

Revolution to Participation: Managerial Approaches to Consumers' Social Media Behavior

**Kalinga Jagoda, Amy Woermke
Bissett School of Business, Mount Royal University**

Abstract

Increasingly, companies are incorporating social media into their business strategy but are neglecting to focus on what to do when social media goes wrong. This paper deploys the Theory of Planned Behavior to develop an understanding of online behaviors and proposes a framework to assist businesses in managing the negative consequences of social media.

Introduction

Over the last 15 years, the popularity of social media sites has exploded across the world. It is now possible for people to share information with others around the world and to create relationships that, without social media, may not have been possible (Curran & Lennon, 2011). According to Neilsenwire (2010), approximately 110 billion minutes per year are spent on social media, which means one of every four and half minutes spent online are spent on social media sites. Businesses are starting to realize that social media sites are one of the best ways to reach their customers (Curran & Lennon, 2011).

Many businesses fail to consider what will happen if social media goes wrong. For example, Intel was attacked by activists opposed to minerals mining in the Congo, forcing the company to shut down its Facebook page (Torben, 2011b.) A large focus has been placed on how to use social media in marketing strategy to reach business goals. However, there has been less focus on what to do when consumers form online groups that can threaten a company's image and sabotage its business goals. In fact, many businesses underestimate the shift of power that has occurred through the advent of social media. Businesses must be aware that social media is increasingly being used as a tool for consumers to voice concerns and to expose unethical business practices (Hiar, 2010). While businesses are certainly becoming more effective at self-promotion through social media, they too often resort to the slow moving channels of traditional media when responding to crises or negative publicity (Torben, 2011). And even those businesses that do attempt to control information online often end up drawing more negative attention to the issue and end up creating increased controversy (Media Badge, 2011).

While it is important for businesses to employ social media in their marketing strategies, it is also essential they learn to manage unsatisfied consumers online. Global online communities can broadcast a message that then becomes available to anyone with internet access (eMarketer, 2011). Offline word of mouth can spread the information even farther. More importantly, the message can spread across the world at zero cost to the sender (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). Even businesses that may not operate globally are being held responsible for their actions by others from around the globe. However, businesses have been taking a reactive approach to managing their brands online (Media Badge, 2011). In order to undertake proactive management online, businesses will require an understanding of online consumer

behaviors. This understanding will allow businesses to develop proactive social media policies as a part of their overall marketing strategy in order to maintain a positive perception for their brand.

The major limitation of the current research on social media adaptation and usage is the lack of research in the area of customer management. The majority of studies focus on the usage of social media in marketing products or services. These studies examine consumer behavior (Pooja, Black, Jiangmei, Berger & Weinberg, 2012), branding (Nassar, 2012), product selection (Lin, Hock & Kwok, 2011), and distribution channels (Raj, Kothandaraman, Kashyap & Singh, 2012). However, they largely ignore how corporations should respond when social media initiatives go wrong or fail to provide the intended results. Only a few studies examine the role of social media in addressing dissatisfied customers (see Chan & Wan, 2009; De Meyer & Mostert, 2011). As social media is becoming an important aspect of reaching customers, prudent management of such initiatives has become paramount to gain competitive advantage. This study attempts to fill this gap by using The Theory of Planned Behavior to analyze four cases and use the findings to develop a framework for effective management of customers deploying social media.

Literature Review

Social media channels have become an important gateway for companies to create ongoing communications with the public (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). Twitter alone has bred success for many companies: Google has three million followers, Whole Foods has two million followers and Southwest Airlines has over one million followers (Malhotra, Mahotra, & See, 2012). Facebook has also become another popular social media that has over 750 million users, and everyday 20 million users will become a fan of a business fan page. With such large usage, companies have begun to flock to Facebook, with over 1.5 million businesses having a Facebook fan page (Jeanjean, 2012). For these reasons, many companies are now feeling pressure to create an online presence in social media spaces. Approximately 70% of executives believe their companies would be perceived by consumers as being out of touch if their company was not present on social media (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). However, “many businesses jump into social media because everyone else is doing it, without first developing a road map of where they are going” (Altes, 2011, p 60).

In the past, businesses used social media as an advertising tool. Messages were posted online without segmenting audiences and without a focus on relationship building (Hill & Moran, 2011). Since then, there have been many articles written on how to use social media with a clear strategy to increase sales, to gather consumer data and to develop a larger customer base. According to Montalvo (2011), a social media strategy should be developed to reach a company’s goals, some of which include increased brand awareness, product innovation, collection of statistical data and increased sales. Measuring the success of a social media strategy is also essential: exploring the variety of available technology and platforms, tracking the frequency of social engagements and gathering salient statistical data (Montalvo, 2011). In developing its social media strategy, a business must first develop an understanding of the various platforms available and how they might advance their strategy. For instance, if using Twitter as a social media platform, it is important to understand how the business can create content that will be retweeted (Malhotra, et. al., 2012). If using Facebook, it is important to understand the various plugins available in order to implement the correct plugins to enhance the business’ online fans (Jeanjean, 2012).

The growing use of social media provides businesses new outlets that can increase interest in their products or services. Pooja et al. (2012) studied the relationship between social media use and the overall impact social-media marketing has on purchase behavior. They were particularly interested in finding the factors affecting the choice and selection of products customers reached through social media outlets. Their analysis shows that advertisers should pay close attention to customer lifetime value considerations in deciding the best social media outlet. A recent study by Nassar (2012) investigated how hoteliers view social media as a branding strategy. They wanted to investigate the effect of hotel grade and location on deployment of social media. Through a survey of 491 hotels from the USA, the UK, and Egypt, he found the probability of using social media to be higher in high-grade hotels. He also found that hotels in developed countries use social media more often than those in developing countries. In order to maximize the customer reach, companies are encouraging the employees, in particular salespeople, to incorporate the social media into their overall sales strategy. Theoretical frameworks and practical applications have been developed to provide services that lead to value creation. Most of these mechanisms use task-technology fit theory and other relationship marketing theories (Raj et al. 2012).

Although, social media provided many opportunities for firms to reach customers and market their products, effective management is paramount to achieve the higher level of success. The interconnectivity various social media outlets provides an additional challenge for managers in selecting the appropriate media and social media mistakes could be costly and take considerable resources to rectify (see Van Grove 2010). There are many instances where individuals or groups deployed social media tools used by the companies to build campaigns against unethical practices (Hiar, 2010). Some companies use social media as a negative tactic against their competitors. Chiu, Ip & Silverman (2012) reported that some companies in China employ people to praise their own businesses and disparage competitors.

Over the last few years, online activism has increased, and many businesses can learn from the success of these activists. They can also learn from the attempts of others in trying to control such activism, which have at best produced mixed results. In Egypt, for example, activists used social media to expand networks, broker relations, globalize resources and shape how individuals thought about participating in protests (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). It allowed them to effectively frame the issues, propagate unifying symbols, and organize the off-line protests (Lim, 2012). In their study, Pearce and Kendzior (2012) found that the Azerbaijani government has successfully dissuaded activists using social media for political purposes. They showed that the government used effective manipulation of digitally mediated social networks to dissuade frequent Internet users from supporting protest and average users from using social media for political purposes. These examples show that some initiatives taken by the governments were successful, but most initiatives were less effective.

As indicated earlier, companies have to pay close attention to the behaviors of customers not only before they purchase the products or services but also addressing their concerns. Managing dissatisfied customers is a complex process. The companies used various ways to manage dissatisfied customers, as they would more likely voice their concerns in various outlets (Chan & Wan, 2009). Establishing long-term relationships with them is an important factor in addressing their concerns (De Meyer and Moster, 2011). Some scholars pointed out that consumer dissatisfaction can lead to consumer innovativeness as an expression of voice. For example, from data collected from 603 consumers and 150 investment consultants across 50 financial service companies, Yang, Chi & Yang (2009) showed that consumer dissatisfaction positively relates to consumer innovativeness when online facility and investment

consultant support are present. They argued that dissatisfaction should be used as an opportunity to innovate their products or services rather than viewed as a problem.

Researchers have used the technology acceptance model (Curran & Lennon, 2011), social network theory (Sacks & Graves, 2012), social cognitive theory (Stefanone, Lackaff & Rosen, 2010) and theory of planned behavior (see Lin, Hock & Kwok, 2011; Becker, Clement & Schaedel, 2010) to understand and analyze behavior of individuals using social media. In this paper we use the theory of planned behavior (TPB) as it can more effectively predict the choices of an individual or group in the business setting. Although, TPB has been extensively used in marketing literature (see Lee, Murphy & Neale, 2009; Hsu, Wang, & Wen, 2006), it has been applied less frequently to information technology usage, including social media. Lin et al. (2011) used TPB to predict intention and choice of two competing web applications, and their results reveal a high percentage of variance in choice intention and actual choice. Investigating the influence of direct and indirect financial incentives on user participation in on-line community adoption, Becker et al. (2010) found that indirect incentives have a strong effect on the intentions to adopt. They also found that the direct incentives may attract new users. Some authors used TPB to investigate negative or illegal activities related to information technology. For example, LaRose and Kim (2007) examined normative influences on media consumption behavior, in particular music downloading. They found that while descriptive and prescriptive norms influenced deficient self-regulation they have little or no direct impact on behavioral intentions. These studies have shown that TPB provides a strong analytical platform to investigate the complex behavior of individuals using social media in business related activities.

Conceptual Model of Planned Behavior

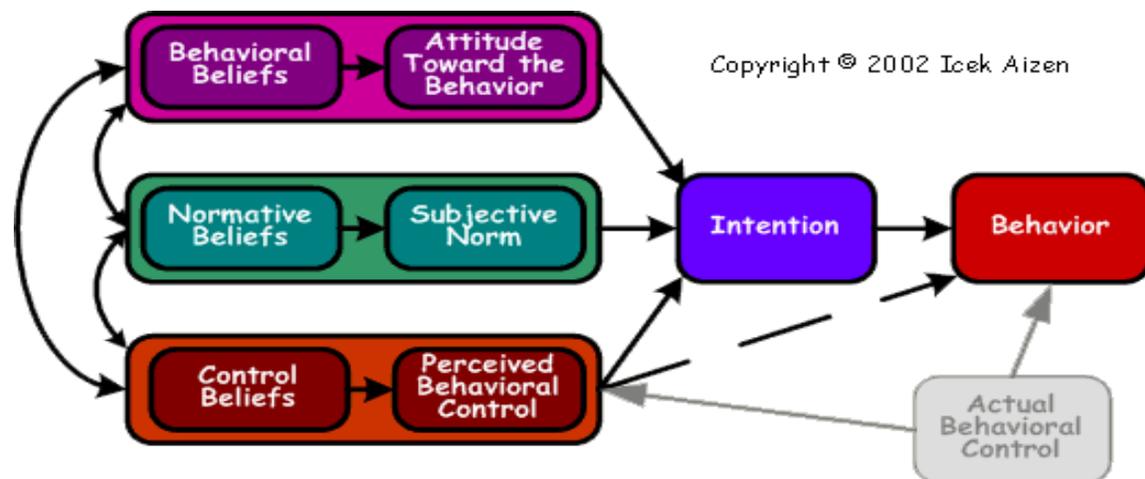
A large focus in developing a social media strategy should be placed on understanding online behaviors; examples of online activism can provide insight into the use of social media to foster negative attitudes toward a company's product, service or actions. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, activism is defined as "a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue" and online activists use internet as their main media of communication. We believe that Theory of Planned Behavior can be effectively used to analyze the relationship between intentions and attitudes of customers who use social media to communicate with companies. In particular, our interest is by using TPB to investigate the behavior patterns of individuals or groups involved in on-line activism.

The Theory of Reasoned Actioning (TRA) proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1975) indicates that attitude is a direct indicator of a person's intentions and behaviors. Ajzen (1991) further extended TRA to create the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB); this new theory was in response to TRA's limitations in determining behaviors of people with incomplete volitional control. In 2002, Ajzen presented a conceptual model to depict the TPB (Figure 1). The model indicates that salient beliefs are the cognitive influences of attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control. Intention and behavior are the consequences of these attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control (Ajzen, 2002).

TPB first attempts to explain human intentions and behavior based upon a person's salient beliefs. Behavior beliefs are formed by associating certain attributes with a behavior, and simultaneously, an attitude towards the behavior is created (Ajzen, 1991). By reviewing the advantages and disadvantages of the behavior's expected outcome, a person is capable of creating a negative or positive attitude

towards a certain behavior (Planing, 2011, p. 9). Normative beliefs are defined as the likelihood that person will approve or disprove of a behavior (Ajzen, 1991, p. 195).

Figure 1.
Theory of Planned Behavior Model



**Note: Figure 1 Adapted from Ajzen, 2002, p. 1*

These can be considered personal beliefs and are developed on the basis of perceived judgments of family and close friends (Chatzisarantis & Biddle, 1998). The person's motivation to comply with normative beliefs determines subjective norms (Ajzen, 1991); the extrinsic influence of behavior exerted from a person's society (Chatzisarantis & Biddle, 1998). Lastly, available resources required for engaging in a behavior influence control beliefs. The perception of control is then created by the person's perception of how easy or difficult it would be to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The central factor in the theory is intention. Intention is the motivation that has developed throughout the model and the stronger the intention, the more likely a person is to engage in the concerned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Behavior is the action that the person performs. Ajzen (2002) defines true behavior as having TACT Elements - target, action, context and time. In short, "the more favorable the attitude and subjective norm, and the greater the perceived control, the stronger should be the person's intention to perform a behavior in question" (Ajzen, 2002, p. 1). Lastly, Ajzen (1991) states that past behavior can be a predictor of future behavior, indicating that it is essential for businesses to be aware of why people are acting out online against brands and how businesses can prevent the escalation of negative social media messages that could potentially be damaging to their brands.

Application of TPB: Four case studies

Technological advancements such as social media, smart phone applications and web-conferencing have provided a voice and an open platform for impacting social responsibility initiatives. Some activist organizations such as Greenpeace have moved many of their campaigns online. The introduction of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube has allowed Greenpeace to expose the world to unethical business practices. Online supporters of Greenpeace have behaved online in a manner that has been extremely damaging to a number of brands. The following examples of activist campaigns will

outline how social media was used to force change on businesses and how TPB can be used to develop an understanding of the online activists' behaviors.

Nestle: Give Rainforests a Break

In March of 2010, Greenpeace uploaded a shocking video on YouTube. The video depicted a man in an office taking a break from work. After opening a KitKat bar, he bites into the KitKat, and unknowingly, he has bitten into an orangutan finger. Blood streams down the man's face and the video is cut to a levelled rainforest. The video's purpose was to call "into question Nestle's methods for acquiring palm oil. Greenpeace [was] claim[ing] that the company's practices contribute to rainforest deforestation" (Van Grove, 2010). On top of the video, the social media campaign used a revamped KitKat logo that said "Give Us a Break - Nestle Killer" (Greenpeace International, 2011).

Within 24 hours, Nestle forced YouTube to remove the Greenpeace video from the site. This action caused further exposure to the video. The video went viral across social media as everyone wanted to see what Nestle was trying to hide (Hiar, 2010). In the days following the removal of the video from YouTube, Greenpeace activists sent Nestle over 200,000 emails (Van Grove, 2010) and "protested at [Nestle] headquarters, jammed its phone lines with complaints, and plastered its Facebook wall with negative comments" (Hiar, 2010). The situation only got worse after Nestle announced that comments would be erased if posted by any user whose profile picture included the revamped KitKat Killer logo.

Nestle was facing a public relations nightmare and continued to argue on Facebook with Greenpeace activists. The campaign continued to spread virally when the increased controversy and comments "were picked up by other concerned consumers, bloggers, journalists, and the food and drink industry itself" (Laura, 2010). As of May 2010, more than 1.5 million people across the world had viewed the Give Rainforests a Break video. Finally Nestle had to face the issue; they had lost all control and publically announced a zero deforestation policy and a formed partnership with The Rain Forest Trust (Van Grove, 2010).

Applying the TPB Model to Nestle

Control beliefs appear to be the strongest indicator of intention. In the absence of social media, the perception of control would have been low. The strong perception of control developed from the belief that various social media sites provided the resources for engaging in the behavior; messages and the Greenpeace video were virally spread across the internet. When Nestle attempted to control the situation by having the Greenpeace video removed and erasing consumer comments from their Facebook wall, activists perceived this to be of little deterrence because it was easy to find other online methods. The perception of control was that it was still easy for the activists to use other social media or methods to engage in the activism behavior.

Subjective norms were the second strongest contributor to the activists' intentions. Beliefs would have developed from the person's belief of how his or her online communities would view the actions. Social media has allowed users to seek out other people who share the same beliefs. A person's normative beliefs would then be combined with strong motivation to comply with the judgments of their online communities, and subjective norms would have supported the online activist behavior. Users could easily view their friends and family posting messages on Facebook, making calls to Nestle and even passing on the video. As well, bloggers and journalists were also acting out online against Nestle, further strengthening subjective norms.

In the past, Greenpeace has developed a perception of radical activism. A person's belief of engaging in behaviors that would associate him or her with such radicalism would potentially create negative attitudes towards joining in Greenpeace activism campaigns. However, social media has allowed behavioral beliefs to change. By posting comments on social media and forwarding a video, a person is not physically putting him- or herself in harm's way, and he or she is still able to support a notable cause. Therefore, a campaign supporter could form a positive attitude about speaking out against Nestle online.

The result was a strong intention to continue attacking Nestle for unethical practices and to continue spreading the message virally. Online behavior in the Nestle campaign can be explained by favorable beliefs, attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control. The result was an intention to act by using social media as a method to speak out against Nestle's unethical practices.

Unfriend Coal

Following the attack on Nestle, Greenpeace decided to target the same media they used in the Nestle campaign - Facebook. They singled out this internet giant as a part of the Greenpeace "Cool IT" campaign that was focused on pressuring technology firms to use clean power. Greenpeace created a Facebook group called "We Want Facebook to use 100% Renewable Energy" after Facebook announced plans to build an energy plant fueled by coal (Hiar, 2010). Facebook later announced that before construction was to begin, they were making plans to double the size of the plant (Fenrenbacher, 2011). Greenpeace encouraged online activists to send messages to Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg (Hiar, 2010) and issued a statement that "Facebook had irresponsibly chosen to double-down its bet on dirty energy" (Fenrenbacher, 2011). To add to the campaign, Greenpeace uploaded a video to YouTube called "Unfriend Coal." The video mocked Zuckerberg and garnered more views than the Facebook group had members (Hiar, 2010).

All the online action caught Zuckerberg's attention, and in September, 2010, Zuckerberg issued a statement on his Facebook Wall stating that only Facebook's old data centers used coal and Facebook planned to move in the right direction; the new data centers would be hydro powered (Fenrenbacher, 2011). In April, 2011, Greenpeace stepped up the campaign to reach a Guinness world record. The record was for the greatest amount of "comments a single Facebook post has received in a 24-hour period. The Facebook 'Unfriend Coal' page had over 69,000 comments, and the previous Guinness Record was 50,000 comments" (Fenrenbacher, 2011).

The campaign forced Facebook to make some changes. The data center design has been converted into an improved industry leading, energy efficient plant. Facebook has even "opened its innovations to the public (and competitors) in an unprecedented manner" (Fenrenbacher, 2011). The Environmental Protection Agency in the US states that a power usage effectiveness (PUE) ratio is excellent at 1, terrible at 2, and the industry best practice is 1.5; Facebook's new data center will have a PUE ratio of 1.07 (Fenrenbacher, 2011). The Unfriend Coal campaign showed online activists why Facebook can be such an effective activist tool; "it really does let you connect and share with people – even the person who started it all" (Laura, 2010).

Applying the TPB Model to Unfriend Coal

Subjective norms were the strongest contributor in this situation to the online behavior. Normative beliefs would have been amplified by pressure from online users' communities. This pressure would

have first emerged from Greenpeace urging their supporters to get involved on social media. As the message spread across Facebook wall postings and an online video, subjective norms would have become stronger. Finally, with the addition of the potential to create a world record, people would have seen the potential to not only speak out against Facebook's data centers, but would have also felt the desire to be a part of a world record. The social pressures in this case would have come from the online social media community. The pressure would have been exerted from people online who were sharing the video and urging their online communities to take part in the campaign. Upon achieving the world record for Facebook wall postings, subjective norms would have further strengthened as Guinness recognized this behavior as being a world record, creating more positive judgments from online communities.

The second contributor to social media behavior was perceived control. As long as activists had access to a computer or mobile internet browser, they would have had all the resources needed to take part in this social media behavior. Users would have seen the behavior as being relatively simple to do because in order to help reach the world record, they would only need to access the internet and to post on the Unfriend Coal Facebook wall. When combined with the subjective norms pressuring people to help reach a world record, the strong perception of control would also have created an extremely strong motivation to participate.

Behavior beliefs about posting online also contributed to the strong intention to take part in this online campaign against Facebook. It is possible that upon reviewing the online behavior, users may have concluded that the advantages would be that they were able to voice their opinions, contribute to a world record, and share a funny video with a friend. Upon Zuckerberg responding to the activists, users would have also seen that they were actually getting the attention of someone who could influence change. This indicates that it would be easy for the online users to form positive attitudes around their online behaviors.

The strong intention to engage in this social media attack against Facebook can be first attributed to strong subjective norms that developed from the urging of Greenpeace, other online campaign supporters, and the Guinness record recognition. The strong perception of control through ease of social media use and the favorable attitude that actions were achieving results, contributed to an increase of social media users taking part in the online behavior to attack Facebook.

Intel Attack

In 2010, proving that even B2B companies can feel the wrath of online consumers, Intel faced a new kind of crisis when it "drew the ire of groups that opposed the use of minerals mined in the Congo" (Stanchak, 2011). The attack came in the form of a coordinated "wall" attack on Intel's Facebook fan page. Activists were campaigning for Intel to "pledge its support for [the Conflict Mineral Trade Act] that would restrict the import of "conflict minerals" that contribute to fighting in the war-torn country (Torben, 2011b).

At first, Intel ignored wall posts and allowed activists to dominate the discussions on the fanpage wall. Many posts were identical and the conversations surrounded issues related to the civil war. Activists claimed that global trade conflict of mineral mining was the reason for the raping and slaughtering of over 5 million Congo citizens in the civil war (Torben, 2011a). Intel was supporting this war by using minerals from Congo in manufacturing.

These accusations were enough to get Intel's attention. Intel started to "remov[e] offensive posts and posts that repeated the same message over and over" (Stanchak, 2011). Activists continued to attack the Intel wall with even more hostile postings. Intel responded by encouraging visitors to take the conversation to the company blog. Further enraged, the activists kept on attacking (Stanchak, 2011). Finally Intel shut off the posting option on their fanpage and issued the following posting: "All, there have been a lot of posts on the same topic within the last 12 hrs. We appreciate hearing your opinion and we have left your posts on the wall, per our guidelines we have only removed offensive comments. We are temporarily turning off the ability for fans to post" (Torben, 2011a).

Failing to understand the power of online activists, Intel was forced to apologize after the issue went viral across activist's personal Facebook pages. To avoid further controversy on the subject, Intel issued an apology to activists, stating the company realizes they should have been more supportive. This campaign was able to demonstrate that "even a high tech company like Intel can fail to understand the power of social media in the hands of activists" (Torben, 2011a).

Applying the Conceptual Model to Intel Attack

In the case of Intel, control beliefs again created a strong perception of control for the online activists. The ability to post on the Intel Facebook wall was done easily as long as activists had access to any device that was connected to the internet. Once Intel started to remove negative wall postings, activists still had a strong perception of control because they could easily repeat their message but with increased hostility. Once Intel disabled the posting function on their corporate Facebook page, the perception of control was still uninfluenced because activists simply began spreading the message across their personal walls on Facebook and were able to draw even more attention to the issue. In the absence of social media, activists would have had entirely different control beliefs. Perhaps they would have seen that they did not have the resources to communicate their concerns as easily. The motivation to travel to Intel headquarters and complain in person would have created a belief that the behavior could be done, but it would not be easy. Therefore, the availability and ease of use of social media was one of the most important contributors to the Intel attack.

Normative beliefs and subjective norms regarding online behavior appear to be different than public behavior. This is because many people would not typically attack a person in public with hostile behavior due to the judgments of others and because it is not considered appropriate behavior in society. However, with the case of Intel, we see that online hostile attacks are viewed as acceptable, and in fact, have encouraged others to act online in the same manner. Online subjective norms that emerged are that it is acceptable to speak out online against unethical business practices, and it is acceptable to share this information with others on online communities.

Regarding behavior beliefs, engaging in hostile attacks online allowed users to hide behind the anonymity of social media. As well, by posting online, more people were exposed to the message, and therefore, online behaviors would have been viewed with more positive attitudes - the benefits of the behavior would have outweighed the costs of the behavior. Even after Intel removed the activists' wall postings and turned off the ability to post, the online behavior continued across personal pages, revealing that these activists could truly see the benefit of using social media to draw attention to the issue. Attitudes were so positive that people continued their attack repeatedly; these online users were determined to prove that they could not be easily silenced.

In the Intel attack there was a strong perception of control which motivated activists to continue attacking Intel through social media. This behavior indicates strong online subjective norms that differ from offline norms. Lastly, positive attitudes regarding what the behavior would achieve contributed to a mob of activists that would not rest until Intel took compassion for their cause.

Barbie It's Over

In this case, Greenpeace made use of the popular social media sites Facebook, Twitter and YouTube in the "Barbie It's Over" Campaign. The campaign accuses "Lego, Hasbro, Mattel and Disney of using packaging material sourced from trees cleared out of the Indonesian rainforest" (Environmental Leader, 2011a). Although the campaign is aimed at multiple companies, Mattel received the worst PR blow. The campaign centered around Mattel's Ken doll, and campaign images featured Ken and a caption that read: "Barbie, it's over. I don't date girls that are into deforestation" (Environmental Leader, 2011b).

The campaign started after Greenpeace conducted tests on Mattel's packaging. The test results showed that traces led back to Sumatra, an Indonesian Island where deforestation practices are considered to be so bad that Linda Kramme of the World Wildlife Fund termed them to be "ground zero" (Peterson, 2011). Deforestation continues to be a huge concern for Greenpeace because "tropical hardwood forests are [considered] biodiversity hotspots. Trees store carbon dioxide, keeping greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere. Clearing them . . . contributes to global warming" (Peterson, 2011).

Greenpeace publicized their findings on Facebook and uploaded videos to YouTube and Vimeo. The campaign was well received by online users who grew up with Ken and Barbie as the "dream couple." Clever online videos that featured comedic scripts and a powerful message about Mattel's deforestation were virally shared across social media. The videos sparked people from all over the world to take action online; people began to email Mattel and post on the Mattel Barbie Facebook page telling the toy company to stop deforestation. On June 10, 2011, the massive amount of wall posts caused Mattel to temporarily shut down the Facebook page. However, the online activism continued across Facebook and Twitter, and Mattel could not stop online users' outrage. (Greenpeace, 2011)

Barbie It's Over supporters were too much for both Mattel and Lego to handle. Mattel announced a global policy to remove any company engaged in deforestation from its supply chain (Greenpeace, 2011). As for the Lego Corporation, they also cut ties with their Asia Pulp and Paper supplier. Lego has also made a commitment that from now on they will only use packaging material certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (Environmental Leader, 2011a).

Applying the TPB Model to Barbie It's Over

Once again, control beliefs and strong perception of control were contributors to users' online actions. It was very easy to view one of the campaign videos online, post a comment, and then share the video with another user in the social media network. It was also very easy to go to the Barbie Facebook page and write a complaint. The whole process would only require the use of an internet browser enabled device. On top of this, the time involved in completing the behavior would only encompass the time to watch the movie and then approximately one to three minutes to pass on the video, post a comment and then make a complaint to Mattel. Users would have seen the behavior as being extremely easy and fast to complete. Therefore, the strong perception of control easily increased the intention to behave.

As well, for any online user who believed their online friends would find the campaign videos both funny and entertaining would be very motivated to spread the message. The online user receiving the video would then believe that the video was sent because the person supported the message, which therefore would further strengthen subjective norms. The more the campaign messages regarding Mattel were spread, the stronger the subjective norms became. As well, as others could see their social network friends posting on Barbie’s Facebook page, the more they would believe the behavior was accepted.

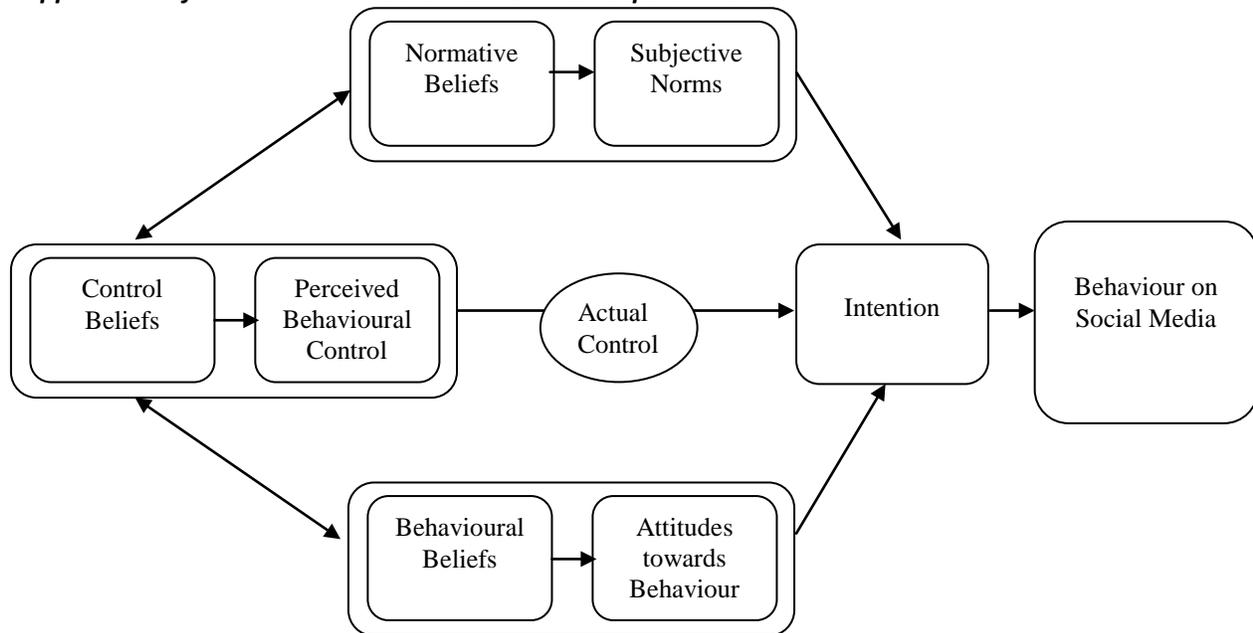
In this situation, the videos were not aggressive but instead humorous and entertaining. This made it easier for people to hold the belief that passing on the video would not be offensive and would also provide entertainment for others. This created a positive attitude towards spreading the videos across social media, and in some situations, it may have been possible that some people were spreading the message for entertainment rather than to support the cause. However, this behavior was still dangerous to Mattel. Even though not all users’ intentions were to support Greenpeace, by passing the video across social media, more users were exposed to the message and became motivated to support the cause.

Therefore, strong control beliefs allowed users to easily engage in online behaviors that supported the campaign. Subjective norms were also strong as messages spread; more people believed this online behavior was acceptable. Lastly, as viewers were entertained by the campaign messages, they assumed positive attitudes about sharing the message with others. These contributors’ motivated people to take part in the social media campaign against North America’s biggest toy companies.

Application of TPB in Social Media Activism: General Observations

The analysis of four case studies using TPB as a conceptual framework provides common paths of actions taken by the individuals and groups involved in social media activism. The conceptual model summarizing the process is given in figure 2.

Figure 2.
Application of TPB in Social Media Activism: Conceptual Model



The TPB Conceptual Model for Social Media can be applied to understand the behaviors of people using social media. The underlying theme that emerged through the analysis of each social media activism case was that social media has increased peoples' control beliefs and perceptions of control. Although subjective norms and behavior attitudes still intertwine with control to create strong intentions, without the increase in the area of control, many people might not develop strong enough intentions to attack companies offline. In all examples analyzed, it is apparent that social media has created extremely strong perceptions of control. People view social media as a tool that allows for ease in engaging in the behavior. The Technology Acceptance Model, as presented by Davis (1989), suggests that people have adopted social media because of the perceived ease of use, the perceived usefulness, and resource accessibility; these factors all increase a person's perception of control (Lee & Liquiag, 2010).

As well, social media removes many environmental barriers, such as geographical distance, that previously would have interfered in activist behaviors. It appears as though the internet will now always provide a venue for voicing opinions, and online messages have the potential to reach every decision maker in the world (Silberman, 2009). Strong perceived control will therefore continue to be a driving force behind consumers' intentions and online behaviors.

Following the strong perception of control, it is apparent that both subjective norms and positive attitudes have created strong intentions for online communities to use social media to attack companies and to voice their concerns as consumers. Support generated from online communities has allowed normative beliefs to be applied by external norms that have created strong subjective norms. As online community members, parents and friends engage in similar behaviors online, strong intentions to also behave in a similar manner are amplified. This is because subjective norms and normative beliefs stem from the need for relationships with others; social media has emerged as a new way to create and maintain relationships (Pelling & White, 2009). There is now increased pressure from others to use social media, resulting in social media being the method of choice for consumers to speak their minds (Pelling & White, 2009). All activist examples analyzed indicate that there are strong subjective norms that support online behavior across the globe.

Next we see that attitudes towards online behavior are very positive. Many people see social media as a protected form of engaging in certain behaviors, therefore little perceived risk tips the scale in favor of the benefits: strengthening online relationships, speaking one's mind, standing up for what's considered right, etc. (Planing, 2011). People have started to believe that online behaviors can create change in the world. Seeing others' success will only continue to enhance people beliefs that online behaviors will force companies to change, and therefore, positive attitudes will continue to contribute to strong intentions and engaging in online behaviors.

Lastly, it is important to understand why these behaviors are important to businesses. Ajzen states that as long as "factors remain unchanged, the behavior also remains stable over time" (Ajzen, 1991). This means that past behavior can be used as a predictor of future behavior when perceived control, subjective norms and attitude towards behavior remain constant (Ajzen, 1991). Businesses must understand that even if they are attempting to operate ethically, and with the best intentions of the consumer in mind, negative online perceptions for their brand can easily develop if the company is not prepared to proactively manage these online behaviors.

Escalation of Online Message Model

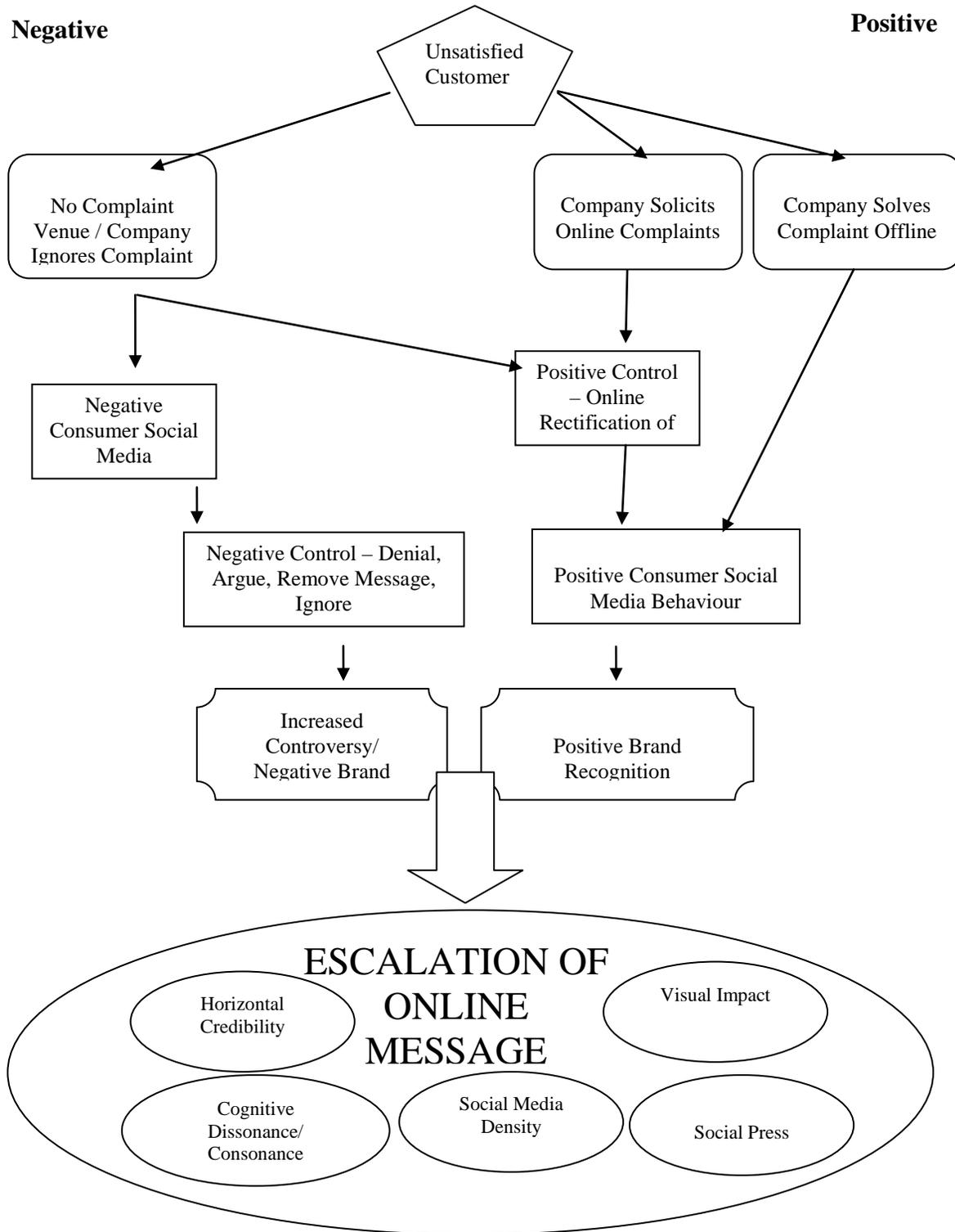
Understanding online behavior is relevant to all businesses, even ones that do not have a social media presence. Technological advancements have allowed for raw information to spread virally across the world at speeds previously unknown. Companies that do not solicit feedback from consumers may not even be aware of a disgruntled consumer. As well, some businesses do not have policies in place to adequately address customer complaints either off or online. In the past, unsatisfied consumers could not afford to battle the colossal budgets of powerful businesses and were forced to rely on negative word of mouth. The question now is not if consumers will engage in social media but rather how businesses will monitor these activities to ensure these messages do not escalate to a scale that could be potentially damaging the company's brand. Based on the analysis of four cases using TPB we developed the following Escalation of Online Message Model (Figure 3) that can be used to guide in developing a company's strategy at managing consumers' online behaviors. Consumers have many motivations for voicing concerns online. The consumer may be looking for a remedy for the issues, such as in the case of Nestle, Intel and Facebook. They may wish to share with others their experience with that intention of cautioning others, or gaining support. Finally, in most cases, they may intend to create a negative perception for the brand. This allows other people online to create beliefs towards the attributes of the brand which can cause negative attitudes towards the company and the brand (Planing, 2011). There are critical stages in the model that will allow a company to address concerns and convert a message from negative to positive.

Aside from understanding consumer's online behavior, it is also important to understand the role that social media plays in the escalation of an online message. If a company can manage online behaviors, there is a possibility to create an escalation of positive messages. Although many brands attempt to keep customers satisfied, it is important to note that there is always the potential for an unsatisfied consumer, and the business should be prepared to deal with all concerns immediately. When the consumer becomes unsatisfied, he or she may have attempted to address the complaint through other offline media. If the company has properly managed the complaint, the consumer is then satisfied and may go online to spread a positive message about the brand. Another situation may be that the company actively solicits complaints online so that they are given the opportunity to rectify the complaint online. Complaints can be solicited on social media sites or on company blogs. Companies can even go so far as to offer a reward for people's honesty and encourage the opportunity to remedy any negative perceptions a consumer may have. This online complaint solicitation offers two benefits. Online users will see that the company does genuinely show concern for customer satisfaction, and the unsatisfied customer can be converted to a satisfied customer. In both cases, the company is creating the opportunity for further positive online messages to escalate.

On the negative side of the model, the consumer goes online and creates a negative message regarding the brand. If there is appropriate online monitoring, the company has an opportunity to convert the message to the positive side of the model. It is evident that, if there are no official channels for voicing complaints, consumers, as demonstrated in the TPB Conceptual Model, will go online to voice concerns. When the company reacts negatively to the message by denying wrong doing, arguing with the consumer, removing the message or simply not addressing the message, the TPB indicates that negative consumer behavior will not be influenced and online attacks will continue. As seen in the Intel Attack, the consumer messages increased in hostility. As well, in the examples of Intel and Nestle, attempting to remove or control the spread of information creates increased attention to the negative message and also increased controversy. The message can then potentially spread online across the world instantaneously. The message will achieve a state of escalation due to horizontal credibility, visual

impact, cognitive dissonance/consonance, social media density and social press. The major components of the escalation of online message are described below.

Figure 3.
Escalation of Online Message Model



Horizontal Credibility - One consumer may not seem like a threat to a corporation. However, if this person has a large online network, or has access to online communities, the message has potential to gain attention. As the message spreads, its credibility is compounded, which may motivate others to voice similar concerns. Doctors, lawyers, and other professionals may offer comments, further enabling credibility (Mainwaring, 2011).

Visual Impact - It is one thing to have a person write a complaint on the Facebook wall; it is another thing for the consumer to post an image or a video. As seen in the examples of Nestle and Barbie It's Over, images and videos can spread a compelling story better than heavy text blogs or a company's PR release in response to a complaint (Keane, 2011). People are visually stimulated, and with today's media clutter, images and videos stand out as an attention grabbing medium (West, 2011).

Cognitive Dissonance - Discomforting news can make people see things differently. Misery loves company. Densely connected social media can spread discomfort in minutes, changing consumer perceptions beyond repair. People are willing to learn from others who have had real life experiences, and people are starting to see the power of social media through the success of online activists and revolutions. This part of the escalation further promotes the consumers online behavior through attitudes and subjective norms (Mainwaring, 2011).

Cognitive Consonance - Comforting news can make people see things differently. Finding others who have had positive experiences with a brand can shed light on others who are unsure of the brand. Densely connected social media can spread good news, although it is important to understand that negative messages have a higher potential to escalate online (Mainwaring, 2011).

Social Media Density - Massive groups of people have gathered on online communities. It's these communities that can further enhance online behaviors and create large potential to create angry mobs of consumers. Integrated technology allows messages to spread across multiple online communities. Accessing social media through mobile devices and computers allows people to be online virtually 24 hours (West, 2011). Controlling a message online is now harder than ever before.

Social Press - The delayed time and the past discretions concerning the accuracy of information reported through traditional media has made many people turn to social media as the new press for reporting accurate news. When an issue is exposed, people will turn to social media to review tweets and posts that will confirm information is valid (Keane, 2011). When a consumer decides to purchase, he or she may actively search on social media to gain an impression of how other people have documented their experiences with the brand (Curran & Lennon, 2011).

Conclusion

Understanding online behavior is relevant to all businesses, even ones that do not have a social media presence. Technological advancements have allowed for raw information to spread virally across the world at speeds previously unknown. Companies that do not solicit feedback from consumers may not even be aware of a disgruntled consumer. Our analysis shows that TPB can be effectively used in analyzing online behavior of customers and interested groups in a business setting. The case studies show that that social media has created extremely strong perceptions of control. The Escalation of Online Message Model proposed in this paper provides a platform in developing effective strategies in enhancing the level of customer satisfaction. While there are numerous factors that influence the effectiveness of managing customer relations, it is envisaged that the adoption of the proposed model

by the senior managers and planners can help proactive actions to be taken to ensure effectiveness. The major limitation of this study is the small sample used in developing and analyzing the model. A quantitative analysis using a large sample will provide better understanding of the relationship between the intentions and actions outlined in the model.

References

- Ajzen, I. (1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 50, 179-211.
- Ajzen, I. (2002, Sept.). Constructing a TpB Questionnaire: Conceptual and Methodological Considerations. Retrieved January 25, 2012, from: <http://socgeo.ruhosting.nl/html/files/spatbeh/tpb.measurement.pdf>
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M.(1975). Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Altes, K. (2011). Social Integration. *Journal of Property Management*, 76(6), 60.
- Baird, C.H., & Parasnis, G. (2011). From Social Media to Social Customer Relationship Management. *Strategy and Leadership*. 39(5), 30-37.
- Becker, J.U., Clement, M., & Schaedel, U. (2010). The Impact of Network Size and Financial Incentives on Adoption and Participation in New Online Communities, *Journal of Media Economics*, 23 (3), 165-179.
- Chan, H., & Wan, L. (2009). Dual Influences of Moderating Variables in the Dissatisfaction Process: Theory and Evidence, *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 2009, Vol. 21 Issue 2, p125-135.
- Chatzisarantis, N. D., & Biddle, S. H. (1998). Functional significance of psychological variables that are included in the theory of planned behavior: A self-determination theory approach to the study of attitudes, subjective norms, perceptions of control and intentions. *European Journal Of Social Psychology*, 28(3), 303-322.
- Chiu, C., Ip, C. , & Silverman, A. (2012). Understanding social media in China, *McKinsey Quarterly*, 2, 78-81.
- Curran, J. & Lennon, R. (2011). Participating in the conversation: Exploring usage of social media networking sites, *Academy of Marketing Studies*, 15, 1-38.
- Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 13(3), 319-340.
- De Meyer, C. F., & Mostert, P. G. (2011). The influence of passenger satisfaction on relationship formation in the South African domestic airline industry, *South African Journal of Business Management*, 42(4), 79-87.

- eMarketer. (2011, July 20). Executives Fail to Focus on Social Media Marketing Strategy. Retrieved Jan. 21, 2012, from: <http://www.emarketer.com/Article.aspx?R=1008503>
- Environmental Leader. (2011a, July 15). Lego Drops APP Packaging after Greenpeace Campaign. Retrieved July 28, 2011 from <http://www.environmentalleader.com/2011/07/15/lego-drops-app-packaging-after-greenpeace-campaign/>
- Environmental Leader. (2011b, June). Mattel Bows to Greenpeace Pressure on APP Packaging. Retrieved July 22, 2011 from <http://www.environmentalleader.com/2011/06/13/mattel-bows-to-greenpeace-pressure-on-app-packaging/>
- Fenrenbacher, K. (2011, Apr 13). Greenpeace Ramps Up Pressure on Facebook's Coal Use. Reuters. Retrieved July 28, 2011 from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/13/idUS96217637920110413>
- Ginovsky, J. (2011). They're Already Talking About You. Jump In. *American Bankers Association. ABA Banking Journal*. 103(11), 25-27.
- Greenpeace International (2011). Ask Nestle to Give Rainforests a Break. Retrieved July 26, 2011 from <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/campaigns/climate-change/kitkat/>
- Greenpeace. (2011). Ken & Barbie break up over deforestation. Retrieved Jan 27, 2011, from: <http://storify.com/greenpeace/ken-barbie-break-up-over-deforestation>
- Hiar, C. (2010, Oct. 8). How Climate Activists Are Warming to Social Media. Public Broadcasting Service. Retrieved July 21, 2001 from <http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2010/10/how-climate-activists-are-warming-to-social-media281.html>
- Hill, R. P., & Moran, N. (2011). Social marketing meets interactive media. *International Journal Of Advertising*, 30(5), 815-838.
- Hsu, T., Wang, Y. & Wen, S. (2006). Using the decomposed theory of planned behaviour to analyse consumer behavioural intention towards mobile text message coupons, *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, 14(4), 309-324.
- Jeanjean, L. (2012). 5 Tips to Increase Your Facebook Fan Base. *Journal Of Financial Planning*, 20-21.
- Keane, B. (2011, January 15). Social media and the Tunisian Revolution. The Stump. Retrieved on August 14, 2011 from <http://blogs.crikey.com.au/thestump/2011/01/15/social-media-and-the-tunisian-revolution/>
- LaRose, R., & Kim, J. (2007). Share, Steal, or Buy? A Social Cognitive Perspective of Music Downloading, *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 10(2), 267-277.
- Laura K. (2010, Sept 29). A Facebook message from Mark Zuckerberg. Retrieve July 20, 2011 from <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/news/Blogs/climate/a-facebook-message-from-mark-zuckerberg/blog/26533/>

- Lee, R., Murphy, J., & Neale, L. (2009). The interactions of consumption characteristics on social norms, *The Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 26(4), 277-285.
- Lee, S. M., & Liqiang, C. (2010). THE IMPACT OF FLOW ON ONLINE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR. *Journal Of Computer Information Systems*, 50(4), 1-10.
- Lim, M. (2012). Clicks, Cabs, and Coffee Houses: Social Media and Oppositional Movements in Egypt, *Journal of Communication*, 62(2), 231-248.
- Lin, J., Hock, C., & Kwok, K.W. (2011). Understanding Competing Web Application Platforms: An Extended Theory of Planned Behavior and its Relative Model, *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, 58(1), 21-35.
- Mainwaring, S. (2011, February 14). Exactly What Role Did Social Media Play in the Egyptian Revolution? Fast Company. Retrieved August 15, 2011 from <http://www.fastcompany.com/1727466/exactly-what-role-did-social-media-play-in-the-egyptian-revolution>
- Malhotra, A., Mahotra, C., & See, A. (2012). How to Get Your Messages Retweeted. *MIT Sloan Management Review*. 52(2) 61-66.
- Media Badge. (2011, Mar. 2). Activists VS. Corporations in the Social Web. Media Badger. Retrieved July 19, 2011 from <http://www.mediabadger.com/2011/03/activists-vs-corporations-in-the-social-web/>
- Merriam-Webber Dictionary. <http://www.merriam-webster.com>
- Montalvo, R. (2011). Social Media Management. *International Journal of Management and Information Systems*, 15(3), 91-96.
- Nassar, M. A. (2012). An Investigation of Hoteliers' Attitudes toward the Use of Social Media as a Branding Tool, *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 4(4,), 93-105.
- Nielsenwire (June 15, 2010). Social Networks/Blogs now account for one in every four and a half minutes online. Retrieved Jan. 23, 2012, from: http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/online_mobile/social-media-accounts-for-22-percent-of-time-online/
- Pearce, K.E. & Kendzior, S. (2012). Networked Authoritarianism and Social Media in Azerbaijan, *Journal of Communication*, 62(2), 283-298.
- Pelling, E. L., & White, K. M. (2009). The Theory of Planned Behavior Applied to Young People's Use of Social Networking Web Sites. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*, 12(6), 755-759. doi:10.1089/cpb.2009.0109
- Peterson, M. (July 14, 2011). Environmental Activists Still Targeting Mattel Over Packaging. Southern California Public Radio. Retrieved July 28, 2011 from

<http://www.scpr.org/news/2011/07/14/27725/activists-still-targeting-mattel-over-packaging/>

- Planing, P. (2011). The role of brand trust in the individual decision process towards the use of new technologies: An empirical investigation. *Psychology Of Education Review*, 35(1), 8-11.
- Pooja, M., Black, J.E., Jiangmei, C., Berger, P.D., & Weinberg, B. (2012). The Impact of Social Media Usage on Consumer Buying Behavior, *Advances in Management*, 5 (1), 14-22.
- Raj, A., Kothandaraman, P., Kashyap, R., & Singh, R. (2012). Bringing "Social" into Sales: The Impact of Salespeople's Social Media Use on Service Behaviors and Value Creation, *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 32(2), 333-348
- Sacks, M., & Graves, N. (2012). How Many "Friends" Do You Need? Teaching Students How to Network Using Social Media, *Business Communication Quarterly*, 75(1), 80-88.
- Stanchak, J. (2011, April 25). Spot Light on business-to-business: Inside Intel's Facebook Attack Strategy. Retrieved July 21, 2011 from <http://smartblogs.com/socialmedia/2011/04/25/spotlight-on-business-to-business-inside-intels-facebook-attack-strategy/>
- Stefanone, M., Lackaff, D., & Rosen, D. (2010). The Relationship between Traditional Mass Media and "Social Media": Reality Television as a Model for Social Network Site Behavior, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 54(3), 508-525.
- Torben R. (2011a, May 13). Fail to understand the power of social media. Retrieved July 19, 2011 from <http://www.torbenrick.eu/blog/social-media/fail-to-understand-the-power-of-social-media/>
- Torben, R. (2011b, July 13). Social media as an Activist Tool. Retrieved July 18, 2011 from <http://www.torbenrick.eu/blog/social-media/social-media-as-an-activist-tool/>
- Tufekci, Z. & Wilson, C. (2012). Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations From Tahrir Square, *Journal of Communication*, 62(2), 363-379
- Van Grove, J. (2010, May 17). Nestle Meets Greenpeace's Demands Following Social Media Backlash. Mashable. Retrieved July 21, 2001 from <http://mashable.com/2010/05/17/nestle-social-media-fallout/>
- West, M. (2011, Feb 20). How Nonprofits Can Use Social Media to Spark Change. The Chronicle of Philanthropy. Retrieved on July 20, 2011 from <http://philanthropy.com/article/How-Nonprofits-Can-Use-Social/126402/>
- Yang, S., Chi, T., & Yang, S. (2009). Exploring the solution - the contextual effect on consumer dissatisfaction and innovativeness in financial service companies, *Service Industries Journal*, 29(4), 557-568.

KALINGA JAGODA is an Associate Professor in Supply Chain Management at Bissett School of Business of the Mount Royal University, Calgary, Canada. He has published more than 60 articles in journals, edited books, and conference proceedings. His main areas of scholarly interest include social media, operations management, technology management, and entrepreneurship.

AMY WOERMKE has a BBA from the Bissett School of Business of the Mount Royal University, Canada. She has co-authored and presented 4 articles in edited books and conference proceedings. Her main areas of interest include marketing, social media and entrepreneurship.