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The Role of Exigencies in Marketing: A Rhetorical Analysis of Three Online Social Networks

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THE ROLE OF EXIGENCIES IN MARKETING: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF
THREE ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS

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
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Accepted by:
Dr. Tharon Howard, Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

Over the last few years, the use of online social networks has increased exponentially, and some of these “virtual communities” are among the most visited sites on the Internet. With this boom in popularity has also come a rise in the need for marketing within these spaces, and very little academic literature exists on how to best utilize this new and budding arena for advertising ventures. Traditional business approaches to marketing are no longer adequate because of the radicalization of new media found within online social networks. This thesis, therefore, provides a new metric of success for social network marketing, supplemental to the more traditional cost analysis that most marketing developers currently use. Three separate, distinctly different instances of marketing within online social networks are analyzed using a rhetorical analysis, derived from Bitzer’s concept of the “rhetorical situation” as well as contributions from Vatz and Consigny, among others. The results of these analyses show that an important determination of the success of a marketing campaign within virtual communities is an accurate assessment (during campaign development) of the exigencies of the situation, both on behalf of the rhetor and the audience. The results also show that the most successful forms of

marketing within online social networks are those that offer similarities between the rhetor's exigencies and the audiences' exigencies.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated, in part, to all of my friends, family, and professors. You all have helped add to it, knowingly or unknowingly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Of course, this thesis would not be possible without the wonderful guidance of my Graduate Committee. Thank you Dr. Howard, for your careful analyses of my work and helpful suggestions; thank you Dr. Katz, for diving head-first into a tremendous undertaking upon your arrival at Clemson; and thank you Dr. Jones, for all your help and support throughout the years. The time and effort that you all have spent in helping me make this thesis the best it could be will not be forgotten.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

“Social network” is certainly not a novel term, as we are all in some way or another part of at least one social network (and most likely several simultaneously, both “real” and online). However, with the rise in availability and technical capabilities of the Internet, *online social networks* have enjoyed a boom in recent years. As of July 2006, *myspace.com* (an online social network) has surpassed such Internet behemoths as MSN, Google, and Yahoo! in online traffic to become the most often accessed web site in North America (Baker). This milestone is the culmination of MySpace’s traffic increase of 132% over the last twelve months, and a staggering increase of 4,300% over the last two years (Baker).

While the reasons for the recent, prodigious increase in popularity are varied, online social networking has been in existence for as long as computers have had networking capabilities. In fact, the formation of the Internet itself has always centered around the idea of a community as the first email discussion list was created in 1975, followed by USENET bulletin board discussions that came into existence in the late 1970's (Naughton 178). These developments have since fostered individual bulletin board systems, instant messaging, and most recently, “blogging”

and online communities that incorporate a “personal ad” style, like facebook.com and myspace.com.

Although the factors behind the meteoric rise in popularity of online social networks are varied, the changes in communication practices that have resulted can not be denied. In an age where TiVo and pop-up blockers have hit the advertising world hard by allowing would-be audiences an escape route from exposure to advertisements, many companies are now looking to online communities as an innovative, fresh, and “hip” way of targeting particular demographics with perfectly tailored messages.

In the past, marketing professionals have had very limited channels through which they can spread their persuasive messages. Should a marketer select television as an advertising medium, they must then choose between a number of different networks, timeslots, and dates to advertise on, many of which may prove inappropriate for the particular message or target audience. Newspaper advertising is much the same, as marketers must select newspapers based on geography and where the target audience is physically located. With radio, another traditional form of advertising, marketers must consider the same choices as with television, as well as the geographic choices newspaper advertisers face. The Internet, and more importantly, virtual communities, have completely reshaped the entire marketing canvas by offering almost limitless possibilities of audience segmentation and specialization, all in

one place. As we will see, it also addresses the human, social need to belong to a community in a way that traditional advertising does not.

Another important characteristic of advertising within social networks that deviates from more traditional forms of marketing is that of *immersion*. In a normal rhetorical situation, a rhetor is aiming messages *at* an audience. In a digital environment, however, the user is completely engulfed by the network itself and is constantly surrounded by consistent persuasive messages. This characteristic is important, and perhaps more powerful than traditional forms of advertising in which many potential consumers can anticipate when a persuasive message is approaching and allow themselves to escape exposure to it.

The types of marketing messages being sent via online social networks are as assorted as the senders themselves, from giant corporations to aspiring musicians. This thesis, therefore, explores three very different uses of marketing in online social networks, examines the individual rhetorical situations, and attempts to assess, from a rhetorical standpoint, why some are successful, and some are not.

Literature Review Impact of Social Networks

The Internet is forcing communications practices to evolve, simply by fostering communities where they could not exist before. In fact, Barry Wellman argues that the Internet should be seen and understood in a broader social context, and that the technology is only adapting to social changes (Wellman et al. 2003). Wellman goes on to explain that

although the Internet is changing communication and human interaction in ways many never imagined, these changes are no different than the inventions of high speed transportation, the Interstate system, or long-distance telephony (Wellman et al. 45). Regardless of which school of thought one subscribes to regarding how technology and the idea of “community” interact with and change one another, one thing is for certain—*marketing and advertising methods must grow and adapt to these changes.*

Much like the aforementioned innovations that eliminate or curtail the need for proximity, the growth of the Internet has led to a recent explosion in the world of online social networks, or virtual communities. Although the rapid increase in use of online social networks has been phenomenal, it did not surprise everyone. As early as 1978, when home computers were practically nonexistent, Roxanne Hiltz and Murray Turoff predicted and described the vast possibilities for socialization and information exchange (or “Computer Mediated Communication”) in an electronic world, and even suggested that electronic communication may be more efficient than face-to-face communication (137). In 1993, Howard Rheingold, a long-time specialist of electronic networks (who is also credited with coining the term “virtual community”), piggy-backed these ideas by predicting the formation of a new type of community that would bring computer users together online, congregating around shared interests and values. In addition, these networks would also allow

creation of ties of support and friendship that could eventually lead to face-to-face interaction; Rheingold claims that this type of community would allow “unbounded sociability” (248).

The online social networks of today exactly facilitate these connections, allowing users to label other individuals as “friends,” a connection that may be described as a “strong tie.” In fact, Mark Granovetter defines the strength of ties as a “combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy, and the reciprocal services that characterize the tie” (1361). Thus, the reciprocity of two individuals characterizing each other as “friends” may be considered strong tie relationships. But users of these networks may also join “groups” of common interests with other users they do not know, creating what Gladwell refers to as “weak ties” (54). Weak ties, Gladwell argues, are perhaps the most important type of connection with another individual or group of individuals, since those connected by strong ties are typically embedded within the same social structures and “occupy the same world as you do” (54). Therefore, by the time that strong ties have been forged, the opportunity to strongly be influenced by one another has come and gone (thus, the opportunity to create and to introduce new needs to each other has passed). Individuals embedded in strong tie relationships are obviously more closely connected to each other, and because of this, there is less space for advertisers to *create* new needs. Those connected by weak ties, therefore, have the potential

to be more influential (and influenced) by new ideas, technology, products, and needs—a dream audience for marketing professionals representing various entities.

The concept of marketing toward particular interest groups within online social networks is a potential “gold mine” that Apple Computers has already realized, and made efforts to market accordingly (apple.com). In July 2006, Apple and facebook.com created an alliance that would allow Apple to give away up to 250 million free songs from its iTunes service, but in order to be eligible to win, users must be members of Facebook’s “Apple Students” group (apple.com). Marketing efforts using these weak-tie common interest groups within social networks are an “opportunity for brands to build a relationship with their users,” according Melanie Deitch, facebook.com’s director of marketing (marketingvox.com). Social networks like Facebook and MySpace are, by and large, immense collections of weak ties, and utilizing the influential possibilities of weak ties through these networks is a powerful concept that may alter marketing practices within them.

In addition to understanding the types of ties that can exist within online social networks, it is also imperative to understand the necessity that exists to belong to communities like the social networks this thesis will analyze. According to Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary, humans have a psychological need to not only belong to some sort of social network, but form attachments readily and heavily resist the dissolution of

existing bonds. The need to belong to some sort of social circle, of any kind, is “powerful, fundamental, and extremely pervasive” (1). Given this deep need to belong, John Suler adds that online relationships have a great importance in human psychology because “cyberspace offers a vast number and variety of groups to join” and “can satisfy almost anyone’s need to belong to a particular group of like-minded people” (391). Suler also notes that it is easier in an online environment to join multiple social groups than it is in real life, both by means of convenience and by addressing different aspects of one’s personality (392). Online social networks are not only entertaining, informative, and inherently social, but they also address a deep-seeded psychological need: the need to belong! And they may do so comparably to face-to-face interactions. It is this quality that makes online social networks unique, as other more traditional forms of media like television and newspapers do not address this need for belonging. Marketers will undoubtedly continue to venture into virtual communities in the future to advertise and capitalize on this attribute.

Method of Analysis

The idea of using the ever-popular online social networks for marketing goals is rather obvious, but this thesis requires an analytical tool to investigate the differences in how these unique uses of online social networks are achieving marketing success (or not achieving, whichever the case may be). Examining each of these individual entities

can be very beneficial to a marketing professional who is attempting to determine how a campaign is to be implemented (if at all), but the question remains as to how these marketing campaigns should be analyzed. Borden coined the term “Marketing Mix” in 1964 as a simple heuristic for planning and evaluating marketing campaigns (3), using what he referred to as the “four P’s.” These “P’s” are Product, Price, Place, and Promotion, and although the concept was developed over 40 years ago, they are still used regularly in marketing even today (odi.org.uk). One element of the “mix” that is notably absent are the needs of both the marketer and the audience in question. Even though later scholars have added up to three more “P’s” to the mix (Booms and Bitner 48; Fifield and Gilligan 12), none specifically focuses on these needs.

One rhetorician, however, who gives us a tool to analyze and critique the various facets of marketers’ needs is Lloyd Bitzer. Bitzer’s discussion of the rhetorical situation may be of use here as a heuristic to analyze three examples of marketing within online social networks. We may view these uses of marketing as rhetorical situations through Bitzer’s lens by considering each need for marketing as a condition that exists independently of the rhetoric used. Bitzer claims that the “situation” spawns rhetoric in much the same way that a question generates an answer (303). We may view these instances of marketing as situational within the contexts of online social networks. As previously stated,

various scholars have different ideas of how social networks are changing the landscape of communication and changing the ways in which communities function, but the idea that these networks are fostering a new rhetorical situation is where Bitzer's analysis truly fits this thesis.

Bitzer goes on to describe these "rhetorical situations" as having three distinct characteristics: exigency, audience, and constraints. Exigency refers to the speaker or company's (or audience's) insufficiency, or the necessity for action (or marketing). Audience is, of course, who receives the messages, or to whom the messages are targeted. Constraints refer not only to the restrictions in given situations of the speaker, but also restrictions of the audience in receiving the message and acting upon it.

By examining different uses of online social networks in terms of the exigencies, audiences, and constraints, and how the individual entities are attempting to accommodate to them, we can formulate why some marketing efforts using virtual communities are successful and why some are not. This thesis, therefore, examines the different uses of marketing through online social networks by three different companies; it examines the exigencies they created (or failed to create) and exigencies they overcame (or failed to overcome). This type of rhetorical analysis has worked well for other scholars investigating a wide array of topics (Hoover 238; Kenny 16) and how proper examination of the rhetorical situation can lead to successful rhetoric. Also, Bitzer's rhetorical

situation works well as a heuristic since this thesis examines the marketing efforts from an outside, consumer perspective (i.e., lacking confidential information about the different entities' respective marketing departments) and uses mostly online material and public record. As mentioned earlier, marketing advertisements address (or attempt to address) particular shortcomings that situations (or potential consumers) may have, and both weak and strong social ties can help to facilitate these changes. Bitzer would claim that the exigency exists, and marketers must concoct a message accordingly. However, Richard Vatz is first to criticize Bitzer's idea of the "rhetorical situation," replacing situation-based rhetoric with rhetor-based rhetoric. According to Bitzer, rhetoric is completely confined to the situation at hand, while Vatz argues that rhetoric precedes the situation and in turn, defines it. Thus, while Bitzer claims that exigencies exist and rhetoric follows, Vatz argues that the rhetor can create exigencies and thus apply rhetoric to them—"no situation can have a nature independent of the perception of its interpreter or independent of the rhetoric with which he chooses to characterize it" (154).

As Wellman argues, the Internet (and social networking within the Internet) is changing communication and human interaction, and it is the use of this medium of social connection and communication—this new rhetorical situation—that we wish to analyze. The following chapter goes into more detail about the use of Bitzer's concept of the rhetorical

situation as an analytical tool, and how this analysis helps to explain why some marketing uses of online social networks are successful, and are worthwhile uses of marketing resources, and some are not. Chapter Two also introduces the three separate cases that are used for analysis via this method.

CHAPTER TWO METHODS

Although online social networking has been around as long as computers have had networking capabilities, little academic research currently exists on the analysis of marketing practices within these networks. Thus, this thesis will help to fill that gap by applying rhetorical theory to three distinct and different uses of marketing within online social networks in order to determine, with explanations, why some are successful, and some are not. While Chapter One introduced the concept and popularity of online social networks and the ever-growing potential of marketing therein, this chapter explains the method of analysis and introduces the three cases of marketing within online social networks examined in later chapters.

The thought of using rhetorical theory to analyze marketing examples may seem suspect, but the definition of rhetoric (via Aristotle) is the “ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion” (qtd. in Bizzell 36). Thus, persuasion is a common factor between rhetoric and marketing, and one of the chief goals of marketing is indeed recognizing the best way to persuade members of the free market to “buy in” to the seller’s goods and/or services. An understanding, then, of rhetoric and its many applications could be of vital use to those in the marketing profession, and a rhetorical analysis

of advertising efforts can yield important information to marketing professionals.

Also, there are numerous possibilities to extend the work performed here into different directions, perhaps using different cases to analyze, using a modified method of analysis, or a completely different rhetorical perspective altogether. To the marketing practitioner, the findings presented here will be of use in developing future campaigns in the online world of social networks. The analyses I perform should yield important findings into the success or lack of success in various marketing efforts, and the results of my research should possess the ability to not only be of use within the contexts of this particular study, but to also project themselves into other areas of marketing research as well. It is also my intention that this thesis be of some use as a “guide,” so to speak, to the marketer, for use in creating campaigns in virtual communities.

Theoretical Lens

As discussed above, marketing efforts can be seen as attempts to persuade an audience. Thus, these instances of marketing can be considered rhetorical situations. Lloyd Bitzer, in fact, expounds on the term “rhetorical situation” and attempts to create a greater understanding of the importance of this “situation.” Bitzer believes that in the realm of rhetoric, the situation itself is often overlooked and is of utmost importance, and that the players involved in the situation are

heavily influenced by the surrounding contexts, and therefore can never escape them. Rhetoric, he claims, comes into existence because of the situation that surrounds it, much like a stimulus/response relationship. Bitzer also likens rhetoric as an answer to a question, claiming that just as an answer with no question is fruitless, rhetoric with no surrounding situation is pointless (303). Thus, according to Bitzer, perhaps the most important element of rhetoric is the situation itself.

Bitzer elaborates on this idea by then breaking the rhetorical situation down into three distinct elements. A complete rhetorical situation, Bitzer says, consists of:

- an exigency,
- an audience,
- and various constraints, both on the speaker and the audience.

Exigency

Houghton Mifflin's thesaurus defines "exigency" as "a condition of being in need of immediate assistance" or "something asked for or needed" (answers.com). However, according to Bitzer, an exigency is a "defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing that is not as it should be" (304). Bitzer's interpretation of "exigency" differs from the more mainstream dictionary definition in that it is much more narrow, mechanistic, philosophical, and ethical. By referring to the exigency not just as "something needed," but rather as an "imperfection" or a "defect" that requires repair, Bitzer implies that

not only is the situation inadequate, but it is somewhat of a responsibility for the rhetor to alleviate it with rhetoric.

In his definition of exigency, Bitzer also notes that persuasion must be a feasible objective; that is, the exigency must be a possible and plausible catalyst for rhetoric to occur. According to Bitzer, “rhetoric is pragmatic; it comes into existence for the sake of something beyond itself; it functions ultimately to produce actions or change in the world” (302). Thus, if the end goal of someone’s persuasive discourse is not possible and can not produce actions or change in the world, per Bitzer, it is not a part of a rhetorical situation. Consequently, the importance of exigency is rather obvious—without a reasonable need for persuasion or rhetoric, rhetoric and a rhetorical situation can not exist.

However, it must be made clear that in this thesis, Bitzer’s three elements of the rhetorical situation are used, but some of his ideas regarding the rhetorical situation are not. As Bitzer viewed all rhetoric as entirely dependent on the situation, many other scholars and theorists have differing views of rhetoric, and some alternative ideas may help an analysis of successful rhetoric. Richard Vatz was one of the first to criticize Bitzer’s ideas, claiming that rhetoric does not lie solely within the situation/context, but within the rhetor him/herself. Whereas Bitzer claims that a rhetor’s discourse is like a response to a stimulus (exigency), Vatz posits that the context surrounding the rhetoric is subjective, and thus the meaning of the situation must come from the

perception of the rhetor. Thus, the exigency is therefore *created* by the rhetor as a response to his/her perception of the “needs” of a situation (155), rather than the exigency existing before the rhetor is aware.

This is a powerful concept, as it is plausible to position some marketers as those who attempt to create “needs” in their audiences. Most recently, drug companies exploring direct-to-consumer advertisers have toyed with this idea, often convincing their target audience that they need to “ask their doctor” about a particular drug—although before exposure to the advertisement, the need did not exist. Instead of crafting a message directed to a particular audience, it seems, these companies have instead attempted to shape an audience, and then hit them with a message. Thus, these rhetors are not responding to an exigency *per se*, but rather they are creating an exigency—which is where Vatz and Bitzer disagree.

Given these ideas, this thesis uses “exigency” as an element for analysis by considering what the individual entities’ motivations for marketing within the online social networks were. Preexisting exigencies will be described as “Bitzerian exigencies,” and those that may have been manufactured by the rhetor(s) will be described as “Vatzian exigencies.” Through research of the various online social networks, documents, statements, and other forms of communication from the officials responsible for the networks and the marketing within them have been found and used for evidence as to why the network exists (are

these entities creating needs, addressing needs, or both?), and how marketing is being used within them.

Audience

Exigency is not the only element required for a rhetorical situation to exist. In fact, exigency is the selecting factor of the next component Bitzer discusses, the audience. An “audience” in a rhetorical situation are those who are subjected to the speaker’s rhetoric and are therefore given a choice whether to act and be persuaded by the rhetoric, or to disregard it. The audience is selected by the exigency, Bitzer claims, because the need for change or the obstacle to be surmounted determines who needs to be addressed rhetorically, thus dismissing those who have no control over the exigency. Bitzer here also asserts, much like as with exigency, that in order for a true rhetorical situation to exist, the audience must have some sort of bearing on the outcome of the exigency in question. Hence, addressing an audience with no ability to alter the situation that requires attention is not a rhetorical situation, and therefore, without a proper audience, no rhetoric can exist (according to Bitzer).

Both Bitzer and Vatz do agree that the persuasion of the audience is the end goal of rhetoric, as Vatz says: “the essence of rhetoric ... is the strategic struggle to create and sustain saliences and meanings for chosen audiences” (99). But how are the audiences chosen? Bitzer claims that the exigency determines the audiences, while Vatz claims that it is

up to the rhetor to “choose” the audiences to address. This reinforces the idea of “creation” of a rhetorical situation, and the ability of the rhetor to determine and address exigencies and audiences where they may not have been thought to exist before.

As an operational definition, therefore, “audiences” are analyzed in this thesis by determining who the viewers of the messages are in online social networks. Once the proper audiences are identified, the following questions are asked: are these viewers the users of the networks themselves? Are they outside “lurkers?” Why are they there? What are their “needs,” collective and individual? Are they created by exigency, or by a rhetor?

Constraints

The final element of Bitzer’s rhetorical situation is the idea of “constraints.” Much like how the exigency of the situation determines the audience, the exigency and the audience determine the constraints—“when the orator enters the situation, his discourse not only harnesses constraints given by situation but provides additional important constraints” (306). Thus, the speaker’s appearance, speaking abilities, tone, likeability, etc. —his/her overall *ethos*—acts as a constraint upon the rhetorical situation. Bitzer goes on to divide the types of constraints into two distinct forms—those “originated and managed by the rhetor” (306), and those that are not (it should be noted that Bitzer readily admits that the speaker can manufacture constraints, but fails to

recognize the possibility of manufacturing exigencies). These other constraints may exist on behalf of the audience, the exigency itself, or various other outside forces (the microphone malfunctioning, babies crying, etc.). No rhetorical situation exists or can exist without constraints, since if there were no constraints on a situation, there can be no exigency. Whether the rhetor properly addresses the constraints and overcomes them determines if the rhetoric is successful or not, and an operational definition of “constraints” in the marketing practices analyzed should not be significantly different from the definition given here.

These three elements, according to Bitzer, “comprise everything relevant in a rhetorical situation” (306). The exigency causes the speaker to engage in discourse (stimulus/response), the audience must be present for the discourse to exist, and constraints are inherently present and may inhibit effective rhetoric, and thus persuasion. If the exigency, audience, and constraints are all properly addressed, according to Bitzer, persuasion can occur, and the situation that prompted the rhetoric may then be modified.

Previous Bitzer Analyses

Although many scholars have referenced Bitzer in their own rhetorical studies and analyses, very few have applied Bitzer’s rhetorical situation to perform analyses or marketing. Some studies, however, have used Bitzer’s rhetorical situation in conjunction with other rhetorical

perspectives (most notably Burke's Pentad) in order to analyze various phenomena. For instance, Robert Wade Kenny cites Bitzer's rhetorical situation as the stimulus for his study on Jack Kevorkian's rhetoric, by posing the question "[does] any rhetor ever manage to control his discursive identity once he has been positioned in the rhetorical situation[?]" (386). Throughout the article, Kenny compares aspects of Kevorkian's rhetoric to the elements of the rhetorical situation, and eventually concludes that the speaker's intent and the rhetorical situation can be, and often are, inherently different. Kenny goes on to say that often there are discrepancies between the "would-be rhetorical utterances of a speaker and those utterances which have rhetorical impact" (386). It is ironic that Kenny uses Bitzer's "Rhetorical Situation" in his analysis, and eventually comes to a Vatzian conclusion (that the speaker's rhetoric can be somewhat detached from the surrounding situation).

Judith Hoover also utilizes Bitzer's rhetorical situation in her case study of former governor of Tennessee Ray Blanton's apologia. The study concluded that the former governor's misinterpretation of the three elements in the rhetorical situation, in many instances, led to ineffective communication and actually *caused more* exigencies (need for rhetoric) than they solved. Thus, Hoover determines that when a rhetorical situation changes, the rhetorical style of the speaker must

change and adapt with it; that perhaps changing rhetorical situations may, in themselves, be considered a constraint to overcome (250).

These studies, unfortunately, prove to be of no use to this study in terms of their specific methods of rhetorical analysis. Those topics analyzed and the analysis of marketing in online social networks bear little resemblance to each other. However, these studies are helpful in that they prove that after-the-fact rhetorical analyses using Bitzer can be performed, and can yield pertinent information and insights. Also, both of these studies used Bitzer's rhetorical situation in conjunction with other theoretical lenses, similar to this study's methods.

But why did these scholars use Bitzer, as opposed to the numerous other rhetorical perspectives that are more often used? Hoover claims that no one had yet to consider speaker's personal values as potential "constraints," and that Aristotelian or Burkean (viewing an act of rhetoric dramatically) methods of analysis failed to address this aspect of rhetoric (236). Kenny utilized Bitzer, in part, to assert that the exigencies of various rhetorical situations may often "situate inappropriate rhetors in discursive positions" (391), and used Kavorkian's rhetoric as an example.

What makes Bitzer's rhetorical situation enticing to use in these two studies and this thesis as well is that using this method of rhetorical analysis is possible from an outside, after-the-fact perspective. I do not have access to internal marketing information of any of the entities that

are analyzed in this thesis. Thus, the only information that can be analyzed is that which is available to the public, and exigencies, audiences, and constraints can all be inferred from information already available. Both Hoover and Kenny utilized Bitzer to analyze transcripts of rhetorical discourse, and the forthcoming analysis is not significantly different. Bitzer's division of the rhetorical situation, and the clear-cut individual elements allow for ease in comparison/contrasting between different cases. These comparisons have the potential to yield conclusions that may not manifest themselves using other rhetorical theories for analysis.

The Modified Rhetorical Situation

While it seems obvious that a situation can dictate what a rhetor might say, it is also just as obvious to note that a rhetor has a certain amount of control over his own rhetoric, despite the context surrounding his discourse. Therefore, perhaps the best way to look at a rhetorical situation is through the eyes of Consigny, who offers a balance between the two extremes that Bitzer and Vatz represent (rhetoric as situation-based and rhetoric as rhetor-based, respectively). The exigency certainly has the power to influence the discourse of a rhetor (as Bitzer says), but in the end it is still up to the rhetor in question to determine what needs to be said (as Vatz says). The situation may determine that rhetoric is necessary, but the rhetor determines the actual rhetoric that is spoken, which is Scott Consigny's perspective. Consigny claims that

rhetoric should not be looked at from a completely rhetor-based or situational-based perspective, but rather more of an Aristotelian “art.” This art, he claims, “is both instrument and situation” (183) and relies heavily on the rhetor’s mastery of “topics or commonplaces” (181), very similar to Aristotle’s idea of *topoi*. Carolyn Miller furthers Consigny’s ideas by offering the definition of *kairos*, a unique potential that a rhetor can grasp. According to Miller, *kairos* is “a critical occasion for decision or action” (312). Thus, Miller’s idea of *kairos* aligns with Consigny in that equal responsibility for rhetoric lies within both the rhetor’s hands and the situation itself. Although the situation may present to the rhetor a proper exigency, it is up to him/her to grasp the particular moment when rhetoric is both worthwhile and able to modify the circumstances in question.

Thus, it is important that this thesis does not completely align with Bitzer’s idea of the rhetorical situation, and the idea that rhetoric is completely situation based. Instead, this thesis must keep the three elements of Bitzer’s rhetorical situation for use in analysis, and also keep the mindset that the rhetor and situation both have potential to alter the uses and possibilities of rhetoric (as we will see). Combining these ideas with Vatz’s and Consigny’s is perhaps the most appropriate method of analysis, since the opposing ideas of exigency will add a new layer of depth to a Bitzer-only analysis. Many new marketing strategies are indeed attempting to jump on the bandwagon of online social

marketing, and thus are attempting to grasp the *kairos* of the situation and apply rhetoric accordingly. The new virtual communities should not be seen as simply an exigency in themselves, but must be understood as a potential for rhetoric. Additionally, it must also be understood that while some marketers address pre-existing needs (per Bitzer), there are also marketing efforts intending to create entirely new needs, thus creating exigencies through their rhetoric (similar to direct-to-consumer marketing discussed above).

Benchmark defined

Determining whether something is or is not successful is often a tricky task to undertake, as success can be defined by a number of different factors. Movies are often considered *critical* successes, but box office failures. Were these film efforts successful then, or unsuccessful? In order to avoid this particular pitfall with this thesis, it is important to define the terminology used in this study and what exactly constitutes a successful or unsuccessful marketing campaign.

The backbone of this analysis is Bitzer's three elements of the rhetorical situation, and thus, the benchmark of success must be based on these rudiments. Therefore, let us define "success" in this study as the ability to properly identify (or as we will see, create) exigencies, and the ability to accurately identify, address, and overcome constraints. Failure to achieve these goals will result in the marketing efforts being considered "unsuccessful."

These goals align with Bitzer in that according to his Rhetorical Situation, successful rhetoric is the ability to do these things listed above. If there is a proper exigency, audience, and constraints are overcome, successful rhetoric will follow. However, since we have identified that this study will benefit from a more diverse study of the rhetorical situation, it is a necessity to address other perspectives when determining what is successful or unsuccessful. Vatz's ideas on the rhetorical situation may also be satisfied here as well, since we have included the aspect of "creating" exigencies and understanding that the situation does not always dictate the rhetoric, but still plays an important role. Thus, Miller's idea of *kairos* is addressed, as we analyze whether the rhetor has indeed been able to grasp this "unique potential" that may (or may not) exist in a given situation.

In quantitative terms, a study could easily be performed to determine whether or not any marketing campaign is successful. Simplistically, if the advertisement (or rhetorical discourse) generated more revenue than it cost to produce, the marketing effort is most likely deemed a success. That type of study, however, is not what this thesis is attempting to perform. These types of financial benchmarks are not appropriate for this thesis, for various reasons. Since I am not an employee and am in no way tied to any of the entities to be analyzed, I have no access to financial data that would yield critical data to a quantitative study like the one described. Thus, I can only observe from

an outside, “public” perspective everything that I analyze for the purpose of this study. Also, the cases analyzed will vary significantly. Therefore, even if financial data were available, comparisons between the marketing efforts would be difficult to make sense of, because of the inherent differences in the efforts themselves.

It is also worth mentioning that financial success comes from a host of varying factors that may or may not be related to the marketing efforts of a particular company. Even if the entities analyzed were to divulge financial information, it would be impossible to draw a cause/effect relationship out of the data, as financial success or participation in certain online social networks may be related to other factors, such as site attractiveness, desire to adhere to social norms, etc.

Case Selection

As one of the largest sports apparel brands in the world, Nike has always been at the forefront of innovation. In continuing with this trend, recently Nike and Google have formed an alliance to unveil a brand new online social network, designed to bring worldwide fans of soccer (the world’s most popular sport) together to discuss the sport, create “fantasy” teams, and even connect with some of the world’s top players—that are endorsed by Nike (Holmes). The company then hopes that interest will evolve into other social networking sites for other sports that Nike can then create. The company hopes the new online

venture will create a “long-term way of connecting with consumers,” according to Trevor Edwards, Nike’s VP of global brand management (Holmes).

Nike and Google’s effort to use the budding world of online social networks for their own branding and marketing objectives represent a good case to analyze, for a number of different reasons, including company size, the collaboration element, and the unique perspective of creating a network revolving around a single sport. These two companies have the capital to create a top-notch marketing campaign, but whether the social network marketing attempt will work or not remains to be seen, given the worldwide (yet relatively small in America) audience, the pre-existing social networks that are already popular, and a release designed to coincide with the World Cup—an event that has already come and gone. So, while audience and exigency seem to have been addressed, Bitzer’s discussion of the rhetorical situation may also perceive these factors as potential constraints as well.

Nike and Google, however, are not the only large companies entering this particular field of marketing. Another company using social networks for its own needs is the software giant Adobe, famous for such products as FLASH and DREAMWEAVER. Since Adobe produces software applications that are often complex and take time to learn, the company has decided to post blogs from some of their employees online, so that users of the software can access ideas and tips straight from the

developers (Cass). The software users can then respond back, asking questions or supplementing the tips that the creators gave, which can then spark numerous smaller and more focused sub-discussions. The basic idea behind the move is that the developers themselves are the most qualified to give advice; and from Adobe's perspective, the more questions answered via blogs, the less calls to customer service. Also, the connections with the consumers can yield more brand loyalty, while the numerous postings of blogs add up to better rankings in search engines (Cass).

While in the case of the Nike/Google venture, the social network is created around various discussions of soccer, Adobe's network is more direct. Nike hopes that the networking that occurs on joga.com will indirectly create a stronger bond between the soccer community and Nike itself, while Adobe has created an online space completely devoted to Adobe products. The respective rhetorical situations, therefore, are very different and offer great variety for analysis.

Although big businesses are using social networking and exploring the use of the space in their own marketing ventures, the cyberspace communities are open—for free—to anyone with a valid email address. Myspace.com allows anyone to create their own "space" and network with anyone they like, using real life social terminology ("friend," etc.). Many small business owners, artists, and unsigned musical acts are now using this free service to increase awareness of their own business

ventures. One such band is OmniSoul, a Delaware quintet who has achieved a fair amount of notoriety in part due to their “space” on North America’s most popular web site and social network (myspace.com).

This band and corporate giants like Nike and Adobe have little in common, except their respective efforts to increase awareness and make connections to potential audiences through social networking. “Spaces” on MySpace, however, are very different rhetorically than networks created by corporations for their own benefit, and the following analyses, starting with joga.com, reveal that.

CHAPTER THREE JOGA.COM

Given the popularity of online social networks, many companies are attempting to break into the budding field by developing their own type of network, often by utilizing some type of gimmick to set them apart from the others. Nike and Google, two of the world's largest and most recognizable corporate identities, have joined forces to create what they hope will be the next big thing in online networking by creating Joga.com, a soccer-oriented networking site. Whether the site will be as successful and highly used as myspace.com or facebook.com remains to be seen, but the financial backing of Nike and Google should at least produce a high-quality and easy to use network, if nothing else.

Joga (which is Portuguese for "play") is laid out and operates much like other popular online social networks. The user has the ability to search for other users, add them as "friends", and continue communications with their "friends" on a number of different levels (sending messages, sharing videos or pictures, creating groups for friends to join, etc.). After creating a profile, members of Joga.com can then add information about themselves, as a way for other users to then search for them. Most online social networks incorporate some type of "profile" that users then supply with information in this way. This

information is usually very general, such as location, age, and interests, and usually a member will upload a photo of him/herself for others to see.

Joga is no different in this aspect, except the information asked for within the profile differs significantly from other more popular online social networks. For instance, members of Joga can input their location and age, but other predetermined questions that members can answer are exclusively about soccer. Members put in their favorite soccer teams (men's and women's), their favorite positions to play, favorite weather conditions, styles, and many other questions purely devoted to the sport. Members also can create what Joga calls "My Starting 11," where they can choose any players in the world (or even other Joga members who are not professional soccer players) and assimilate a "fantasy" or "dream team." This is meant to spark discussion and create friendly debates about soccer, as other users who are perusing profiles can make comments about the "Starting 11," or any other profile material that may spark discussion. Most members seem to spend a fair amount of time answering the questions and creating their Starting 11, suggesting that members of Joga are serious about soccer and meeting others who are also passionate about soccer. As seen in Figure 3.1, some users are more serious about soccer than they are about their profiles, supplying potential visitors to their page with sarcastic comments that seem to be poking fun at Joga's narrow range of interests (for example, this user

answered the question “where do you usually play?” with, “on the field”).

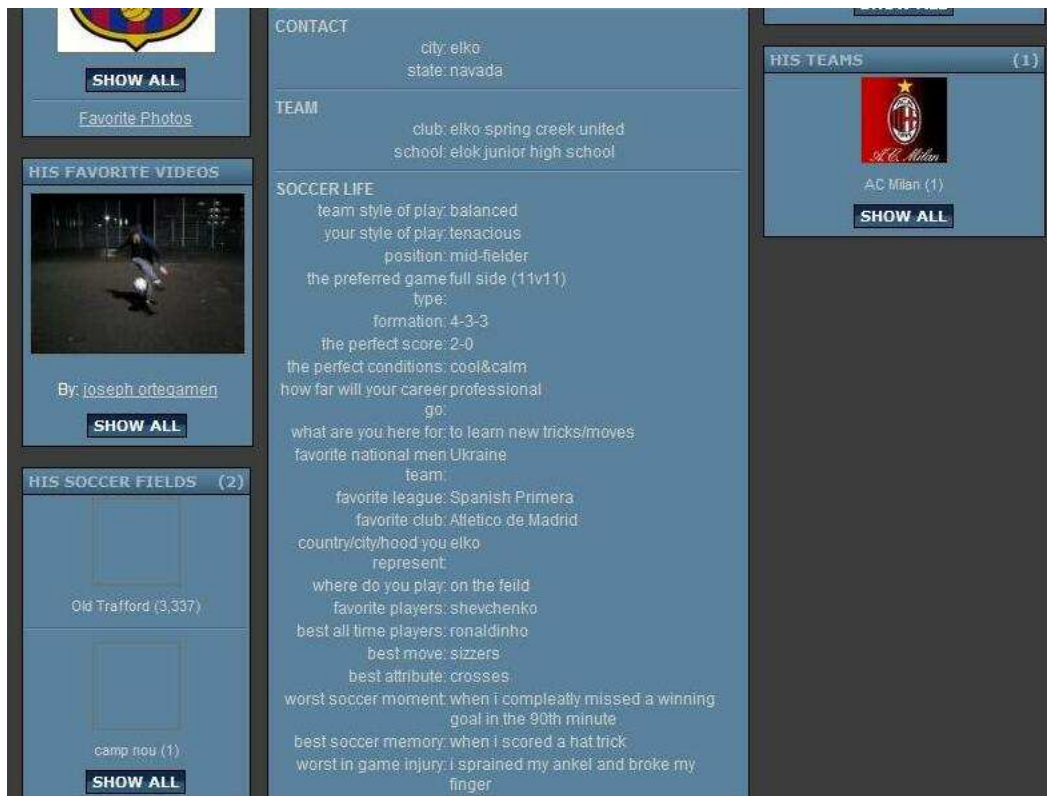


Figure 3.1: A random Joga user's profile. In a standard Joga profile, almost twice as many soccer-related questions are asked than general questions.

The main significant difference between Joga and other online social networks is, in fact, the way it was meant to be different—by being only about soccer. Almost all of the conversation that occurs between Joga users centers around soccer, the game itself, the players, the equipment, and various other aspects of the game. Another notable difference between Joga and sites like MySpace is that there are absolutely no advertisements on Joga.com. Google and Nike's names are visible along the top band of every page, but there are no pop-up ads, banner ads, or exit ads anywhere on Joga's pages. In fact, some links

that look to be banner ads are actually links to some of Joga's professional soccer players' member pages. In Figure 3.2 (below), the two small pictures in the bottom-left of the screen resemble advertisements, but are actually links to other Joga.com profiles.

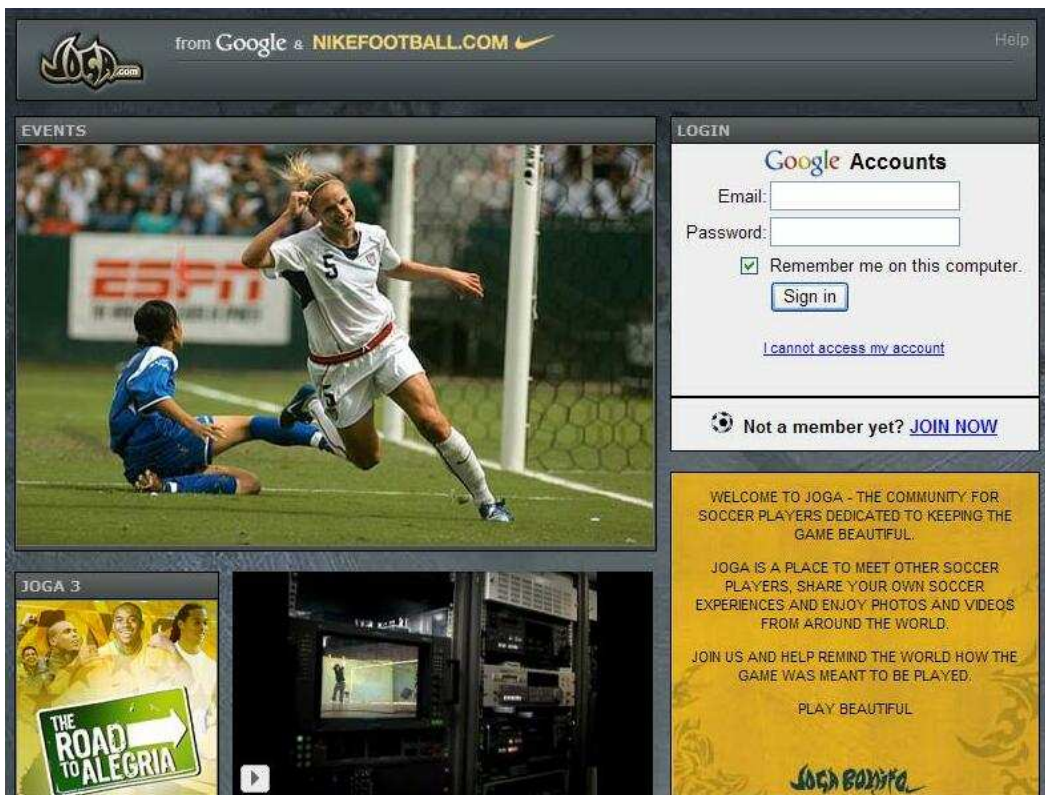


Figure 3.2: *The Joga.com Home Page*. The Nike and Google insignia are displayed at the top of every page, but absolutely no other advertisements exist on the site. Also, Joga's devotion to soccer is clearly illustrated on its home page.

Exigencies

Nike and Google seem to have created a network that receives a fair amount of visits from its users, but why was the site created in the first place? Figure 3.3 is a screen shot of the “About Joga” page on joga.com:

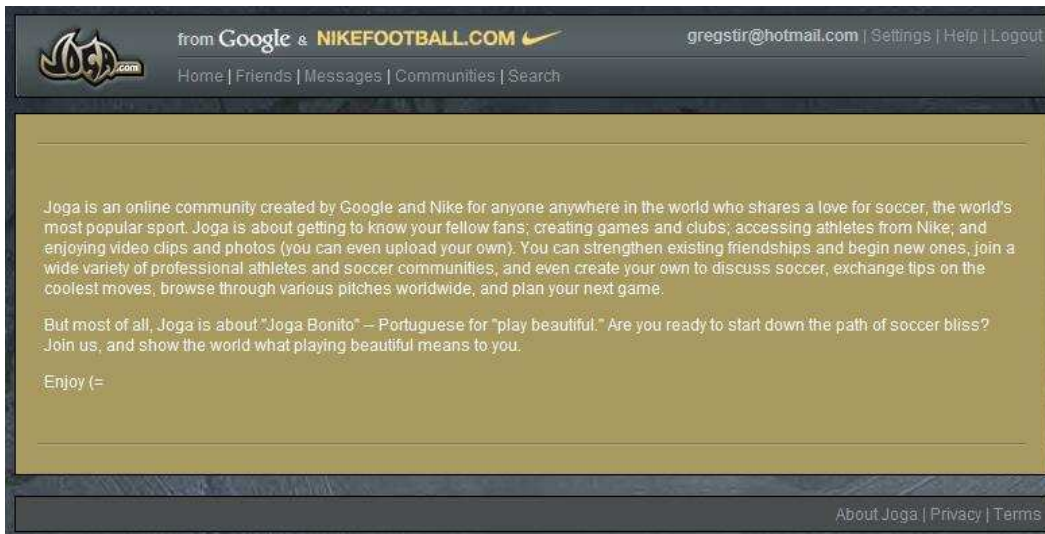


Figure 3.3: *Joga's Official Statement.*

From this official mission statement, we can point out many goals that Nike and Google hope to achieve from the creation of this network. Each of these reasons for the development of Joga could be considered/would seem to be individual exigencies (as the existence of a goal implies that there is a “defect” in the current situation), and it is all of these combined that make up the entire exigency of the network itself. Thus, Joga’s official goals (per the above statement) are to:

- help Joga users get to know other soccer fans, and strengthen pre-existing relationships
- give users the ability to make connections with Nike athletes
- offer users access to videos and pictures of soccer players and fans all over the world
- give users a space to discuss soccer issues and organize soccer games/leagues.

The first goal listed seems to be fairly consistent with other online social networks, outside of the focus on soccer. Given the popularity of online social networks that are designed wholly to create new friendships and strengthen preexisting connections, it is obvious that

Nike and Google are attempting to respond to a preexisting need rather than creating their own. This exigency, it seems, is for Internet users to have the ability to connect and communicate with other users from around the world, much like the capabilities that other online social networks facilitate. The fact that this network centers on soccer may also show that the need did exist for soccer fans (exclusively) to unite, and Nike and Google are seemingly attempting to respond to that social need.

Joga attempts to overcome the second “official” exigency by giving its users access to Nike’s soccer-playing athletes. Users can learn more about their favorite athletes, and at times are able to communicate with them and interact with them in ways not previously possible for the average fan. Given this new opportunity, Nike and Google may be attempting to create celebrities out of many soccer players who will participate in the Joga community. Thus, the creation of the “star” personae may indicate the creation of an exigency, that is, for soccer fans to form connections with their new favorite soccer personalities.

The third goal of Joga is to give soccer fans an opportunity to share videos and pictures of all things soccer-related. Players and fans from around the world can then learn different moves and strategies, and also be entertained by some of the world’s best players. Most anyone who dabbles in Internet video has surely come across the wildly popular Youtube.com (another Google-owned social network), where people

from all over the world share their videos for all to see—which may indicate a preexisting exigency to share information in this manner. If so, Nike and Google are responding by allowing media sharing on Joga, and are attempting to find a niche by devoting all video and picture sharing to soccer only.

The final individual goal that Joga addresses is the allowance of its users to discuss soccer through local or interest-based communities and to facilitate organization of soccer matches. Given the somewhat low popularity of soccer in the United States, it seems as if soccer fans in the U.S. may in fact need a tool like this to discuss soccer and to construct soccer teams and matches with other local users. These users, before Joga, may not have been aware of each other's existence and thus Joga may in fact be responding to an exigency.

As seen below in Figure 3.4, joga.com gives its users an open space to discuss and debate all things soccer. In this case, soccer fans from around the world are discussing the controversial actions of French soccer star Zinedine Zidane during the last match of the World Cup tournament. In the final minutes of the game, Zidane was ejected from the field after headbutting an Italian opponent to the ground, apparently responding to an insult by the Italian player. Users, in this figure, are debating about whether the actions were worth the ejection, and if Zidane's physical retaliation ended up costing the French team the World Cup championship (Italy went on to defeat France for the

title). While users may have the option to discuss soccer-related issues with other fans in various other ways across the Internet, Nike and Google hope that a soccer-specific forum will fill a niche (and thus satisfy an exigency) for people who may not be able to find an adequate pre-existing alternative. In terms of an exigency, Joga hopes to fill a void for soccer fans that want to discuss and debate soccer topics but do not have an outlet to do so.

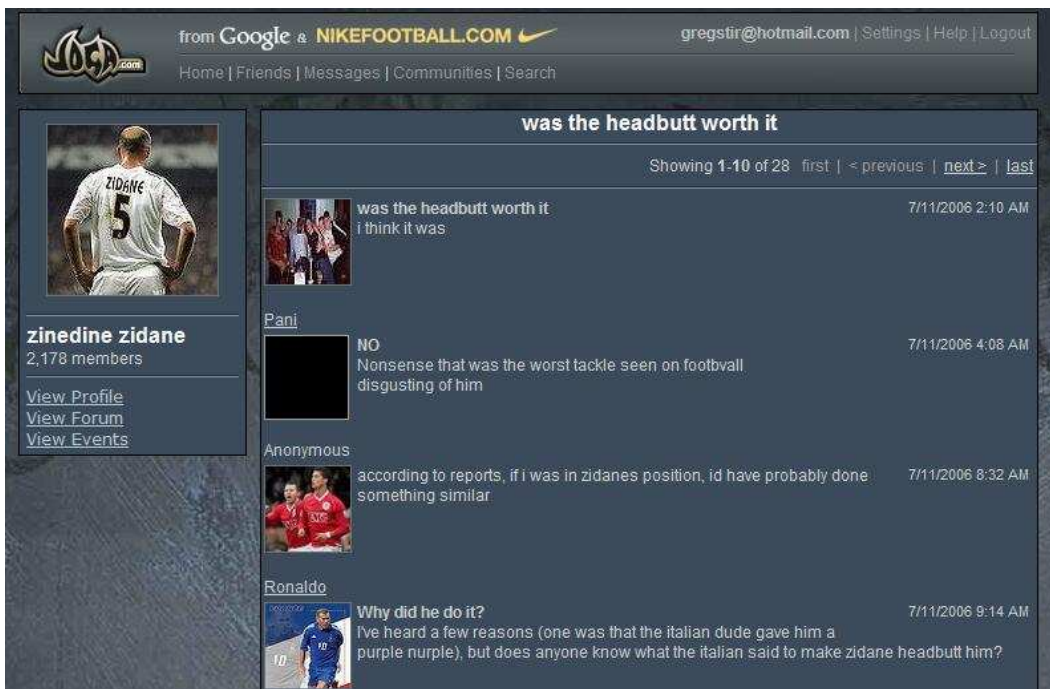


Figure 3.4: Zidane Discussion.

Even though we have a better understanding now of what Nike and Google hope to do for the users of Joga, what do Nike and Google want to do for themselves? What are their own goals or exigencies that they hope Joga will address and remedy? Up until this point, this analysis has seemingly “bought in” to the rhetoric that Nike and Google have projected through their joga.com venture. Potential exigencies that

have been discussed thus far are, in fact, the “manufactured” Vatzian exigencies that the two corporate superpowers would like the average soccer fan to believe. However, if this analysis is to be accurate, it must take into account all potential exigencies, and not only the exigencies that the network itself claims exist.

These “manufactured” exigencies are where Vatz’s perspective of the rhetorical situation can help out. While Bitzer posits that the exigencies in a situation are predetermined, and the rhetor is simply producing rhetoric in order to inspire some action to correct some shortcoming, Vatz offers the insight that it is possible for the rhetor to be creating exigencies within rhetoric. Here, we may have a prime example of this phenomenon, as Nike and Google claim there are certain exigencies at hand that led to the creation of Joga (as discovered through the official statement from Joga). We also may see the creation of exigencies in some of the goals/features discussed earlier. For example, the ability to connect with soccer celebrities (only those endorsed by Nike) may or may not be exigencies felt by consumers. Since soccer fans have not, to this point, ever had the opportunity to connect in such a way with their favorite professional players from around the world—or even perhaps imagine the possibility of doing so—it seems difficult to determine whether this “need” ever existed in the first place. However, the fact that the only 17 players available through joga.com are those endorsed by Nike raises a suspicion that this may be

a Vatzian exigency. If Nike had been interested in creating a truly online social network for the sole benefit of fans, they might have made more, if not all, players accessible (although it should be noted that some players may not want fans to contact them).

Given that this thesis is meant to address and analyze the use of marketing within an online social network, we should keep in mind that the entire network is a form of marketing as we can see from the Google and Nike trademarks that are visible on every page. In fact, there are no outside sources marketing on this network (joga.com does not use banner or pop-up ads on its site), so the network itself is the marketing. So what are Google and Nike trying to market through the use of this online social network?

It seems rather obvious that Nike is attempting to get its name out to soccer fans as a serious advocate of the game and provider of soccer equipment. If Nike is able to convince fans that they are committed to the sport of soccer, then it is reasonable to assume that the fans will also be convinced that Nike is serious about their soccer-related products. According to *Business Week*, a few short years ago Nike's plummeting stock caused company executives to move marketing efforts in a different direction—toward the \$2.5 billion dollar global soccer gear business (BW Online). Since the global soccer market has been dominated for years by German rival Adidas, Nike has shifted focus and strategies to break into this highly lucrative sports equipment area, and

these marketing efforts have recently culminated with the addition of joga.com. In the summer of 2006, there were 15 main sponsors of the FIFA World Cup, which included global giants like McDonald's and Coca-Cola, who each paid \$56 million to FIFA for the right to sponsor (telegraph.co.uk). Notably missing from this sponsorship list is Nike, but notably present is the world's soccer equipment sales leader, Adidas. It seems reasonable to conclude that Nike, in lieu of spending a tremendous amount of money for an official sponsorship like its competitor did, advertised joga.com "à la carte" during the World Cup for a fraction of the price. In fact, in Britain, 30-second commercial spots during the tournament cost around \$300,000 (telegraph.co.uk).

If Nike and Google are able to generate interest in Joga (and Nike soccer equipment) through the use of carefully selected advertisements as opposed to a full-blown sponsorship deal, it is possible that the marketing move will be profitable in the long run. By recruiting return visitors to the social network, Nike and Google may be able to *immerse* potential customers into a world of subtle advertisements rather than aim and shoot marketing messages *at* them. Thus, although their advertising during the actual World Cup tournament was considerably less prevalent than other competitors', the long-term effects of the joga.com advertising may yield great rewards.

Google's stake in the creation of Joga remains unclear from an outside, surface perspective. The consistent banner on Joga that bears

Google insignia is the only way the company seems connected to the site. Although inside information about the formation of Joga is not known, it seems possible and likely that Google is responsible for creating the network, while Nike is responsible for the content. Therefore, Google has the opportunity of advertising for its search engine and other miscellaneous ventures to all Joga users by way of the Google insignia being present on every page. Also, even though Joga does not use outside advertisements yet, it is possible that if the social network reaches a high level popularity and regular users, Google and Nike will charge other entities to advertise on the site and will profit accordingly.

Audience

Given the nature of joga.com, the audience seems relatively easy to define. The typical member of the Joga audience is most likely either a soccer fan or player, and is probably a member of a younger demographic, given that Nike usually targets younger members of the population, and online social networks are typically frequented by a younger crowd. Also, given the greater popularity of soccer overseas than in America, there are most likely more non-American audience members than American citizens. Nike, in order to accommodate to this idea, offers numerous language options for the network. An archetypal visitor to joga.com is also most likely a member or soon-to-be member of the online site, as it does not offer much to those that are not

members. None of the services that Joga provides are available to visitors who have not signed up for a free membership. Therefore, “lurkers” are most likely a rarity.

But what are the needs of this audience? Members of joga.com are most likely there to do exactly what Nike and Google advertise—to connect with other soccer players. Individually, members may need to meet other soccer players in their area to organize playing times, talk about soccer, or otherwise. Collectively, members of Joga may simply need an online space completely devoted to soccer in every aspect, which includes options for socializing, entertaining, and informing.

Constraints

The constraints on this type of online social network are fairly prevalent, given the pure devotion of this network to the sport of soccer. Perhaps the biggest constraint, therefore, is that soccer is not very popular in the United States. It may be fair to assume that a site such as this could be popular elsewhere in the world, but this constraint may be too difficult to overcome here in the States. It is safe to assume that Nike and Google’s largest market is America, which may suggest that the site was developed to spread the brand elsewhere in the world where the two entities are not so popular, but that remains unclear. From an American perspective, an all-soccer online social network will most likely not be embraced.

According to Holmes, the launch of Joga was also meant to coincide with the opening games of the World Cup in Germany in 2006. The World Cup is a wildly popular event worldwide, and even garners some American attention. But, can Joga thrive now that the World Cup is long over, and will not return until the summer of 2010? While it seems very likely that an event such as the World Cup could increase awareness and interest in soccer temporarily, it does not seem very probable that long-term interest will develop in America for soccer once the World Cup is over.

The tactical launching of Joga to coincide with the starting rounds of the World Cup may be looked at through the lens of Carolyn Miller's idea of "*kairos*," that good rhetoric exists when the rhetor grasps a unique potential at the right moment. Using *kairos*, Google and Nike may have considered the World Cup to be an opportune moment to launch an all-soccer online social network, thus considering the occasion part of an exigency in itself. However, once the World Cup is over, it is expected that there will be a drop-off in popularity of the sport in the United States, thus turning what seemed to be an opportune moment into a rather unexpected constraint. Because, after all, the World Cup must end at some point, and the popular tournament only comes along every four years. Thus, launching the network to coincide with the World Cup may have been a short-term advantage (*kairos* emerged from exigency),

but a possible long-term constraint (*kairos* passes, thus becomes a constraint).

On the business side of the discussion, we also must consider an important constraint that has the potential to plague even the most effective rhetorical message—cost. Regardless of the needs of the audience and of the aptness of the speaker, if the rhetor can not afford to get the message out, the rhetorical situation ceases to exist. In this case, the cost of creating an online social network purely for marketing purposes is presumably quite small. It is certain that Nike’s partnership with Google was mutually beneficial; as Nike provides the sport’s name recognition, while Google already possessed the equipment, connectivity, and expertise to create a network. While neither Nike nor Google have divulged any information on their costs of development, given Google’s network capabilities, it is fair to say that the costs were minimal. On top of this, the network also uses Google accounts for Joga memberships, therefore tapping into a preexisting pool of Google subscribers for potential new Joga users. Thus, in this situation, cost seems to be a somewhat insignificant constraint, which most other marketing ventures can only dream of.

Holmes also states that Nike and Google are planning to launch more online social networks that center around a particular sport if Joga catches on and becomes popular, including a football and basketball specific network. But what then, will happen to Joga members who are

also basketball fans? Would they then need to join the new networks? The constraint here is that although Joga may be successful in targeting a niche (soccer lovers) who have not been addressed by online social networks before, the specificity of Joga may pigeonhole its users too much. Thus, Nike and Google's attempt to find a niche in the world of online social networking may have also inadvertently created a constraint by not appealing to a mass audience.

It must also be mentioned that there are already other, vastly more popular online social networks in existence. Users of facebook.com, myspace.com, youtube.com, and many others may not feel the need to join Joga, even if they are soccer fans. Most of the other online social networks offer ways to segment users by personal interests, and that can easily include soccer. YouTube and MySpace already offer video uploading and downloading features, so members of these networks already have the ability to share pictures and videos, meet new friends, communicate, and gather information on almost any topic, including soccer. Members of these networks, therefore, may not need what Joga has to offer.

Is Joga Rhetorically Successful?

From a business perspective, Joga may be a great example of marketing using online community space. As mentioned earlier, Nike attempted to launch the site with the World Cup, and advertised the network during the tournament in order to target as many soccer fans as

possible to the soccer-oriented site. While other corporate giants chose to spend much more money to become official sponsors, Nike decided not to, but instead decided to try to use smaller amounts of advertising space in order to create awareness for what may end up as a successful long-term marketing venture. Although equipment leader Adidas paid FIFA \$56 million to become an official sponsor, joga.com regulars will much more easily remember Nike as a World Cup sponsor than Adidas, which may prove to be an ingenious move. From a rhetorical perspective, however, the site may not be as successful as it seems to be.

Online social networks in this thesis will be determined to be successful or not based on their ability to create or identify exigencies, and their ability to overcome the constraints of the rhetorical situation. If they do not do these things, the persuasive messages that they attempt to send will not be acted upon. In this situation, we have a social network that has quite a few different exigencies (both Bitzerian and Vatzian), but also a lot of constraints that it must overcome.

Perhaps the biggest problem with this network is the basis around soccer. This may not be a problem elsewhere in the world, but this thesis is written from an American perspective. Segmenting an audience can be very good for a rhetor to do, so as to make the biggest impact on those who are most likely to act, but segmenting too drastically can result in a rhetorical failure—which may be what we see here. It is very

likely that the American audience segment is not interested or willing to devote time to an all soccer network. Perhaps devoting a social network to a more popular American sport like basketball or football could work, but the probability of one devoted to soccer being successful in the United States may be far-fetched.

Although Joga's soccer focus has been deemed a constraint, it is easy to see why Nike and Google have attempted to find a niche within the online social network scene. More popular networks already exist, and have millions upon millions of active members, so if a new network wants to find success, it makes sense that it would have to fill a niche or address a need that has not already been addressed. Joga then has attempted to create a constraint upon its users, suggesting that alternative social networks are inadequate ways to connect with other soccer fans. Unfortunately for Joga, these preexisting networks do offer ways of doing almost everything that Joga can do. Other networks can not allow its members to connect with Nike athletes the way that Joga can, but it is fairly debatable as to whether or not the target audience needs to connect with Nike athletes anyway.

Joga does a great job in that it gives its audience everything necessary to respond to the exigencies (both real and manufactured) at hand—connection, socialization, information—but unfortunately does not do an adequate job of overcoming its own constraints in order to be a rhetorically successful online social network. By failing to overcome

these constraints, Joga has essentially failed to properly address the Bitzerian exigencies and properly create the Vatzian exigencies necessary for audience action (more specifically, use of the network). Since these constraints mentioned have not been adequately overcome, it is likely that Joga will not be a very popular network in the US, and the marketing messages from Nike and Google will therefore not reach the target audience. It is possible, however, that Joga will be popular in other nations where soccer is more popular and other competing social networks are not.

One network that is already popular in the United States (and beyond) is Adobe's Communities, which is the subject of Chapter Four's rhetorical analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR ADOBE COMMUNITIES

While Joga attempts to move the popular “friend sharing” genre of online social networks into a more specialized community (centering around soccer), Adobe has developed a completely different type of network that does not involve “friends” or soccer. Adobe has created a network that allows for personal interaction between people with common interests—those interests, of course, that are related to Adobe and their broad range of software products. The result is an officially sponsored message board and blog site dedicated to informing the public about Adobe (and Macromedia products, a company that Adobe purchased in late 2005, according to adobe.com), answering questions about products and product applications, and allowing public input on the developmental process of future Adobe software titles.

All of these features are bundled together in a feed aggregator called MXNA 2.0, which according to Adobe, is designed to allow readers to “monitor 1252 different Adobe related weblogs and news sources, all in one place” (adobe.com). Users, therefore, can easily search through blogs, feeds, and related news articles to find the information and/or help they are looking for, and if an answer to their questions does not exist, they can pose their question to be answered by an Adobe staff member. The aggregator is not necessarily required to peruse the

communities that Adobe offers, but the company does claim that the MXNA system is the quickest and easiest way to find specific information.

For the user who wishes to dive into the system and search for answers without the assistance of the MXNA system, the “Adobe Communities” are organized and divided into four distinct areas, specifically for different types of users: developers, educators, designers, and partners. These four audience segments each rely on Adobe products for different reasons, and the discussions and information contained within each of the discrete mini-communities varies greatly in accordance with the appropriate audience.

The Developers’ Center, for instance, is devoted to extending the knowledge of Adobe users through the use of “articles, tutorials, code samples, downloads, and sample applications,” and also allows the possibility for connection with others through traditional blogs and message boards, where the real communities start. On the developers’ page, there is a link to the homepage of numerous even smaller communities that are completely devoted to a particular piece of software, such as DREAMWEAVER, FLEX, FLASH, etc. When the user enters into the community of their choice, they are given a multitude of options for different ways of finding the information they are looking for, or sharing the information they have. For instance, on the new “FLEX cookbook” page (Figure 4.1 below), users are immediately given a

search box, or they can browse the latest posts or even the highest rated posts.

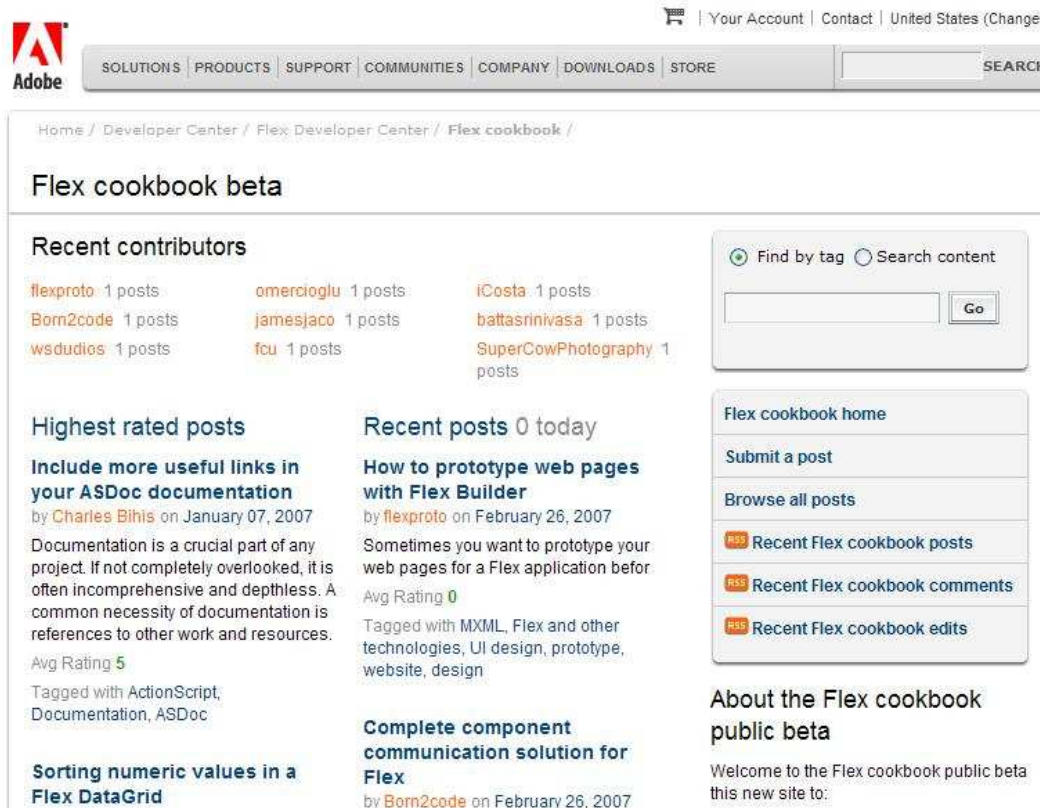


Figure 4.1: *Flex Cookbook*. Screen shot of the Flex Cookbook page, where users can browse blogs and posts by ratings, recency, contributor, or by open-ended search.

The Communities vary significantly from the wildly popular online social networks that have been discussed in this thesis so far. Other networks, like Joga and MySpace, exist mainly for the ability to socialize, to enhance preexisting friendships or create new ones based on general personality characteristics. The Communities are different, however, in that the reason for the existence of the network is to create and share knowledge about the world of Adobe—and any friendships that are created or strengthened in the process is more of a side-effect than a main objective.

Numerous other message boards for the purpose of exchanging information exist all over the Web, but what sets the Communities apart from their counterparts are the dedication to Adobe products and the participation in the Communities by Adobe staff members themselves. This gives the members of the Communities access to experts in the areas they have questions in, and also allows for Adobe to receive feedback from real users about their products and services. While other message boards may provide accurate and helpful information about a variety of topics and interests, the Communities are completely and wholly devoted to being the definitive destination of any and all who seek answers about all things Adobe.

Exigencies

Many of the reasons that Adobe would develop an online social network such as this seem obvious, but in order to examine the exigencies that may be involved in this rhetorical situation, it is important to extract an official mission statement. According to Adobe, the Communities exist to meet the following goals:

- to help the user find solutions to Adobe software-related problems
- to publish solutions the user has created for the community
- to comment on the solutions created by others, and
- to opt for the chance to have an original solution published by O'Reilly.

Much like Joga in the previous chapter, it seems that Adobe is making claims that there are exigencies at hand by announcing official goals for

the network. If there were no situational shortcomings, then there would be no purpose, mission, or “goal” to work toward.

The first goal of the forum listed here is the most obvious. Message boards, by and large, exist simply for the exchange of information between two or more people, and usage of message boards for the purpose of finding solutions to problems seems obvious. The fact that Adobe would develop a message board for their own software also makes sense, as it gives customers satisfaction that the company is committed to helping the consumer get the most out of their purchase and making sure that the customer is satisfied with the product. Software, just like any other product, service, or good on the market today, will at times need to be supplemented with support from its manufacturer. For this reason, Adobe seems to have responded to a preexisting need, or exigency, by giving users of its products a way in which to help themselves find solutions to their products.

As per the second official goal, the Communities also exist so that those users who have discovered solutions to problems they feel are common or troublesome (or both) may share these ideas with fellow participants of the social network. If we have already determined that a network which facilitates receiving help is a response to a preexisting need, it stands to reason that a network that facilitates giving help is also responding to that need, since one can not exist without the other. Users of Adobe products who have discovered tricks, secrets, or solutions

to problems often do want to share their knowledge with other users, and the Communities were developed (in part) to give these savvy users the ability to disseminate their know-how to the masses.

However, it is imperative that this thesis examine the perspective of Adobe attempting to create the need (or exigency) for public help for common problems for the typical software user. We must not forget, after all, that there are two distinct types of exigencies at hand in the rhetorical situations that are being analyzed—“true” or pre-existing exigencies (Bitzerian exigencies), and “manufactured” exigencies (Vatzian). Thus, instead of only looking at the exigencies that Adobe claims exist for the users, this thesis must also attempt to look behind the scenes and understand what exigencies exist for Adobe to create and foster these “communities.”

By giving the general public a space to not only ask for help when needed but also to offer it, Adobe may have in fact persuaded some tech-savvy users of its products that they *need* to share their expertise with those who require assistance, and to create original threads that start with solutions rather than problems that illicit responses. By creating the need for the “average Joe” to share knowledge and information with those in need, Adobe has potentially diminished a significant portion of its customer service workload. In fact, according to official company stockholder data, during the same three month period of 2006, the company spent \$6 million *less* on service and support than

in 2002, despite the fact that during that four-year span, the company's revenue grew by 112% (adobe.com). It is also notable that the Communities were first introduced in 2002. Saving \$6 million would certainly motivate most organizations to attempt to create Vatzian exigency.

These Adobe "experts," however, may be helping their fellow users out for a variety of reasons. While some may simply be altruistic in nature and sincerely want to help others who are having problems; others may be in it for their own personal gains, by advertising their abilities and know how to other users (or potential future employers) who may be watching, or simply to show domination over a weaker designer or computer user. For instance, in Figure 4.2 below, the user Teri Pettit may just be a helpful person and may like to solve others' problems, but he/she may also be advertising her capabilities to potential employers who need services with Illustrator, or s/he may be simply showing domination over the user Bill Hoag. Thus, while people are essentially helping themselves, they are also helping Adobe by allowing these users with problems to rely on their peers instead of Adobe customer service representatives.

Topic

Changing colors in line graph - How to?

Bill Hoag - 04:48pm Feb 25, 2007 Pacific

Illustrator V 12.0.1. According to help you can select and change parts of a graph using the Group Selection tool and then change that part. I can get it to work on a bar graph but not on a line graph. I want to change the colors of the lines and the legend. This works on the bar chart but the same procedure fails on the line chart.

The selection process seems to work OK (I found out in both cases you must use shift and select each segment plus the legend) but the color change does not work like it does with the bar chart.

[Reply To This Discussion](#) | [Back to Topic List](#)

To start a NEW discussion click on the [Back to Topic List](#) link and select **Add Topic**.

If you are in an archive forum please go up to the [main topic list](#) (archives are read only).

Messages

5 messages. Displaying 1 through 5.

[1](#) [First](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Last](#) [5](#)

[Show All Messages](#)

Teri Pettit - 8:57am Feb 26, 07 PST (#1 of 5)

Edited: 26-Feb-2007 at 08:58am

If you are using shift-select, that may be your problem. There are invisible elements in a graph that cannot be selected by shift-selecting, only by clicking multiple times on the same object using the Group Selection tool. You may just not be clicking enough times. Or perhaps you are "missing" on one of the clicks, since it is harder to click on the right place for lines than it is for filled areas.

For a line graph, you will want to click three times on *the same* line segment. The first click selects one segment, the second click selects all segments of the same data column, and the third click adds in the little segment from the legend. Then change the stroke color. (A fourth click would allow you to make all the lines the same color, but it is unlikely you want to do that if you are including a legend.) Similarly, to change the color of the boxes that mark the data points, click three times on [Figure 4.2: Illustrator Forum](#). Screen shot of a forum for the Illustrator program. Users here are posing questions to the public and other users are responding with answers.

The third goal of the Communities is to foster continued dialogue and conversations between users of the site by allowing them to comment on each other's posts (and subsequent comments). Although Adobe introduces this objective as independent from the other three goals listed, this is actually an extension of the site's ability to allow common problems to be solved by those not employed by the company. By giving users the ability to comment on other users' posts, Adobe has simply expanded the types of help one can give or receive. Comments posted can either ask further questions (that will in turn generate more responses), refute information given by a previous poster, or facilitate

relationships between posters—thus giving users more assets from which to draw on when they have problems in the future. All of these possibilities are supplemental to the first two “official” goals already mentioned.

The Communities attempt to recognize the final official goal by giving users with unique or exceedingly insightful solutions to problems the chance to be published in a software-specific guidebook. It seems rather unreasonable to assume that before the Communities were built there was a need for an outlet by which average people can have software tricks published, so this notion suggests that Adobe has in fact created the need it then fulfills (this could be said about any product, really). By offering the possibility of being published, this need creation may inspire those who would not normally post to a discussion forum to contribute, thus assisting Adobe (as mentioned earlier) by lowering the workload for its customer service department—a goal not mentioned by the company as a reason for the creation of the online social network.

Thus, the marketing element of the Communities is the network itself, in that the entire site is an advertisement for the capabilities of Adobe products, the helpfulness of the company and desire for customer satisfaction, and a testament that there are plenty of resources in case a problem should arise for consumers. These are goals that the company would like to achieve anyway, and by creating a network devoted to its own products, the general public has achieved these goals for them.

In fact, according to Adobe.com, the company's revenue has grown by 112% in the last four years, and money spent on marketing has gone up at a relative rate (131%), while money spent on service and support has actually gone *down*. While no hard evidence exists to a company outsider as to why these numbers are behaving in such a way, it may be possible that some of those marketing dollars are being redirected into the Communities, and thus a large portion of marketing, service, and support are being supplied by the same entity.

Audience

The large majority of those that are exposed to the Communities are most likely owners of various pieces of Adobe software. As mentioned earlier, these Adobe users may either have problems that need to be solved, or have solutions to problems that others may have also encountered. Since Adobe's software is sold around the world and to large corporations as well as home computer users, participants may be from any age, race, nationality, or gender, connected only by their interest in and experience with Adobe software.

Whereas on Joga, it seemed rather unlikely that there would be any lurkers on the site, there is a high probability of lurkers in the Communities. Although many heavy users of Adobe software may join the network and become regular contributors to various discussions, the casual user may search the site until they find the answers they need, and spend no further time there. Unlike some other online social

networks, joining the Communities is not necessary to benefit from its existence.

Although the typical audience member of the Communities is most likely the owner or user of some Adobe product, there may be a smaller number of participants (most likely lurkers) who peruse the site simply for more information about the company and its products. Often times software can do significantly more or less than advertised, so it may be smart for a potential buyer to read some of the discussion boards as reviews for the product of interest. Also, as mentioned earlier, some users of the Communities may peruse the Communities with the intent on marketing their own knowledge and abilities through the guise of helping a fellow user.

But what are the needs of the audience? First and foremost, the participants of the Communities need information. Individually, they either need help with a problem, need specifics about a particular piece of software, or they need to know what the newest trends and techniques are for use of the software. As discussed earlier, it is also possible that certain members of this audience may feel the need to offer help to others as a form of altruism, or as a way of self-marketing. Collectively, this audience needs a space to connect with other users not only to help with particular problems or questions about a software program, but to share ideas and increase the knowledge and the abilities of the group where this possibility may not have existed before.

Constraints

Perhaps the biggest constraint on the Communities is the fact that there may simply be *too much information* available. With thousands of posts online and numerous segments deriving from every software title that Adobe offers, it may be difficult for the average user to find exactly the answer or piece of information that they need. In fact, the sheer size of the Communities and the amount of users that the network hosts may be intimidating for a potential new user to navigate through, thus discouraging them from utilizing the network and all of its features. Instead, they may actually turn to other, less voluminous message boards or to weak-tie sub-communities like Adobe groups within Facebook or MySpace.

Another significant constraint is the extreme diversity of the audience in question. Although almost anyone in the world has the capability to buy and use the software Adobe sells, how can any company adequately identify all of the individual needs of all the numberless demographics and sub-cultures? Furthermore, how can they respond to these needs through their online network?

Also, upon close inspection of some of the conversations that occur within the communities, it seems that some users are not happy with their status as a “guinea pig” in Adobe’s operation. Indeed, some participants seem to resent Adobe’s usage of the forums as a way to further project development at the expense of the users (without their

compensation). In Figure 4.3, for instance, we have a situation in which an Adobe representative began a thread on corrupt Illustrator files. This representative asked that anyone who had such files please upload them to Adobe, so that they could be studied and the cause of what is corrupting these files could be discovered and fixed. The corrupted files that are uploaded, however, would not be fixed and sent back to the original owner. This enraged some users, who felt like it is Adobe's responsibility to not only fix future problems, but also fix problems at hand—especially when users are going out of their way to help Adobe diagnose the problem by uploading their own files.

Scott Koblich - 6:22am Oct 4, 05 PST (#7 of 46)

Read the original posting- the files will not be fixed and will not be returned!

[Post Reply](#)

[back to top ▲](#)

Abe Hauer - 5:38pm Oct 5, 05 PST (#8 of 46)

Ahhh, the good ole exclamations..

Design and code right!!

Well they should be fixed and they should be returned - who else thinks so?

Lighten up dude, you personalities that like to TELL instead of REMIND a customer are clueless to the Golden Rule, especially in this case where it is Adobes issue.

Wonder if Warnock and Geschke (Adobe founders for those not knowing) would have handled the manner like this back in 1982? Hmmmmm..

Figure 4.3: *User Complaints*. Forum discussion about Adobe's reliance on the Communities as a way of customer service, and its drawbacks to the old way of helping customers.

Are the Adobe Communities Rhetorically Successful?

The previous chapter dealt with an online social network that has a few exigencies, but numerous constraints. In this case, we seem to have a network that has quite a few exigencies, but very little constraints to

overcome. The biggest constraint, the overall immensity of the amount of information available, is a fairly serious constraint and can be difficult to overcome. Adobe has, however (as mentioned earlier), derived an easier way to find information and navigate through the wealth of knowledge through their development of MXNA. In fact, the existence of this constraint must be very apparent to them, as they have recently released a second version of the feed aggregator that improves on the first one. Although novice users may still have trouble and get lost in a wealth of information, as the amount of information continues to grow in the Communities, it is evident that the methods in which information is retrieved will evolve with it.

Targeting a product or service to the wrong demographic or not properly addressing the wants of an audience segment can spell doom for marketers, which makes Adobe's goal to appeal to an unbelievably large demographic seem lofty. However, Adobe has taken productive steps in ensuring that the needs of almost every demographic are met. The Communities page is divided, in fact, into four different areas, based on users' individual exigencies. Thus, it is just as likely for executives in a large corporation to use the network as it is a home computer user, simply by selecting what it is the respective party wishes to do. Also, Adobe offers the features of the Communities in 20 different languages and dialects, and has made navigation through various pieces of software fairly simple. While it is impossible to address the needs of

every last person on the planet, Adobe is certainly making efforts to do just this—and is coming out on top.

Adobe has done a great job with the Communities, as everything is given to the audience to overcome the potential constraints. While some constraints may be impossible to overcome completely, and some constraints (like amount of information) grow alongside the expansion of the network, Adobe is making strides to address these constraints. Perhaps the biggest reason that Adobe's online social network is successful (rhetorically and otherwise) lies within the fact that Adobe gives the general public the chance to express its problems, suggestions, frustrations, and desires with the company, and Adobe can respond accordingly. In other words, even though Adobe has created a social network largely for its users to communicate with each other, they have remained somewhat accessible for their users to communicate with them.

From a pure business perspective, it is difficult to argue with the numbers that Adobe has put up since the Communities' launch in 2002. Whether the network is rhetorically successful or not, Adobe has managed to cut service and support costs over the last 5 years, despite the fact that the company (and virtually every other aspect of the company) has more than doubled during that time. While it is impossible to tell with public data whether these trends are due to the Communities or not, the figures certainly suggest that they are.

The next case for analysis, however, requires no financial analysis (superficial or otherwise) due to the free nature of the site. The following chapter (Five) discusses the results of the rhetorical analysis of an unsigned band's MySpace page.

CHAPTER FIVE MARKETING WITHIN MYSPACE

In the previous chapter, the Adobe Communities network was analyzed, which was a drastically different system altogether than Chapter Three's joga.com, as the Communities were developed more for social support than socialization. In this chapter, however, we will revert back to the more popular "friend-finding" social networks, with an analysis of a marketing campaign found within myspace.com. This network is completely different than the ones already analyzed for a number of reasons, most notably that there is no large corporate sponsor of MySpace, as there certainly is with Joga and the Communities. The result is a collection of individual pages, or "Spaces," that create an overwhelmingly large network of people from all around the world that are easily accessed by anyone with a MySpace account, which anyone can acquire for free.

Once a user has become a member of the social network, they are free to browse other users' pages, and socialize with other members in many different ways. Users can find friends they already know, search for people with common interests, occupations, or locations, or search through a buddy's list of friends for potential acquaintances as well. The site is structurally very similar to joga.com in a number of ways, with the most noteworthy difference being that MySpace does not focus on

any particular theme or sport other than the theme of pure socialization.

When a new user first becomes a member of MySpace, they are given a “Space” to do with what they please. MySpace also gives its members the capability to post pictures, songs, and even videos on their own personal “Space” in order to give members the ability to personalize their space and express themselves appropriately. Then, members of MySpace can add friends to their “Friends List” by submitting a “Friend Request” to whomever they please, new friend or old. The recipient of the request then has the option to confirm or decline that the two are, in fact, friends. In addition to user-provided information and media, members can also peruse the “friends list” of other users to not only see who knows who, but to also find and make more friends.

A user of MySpace will notice that there are advertisements on the site, in fact, quite a few of them from various sources. There are banner ads within the home page, advertisements after a user logs in, and even exit advertisements that are often geared toward specific audience traits based on the information that users supply for their own individual profiles. For instance, if a user has entered information in his profile that he is a single, heterosexual male from Texas, it is not unlikely for personalized advertisements to appear (upon entry to MySpace, exit from MySpace, or otherwise) from dating services with pictures of

women that are supposedly single, of a similar age, and from a nearby town.

Other notable advertisements include elaborate movie or television spots, often with playable video clips. These promotions frequently feature two or three banner-style advertisements, on the same page, that display images or words moving from one to the other, thus projecting the appearance of being a full-screen advertisement while taking up significantly less screen real estate. However, on individual Spaces, the only advertisements consist of one banner ad and a search bar sponsored by Google, both at the top of the page. Members can, however, advertise whatever they like within the confines of their Space. In fact, the entire network is, “in essence, a marketing tool that everyone who registers has access to” (Lapinski).

The history of MySpace is somewhat clandestine and not readily offered on the network’s Web site. According to Trent Lapinski, MySpace was started from a group of marketers who were successful (although their success was waning after the so-called “dot-com bubble burst”) at a company called Xdrive that offered free online Web space for personal homepages. After the site Friendster (a similar social networking site) popped up and began to gain popularity in 2003, MySpace was developed as a rival, hoping to cash in on the popular phenomenon of social networking while utilizing their already large preexisting base of free Web space users (and over 50 million email addresses in their database

to advertise the network to). In the end, the plan worked, and in the summer of 2006, MySpace became the most visited site in the world (Baker). From its inception, MySpace was intended to be a marketing platform for both its users and its parent company.

This analysis is different than the previous two, however, since we are less interested with how MySpace uses marketing and more interested with how individual entities use marketing within the online realm of MySpace. Since MySpace offers free membership, anyone can become a member and advertise whatever they like on MySpace for no cost whatsoever. There are numerous types of businesses on MySpace (in fact, the network encourages internal marketing by promoting business “networking” as an option for inclusion when creating a Space), but this online social network offers a special benefit to musicians. As a musician (signed or unsigned), MySpace offers a “MySpace Music Space” as well as an audio player within the page that can play up to four separate, full length songs (in the form of mp3’s) to anyone who visits the space.

This feature can be very beneficial for struggling musicians, as it offers unsigned artists the chance to utilize the exact same network characteristics that makes MySpace popular for socialization. Instead, musical artists can use the social network to make friends, and other users who may come across the band’s profile via a search or through a peer’s “friends list” have a chance to be exposed to their music when it might not be possible otherwise. Local musicians often do not get

adequate attention since their fan base is usually that of the surrounding area, but MySpace Music allows bands anywhere to get their music out to the masses, for free.

One such band that is utilizing the free features that MySpace offers is OmniSoul, a Delaware quintet that has garnered some regional success, but has not broken through to a nationwide audience thus far. The five members of the band all met while attending college at the University of Delaware, winning a Battle of the Bands competition during their first real playing gig together. The band then began touring around the Newark, Delaware and Philadelphia area, growing their fan base at an alarming rate in the meantime. Local radio began playing their music, and before long, Omnisoul had become a rather significant force in the local music scene (omnisoul.com). They would eventually go on to develop their own Web page and MySpace page as well.

Their individual Space consists of very typical elements for any space, musician-run or otherwise. Their page includes a profile picture of the entire band, an audio player with four of the band's original full-length songs in rotation, a list of upcoming tour dates, a list of friends, and a comment area where friends can leave messages to the band.

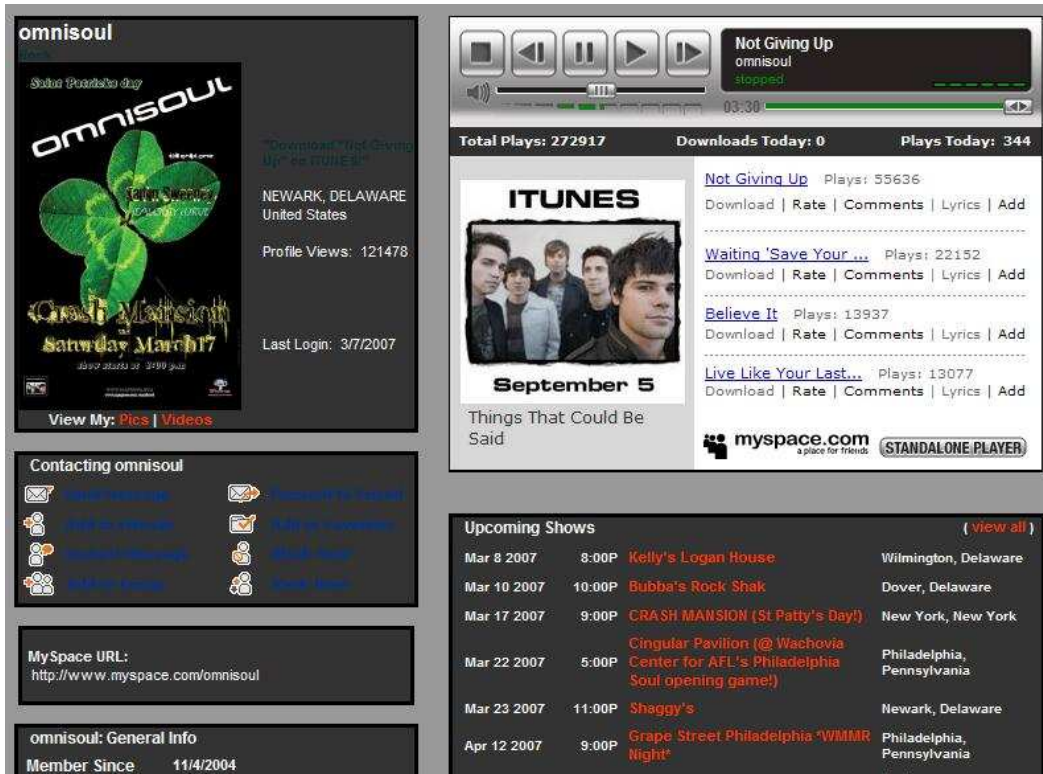


Figure 5.1: OmniSoul FrontPage.

Exigencies/Audience

MySpace has, like Adobe and Nike/Google, a mission statement that lays out the reasons for its creation. However, since this thesis is concerned with particular examples of marketing in online social networks and not necessarily the networks themselves (unless they are inherently linked, as has been the case thus far), an analysis must be made of OmniSoul's use of marketing and not of myspace.com's. There is no mission statement on OmniSoul's MySpace page upon which to base an analysis, so the researcher made personal contact with the band's lead singer/songwriter, Derek Fuhrmann. He gave this statement:

MySpace is an amazing tool for bands today to not only promote their music, but more importantly to keep in touch with their fan base. Making fans an intricate part of a band's world through daily interaction is really a brilliant concept.

OmniSoul is a band that has not yet garnered mainstream attention, so they hope by creating this Space, they will be able to generate exposure for themselves to people that they might not have been able to reach otherwise. As seen in Figure 5.1, the band has posted four original songs that anyone can play, anytime, for free. In the past, where national or worldwide exposure to music has relied on radio or television, MySpace has given Internet users the ability to find OmniSoul's music and play it for free anytime they like.

While the fact that one of OmniSoul's exigencies is to disseminate its music to the masses is difficult to dispute, it is also obvious that the band is attempting to create an exigency in its potential audience. In short, this page tells its viewers that they *need* to listen to OmniSoul's music, become their "friend," attend their concerts, and purchase their CD's. Thus, this marketing may be considered a manufactured Vatzian exigency, since it is likely that the audience did not need to do any of the above before viewing the MySpace page.

OmniSoul also hopes that the social networking feature of MySpace will help their exposure level, by adding as many "friends," (other users of the enormous MySpace network) as possible. The more users of MySpace that come in contact with the band and with whom the band can become "friends," the larger their social circle becomes, and the greater their chances of widespread exposure. Other than mere name exposure, however, is the possibility for music exposure. Clearly visible

within the music player in Figure 5.1, there is an option for each song, where a “friend” can “add” the song to their personal Space, where it will automatically play when another user views it. Thus, friends of OmniSoul can take the band’s music and advertise it on their personal Space, all the while expressing themselves by personalizing their page. However, is the “need” to personalize a Space preexisting or not?

As previously stated, there is a deep psychological need for humans to belong to (or at least appear to belong to) particular social circles, and the concept of personalization of a “Space” may be attributed (in part) to that need. The desire to “dress up” a MySpace page, for instance, may incorporate some of Pierre Bourdieu’s ideas, per his definition of “social capital.” This form of capital, according to Bourdieu, includes resources based upon relationships, networks, or inclusion into particular groups (98). Bourdieu goes on to argue for the fungibility of economic, cultural, and social resources, claiming that all three of these can be transformed into each other through various acts and/or situations (99). Therefore, membership of a particular group may be transformed into economic successes, for example, and the personalization of a user’s “Space” may therefore indicate inclusion in a distinctive social circle.

Thus, fans may be attempting to “cash in” on social capital by forming connections with the band. They may become the band’s “friend,” comment on their page, or send them a message in hope that

they respond. As peers recognize that a particular user is “friends” with an up-and-coming, trendy band, that person’s social capital may rise, and can then lead to transformation into other forms of useful capital, such as cultural capital—which include various advantages that a person may have that put them at a higher status in society. It is for these reasons that we may assume that the modification of an individual’s space for aesthetic reasons is a preexisting exigency that MySpace and OmniSoul have both benefited from.

Aside from creating new fans, OmniSoul hopes to strengthen its relationship with preexisting fans through its MySpace page as well. Through blogs that inform of the band’s day to day activities, news postings, the occasional MySpace promotional contest (they recently held a contest by randomly selecting a user who posted an OmniSoul song on their individual MySpace page), and by posting on friends’ comment spaces, the band seems to be committed to reinforcing the ties it has already created. The idea of the fans being a part of the “band’s world” (Fuhrmann) is very similar to Adobe’s Communities, in that users of the Communities and Adobe share very close relationships, and in turn, influence each other. In fact, OmniSoul recently had a poll on their MySpace page, asking their fans to vote on which cover song they should perform at their next show—illustrating that this connection has influential possibilities on both parties involved. Influencing the audience has always been an important goal of marketing, but if the

audience is successfully able to convince the speaker what they want, persuasion is achieved in a much more efficient manner. Consider, for instance, the importance of user feedback within the Adobe Communities.

However, these close relationships are two-sided, and while OmniSoul may have the need to ensure that connections to fans are strengthened, at the same time, the fans themselves must also be interested in keeping ties to the band and its music in order for the connections to thrive. Some fans may feel the need to connect with the band without an effort on the band's part, while some more casual fans may not care much about their relationship with the band unless a noteworthy event occurs (such as signing a major record label or releasing an album) and thus may not recognize this exigency. Therefore, we may assume that the need to connect on behalf of the fans can sometimes be Bitzerian and sometimes be Vatzian.

Members can put as little or as much information on their Space about themselves as they like. This data can include race, religion, education information, favorite bands, occupation, and even salary information. All of this information can then be used as search criteria, to find old friends or potential new ones. However, it is possible for advertisers to use this information, as bands that have similar sounds to other musicians actively search for users whose interests are in line with other, better known artists, and attempt to make connections. For

instance, some of OmniSoul's "friends" are actually other bands who use OmniSoul's friend list as a database of potential new fans to make "friends" with—and vice versa. Those who choose to become "friends" with OmniSoul are aware that their "friendship" becomes public knowledge, and that they may be contacted by other people with similar interests. This may illustrate the need for connection on both the band and the fans' parts.

With this case, we have encountered several different exigencies, both Bitzerian and Vatzian, which come into play within the context of this rhetorical situation. The band needs to get exposure to their music, distribute their music and information to new fans, and strengthen their connections to existing fans. Their audience needs to become exposed to new music, learn about the band, and make and strengthen their ties to the band. While these exigencies can often be difficult to categorize in terms of whether they are created or not, OmniSoul's MySpace page is different than many other forms of marketing in that regardless of the nature of the needs, the rhetoric is mutually beneficial for the rhetor and audience alike. In the previous analyses, we have uncovered that the rhetors typically have their own needs in addition to those that they claim the audience has. With this case, OmniSoul needs to create new fans and strengthen ties to preexisting fans, and OmniSoul fans likewise have the need to spread the music to their friends and follow the band on tours and continue to listen to new music. As shown in Figure 5.2,

fans and “friends” of the band enjoy connecting with them and other fans, in order to get information about concerts, CD releases, and also to simply offer praise of their material. Thus, while the motives for the exigencies are different for the rhetor and audience, the means to these mutual ends are the same.



Figure 5.2: *Conversations with the Band.*

A superficial analysis of the conversation in the above Figure 5.2 may reveal interesting insights into the motivations of these individuals to

post on OmniSoul's page. While being a "friend" of the band is a requirement to get up-to-the-minute informational postings, no other MySpace activity is necessary. These posters have chosen to communicate with the band (in a public manner) for numerous possible reasons. "The Alone Girl," for instance, wrote to the band to praise their work and to wish them a happy St. Patrick's Day. This may have been done simply to participate in the virtual community, in order to satisfy the psychological need to belong, or may have been done in hopes that the band will then respond back, which may lead to a strengthened interpersonal connection. It is also conceivable that the possible (public) response(s) from the band on "The Alone Girl's," MySpace page will increase her social capital and further solidify or enhance her social status. "TheChristineATTACK's" posting may be for these same reasons. "The Dimmed Guy" may also have the same motivations, but in his post he is clearly looking for a response from the band, which may mean in addition to the other possibilities already mentioned, he is simply interested in obtaining information.

Constraints

Usually with the development of a marketing effort within the confines of an online social network, one of the key constraints is competition from other similar networks (much like what we saw from Joga). However, with MySpace garnering approximately 80% of the total traffic to online social networks (Baker), that particular constraint is not

an issue here. Given that this community draws such an enormous amount of traffic does present a potential problem in that OmniSoul's page may get buried beneath the other millions of musician pages within the network. Since anyone with an email address can create their own page (music space or ordinary), how can one band compete for the attention of a potential audience against a vast amount of competitors?

Also, although MySpace is a wildly popular network that gains a ridiculous amount (240,000) of new members daily (Baker), the fact remains that there are still plenty of Internet users who haven't bought into all the hype and joined the network yet. So, by segmenting the potential audience into two categories (MySpace users and non-MySpace users), choosing either segment exclusively still leaves a tremendous amount of potential viewers that are not being targeted. Thus, while advertising on MySpace seems like reaching the largest audience possible, what about those millions of users who don't use MySpace?

Is OmniSoul's Space Rhetorically Successful?

The rhetorical success of marketing within online spaces has been defined in this thesis as the ability to create or address exigencies while overcoming the constraints of the rhetorical situation. In this case, we have an instance of marketing with quite a few exigencies, both Bitzerian or Vatzian, and a small amount of constraints, although the ones that exist can be detrimental.

Rhetorically, OmniSoul's page is probably the most successful of the three cases this thesis has analyzed, due to the fact that the exigencies OmniSoul has created on behalf of its audience and the exigencies that already existed for the band all rely on the same solution—the MySpace page. Since fans of the band can view the rhetoric of the page as mutually beneficial, and not just as some big-name company that wants to profit off of the average citizen, the audience is probably more likely to react to the messages of the page and further support the band.

The biggest constraint, however, is finding the band's Space amidst the millions of individual pages that already exist in the MySpace universe. Although the majority of users who visit the page were probably directed there by a fan, getting random users to come across the page may prove to be next to impossible. Even by increasing the amount of search criteria for those actively looking for new bands to listen to on MySpace, there simply may be too many other options for people to find first. However, the idea behind using MySpace is that the band's popularity may snowball, by generating more and more "friends" and exposing all of the subsequent "friends" to their music. Thus, their popularity reaches a point where major record labels and/or other forms of media notice, the band may not have to rely solely on its MySpace page for exposure anymore.

Also, OmniSoul runs into the problem of targeting only MySpace users, and this could potentially leave out a large audience segment who

may be interested in OmniSoul's music. The great thing about MySpace, as mentioned earlier, is that any Internet user can view a MySpace page without becoming a member, and content from the network still appears as results of search engine queries. Given these possibilities, it seems that OmniSoul does have a chance to reach MySpace users and non-users alike.

The band also houses a more traditional Web site (omnisoul.com) which they developed before the MySpace page that offers visitors similar features (in fact, the two pages link to each other). As illustrated by Figure 5.3, on this page, fans can learn about upcoming shows, listen to the band's music, buy merchandise, and even chat on a message board with other fans. In fact, the differences between the Web page and the MySpace page are minimal to say the least, and may only exist as a supplement to those who do not use MySpace. There is essentially nothing that a user can do on the Web page that they can not do on the MySpace page, but there is one thing that only MySpace allows, and that is access to their enormous network of active users and the social networking capability that only they can provide.



Figure 5.3: *Omnisoul.com*.

Perhaps this is the most important benefit of OmniSoul’s usage of MySpace, as it is a luxury that the previous marketing examples have not been afforded—the use of free space to advertise. In the previous two chapters, attention was paid to what the corporate entities were likely paying to get their messages heard by the masses, and what the potential alternatives were that may be more cost-efficient. In this case, however, OmniSoul has received absolutely free exposure (as even development and maintenance of the Space requires no professional help) and even if the message falls on deaf ears, the band can not possibly be any worse off because of its MySpace page. It is for this reason, then, that OmniSoul’s marketing within MySpace is not only a rhetorically sound idea, but a great business move as well.

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSIONS

It has become clearly evident that, even with the relatively small sample of cases analyzed, the individual differences between those who advertise within virtual communities are astounding. While some (like Adobe) are looking to utilize input from their customers in future company developments, others (like OmniSoul) are simply looking to advertise themselves and make their existence known. Regardless of the specific goals that these rhetors have, they have all come to a decision to use virtual communities as the environment in which to create their own rhetorical situations.

As more and more individuals worldwide are gaining Internet access each year, it seems impossible for the interest in online social networking to decline. Given the growing trend toward electronic communication, it is almost certain the advertising in these social spaces will become more important in the coming years, and may eventually be the most prominent form of advertising if current trends continue. The reasons for this growth involve a number of different factors, but perhaps the most important is the complete radicalization of the marketing landscape that online social communities, and the Internet, afford.

Although the channels for advertising within newspapers, television, and radio (the more traditional forms of marketing) are limited, the possibilities for advertising in an online environment are seemingly endless. Traditional marketing efforts have focused on determining exactly what channel to advertise through, in order to properly segment the potential audience, but users of online social networks have often times segmented themselves. Users of Joga, for instance, are soccer fans, users of the Communities are interested in Adobe, and users of MySpace have the option to supply whatever information about themselves that they wish. Marketers can spend more effort focusing on the messages that they will use, and less time on proper audience segmentation.

Another benefit to marketing in a virtual community is that once the audience enters the network, they may be able to *ignore* advertising messages, but they can not *avoid* them (immersion). Consider the Adobe Communities, for instance, which uses no outside advertisements or pop-up ads (that the typical user can avoid easily), but rather advertise through immersion in that the entire network is the respective marketing effort. Once a user has entered into the Communities, they are constantly exposed to Adobe messages and discussions, and the participants' comments in the discussions can also be considered advertisements. These "advertisements," according to Gladwell, may be more powerful than traditional forms of advertisements (54), due to the

power of weak-tie relationships, which is exactly what kind of relationships exist on Adobe's Communities.

Also consider a social network like SecondLife.com. SecondLife is somewhat of a newcomer (in format) to the world of online social networking. Users of this particular network actually create an entire new human being to occupy in a completely unique digital "world." Inhabitants of this world are able to partake in many of the same activities that inhabitants of the real world engage in, and the digital world even has its own system of commerce that utilizes real money. Users of this world, for instance, can create art, build houses, or design clothes that can be sold to other users, and real currency exchanges hands in the transactions (not just "virtual" currency). In fact, SecondLife lures in thousands of new users daily and its commerce system generates more than \$10 million in transactions weekly (Secondlife.com).

The marketing potential for a network like SecondLife seems astounding. Not only are there virtual businesses within the network, but with these businesses are possibilities for advertising (and even the possibility of advertising a marketing development service!). Some musicians and other performers have already attempted to grasp the potential of SecondLife by performing concerts within the virtual world (and charging users' avatars to see the performances) and selling music to other users, and some tech-savvy campuses have even begun to hold

classes within this virtual world. The existence of such possibilities in an online world truly embody the “unbounded sociability” that Rheingold predicted almost 15 years ago (248).

As these analyses have progressed, it may be noted that while most of the attention has been focused on rhetorical benchmarks, some regard has also been given to financial aspects of the advertising messages as well. It is worth reiterating that while this study may have concluded that certain advertising campaigns were born of seemingly very sound business models, the true measure of success that this thesis has attempted to determine is strictly rhetorical. The reason for this determination of success is due to the idea that no matter how little (or much) is spent on an advertising campaign within online social networks, and no matter how large the potential audience may be, the rectification of the exigencies will not occur if the rhetor does not properly address these needs and overcome the constraints of the situation. If the exigencies are not overcome, then persuasion will not take place, and the marketing venture will fail, both rhetorically and financially.

At the same time, however, it is important to consider the perceived costs of these marketing campaigns, since it is possible that a marketing effort can be rhetorically successful but financially disastrous if proper cost analyses are not performed. What this thesis has attempted to illustrate is that with regard to marketing within social networks, the

cost (or perceived cost) is less of an issue than rhetorical success, and these analyses have provided a potentially more successful set of metrics that marketing developers can use than cost analyses alone. Before the marketing department of a business of any kind chooses to advertise within virtual communities, they must first closely analyze the entire rhetorical situation—and this thesis has given marketing departments an analytical tool to do so.

In fact, many marketing professionals work within a particular pre-set budget, and must plan their campaigns accordingly. It may be more beneficial to first evaluate the rhetorical situation and then determine appropriate costs, and apply finances toward the exigencies suitably. Most businesses already perform audience analyses, but they often fail to pay close attention to the exigencies of the situation, both preexisting and manufactured. This thesis, therefore, offers some explanatory power over the phenomenon of unsuccessful marketing even though cost analyses may have predicted success, or vice versa. Perhaps the most important finding for marketing professionals that comes from this study is the idea of separate exigencies, as we have seen in the previous three chapters. Although marketing developers have their own set of exigencies when it comes to developing a marketing campaign (that usually includes advertising a particular product, or the “business side”), they must also convince their audience that there are exigencies inherent in the situation which requires the audience to act. If a

marketer is successful in persuading the audience that the manufactured exigencies exist, then successful rhetoric will occur. What we have seen here, through this thesis, is that rhetorical success in this manner is most easily achieved by entities whose own individual exigencies are symbiotic to the exigencies of the audience. In other words, the users of these online social networks and the entities that are marketing within them have congruent needs. Table 6.1 (below) illustrates these similarities.

Table 6.1: *The relationship between the organizations' and audiences' exigencies.*

	Organizational Exigencies	Audience's Exigencies
Joga.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent exposure of Nike/Google brand to worldwide soccer community • Create ties between Nike-endorsed players and fans, to increase interest in Nike 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialization • Browsing videos and pictures of soccer games • Discuss soccer and plan soccer games • Be a part of a community
Adobe Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free advertising through user discussions about capabilities of Adobe software • Decrease support costs by allowing users to help each other • Receive input on future releases • Less expensive form of usability testing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover capabilities of Adobe software, learn new tricks • Get software help quickly, without calling an automated number • Give Adobe suggestions on improvement of software • Advertise their expertise with Adobe products • Belong to a social circle
OmniSoul's MySpace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get free exposure on the world's most popular Web site • Disseminate music and information about the band • Strengthen ties to fans through communication tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become exposed to new music • Learn more about the band • Connect with the band and other fans to create and strengthen ties • Demonstrate membership in "hip" social scene

For instance, Adobe created the Communities to inform the public about their own capabilities, to offer a space for support and technical help, and to solicit input on future software releases. Users frequent the Communities for the exact same purposes—to get information about Adobe’s software, to get help, and to provide input on upcoming software releases (as well as other, self-aggrandizing reasons discussed earlier). OmniSoul’s MySpace page is just the same. These exigencies are somewhat of a happy medium between Bitzer and Vatz’s ideas of exigency, since they equally exist on both the audience’s and rhetor’s part. These two entities have, therefore, created exigencies so well, that it is almost impossible to discern whether they were created, or already existed in the first place. That, however, is a principal use of rhetoric. It is up to the speaker to convince the audience that the need for action the speaker sees also exists for the audience, and these two entities perform this task very well. The problem with Nike and Google’s [joga.com](#) is that the “needs” of their audience are being purported as exigencies, but they are simply creations of marketing developers. Thus, the biggest constraint on any marketing effort, within online social space or not, is that of convincing the audience that the exigencies actually exist.

The easiest way to achieve “exigency congruence,” as we have seen with these analyses, is by simply using the online social network for what it was meant to be—a social network. Both OmniSoul’s page and the

Adobe Communities readily communicate with the users of their respective sites, and it is for this reason that their exigencies are so similar to their audiences'. This is not to say, however, that interaction between the rhetor and the audience is the only way to achieve success when marketing within an online social network. If this were true, then other social networks that rely on outside advertisements like Facebook or MySpace would fail to exist, even though it should also be noted that MySpace has created a "mascot" of sorts (a user known as "Tom," who is claimed to have created the site) that communicates with users and informs them of particular problems, etc (Lapinski).

Another important issue that this thesis raises for a marketing coordinator who may be interested in the possibility of utilizing online social networks within advertising campaigns (or vice versa) is the overall ambiguity of exigencies. Through the analyses performed on the three separate cases, an attempt was made at determining what the real exigencies were, as well as what exigencies may be manufactured by the rhetors in question. In the end, however, it is virtually impossible to discern the difference, or to properly identify *all* of the potential exigencies involved in the rhetorical situation. Because of this uncertain nature, assumptions were often required to complete the analyses, but a marketing professional at least has the final say in determining what exigencies they will attempt to create.

Thorough investigation of exigencies is extremely important, but an exhaustive rhetorical analysis does not stop there. While these businesses may superficially consider constraints, usually in the form of costs, they may not fully examine all of the constraints on the entire rhetorical situation. Take (for instance) joga.com, whose parent companies spent large amounts of money to make sure that the social network was advertised in the most cost-efficient way possible during the World Cup. Nike and Google's marketing plan of Joga may be commendable in terms of efficaciousness, and the attention paid to the constraints of advertising costs during the World Cup, but their failure to recognize such constraints as the limited kairos of the situation and other established social network alternatives (as well as the more significant difference in exigencies on their part and their audience's) make the overall effort unsuccessful.

Exigencies are not the only element of the rhetorical situation that can be manufactured, however. It is also possible for a rhetor to attempt to create constraints—not necessarily on the entire rhetorical situation itself, but rather on the audience. By persuading the audience that there are more constraints involved in a situation, or rather, persuading the audience that they have less options for action than they really have, a rhetor can more easily convince an audience to act in a particular manner. Nike and Google, for instance, have subtly attempted to convince their potential audience that there are not preexisting

means for the features that their network offers, and Adobe has also attempted to convince its users that other unofficial message boards are inadequate for their needs, thus creating a constraint by offering only one viable option.

The future for marketing within these networks does seem bright, but there are also various directions in which research can be performed in the near future. Although this thesis has brought to light many interesting and telling characteristics of successful marketing practices in online social networks, it is by no means completely exhaustive and there are certainly modifications that can be made by future scholars.

Perhaps the greatest improvement to this study would be the addition of accurate financial information, and analysis, to the preexisting rhetorical analyses. If, for instance, a particular marketing effort is enjoying a large amount of financial success, the subsequent rhetorical analysis may help to determine factors that contribute to the campaign's prosperity. Conversely, if a marketing effort is failing fiscally, examining the rhetorical situation may reveal reasons for the lack of success. Thus, it seems that true success of a marketing campaign requires both financial gains and successful rhetoric, and this thesis only properly analyzes the latter. The financial information, unfortunately, is based on conjecture and educated guesses.

Although the methodology for this study seems to be fairly complete in its analysis of the rhetorical situation, it is by no means the "be all,

end all” method of rhetorical analysis available. There are numerous other theoretical lenses that may be applied to marketing efforts within virtual communities, and it may be beneficial to marketers for future scholars to perform such analyses with completely different methodologies. Then, perhaps the newly found results can be compared to those in this thesis in order to produce new conclusions or insights into the nature of successful rhetoric.

With the new age of rhetoric and persuasion upon us, in the form of electronic interactions and virtual communities, it is important that marketers and rhetoricians alike make efforts to understand how these changes impact traditional communication. My hope is that with studies like these, we will come closer to understanding not only what makes for successful persuasion in an online social network environment, but also what makes for successful communication in general.

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