words with social media because it's about experience and not necessarily about what people say they're experiencing.

**Do you think that social media is an appropriate tool for creating a brand identity?**

I think it is, but I think it's also on the same plane as any other type of advertisement. You still have to market to a specific group. The upside to Facebook and Twitter, and things like that is, you can have a customer come in, or visit the website and become a Facebook fan, or a fan of your page, and anyone who is then one of their friends will see that, so you're not having to direct your marketing to a friend of a friend of a friend, but they're still able to see somewhere in their communication or their social network, there is someone that they know who has either been into our website or been in to the store, so that they can say, "Hey, what was your experience?" So, it's targeted the same way as doing a phonebook advertisement, you have an idea of who you're trying to reach, but it goes further because unlike me telling you that something is a really great product or such and such is a really good place and you may or may not tell anyone else because that was first hand information, with social media, you're going to see it repetitively from multiple people in your same group and then you pass it on more readily. So it goes back to that seven times rule. It takes a person an average of seven times to commit something to memory from either seeing it or hearing it. The more you're out there the better it is.

**What are the benefits of using social media?**

Direct communication. Because there are so many people using it, they feel a little bit more personal when you're connecting with them yourself. If, for example, McDonald's were to make a post, I wouldn't feel the same way as a local business making a post, because they are paying someone specifically to sit there and make those posts who has no direct relationship with the person receiving them. Whereas with a local or small business like us, that post is going to mean a lot more because when they come in, they're seeing where it's actually coming from, they're meeting the people who initiated that, even if it's just telling them what our flavors are for the day. It's much more personalized than if it's coming from somebody in a big pond that they're never going to meet. They're not connected with the product. There's that communication factor between the people on our page or viewing the page and even if they don't actually come in, they may talk to us on the phone. So it's much more personal than doing radio advertisement or television marketing.

**How do you measure the success of your use of social media?**

We don't really have a way, and to be honest with you we're still working on getting a regular routine to set those up and update our pages and make sure that we're giving the most accurate information and at the same time, not overwhelming people. Because if you, Twitter for example, people don't want to hear every 5 minutes what's going on in a business, they might not even want to know every day. You kind of have to plan how you're going to target that marketing, with e-mail blasts, like we also use those, with people to sign up for that. We try not to send more than one a month because we don't want to overwhelm people with more information than they can deal with or want to deal
with. The nice thing about Facebook is that you can run ads and kind of see how many clicks you're getting, you can get responses that way, directly, kind of like Google pay-per-click type advertisement, but with the social networking pages you can list it to only be seen by friends of your group members or friends of your friends instead of targeting people who are already on your list. You can branch that out. And that's a good way to see where people are finding out about us, and if it's actually bringing them in the door.

**Have you been able to determine if what you've done with social media has had a positive or negative impact on your brand?**

You know, in this economy it's really tough to market to anyone with any type of fashion, post cards in the mail letters, emails, social networking. We can see where people are using the offers and coming in and referring a friend, but you can't track that repeat business from those. You can find out how someone found out about you and they can say, "Oh, I found you on Facebook," or "It was your blog," or "Another person I know is related to your site somehow or links to your site," but after that first time that they come in, there's no way to track if that's what brought them in the second time. If it was what we did or another offer or if it was another referral from somebody else that got them to come back in a second time, so you can see the initial response, but you don't always see past that. You can't always track who is seeing those ads either. You know generally what population you targeted, but who's actually coming in from the two or three hundred people that clicked on the ad, we may get 50 of those who actually come in during that promotion, or we might get 5 and the rest of them come after that. So you can see a result of people looking at it, but you don't always have a way to track the results of the long-term effects of them coming in the door.

**What would be some pitfalls of social media that you've experienced?**

I think the big thing is too much information. And then you have to have a certain amount of control to not make it too personal, especially with branding. When you want to look and feel like a well-organized structure and company, who is professional, you don't want to have personal comments, which is where a lot of businesses, I think, fail. When you start bringing politics and religion into anything you alienate a certain group of people, and so the tough thing is keeping the bias out of your postings, or even off of the wall. It's one thing for you to post about your beliefs on a wall and mention us, it's another thing for that to be on our wall, so there has to be a certain amount of censorship to not alienate another customer. Because not everyone has the same beliefs or the same opinions of things, or sees things the same way, so I think that's the difficult of social networking, is keeping it informative and fun and personable without mixing in things that people don't need to be knowing or may alienate a population of people.

**Before you started using social media at Iced, did you do any sort of research on it or work on any strategies?**

Not in particular, I knew from my experience using social networking, personally, what I paid attention to, knowing what was out there, how I could use those sites to market better. You know, a blog is a place where I can give more detail than a Facebook posting, so for more information you can visit here, linking those things together is important if
you're going to do it in one, you have to cover all of them. But as far as a strategy, no, I think there's a lot of trial and error with that. Every business is going to be different, every brand is going to be different. What works for me will probably not work for the children's consignment store next door, it's a different target customer, it's a different income level that they're targeting, so in the big picture, yes it can be used for many, many things, but each individual is going to have to try different things to find what's really going to work for them. And just general marketing research helps. Knowing how to word an offer and whether giving some things for free to get the person in the door is a profitable advertisement. In some cases it is, and in others it's not. Just like any other advertisement, those have to be considered with social media and the online networks.

**Do you have a way of tracking traffic to or through your social media?**

We do and I use that through my own hosting company they provide me with those statistics. It will show me if you posted about me in a blog and somebody clicked on the link to our page, it'll show me how many key words we popped up for, it'll show me how many clicks from this site to our page, how many people opened e-mails and visited our website from one of the e-mails, so there's a lot of information that I can see and track, but again, that doesn't actually put anything to the person walking in the door. And you can see independent IP addresses, and that makes a difference, you can see unique visitors, but again, you could have a unique visitor from California who just stumbled across or was doing research. So there is a lot of variations in the traffic that you see on the Internet. It's not going to be 100% accurate, that's just reality, for what your traffic is actually representative of that's coming in the door.

**Do you think that adopting social media was the right step for Iced?**

I do, I think every business needs to have a presence on the Internet and that's the type of Internet advertisement, it's free advertisement, so Twitter and Facebook and those free sites, which are powered by advertisements, give you a presence in more than one location. To sign up and be on Google Maps is great, but if that's the only place you're listed, you're not necessarily going to get picked up by somebody's blog who's searching the Internet. So the more places you put your name or your brand or your product out there, the more likely you are to see a result. Same thing, you know, the more print advertisement you do, the more likely you are to have people coming in the door, but that's cost advertising versus the free advertisement and people, again back to technology, want everything now, they want it quick and easy and they want it to come to them. They're not necessarily going to go pick up the phonebook to go look for your number, but they are going to get on their phone or go to their computer and Google search because it's instantaneous. So there are certain forms of advertising that are hit or miss, just like it is with social media, but you're paying a lot more for that miss.

**What would you say is Iced's brand identity or personality?**

Basically our branding is our cupcake, it's all about the product and about how the product is provided, the service behind it, but ultimately with any food item it's about that final finished product that people are going to taste which is why our logo has a cupcake in it and everywhere you search for us you're pretty much going to see that logo pop up
as a screen page or as the main photo for a blog or anything we want people to see that image and that unique script of font for our name, and recognize that they've seen it somewhere else or that it's unique, it's not just another cupcake and another Times New Roman font. So from that respect, when it comes to how we've branded and how we put that across, it's really just having the consistency, having one thing that people can relate back to. A lot of people think that we're a big franchise, but we're independent and that's what we like because it brings people in the door to try something and when they find out that we're not a big franchise, it's a little bit more heartwarming because local businesses are supported by their community, so really, what we're about and what we're trying to create is that family-friendly, something fun, something different, but not the same thing you'd get anywhere else. But again, back to just focusing on just our product, which is a cupcake.

I thought the same thing when I originally ran across your brand. I was very impressed to learn that you were a local business.

You have to spend money to make money and giving the proper image upfront, that first impression means everything. If you met us at an event somewhere, Saturday Market, which we've participated at, which is downtown Greenville, but we didn't have a website to go along with it, you probably wouldn't seek us out for future products, you would just see us down at the market, but if you saw us down at the market and then went home and found us online, and saw all of the other things that we could do, you're that much more likely to come in to the store. So, the Internet is a second location to bring people in to your physical location. If we don't, businesses and individuals alike, put something in every possible location that we can, we're missing an opportunity, but again you have to spend some money to be able to see that come back and we decided to spend that money on that website versus print advertisement because what's online is going to stay there and it's shared through social networking and through e-mails now, much more rapidly than any magazine or phonebook or radio commercial. So dollar for dollar, it's more, from a business perspective, it's a more reliable investment because you can track those results even if they're not 100% accurate.

Is there anything significant about your brand or use of social media that we haven't talked about?

You know, again every business is different. In this area we're a new concept. A lot of people had only heard about a cupcake shop on television and those were a select few of the population in this area. So being new and having a strong brand from the beginning gave us an advantage. If we were just to have opened up and picked out a name the week before we opened and not been listed online or not been in a phonebook, or not been on Google search, or not been on Facebook and all these other accessible places, we wouldn't have stood near a chance of survival because it's not something that people went looking for, we had to put it out there for them to stumble across and give the community the idea of a cupcake shop in Greenville. So from that respect, having a strong logo and a strong website brought people to us that happened to find us that weren't seeking us out, and if we hadn't had those things, no one ever would have had that opportunity to stumble across us. It's not like 25 and 30 years ago when you had your kids get in trouble and you made them read the phonebook or you know, you punish them by making them do
tedious work, because people aren't just going to go thumb though the phonebook and find the cupcake shop, but if you're searching online and it happens to pop up, you're going to go and look at what it is. And a lot of people were just very amazed to find that there was a cupcake shop in the area and then they came in just to find out what one was. So that's a big difference, having that strong look brought more people in the door than if it was just a blog and it was a home-based business. So branding has a lot to do with the success of a business, that's my opinion.

When did Iced get started?

We incorporated the business in July of 2007. It took us a year to actually open our doors at this physical location, so that was not until June 2008. So we're coming up to the close of our second year in June. So for us, that first year was really important because we'd already had a year invested. So again, it goes back to that free - anything that we could do that didn't cost an extra five or ten or hundred or two hundred or a thousand dollars, was worth a try and trial and error is what you have to do, especially with a new concept. Something like this, like I said, hasn't been done in this area, there's not one on every corner like there is a pharmacy. We're not competing with just any other business or another cupcake shop so, it was important to be in as many places as we could even if they weren't profitable places to be. If it was free it didn't matter! So and you know it (social media) gives people a lot of opportunity that they wouldn't otherwise have to expand their branding, because you can't do that in a lot of other ways.

Do you have any future plans for implementing social media?

We'll continue with it the way we have been, you can do polls and all kinds of things now. And again I don't want to overwhelm people, you want to keep a group of people who don't feel bombarded with the information, they can go and find it when they want it or might stumble across it as kind of a reminder, not to push a product or a service on people so my feeling is just to keep it very simple, just enough information to get people to come looking for more. You know, using Twitter and Facebook we will probably start to post our flavors for the week on Mondays, just to give people an idea of what's coming this week and to find out specific days to check the website. But that's a way I feel that we won't overwhelm people because one text message on their cell phone for social networking a week, so that's something I'd like to do. When it comes to the blog, when we start doing more and more events, whether it be bridal shows or downtown for Saturday Market, just do a weekly post about the Market. The nice thing about a blog versus Facebook and Twitter, is yes people can subscribe to it, but most cases they don't subscribe to it, it's just something they go and check occasionally, so you can post as many things and as many times as you want to and it's not directly saying, "Hey, come read this article." Where as with Facebook and Twitter, if you're going to make a post they're going to see it when you make it. Facebook pages are a little bit less in your face that way, but Facebook messaging it goes to them and they can decide not to receive that anymore and then they never remember to go back to the page again. So there's the upside to the blog, so people who visit the website can click over and see, they don't have to go and read every article so they don't get bombarded with information. It's more by choice.
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