HYPOTHESIS:

Current research shows that an effective social media campaign will promote the business and its brand along with its products and services while encouraging the audience and target market to engage with the business and its brand through comments, images, videos and a range of other multimedia.

Effective posts, especially on Twitter, “are make-or-break text in terms of portraying a message from a firm [business/brand], so businesses must be extra prudent and strategic in the design and execution of their content in order to motivate and sway their followers (Brown, Cromer, Milne, Swani 49). Additionally, effective posts will implement different message strategies based on whether they are promoting products or services. The Ebertfest campaign we are running will be based in message strategies that concern services. “Services differentiate from products in the sense that they are more intangible and heterogeneous” (Brown, Cromer, Milne, Swani 49). Our project is designed to help audience members at Ebertfest engage with the movies, filmmakers and actors along with the town of Champaign through the information we provide on our social media accounts and our website. Therefore, our posts should be designed to promote the services (movie info, actor bios, theatre trivia, etc.) we are providing with our social media campaign and website.

Effective posts that market services develop brand images (Ebertfest logo) and use emotional appeals to connect with target audiences. The following flowchart from Brown, Cromer, Milne and Swani depicts the necessary information to include when designing posts, Tweets and other online content.

![Flowchart Image]

FIGURE 1: Conceptual Framework
The idea is to develop a web presence that allows us to positively interact with our audience through posts, links to content, images and videos while reinforcing the image our brand. As David Aaker states in his article, “the brand is special because it explicitly and unambiguously represents an organization as well as a product.” The quality and quantity of our content will reflect our dedication to our audience. Additionally, Aaker goes on to state that the challenges of developing and maintaining the brand manifest in “staying relevant, creating value propositions, managing negative associations, adapting the brand to different contexts, and making the brand identity happen.” The idea here is to differentiate our services from those that already exist in the same vein (i.e. Ebertfest’s official Twitter and other social media campaigns) and to deploy our content in a way that draws audience members to our site first rather than seeking the information and services we provide elsewhere.

The students in JOUR 425 have created a website and supporting social media accounts in order to provide access to information on a mobile platform for audience members. Our social media presence and website serve as hub for all information related to Ebertfest. Our idea as a class is to set up a one-stop shop for Ebertfest information regarding the films, filmmakers and actors along with historical information regarding Roger Ebert and Ebertfest in the Champaign community. We strive to have content that is both reliable and credible and delivered as the events happen. Before posting and creating content, students were asked to consider the following questions:

- What problem are our services and brand a solution to?
- Why will our information be a more reliable and credible source for information and what is our ability to deliver this type of content?
- How is our content different from what is already out there?
- How are we going to deal with negative interactions on our social media accounts and website?
- How can we stay consistent with our brand identity while promoting the variety of our information (films, actors, filmmakers, history, trivia, bar specials)? A variety of contexts gives us the responsibility to be the best source of information each day for each type of information we are providing.
- Why will audiences want to revisit our content for the latest information?
- What is going to resonate with our audience that will trigger our content as useful and enjoyable information?

**SOURCES:**

- http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=25754515-3e4d-43db-a382-0f1691eaba29%40sessionmgr4003&vid=8&hid=4206
- http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1005279
ANALYSIS:

We utilized Google Analytics to monitor pageviews, viewer acquisition, viewer behavior and more. The issue with analyzing these numbers is the fact that students in our class were viewing our website, skewing the numbers. For that reason, the numbers are likely higher than they would be if we only took public pageviews into account.

**General Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sessions</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pageviews</td>
<td>1,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages / Session</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. Session Duration</td>
<td>00:04:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bounce Rate</td>
<td>47.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% New Sessions</td>
<td>23.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We finished with about 2,000 page views and an average page view time of 4:30, which is a strong number. The bounce rate was high, almost 50%. This means that almost half of visitors entered the site and exited without viewing other pages on the site. This number could have been improved if our content linked to more content within our website. We could have added “Related Sites” and links of that nature to encourage viewers to view more pages on ngebertfest.com.
Looking at acquisition to our website, it is clear that referrals account for the majority of pageviews. This result was to be expected, as we had links to our website on several other websites and social media accounts. One important note is that the source with the most referrals is our class website, so that number needs to be ignored. Other than that, the News-Gazette had a strong amount of referrals, followed by several University of Illinois websites.
Demographics

Google Analytics gives users the ability to look at demographic information of their visitors. It does this by storing a number in their browsers when they visit our website. Google Analytics then identifies that computer’s visits and uses that information to determine demographic information including age and gender.

What could we have done better?

Over the timeline of the Ebertfest project execution, many members of the class noticed aspects that could have been improved on if given the opportunity to do the project again. Many of the aspects brought up by the group are outline below.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Many of the students mentioned aspects for the social media team. More university involvement would help the social media obtain a stronger network of influential people to create awareness of the campaign online. Specific actions like following more University of Illinois twitter account would help improve this aspect in the future.
Also, using more social media outlets, such as Facebook have potential to improve the campaign for future endeavors. The social media outlets that were decided upon to use by the team (Twitter, Instagram, Vine) also could have been used in more directed and conscious ways to help direct our media at the specific target audience. For example, many thought the Twitter was overused, especially in the amount of tweets that were sent out without a real purpose. If the number of tweets were reduced, this would also eliminate the possibility of annoying our audience and providing them with meaningful information. Many felt that the Instagram account was under-utilized and should have been a media that was reevaluated to determine if it was necessary. The Vine account, many felt, was even more under-utilized in the campaign and should have been eliminated. Because of the Instagram account having video capabilities, the Vine was rendered as a useless media.

The tweets that were retweeted and favorited the most featured “mentions” of other people in the tweets, with the level of exposure of the tweet directly correlated with the amount of followers that the mentionee had.

The analysis group provided the social media group with a list of popular list of twitter handles that could be tweeted at from the Ebertfest account. The lack of communication between the teams led to a less-than-stellar attempt to tweet at these aforementioned accounts. If those twitter handles were utilized, we would have had much more exposure.

Tweets with photos also saw much more popularity, suggesting that our audience would have liked more visuals accompanying our twitter efforts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reader blogs</th>
<th>Allowing readers to publish blogs, have visible spaces with comments, e.g. MyTelegraph</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>User-generated data</td>
<td>Participation with low barrier to entry, e.g. rating, polls, films, sports players, NYT word train features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User questions</td>
<td>Crowdsourced questions initiated by news organisation for public figure online or via broadcast/webcast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social network functionality</td>
<td>On-site social network elements, e.g. member spaces, friend recommendation, etc., e.g. Times People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-site engagement</td>
<td>Interacting and engaging in social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, YouTube</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Diagram showing activity levels for different types of participation. The arrows show areas of increasing or decreasing focus.](image)

**Figure 10.** Activity levels for different types of participation. The arrows show areas of increasing or decreasing focus.

### 2.7 Lessons and conclusions

The data confirm the following suggestions gleaned from interviews.

1. UGC and social media are now considered strategically central to the development of these organisations. All have invested more resources - or are planning to invest more resources in this area. News UGC and off-site engagement are likely to see the most growth. Only message boards are likely to see a reduction in activity.
2. The BBC and CNN (broadcasters) place more emphasis on news-related UCG and the newsgathering benefits of being closer to
This Chart, taken from the article entitled The Rise of Social Media and its Impact of Journalism by The Reuters Institute of the study of journalism shows that, according to their research, user-generated content–i.e. Reporting, crowdsourcing, etc.–is deemed to be growing in importance by mainstream news outlets because it creates far more data than the likes of blogs or user-comments. Consequently, if we would have focused more on engaging patrons of Ebertfest we would have (1) generated more data and (2) reduced the amount of time that we would have had to have been at Ebertfest itself.

Also, the article goes on to explain that news media outlets are far from mastering social media, for most of the social media efforts by these outlets started as bottom-up programs. However, as time has passed and the importance of social media has become more palpable, they are switching to a top-down style of social media use, with direct and concise instructions coming from editors down to reporters.

By simply creating a “social media team,” we effectively created a bottom-up system of utilizing social media. More direct instructions, perhaps from the analysis group or the professor himself would have helped us yield better data and participation in the social media realm.

Timeline Planning

Another factor that would have made the campaign stronger would be to start the promotion and marketing long before the campaign kick-off. Many believed that with more preparation time, we would have been able to have better established connections to promote the campaign. This extra time would have also allowed us to spread the word about the campaign and event.

Credentials

On several occasions at the event, press passes did not match the amount of people helping with the event, so some people were not able to help in the way they were scheduled to do so. In the future, the class felt that more press passes would have allowed more people to utilize their time at the event.

Event Specifics

The class agreed that having a table outside the event would have helped build a presence for the campaign for the people attending. It would have attracted the attention of our target audience and provided another way to connect with them. Also, talking directly with more people about the campaign during the event would have helped spread the word more directly.

CONCLUSION;

In closing, we understand that we did not have an optimal amount of time to get this project off the ground but we thought that it was an overall success. We considered our coverage of Eberfest 2014 a success due to the participation by the entire class and the production of content outside of general news coverage. Although there are some things that could have been done differently and potentially more effectively, it is safe to say that this coverage advanced our journalistic knowledge as a whole. Our coverage of Eberfest went outside the realm of interviews and stereotypical content. We were forced to think outside the box and find unique ways to provide our audience with information about the festival. As a whole, we were able to
learn lessons about media and journalism that can only stem from practice and experience. Correcting Tweets with errors in them allowed everyone to see that mistakes can be made but can also be corrected. One the other hand, recognizing people who may not be famous but are important to the festival reminds us to always research and know what and who you are covering. It is never an easy task to effectively provide information to an audience varying from 18 to 65 years old. Google Analytics and establishing a presence at Ebertfest displayed results suggesting that we were able to reach this audience despite the large range ages. Again, this coverage of Ebertfest 2014 can most definitely be considered a success for a variety of reasons. With a small window to work with and only a few press passes, our goal was achieved because we were able to reach the fans of Ebertfest providing information outside of your everyday news content.