

TOOLS OF THE BLOGGING TRADE: A STUDY OF HOW DIALOGIC PRINCIPLES HELP
ORGANIZATIONS STRUCTURE BLOGS TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

by

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(Under the Direction of Kaye D. Sweetser)

ABSTRACT

Past research has shown that the application of the dialogic theory is instrumental in organization-public relationship building. This study aims to extend the investigation of dialogic blog use. Through the comparison of a high dialogic blog and a low dialogic blog, this study's purpose is to experimentally identify how dialogic capacity influences dialogic experience, dialogic feature importance, organization-public relationships, and individual levels of issue involvement. Through the use of exploratory dialogic scales, data reveal that high dialogic blogs provide visitors with positive dialogic experiences and are highly effective at establishing organization-public relationships but are not capable of altering individual levels of issue involvement. Additional findings reveal specific individual dialogic features that stakeholders consider most important to blog communication.

INDEX WORDS: Dialogic Theory, Dialogic Principles, Dialogic Features, Public Relations, Relationship Management Theory, Organization-Public Relationships, Issue Involvement, Online Communication, Social Media, Blogs

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Public relations scholars and practitioners are known to possess a wide array of skills and to perform a variety of duties. Examining the big picture goal of these skills and duties reveals a common trend in the field. Research has revealed that organization-public relationships are a key factor in the construction of theory and the effective practice of public relations. Additionally, research regarding the use of the Internet and social media shows that theory is necessary in guiding their proper use as public relations tools. When used effectively, these tools have been found valuable in establishing both dialogue and relationships.

Currently, the growth of the Internet and social networking sites is facilitating a record opportunity for organizations to connect and engage with publics. Research shows that using social media develops mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and target publics (Yang & Lim, 2009). Blogs, in particular, offer a distinct opportunity for developing and maintaining relationships between parties due to their unlimited nature of message dissemination (Kelleher & Miller, 2006).

As an extension of previous research by Kent, Taylor, and White (Kent & Taylor, 1998, 2002; Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001) regarding the dialogic theory and websites, and of Seltzer and Mitrook (2005, 2007) regarding the dialogic theory and blogs, this study provides experimental insight into blogs' potential in building and strengthening relationships between organizations and target audience members. Findings support current trends toward blogs' relationship potential by building upon the existing research stream.

This study moves beyond the constraints of a content analysis to experimentally identify how dialogic capacity influences the building and maintenance of organization-public relationships. This experiment fills the research gap identified by Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) who concluded that “eventually, the study of dialogue and online communication will need to move from analyzing the dialogic features of online communication and start determining what effect engaging in dialogue has on stakeholders” (p. 340). This experimental research shows that the successful incorporation of dialogic principles and features into an organizational blog results in a stronger relationship between the organization and its publics. Additionally, this study supports the need for dialogic communication when aiming to provide positive dialogic experiences and identifies specific technological aspects needed to build the best, most effective blog.

While the theories that guide this study, the dialogic theory and relationship management theory, have proven to be interrelated within the field of public relations, issue involvement measures are completely new to the study of dialogic communication. No past research has examined the possible influence of dialogic communication on individual levels of issue involvement, providing this study the opportunity to examine a new avenue of public relations research.

Findings from this study offer a clearer understanding of how online organization communication tools can be better developed into dialogic communication outlets, how the resulting effect on organization-public relationships can be measured and improved upon, and how varying dialogic capacities alter dialogic experiences and individual levels of issue involvement.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dialogue in Public Relations

The current state of public relations theory, research, and practice is moving toward a two-way relational communication model, and as a result, many scholars and practitioners are increasingly using the terms dialogic and dialogue to describe ethical and practical approaches to public relations (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 21). While dialogue has become a component of effective public relations and a highly desired product of today's practice (Kent & Taylor, 2002) its roots lie with the philosopher and theologian Martin Buber, who is often considered by many academics to be the father of the modern concept of dialogue (Buber, 1970/1923, 1985/1947). According to Buber, dialogue involves an effort to recognize the value of others (Buber, 1970/1923). Those others should not be viewed as objects – “I You” - but as equals “I Thou” (Buber, 1970/1923). For dialogic relationships to exist in the equal “I Thou” stance, parties must view dialogic communication as the overall goal and not merely a means to an end (Buber, 1970/1923). Buber viewed human communication as an intersubjective process in which parties form relationships based on dialogue (Buber, 1970/1923, 1982/1957). Buber's notions of dialogue and relationships focus on ethics, openness, and respect (Buber, 1970/1923, 1982/1957).

Pearson was one of the first scholars to conceptualize dialogue's application to public relations. In his 1989 doctoral dissertation, *A Theory of Public Relations Ethics*, Pearson identified dialogue's potential as a public relations tool, strategy, theory, and structure for

relationship building (1989a). His work sought to develop a more ethical framework for public relations theory and practice based on the use of dialogic “systems” rather than monologic “policies” (Pearson, 1989a, p. 177). This dialogic framework made it “morally right” for communication relationships to be established and maintained with all publics affected by organizational actions (Pearson, 1989a, p. 329).

The theoretical and practical applications of dialogue have continued to be tested and expanded upon within the field. Pearson’s framework outlining dialogue as the most ethical form of public relations has been supported more recently by scholars such as Grunig, Kent, and Taylor who have offered dialogue as a lens through which ethical public relations can be viewed (Grunig, 2001; Kent & Taylor 1998, 2002; Pearson, 1989a, 1989b). Even more, dialogue has been identified as one of the most important features of the symmetrical model (Grunig, 1992). In their 1984 book, *Managing Public Relations*, Grunig and Hunt outlined and defined four models of public relations. Since then, these models have been the focus of much theory and research in the field. Of the four models - press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical - it has been argued that the two-way symmetrical model is the most desirable model and the best approach for conducting effective public relations (Grunig, 1989, 1992; Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The symmetrical model positions public relations as a process of continual and reciprocal exchanges between organizations and their publics by allowing these groups to communicate interactively and as equals (Grunig, 1993; Grunig & Hunt, 1984). In order for symmetrical communication to be effective, both parties involved, the organization and the public, must be willing to engage in dialogue (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999).

Varying approaches to corporate communication have been the focus of practice and research for a long while across multiple disciplines. In their 1987 article, *Reinventing Corporate Communications*, Toth and Trujillo urged a reinventing of corporate communications. Their work acknowledges that organizations recognize the need for communication as it provides ongoing dialogue with important publics both internal and external (Toth & Trujillo, 1987). In sum, they describe organization communication as a multi-faceted process that is responsible for representing the organization's goals and character to its publics and in turn receiving and using information directed back from these publics (Toth & Trujillo, 1987). To obtain successful communication they identified six critical concepts – language, structure, roles, technology, power, and social responsibility (Toth & Trujillo, 1987). Within the structure concept, they outlined organization communication as a two-way process involving various channels and media (Toth & Trujillo, 1987). It has been suggested that treating communication as a two-way process as supported by Toth and Trujillo (1987) and specifically practicing public relations within the two-way symmetrical model, organizations may develop a more relationally based focus (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992). This relationally based focus may lead an organization to achieve more effective and ethical communications and practices (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992).

Public Relations as Relationship Management

A relationally-based focus of public relations supports Ferguson's (1984) suggestions pertaining to theory development opportunities within the field. Her research identified that the area of public relationships holds the best opportunity for theory development (Ferguson, 1984). Since this identification by Ferguson (1984), extensive research effort has been devoted to studying theories and their capacity to build and maintain organization-public relationships and subsequently the constructs in which these relationships can be described, measured, deemed

important, and affected by various conditions. The identification of this research potential and the outcomes that have followed have caused a strong shift in the field, both academically and professionally, toward a relational action emphasis (Kelleher & Miller, 2006). As a result of this shift, relationship theory has become the second-most researched area in public relations scholarship, only behind the related concept of symmetrical communication, also referred to as the Excellence Theory (Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, & Jones, 2003).

In their work to identify dimensions of good organization-public relationships, Ledingham and Bruning (1998) state that the term public relations “implies that the research and practice of the discipline should focus on an organization’s relationships with its key publics, concern itself with the dimensions upon which that relationship is built, and determine the impact that the organization-public relationship has on the organization and its publics” (p. 56). In subsequent work by Bruning (2000), it was noted that relationships have become so central to the profession that the term relationship has begun to appear in almost every definition of public relations.

In response to Broom, Casey, and Ritchey’s (1997) call for a definition of organization-public relationships, Ledingham and Bruning (1998) offered the following tentative definition; “the state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political and/or cultural well-being of the other entity” (p. 62). They go on to describe an ideal organization-public relationship as “the state that exists between an organization and its key publics that provides economic, political, and/or cultural benefits to all parties involved, and is characterized by mutual positive regard” (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998, p. 62).

This focus on organization-public relationships has contributed to the increasingly popular trend in which scholars and practitioners refer to public relations as relationship management; a description of what the field is rather than what it does (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). This management function directs the field towards establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and the publics they are dependent on for success and failure (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994). Commonly referred to as the relationship management perspective, this focus has been credited with shifting the practice away from managing publics and manipulating public opinion and refocusing it toward building, nurturing, and maintaining organization-public relationships (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Grunig, 1992).

Research shows that publics perceive three different types of relationships with organizations; professional, personal, and community (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999). In order for any of these three to exist, both the organization and public must recognize that they have the power to affect the other party. A relationship is fully formed once this recognition is established and analysis of existing relationships is based on perceptions from each party involved (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999). These perceptions are dependent upon strategic, relationship-focused, and goal-oriented exchanges facilitated by the organization (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999).

From the public perspective, any relationship formed should satisfy the needs of the public and their expectations, goals similar to those of interpersonal relationships (Bruning, 2000). While from the organization perspective, continual relationship management serves an organizational management function that focuses on utilizing communication and dialogue strategically to achieve organizational goals (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

For public relations to fulfill an organizational management function, and to be valued within an organization, practitioners must focus their efforts upon developing long-term

relationships (Ehling, 1992) and must demonstrate the impact of their programs on these relationships (Grunig, 1993). Additionally, research has emphasized that practitioners efforts should contribute to organizational goals; linking organization-public relationships to organizational goals will enhance the value that public relations has to the organization (Grunig, 1993).

Communication has been identified as a key public relations role, a valuable product of organizational public relations, and an essential factor to the success of organization-public relationships. In his 1993 article on public relations image and substance, Grunig explored the complementary nature of symbolic and behavioral relationships and argued the importance of their interconnectedness. Public thoughts and opinions of an organization are partially a product of communication, a symbolic relationship, which can be used to improve interactions between an organization and its publics, a behavioral relationship (Grunig, 1993). Understanding communication's role within relationship building is key to this study as it focuses on the direct effect that dialogic communication has on organization-public relationship building.

Dialogic Relationships

By applying dialogue and the related dialogic theory to online communication, practitioners can orchestrate the construction and maintenance of organization-public relationships.

Public relations practitioners can effectively facilitate dialogue by establishing means for dialogic communication to take place (Kent & Taylor, 2002). In their 1998 study on how to facilitate relationship building through the Internet, Kent and Taylor defined dialogic communication as “any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions” and “a communicative give and take ...[through] the process of open and negotiated discussion” (p. 325). In follow-up

studies regarding online relationship building and the dialogic theory, dialogue was found to be effective at guiding mediated relationships such as those created via online communication (Taylor et al., 2001), which in turn, was found to provide an ideal venue for fostering dialogue (Kent & Taylor, 2002). As dialogic mediums, the proper use of Internet-based tools has potential to influence the creation of organization-public relationships (Kent & Taylor, 1998). The Internet and these tools hold unique relationship building potential as dynamic and long-lasting relationships between publics and organizations can be created, adapted, and changed through their strategic use (Kent & Taylor, 1998).

As the Internet has taken hold of communication efforts over the past decade, a plethora of new vehicles now exists for organizations to directly connect with their publics. The Internet's use as an information dissemination tool and its ability to "get the message out" (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p. 325) has led to its emergence as an important public relations tool for organizations (Kent et al., 2003). Specifically, it provides a controlled channel through which organizations can communicate with publics and the media, and through which publics can better understand organizations (Kent et al., 2003). Newsom, Turk, and Kruckeberg (2000) believe that in today's society it would be impossible to practice effective public relations without the Internet. It has become a personal and strategic tool in the public relations process that aids organizations in their day-to-day activities (Porter & Sallot, 2003).

On the level of the practitioner, the general consensus among public relations practitioners is that the Internet offers them and their organization one more tool for responding to publics (Kent et al., 2003). Research by Sallot, Porter, and Acosta-Alzuru (2004) on practitioner Internet use found that several dominant themes emerged regarding its use by individuals in the field. Practitioners use the Internet as "standard operating procedure," a

research tool, a way to target publics, a means to improve media relations, to evaluate programs and campaigns, to identify and manage issues and crises, to improve relationships, to equalize practitioner differences, and to advance their careers (Sallot et al., 2004, p. 276). In sum, they found that strategic use of the Internet in the public relations process empowers practitioners by enhancing their roles, evaluating their status, elevating their performance, and overall mastering the practice (Sallot et al., 2004).

Extensive dialogic theory research by Kent, Taylor, and White (Kent & Taylor, 1998, 2002; Kent et al., 2003; Taylor et al., 2001) has provided a framework for facilitating dialogic relationships through the Internet and serves as a guide to scholars and practitioners interested in online dialogic relationship building (McAllister-Spooner, 2009). Research on the theory and website design has positioned the theory as an “honest and ethical means to guide practitioners and scholars in the creation and maintenance of effective organization-public relationships” (McAllister-Spooner, 2009, p. 320). Findings suggest that relationships are best facilitated by organizations engaging in open-minded discussion with communicative give and take through honest channels (Kent & Taylor, 1998) and when organizations create interactive, organization-to-public communication channels based on honest, effective media (Kent et al., 2003). However, to achieve these relationship building results, organizations can not depend on technology itself, rather the way technology is used determines the potential that exists. It is important that aspects from each of the dialogic theory principles are incorporated into technology use in order to achieve relational success (Kent & Taylor, 1998).

The dialogic theory is based on the incorporation of five principles that are most effectively used to build relationships through the Internet and social media (Kent & Taylor 1998). Properly incorporating aspects of these five principles, enhances open communication and

organizational responsiveness, ultimately leading to relationship development (Taylor et al., 2001).

Dialogic Principle One: Dialogic Loop

Dialogic loop requires that users be provided opportunities for two-way communication through their engagement with interactive elements (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005). A successful dialogic loop allows users to query organizations and offers organizations the opportunity to respond to comments, questions, concerns, and problems (Kent & Taylor, 1998). The relationship building potential of a dialogic loop is greatly dependent upon timely and professional responses on the part of the organization and a feeling of acknowledgement on the part of the public (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Taylor et al., 2001). Without a dialogic loop, online communication merely becomes another monologic communication outlet for organizations (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Like quality interpersonal relationships, quality organization-public relationships are two-way (Sweetser, 2010).

Dialogic Principle Two: Usefulness of Information

Many organizations are guilty of focusing on presentation - fancy graphics and page layouts - instead of actual content or information (Taylor et al., 2001). Information is considered useful when an organizations makes an effort to post information that serves more than its own needs (Gordon & Berhow, 2009). Information should be of general value to all publics (Kent & Taylor, 1998) while simultaneously satisfying users who are seeking information that is specifically tailored to their own needs (Rybalko & Selzter 2010). Information should be purposeful while simultaneously being interesting, informative, and valuable (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Internet-based tools serving a public relations function should be an accurate extension of the organization (Kent & Taylor, 1998). In terms of the power that information has to build

relationships, Kent and Taylor state that, “making information available to publics is the first step in developing relationships with them” (1998, p. 328). Users should feel encouraged to maintain relationships with organizations because of the benefits they receive (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005). Organizations must ensure that visitors are benefitting from relationships by addressing topics that are of interest, value, and concern, while simultaneously satisfying organizational goals.

Dialogic Principle Three: Return Visits

Repeat interactions and dialogue form the basis of successful ongoing relationships (Taylor et al., 2001). To lay the foundation for these relationships, attention must be paid to the features that specifically generate return visits (McAllister-Spooner, 2009). Web-based communication tools should contain features such as updated information and interactive elements in order to be attractive for repeat visits (Kent & Taylor, 1998). “Sites that contain limited/unchanging information are no longer useful after one visit and do not encourage return visits” (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p. 329). Users are encouraged to maintain relationships through repeat visits when updated information is purposeful, interesting, informative, and valuable (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Return visits are necessary, as relationships are not built through one-time interactions (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005); like interpersonal relationships, organization-public relationships must be fostered over time (Sweetser, 2010).

Dialogic Principle Four: Ease of Interface

Users should find online communication tools easy to navigate (Kent & Taylor, 1998) and information pertaining to individual needs should be easy to find (Rybalko & Seltzer 2010). Web-based tools serving as an extension of an organization should be well organized (Kent & Taylor, 1998) and information should be displayed in a logical hierarchical structure (McAllister-

Spooner, 2009). Experiences may be linked to the ease with which users navigate a site. Users are quick to abandon frustrating sites, causing overall negative experiences and great cost to the sponsoring organization (Vorvoreanu, 2006).

Dialogic Principle Five: Conservation of Visitors

Sites should offer features that value and conserve visit time (McAllister-Spooner, 2009) while simultaneously encouraging users to stay (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). Users should be interested in remaining on a site for a time period that is substantial enough for a relationship has develop (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005) and care should be taken when incorporating links that lead visitors astray or away from the site (Kent & Taylor, 1998). An unstated assumption that applies to all websites, is that the host has something of value - a product, information, etc - to offer (Kent et al., 2001). As a result, it is important to not lead visitors away before this item of value has time to be shared. Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) argue that other social networking sites such as Facebook and YouTube can be perceived as part of an organization's extended social networking presence, and therefore, links to these related sites should be considered part of conservation of visitors.

Dialogic Communication via Social Media and Blogs

Blogs that successfully incorporate elements of each of the dialogic principles have been found to effectively cultivate organization-public relationships (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007). Research by Seltzer and Mitrook (2007) extended dialogic findings from Taylor et al. (2001) to blog use and revealed that blogs are social media tools that have potential to be more effective than traditional websites in relationship-building efforts. According to Sweetser (2010), social media refers to a "series of online tools that encourage interaction" (p. 295). On a similar note, Perlmutter (2008) describes social media sites as virtual platforms that allow users to collaborate

in content creation making them ideal for interactivity and information exchange. In his opinion, social media sites are built with potential for organizations to create and sustain long-lasting relationships (Perlmutter, 2008). Social media and blogging have become factors that practitioners and scholars must consider when deciding how to appropriately manage relations with different publics in different scenarios (Kelleher, 2008).

Social media has become an increasingly popular manner through which companies step away from their normal organizational/official voice and communicate with online publics using a more human/relational voice (Sweetser, 2010). In a review of literature regarding social media use of conversational tone, Sweetser (2010) found that communicating in a human voice can positively impact organization-public relationships. According to Kelleher (2009) human voice describes “an engaging and natural style of organizational communication as perceived by an organization’s publics based on interactions between individuals in the organization and the individuals in publics” (p. 177).

Specifically, the conversational/human voice that blogs embody is perhaps one of their most important and defining characteristics in the process of building and maintaining relationships (Kelleher & Miller, 2006). Experimental data by Kelleher and Miller (2006) on blogs and relational measures, found that organizational blogs are more effective at communicating in a conversational/human voice than traditional online material.

As a popular web-based technology, the structure and features of blogs have the ability to facilitate increased interactivity and foster ongoing communication, making them dialogic in nature and providing them with greater relationship building potential (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005). Their capacity to incorporate a high number of dialogic principles, Seltzer and Mitrook (2005) believe, may be one explanation for blogs’ ability to connect individuals and organizations.

Reading scholarship on blogs, one can find a variety of definitions attempting to describe their purpose and structure, the features that set them apart from websites, and the role of individual and organizational bloggers. However, a basic definition is offered by the Encyclopedia Britannica (Blog, n.d.). Here, blogs are described as online journals where an individual, group, or corporation posts a record of activities, thoughts, or beliefs through the presentation of either news or original material. Interaction with the publisher, or blogger, is common through the posting of comments and the sharing of different media sources such as written text, pictures, audio, or video (Blog, n.d.).

Kaye (2005) paints a picture of common blog use in today's society through her study of blog use motivation. Kaye describes blogs as asynchronous online communication venues that provide users with a range of interaction options and that "connect users to a kaleidoscope of information and opinion that is sure to satisfy many needs" (2005, p. 74). Kaye addresses how blogs can act as both one and two way forms of communication due to the freedom that users have to determine their own amount of interaction and participation (2005). Blog use is not dictated by the technology; rather users set their own level of engagement, revealing the unique flexible nature of the blogosphere (Kaye, 2005). Additionally, her findings reveal that the eclectic nature of blogs is able to serve a variety of needs and may be able to explain how blogs are able to attract loyal and habitual users (Kaye, 2005). Blogging offers these users means to publicly express their opinions and affiliate with like-minded individuals offering an overall sense of belonging within the blogosphere (Kaye, 2005).

In terms of the role served by organizational blogs, Kelleher and Miller (2006), state that organizational blogs stand at the intersection between personal reflection and professional communication. Finding the appropriate position at this intersection allows organizational blogs

to serve as a positive form of communication between organizations and their publics. Public relations practitioners need to recognize that organizational blogs have potential to be effective in online relationship-building efforts (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005). This study aims to support that need by widening the realm of dialogic research.

Broadening Dialogic Research

To broaden the scope of dialogic theory research, this study features several important changes. First, to decrease the research gap as it pertains to research methods, this study uses an experiment rather than a content analysis. Even more, this experiment directly includes findings pertaining to the relationship management theory through the use of the relational maintenance strategy scale. Lastly, this study uses fabricated TOMS blogs as treatments, shifting dialogic study from activist blogs to corporate blogs.

The experimental method is relatively new to the dialogic research stream, as most past research has been based on content analyses. Assessing the presence of dialogic principles and features, past content analyses attempted to measure the responsiveness and relationship building potential of environmental activist websites and blogs. In a content analysis by Taylor et al. (2001) of 100 environmental organization websites, findings revealed that most organizations incorporate dialogic aspects in their website but fail to fully engage their publics in two-way communication. In a follow up study, Kent et al. content analyzed and compared 150 environmental activist and watchdog group websites (2003). Their research revealed that the more dialogically oriented an organization appears, the more likely that organization is to respond to stakeholders, and that specific design features are necessary to build relationships with publics through the use of a website (Kent et al., 2003). Seltzer and Mitrook extended the research stream by studying the dialogic theory and blogs (2005, 2007). In a content analysis of

50 environmental activist blogs, findings revealed that blogs may incorporate many of the dialogic principles and features to a greater degree than websites (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005, 2007). However, as it can be seen, no past dialogic research has incorporated measures driven by relationship theory. To examine true dialogic/relationship cause-and-effect, this study explored the relationship management theory through a dialogic lens and use of the relational maintenance strategy scale.

To execute this dialogic experiment, this study uses fabricated TOMS blogs. Because this study aims to directly compare differences related to dialogic capacity, fabricated blogs were chosen over existing blogs in order to maximize dialogic capacity control. TOMS was chosen as the blog sponsor to follow the suggestions of Seltzer and Mitrook (2005) and shift the focus from activist blogs to corporate blogs. This shift is important as Toth and Trujillo (1987) identified that corporations are at the forefront of adopting and utilizing new communication technologies and it is important to gain an understanding of how the everyday use of these technologies is affecting the communication process. Even though TOMS is centered around a charitable/humanitarian movement, its strong focus on products, sales, and revenue is expected to influence relationship-building potential. Practical application findings aim to support Grunig's stance that when organizations focus their public relations efforts on developing long-term relationships, such as building relationships through dialogic blogs, benefit-cost analyses can be used in determining the value of those relationships and ultimately the value of public relations (1992).

Issue Involvement

TOMS was chosen even more carefully to satisfy a unique and pioneering dialogic endeavor to examine levels of issue involvement. This study introduces a new connection

between degrees of issue involvement and the dialogic theory by adding the use of issue involvement measures.

Past experimental research posited that framing of a news article impacts individuals differently based on their level of involvement with the issue addressed in the article (Van Gorp, Vettehen, & Beentjes, 2009). While no connection was found to exist between framing and individual involvement (Van Gorp et al., 2009), cognitive theories of attitudes show that people who are highly involved in a situation, to which a specific attitude applies, are most likely to change their attitude about it after considering persuasive messages (Grunig, 1993). These past issue-based findings open avenues to examine other communication-based factors that can alter individual degrees of issue involvement.

TOMS was founded on the concept of One for One, the practice of giving one pair of shoes to a child in need for every one pair purchased. Thus, the humanitarian issue of children without shoes is the core of TOMS' One for One Movement and serves as an issue that can evoke passion in individuals and whose involvement can be tested following dialogic manipulation (TOMS Shoes, 2013).

Pacing Dialogic Research

By using an organization such as TOMS, groundwork is laid for several new areas of study: the combination of the dialogic theory and issue involvement, the application of the dialogic theory to a profit-driven corporate blog, and dialogic effect on relationship measures based on stakeholder feedback. By using a company as unique as TOMS, this study is able to advance dialogic theory research through small steps rather than jumping from one extreme to the other. With past dialogic theory research examining environmental non-profit and activist blogs and websites (Taylor et al., 2001; Kent et al., 2003; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005, 2007), this

study wanted to remain relatable to past research by focusing on a charitable and humanitarian-driven organization rather than an entirely sales-oriented, profit-driven organization. In time, through future research avenues that remain open, dialogic theory research can explore all types of organization communication, but will hopefully do so by continuing to take steps in which research can remain relatable and build upon itself through the careful selection of organization type.

Filling Dialogic Research Gaps

As a review of this literature demonstrates, using “properly designed and executed computer-mediated communication,” (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007, p.7) organizations can establish effective two-way symmetric communication with publics. Thus, the Internet holds great potential as a dialogic medium (Kent & Taylor, 1998). However, as it stands, organizational websites and blogs remain under-developed dialogic tools that should be harnessed into efficient communicative avenues for organizations and publics (Kent et al., 2003). Much more study is necessary to achieve full dialogic understanding, as little information currently exists, from the viewpoint of public users.

Findings from this study have implications for developing a clearer understanding of how online organization communication tools can be better developed into effective dialogic communication outlets, can aid in building relationships between organizations and publics, and can alter degrees of issue involvement. As an extension of the dialogic theory research stream (Kent & Taylor, 1998, 2002; Kent et al., 2003; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005, 2007; Taylor et al., 2001) additions to the existing knowledge pool reveal how a dialogic approach can be used practically when facilitating online communication. With a unique focus on the effect that

dialogic communication has on stakeholders, results provide the body of scholarship a necessary understanding of dialogic effect on a more personal level.

Existing research provides an admirable basis for understanding dialogic communication and effects, however, to close existing research gaps, the following research questions have been developed and tested in an experimental setting. A high dialogic TOMS blog is directly compared to a low dialogic TOMS blog and resulting dialogic, relationship, and issue involvement outcomes are measured. Understanding how to use the Internet dialogically through studies such as this will ultimately influence its growth into a tool for dialogic communication.

Research Questions

RQ1: Are dialogic experience levels higher for blog visitors for each of the dialogic principles when engaging with a high dialogic blog than with a low dialogic blog?

RQ2: Which dialogic features are most important to blog use?

RQ3: Do blogs that incorporate a high number of dialogic features more effectively establish organization-public relationships than those that incorporate a low number of dialogic features?

RQ4: Do blogs that incorporate a high number of dialogic features more effectively establish higher degrees of issue involvement for blog visitors than those that incorporate a low number of dialogic features?

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The ability to build and enhance organization-public relationships remains a unique contribution of the public relations profession (Kelleher & Miller, 2006). Practitioners and scholars alike have heralded the Internet for its use as a tool for dialogue and two-way communication, especially when faced with the challenge of communicating interactively with publics comprised of large numbers of individuals (Kelleher, 2009). An organization's commitment to the dialogic theory and employment of dialogic principles may be indicative of an overall organizational dialogic disposition (Taylor et al., 2001). The employment of these principles into website or social media design, specifically blogs, reflects an organizational commitment to dialogue and relationship building with publics of all sizes and has the potential to influence individual levels of involvement regarding issues covered in online communication.

This study features a full experiment. It contains two conditions, high dialogic and low dialogic, plus control; collected data in a non-natural laboratory setting; randomly assigned subjects to one of the conditions; and maintains a high degree of control in which the independent variable, dialogic capacity, was manipulated by the researcher.

This full experiment tests the impact of dialogic features on individual levels of issue involvement and organization-public relationships via organizational blogs. Through comparison of a high dialogic blog and a low dialogic blog, this study identifies how the presence or absence of dialogic attributes influences relationships and individual levels of issue involvement. Results reveal specific technological elements required to build the best, most effective blog that is

capable of establishing strong relationships and explain how these elements influence individual levels of issue involvement.

Advantages and Disadvantages

An experimental design method allows this study the advantage of maximizing control of all manipulation factors, specifically the number of variables incorporated or excluded from the opposing treatments. Additionally, this study fosters causal relationships between independent and dependent variables with meaningful connections, an advantage that provides insight to further causation research in the field.

One potential disadvantage of this study's experimental design method is the possible presence of the Hawthorne Effect (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). As people try harder to achieve a result when they know they are being watched than they would under more normal circumstances, results may adjust accordingly. Another potential drawback of the method is the limited sample. While results reflect a general outcome, they are only accurate to this study's sample and further research is needed to examine larger demographics and trends.

Finally, a questionable disadvantage of the experimental method is the use of a laboratory setting. While some treatment and control groups may find the research environment completely natural, others may find it ill-suited to their tastes and habits. While this study's external validity may be threatened by laboratory use, it could also reap a potentially higher external validity for the same reason.

Sample

The sample for this research study is comprised of college students, ages 18 and older, at a large Southeastern research university ($N=165$). Potential participants were contacted through

brief classroom visits and/or an invitational email distributed by course instructors (Appendix A).

It is often questioned whether college students are a legitimate sample but as noted by Iyengar (2002) broadening the research pool is considerably expensive and cumbersome, while college students serve as an available “captive” population. Convenience samples, such as the college sample chosen here, are often considered to reduce generalizability (Sweetser, 2010). With success, this study will provide future research with a firm starting point from which wider samples can provide more generalizable findings and achieve a deeper dialogic understanding.

In terms of this chosen sample, familiarity with the organization featured in the blogs, TOMS, was desired and predicted to exist. Kelleher and Miller state that one advantage of a college student sample is its likelihood to be considered a key public for an organization - in their case Microsoft - in this case TOMS (2006). This was proven true as TOMS’ target audience is 18 to 24 year olds (Microsoft Advertising, 2010). Study participants ranged from 18 to 34 years old with the mean age of 21.09 sitting comfortably within TOMS target audience range. Familiarity amongst this ideal-aged participant group, as predicted, was achieved with 95.2 percent of participants reporting to be aware of TOMS ($n = 157$).

Considering these justifications alongside the knowledge that social media is widely used by young adults (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2009), this study asserts confidence that a convenience sample of college-aged participants provides a strong representation of the average adult citizen who is likely familiar with Internet technologies and blogs. This study feels certain that findings from the chosen sample has established the foundation necessary for future experimental dialogic research.

Treatment

This experiment focuses on the comparison of two blogs: a high dialogic TOMS blog and a low dialogic TOMS blog. Both blogs were created by the researcher for the purpose of this study as a means to maximize control, ensure consistency of information presented, and create ideal dialogic capacity differences. Consistent information is presented through posts on both blogs, however the high dialogic blog portrays the information using a larger variety of dialogic features. Additional information is also present on the high dialogic blog through the use of supplementary content pages.

Both blogs were created using the online blog platform Wordpress.com. To ensure consistency, both blogs were created using the same Wordpress theme. In building the low dialogic blog, the theme was stripped of as many features as possible, leaving only the minimal number features required by the theme structure. In contrast, when building the high dialogic blog, the theme was added to via the use of widgets and plugins in order to incorporate as many features available to the theme as possible.

Upon creation, dialogic capacity was determined by quantitatively coding both blogs using Kent et al. (2003), Taylor et al. (2001), and Seltzer and Mitrook's (2005, 2007) 32-item dialogic content analysis coding system. Due to the content/formatting of the fabricated blogs, 8 items were added to the original 32-item content analysis coding system, leaving 40 genre-appropriate items. These 40 items are commonly referred to as dialogic features and each feature fits into one of the five dialogic principles. For the initial 32 items, feature placement remains consistent with past dialogic studies. The eight additional features were placed within the principle that they most closely aligned.

Based on the procedure of Seltzer and Mitrook (2005, 2007), the blogs were coded to by noting whether each dialogic feature was either present (1) or absent (0) (Code Book in Appendix B). The high dialogic blog received a coding score of 37 (Appendix C) and the low dialogic blog received a coding score of 8 (Appendix D). Past dialogic theory studies coded blogs and websites using the dialogic content analysis coding system to examine the frequency of feature presence (Kent et al., 2003; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005/2007; Taylor et al., 2001). However, the concept of establishing dialogic capacity of an individual blog based on the number of features present is new. This study does not offer a threshold that a blog must meet to be considered highly dialogic, however, it is proposed that a 29-feature difference (high, 37 and low, 8) is substantial enough to establish opposing dialogic capacities.

Both blogs were double coded by a set of trained undergraduate coders using Holsti's method (North, Holsti, Zaninovich, & Zinnes, 1963). The high dialogic blog received an inter-coder reliability score of 92.5 percent and the low dialogic blog received an inter-coder reliability score of 91.3 percent, both safely above Holsti's 85 percent threshold (North et al., 1963).

Procedure

Through an online registration, 165 subjects signed up to participate in one of 24 facilitation sessions (Facilitation Guide in Appendix E). All facilitation sessions were held in a controlled research setting in 2012. Participants in each facilitation session were randomly assigned using a random number generated to one of three experimental cells: high dialogic ($n = 57, 34.5\%$), low dialogic ($n = 51, 30.9\%$), or control ($n = 57, 34.5\%$). Treatment groups were exposed to one of the two blogs. During the 15-minute exposure period, participants were asked to familiarize themselves with the blog and interact with all aspects of interest to them.

Headphones were placed at each computer station so that participants could interact, if desired, with audio and video features without disturbing other participants. Upon completion of the exposure period, participants completed an online post-test questionnaire based on their observations and interactions with the blog (Appendix F).

The control group, likewise, completed the online post-test questionnaire (Appendix G). However, they were directed to complete the questionnaire based on their perceptions of and previous experiences with blogs in general rather than their interaction with a treatment.

Though all experimental materials (stimulus and questionnaires) were online, the experiment itself was facilitated in laboratory setting to ensure maximum control.

Variables

Using experimental results, this research study examines the impact of dialogic capacity on dialogic experience, dialogic feature importance, organization-public relationships, and issue involvement levels.

Independent Variable: Dialogic Capacity

The independent variable manipulated in this study is dialogic capacity. Dialogic capacity is based on the number of individual dialogic features (0 to 40) incorporated into the two treatment blogs (low treatment = 8 features, high treatment = 37 features).

Dependent Variable: Dialogic Experience

Dialogic experience (DPE), as a result of manipulation, serves as the first dependent variable. Dialogic experiences were measured using a dialogic principles scale created for the purpose of this study and the content/formatting of the blogs. The dialogic principles scale was created to measure key components of each dialogic principle as it has been defined in previous dialogic theory research (Kent & Taylor, 1998, 2000; Kent et al., 2003; Seltzer & Mitrook 2005,

2007; Taylor et al., 2001). Based on an in-depth analysis of each of the principles' defining characteristics, a 20-item scale was created with each of the five principles being analyzed by a set of three to six items. Agreement levels with each of the items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1, *strongly disagree* to 5, *strongly agree*.

Dependent Variable: Dialogic Feature Importance

Perceptions of individual dialogic feature importance (DFI) serves as the second dependent variable. Using an exploratory dialogic features scale, participants gauged levels of importance for each of the individual dialogic features as a result of manipulation. The 40 features taken from dialogic taxonomy were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1, *not important* to 5, *very important*.

Dependent Variable: Organization-Public Relationships

The relationship established with the organization, based on dialogic capacity, serves as the third dependent variable. This relationship was measured using the relational maintenance strategy scale, based on Stafford and Canary's (1991) taxonomy of relational maintenance strategies used in previous research on social, personal, and romantic relationships, and marriage. A version of the scale previously adapted for social media was employed (Kelleher, 2009; Kelleher & Miller 2006, Sweetser, 2010; Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007). This 25-item Likert scale ranging from 1, *strongly disagree* to 5, *strongly agree* measures relationship items such as task sharing, relational commitment, conversational style, responsiveness, and tone.

Dependent Variable: Levels of Issue Involvement

The fourth dependant variable relates to individual levels of issue involvement. Participants gauged their individual level of involvement with the issue of children without shoes following dialogic manipulation. Issue involvement measures as used in Van Gorp et al.'s (2009) study

were used to measure degrees of involvement. With a slight variation from past use, participants were presented with five questions about the issue of children with no shoes. Each question represented a different involvement approach to the issue and participants were asked to rate their level of involvement or likely involvement on a five-point Likert scale with 1 representing a low involvement answer and 5 representing a high involvement answer.

Instrument

Using a posttest-only experimental design with control, participants completed a post-test questionnaire, which contained each dependant variable scale previously outlined. Regardless of cell assignment, questionnaires included all the same items, re-worded as appropriate, with the exception of manipulation check items, which were only included on the treatment questionnaire.

It is important to note that the scales used to measure dialogic experiences (DPE) and dialogic feature importance (DFI) are new, trial scales created for this study. One goal of this investigation is to develop dialogic scales than can be used here and in future research to measuring dialogic experiences and feature perceptions. Dialogic experiences are based on the application and examination of the five overarching dialogic principles (DPE), while dialogic importance is based on the assessment of each of the 40 individual dialogic features (DFI). As newly developed, un-tested scales, the dialogic principles scale and the dialogic features scale are new to the experimental setting and the dialogic theory. Their use in this study is key to the development of a standard set of dialogic scales. Results here aim to serve as an initial set of measures that will ultimately lead to future research in which the scales will be further tested and developed.

In addition to these scales, the questionnaires addressed participant demographics, frequency of and reasoning behind blog use, and familiarity and involvement with the chosen

organization (TOMS). Participants were mostly female ($n = 136$, 82.4%) and ranged in age from 18 to 34, with the mean age of 21.09 ($SD = 1.54$) satisfying this study's desire to be within TOMS' target age range of 18 to 24 (Microsoft Advertising, 2010). More participants reported to read blogs ($n = 136$, 82.4%) than write ($n = 64$, 38.8%) with the mean reading time of 82.35 minutes ($SD = 101.3$) being much greater than the reported mean writing time of 30.94 minutes ($SD = 40.1$). The lower number of blog writers reported to write for mostly personal reasons ($n = 41$, 24.8%) while the higher number of blog readers credited a mixture of both personal and professional reasons ($n = 81$, 49.1%). Participants reported to be familiar with TOMS, with 47.3 percent reporting to be very familiar ($n = 78$) and 33.3 percent being familiar ($n = 55$). Even more 60 participants (36.4%) reported to own at least one pair of TOMS shoes.

Treatment cell questionnaires concluded with four additional questions serving as a manipulation check to confirm the dialogic categorization (high/low) for each stimulus. According to the results of chi square tests, the manipulation of dialogic capacity of a blog worked. High dialogic cell participants acknowledged the presence of key dialogic features and low dialogic cell participants acknowledged the absence of these same items.

High dialogic cell participants found a variety of media types present (100.0%), while low dialogic cell participants did not (0.0%), $\chi^2(1) = 100.27, p = .001$. Consistent results were found for information on how to become involved or affiliated, with high dialogic cell participants finding it to be present (90.0%) and low dialogic cell participants not (10.0%), $\chi^2(1) = 75.04, p = .001$. Similarly, high dialogic cell participants found opportunities to share opinions present (89.1%), while low dialogic cell participants did not (10.9%), $\chi^2(1) = 59.29, p = .001$. Though not as strong, there was also support for the presence of information on the

origin of the TOMS movement. High dialogic cell participants found this item to mostly be present (67.9%), while low dialogic cell participants did not (32.1%), $\chi^2 (1) = 29.73, p = .001$.

Data Analysis

In preparing the data to answer the research questions, items in each of the four scales, the dialogic principles scale, the dialogic features scale, the relational maintenance strategy scale, and the issue involvement scale, were summed into indices and reliability was measured using Cronbach's inter-item correlation coefficient.

Indices were created for the dialogic principle scale, used to measure dialogic experience, by sorting its 20 items by principle. Identified during the creation of the scale, each of the five dialogic principles contained three to six items, which were summed into principle-specific indices. Four of the five principle indices were found to be reliable: (DPE) dialogic loop (alpha = .74), (DPE) usefulness of information (alpha = .82), (DPE) return visits (alpha = .79), and (DPE) ease of interface (alpha = .76). One variable within the (DPE) conservation of visitors index (links that lead away from the blog) did not load and was removed, leaving two variables within the index that loaded reliably (alpha = .79). Since this scale was created for this study, and had never been previously used, no formerly established guidelines for index creation could be employed. The listing of variables within each newly created dialogic principle index can be found in Table 1.

For the dialogic features scale, used to measure dialogic feature importance, indices were created to remain consistent with the feature groupings from previous dialogic studies (Kent et al., 2003; Seltzer & Mitrook 2005, 2007; Taylor et al., 2001). Feature groupings within each principle were unaltered with the exception of the eight additional items identified as appropriate for the content/formatting of the blogs used in this study. These new items were placed in the

feature grouping of the most fitting principle. All five of the feature indices were found to be reliable: (DFI) dialogic loop (alpha = .80), (DFI) usefulness of information (alpha = .85), (DFI) return visits (alpha = .88), (DFI) ease of interface (alpha = .85), (DFI) and conservation of visitors index (alpha = .79). Again, with this scale being created for this study, and never used before, previously established guidelines for index creation could not be used. The listing of variables within each newly created dialogic features index can be found in Table 2.

The relationship scale was divided in the same fashion as previous studies concept groupings. Separate indices were made for each of the concepts based on the historical groupings from Sweetser 2010. In Sweetser's (2010) analysis one item from the initial relationship maintenance scale did not load and was removed. To remain consistent with the adopted variable groupings, that item was deleted from this analysis as well. Sweetser (2010) introduced two new indices, response to criticism and dialogue, to the five existing constructs identified in earlier relational maintenance research, task sharing, communicated relational commitment, conversational human voice, responsiveness/customer service, and positivity/optimism (Kelleher, 2009; Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007). Upon creation, six of the seven of indices were found to be reliable: task sharing (alpha = .80), communicated relational commitment (alpha = .90), conversational human voice (alpha = .73), responsiveness/customer service (alpha = .76), dialogue (alpha = .84), and positivity/optimism (.91). While the responsive to criticism alpha (.53) is lower than the standard threshold, it was consistent with the Sweetser 2010 alpha for this index (.56) and only contains two variables. In answering the research questions, all seven indices were used. The listing of variables within each index can be found in Table 3.

The five issue involvement items were initially factor analyzed, however the resulting solution only explained 54.09 percent of the variance, not meeting the commonly accepted threshold of 60 percent. As such, the issue items were summed into a single index. The index satisfied reliability standards with an alpha of .78. Mean scores for individual variables are displayed in Table 4.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Experimental results provide answers to this study's research questions which demonstrate how dialogic capacity of online organization communication outlets, such as blogs, can influence dialogic experience, dialogic feature importance, organization-public relationships, and issue involvement.

Dialogic Experience

Research question one asks whether dialogic experience levels are higher for blog visitors, for each of the dialogic principles, when engaging with a high dialogic blog than with a low dialogic blog. Results indicate this is the case. Comparing mean scores for each of the dialogic principle indices across cells revealed that blog visitors report higher levels of dialogic experience for all five of the dialogic principles when engaging with a high dialogic blog than with a low dialogic blog. High dialogic conditions have the highest levels of dialogic experience potential, followed by control (no blog exposure), and then low dialogic conditions.

An initial one-way analysis of variance showed statistically significant differences were present based on dialogic condition cell for all of the dialogic principle indices: (DPE) dialogic loop, $F(2, 161) = 38.43, p = .001$; (DPE) usefulness of information, $F(2, 160) = 18.62, p = .001$; (DPE) return visits, $F(2, 160) = 73.49, p = .001$; (DPE) ease of interface, $F(2, 161) = 25.06, p = .001$; (DPE) conservation of visitors, $F(2, 162) = 23.99, p = .001$. A series of follow-up Bonferroni post-hoc tests were conducted to determine specific differences between cells. For each of the indices, post-hoc analyses revealed that the high dialogic manipulation cell reported

statistically significantly higher levels of dialogic experience than the low dialogic manipulation cell. Consistent results were found in regard to control, with the control cell having statistically significantly higher levels of dialogic experience than the low dialogic manipulation cell.

Post hoc analysis on the (DPE) dialogic loop principle index revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 3.32; $p = .001$), and the mean score for the control cell was likewise statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 2.98; $p = .001$).

Post hoc analysis on the (DPE) usefulness of information principle index revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 3.59; $p = .001$). The mean score for the control cell was also statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 2.18; $p = .001$).

Post hoc analysis on the (DPE) return visit principle index revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 4.00; $p = .001$). The mean score for the control cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 4.75; $p = .001$).

Post hoc analysis on the (DPE) ease of interface principle index revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 3.77; $p = .001$). Likewise, the mean score for the control cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 2.38; $p = .001$).

Post hoc analysis on the (DPE) conservation of visitors principle index revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 1.70; $p = .001$), and the mean score for the control cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 2.14; $p = .001$).

Thus, with blog visitors reporting different levels of dialogic experience potential based on dialogic exposure, an affirmative answer is provided for research question one. This reveals that the presence or absence of dialogic features on a blog affects blog visitor experiences within each of the dialogic principles.

Dialogic Feature Importance

Research question two asks which individual dialogic features are most important to blog use. In order to identify specific aspects required to build the best most effective blog, participants were asked to rate each of the 40 dialogic features on their level of importance (1 = not important, 5 = very important). Eleven of the 40 features were identified as most important by comparing mean score differences between the high dialogic cell and the control cell and the low dialogic cell and the control cell. Based on their high dialogic exposure, high dialogic participants were expected to rank features as more important than control participants. On the contrary, low dialogic participants were expected to rank features as less important than control participants based on their low dialogic exposure.

Seven features were identified by the high dialogic cell having a statistically significantly higher mean scores than the control cell. An additional four items were identified by the low dialogic cell having a statistically significantly lower mean scores than the control cell. Thus, the following features are offered as an answer to research question two: (DFI) audio components, F

(2, 162) = 4.30, $p = .015$; (DFI) video components, $F(2, 162) = 4.52, p = .012$; (DFI) mission statement or philosophy, $F(2, 161) = 14.40, p = .001$; (DFI) how to become affiliated, $F(2, 162) = 12.31, p = .001$; (DFI) how to purchase products, $F(2, 161) = 7.06, p = .001$; (DFI) celebrity spokespeople, $F(2, 162) = 13.37, p = .001$; (DFI) organizational logo, $F(2, 162) = 5.86, p = .003$; (DFI) posts published regularly, $F(2, 160) = 4.75, p = .010$; (DFI) last post published recently, $F(2, 162) = 8.04, p = .001$; (DFI) organizational speeches, $F(2, 162) = 4.97, p = .008$; (DFI) search engine, $F(2, 162) = 3.86, p = .023$. A series of follow-up Bonferroni post-hoc tests were conducted for each of the 11 features to determine the specific statistically significant differences between cells.

Post hoc analysis on the (DFI) audio feature revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the control cell (mean difference = .59; $p = .022$).

Post hoc analysis on the (DFI) video feature revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the control cell (mean difference = .47; $p = .041$).

Post hoc analysis on the (DFI) mission statement or philosophy feature revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the control cell (mean difference = .86; $p = .001$).

Post hoc analysis on the (DFI) how to become affiliated feature revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the control cell (mean difference = .91; $p = .001$).

Post hoc analysis on the (DFI) how to purchase products feature revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the control cell (mean difference = .74; $p = .01$).

Post hoc analysis on the (DFI) celebrity spokespeople feature revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the control cell (mean difference = 1.08; $p = .001$).

Post hoc analysis on the (DFI) organizational logo feature revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the control cell (mean difference = .64; $p = .003$).

Post hoc analysis on the (DFI) posts published regularly feature revealed that the mean score for the low dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly lower than the control cell (mean difference = -.47; $p = .008$).

Post hoc analysis on the (DFI) last post published recently feature revealed that the mean score for the low dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly lower than the control cell (mean difference = -.64; $p = .001$).

Post hoc analysis on the (DFI) speeches feature revealed that the mean score for the low dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly lower than the control cell (mean difference = -.56; $p = .028$).

Post hoc analysis on the (DFI) search engine feature revealed that the mean score for the low dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly lower than the control cell (mean difference = -.56; $p = .020$).

In summary, responding to research question two, participants indicated audio, video, mission statement/philosophy, affiliation, purchase products, celebrity spokespeople, logo,

speeches, regular posts, recent posts, and search engine are the most important dialogic features to blog use. While the remaining 29 features vary in importance level, participants ranked them below the 11 features offered as an answer to this research question. To understand these findings in a broader sense of the dialogic theory, each principle can be examined by its individual features identified as important. The usefulness of information principle led the way with eight important features (audio, video, mission statement/philosophy, affiliation, purchase products, celebrity spokespeople, logo, speeches). This was followed by two features within the dialogic loop principle (regular posts, last post recent) and one feature within the ease of interface principle (search engine) were identified to be important. No features in either the return visit or conservation of visitors principle were identified to be important. Analysis on the principle level reveals that the usefulness of information principle is considered most important to blog use based on the features it encompasses.

Dialogic Capacity and Relationships

Research question three asks if blogs that incorporate a high number of dialogic features are more effective at establishing organization-public relationships than those that incorporate a low number of dialogic features. This appears to be the case. Data reveal that dialogic capacity impacts how effectively a blog establishes organization-public relationship.

An initial one-way analysis of variance showed statistically significant differences were present based on cell for all of the relational maintenance strategy indices: task sharing, $F(2, 162) = 12.76, p = .001$; communicated relational commitment, $F(2, 161) = 14.84, p = .001$; conversational human voice, $F(2, 160) = 7.97, p = .001$; responsiveness/customer service, $F(2, 161) = 7.63, p = .001$; dialogue, $F(2, 162) = 8.37, p = .001$; responsiveness to criticism, $F(2, 161) = 10.69, p = .001$; positivity/optimism $F(2, 161) = 9.33, p = .001$. A series of follow-up

Bonferroni post-hoc tests were conducted to determine the specific statistically significant differences between cells. For each of the indices, post-hoc analyses revealed that the high dialogic manipulation cell statistically significantly established a better relationship with the blog visitors than the low dialogic manipulation cell. Similar results were found in regard to the control, with the control cell establishing a better relationship with the blog visitors than the low dialogic manipulation cell, however, significance levels for control had mixed results.

Post hoc analysis on the task sharing relationship index revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 2.98; $p = .001$), and the mean score for the control cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 1.73; $p = .011$).

Post hoc analysis on the communicated relational commitment relationship index revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 3.41; $p = .001$), and the mean score for the control cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 3.36; $p = .001$).

Post hoc analysis on the conversational human voice relationship index revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 1.88; $p = .001$). However, statistically significant mean score differences were not found between the control cell and the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = .54; $p = .807$).

Post hoc analysis on the responsiveness/customer service relationship index revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 1.33; $p = .001$). Statistically significant mean score differences were not found between the control cell and the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = .79; $p = .066$).

Post hoc analysis on the dialogue relationship index revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 1.62; $p = .001$), and the mean score for the control cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = 1.43; $p = .003$).

Post hoc analysis on the responsiveness to criticism relationship index revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = .55; $p = .014$), and the mean score for the control cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = .89; $p = .001$).

Post hoc analysis on the positivity/optimism relationship index revealed that the mean score for the high dialogic manipulation cell was statistically significantly higher than the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = .78; $p = .003$). However, statistically significant mean score differences were not found between the control cell and the low dialogic manipulation cell (mean difference = -.12; $p = 1.00$).

Thus, for all seven of the relational maintenance strategy indices, it was determined that organizations with blogs that incorporate a high number of dialogic features are more effective at establishing relationships with the public than those that incorporate a low number of dialogic

features. However, the task sharing, communicated relational commitment, dialogue, and responsiveness to criticism indices were found to support the notion that no blog exposure is better at establishing a relationship between an organization and the public than exposure to a low dialogic blog. Meanwhile, the conversational human voice index, responsiveness/customer service index, and the positivity/optimism index revealed that exposure to a low dialogic blog would be more effective at establishing a relationship between the public and an organization than no blog exposure. While results are mixed, an overall affirmative answer to research question four reveals that dialogic capacity of an organizational blog impacts how effectively an organization-public relationship is established.

Dialogic Capacity and Issue Involvement

Research question four asks whether blogs that incorporate a high number of dialogic features are more effective at establishing higher degrees of issue involvement for blog visitors than those that incorporate a low number of dialogic features. Results indicate they are not. It was found that dialogic capacity of a blog does not impact degrees of issue involvement for blog visitors. An initial one-way analysis of variance showed statistically significant differences were not present based on cell for the issues involvement index, $F(2, 159) = .841, p = .433$. This finding indicates that an individual does not become more or less involved in an issue following exposure to a blog of one dialogic capacity versus another.

TABLE 1
DIALOGIC PRINCIPLE INDEX ITEM MEAN SCORES

	Overall	High Dialogic Cell	Low Dialogic Cell
<i>Dialogic loop principles index (alpha = .740)</i>	<i>10.43</i>	<i>11.56</i>	<i>8.24</i>
Interactive	3.23	3.75	2.18
Communicates with visitors	3.76	3.89	3.22
Provides opportunities for me to communicate	3.43	3.91	2.82
<i>Usefulness of information principles index (alpha = .824)</i>	<i>23.71</i>	<i>25.32</i>	<i>21.72</i>
Information is useful to visitors	3.99	4.25	3.76
Information is useful to me	3.62	3.81	3.02
Information is purposeful	4.12	4.51	3.82
Information is interesting	4.04	4.23	3.69
Information is informative	4.07	4.40	3.80
Information is not valuable (reverse coded)	3.90	4.19	3.63
<i>Return visit principles index (alpha = .793)</i>	<i>9.61</i>	<i>10.58</i>	<i>6.58</i>
Attractive for repeat visits	3.18	3.35	2.22
Up to date	3.36	3.74	2.37
Contains interactive elements	3.07	3.52	2.00
	<i>17.63</i>	<i>19.28</i>	<i>15.50</i>

Ease of interface principles index (alpha = .763)

Easy to navigate	4.05	4.26	3.96
Not well organized (reverse coded)	3.56	3.96	3.33
Contains information for my individual needs	3.24	3.75	2.35
Displays information in a logical structure	3.54	3.98	3.18
Interface provides positive experience	3.24	3.32	2.69
<i>Conservation of visitors principles index (alpha = .793)</i>	<i>6.27</i>	<i>6.64</i>	<i>4.94</i>
Encouraged me to stay	3.09	3.25	2.35
Valuable use of my time	3.18	3.40	2.59

Note. Items asked on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

TABLE 2
DIALOGIC FEATURE INDEX ITEM MEAN SCORES

	Overall	High Dialogic Cell	Low Dialogic Cell
<i>Dialogic loop features index (alpha = .802)</i>	<i>27.00</i>	<i>27.05</i>	<i>25.85</i>
Option to send email messages	3.12	3.11	2.96
Opportunity to post comments	4.03	3.77	4.02
Vote or survey	3.61	4.00	3.24
RSS/email subscription	3.54	3.47	3.49
Posts published regularly	4.39	4.42	4.12
Last post published recently	4.24	4.19	3.92
Invitation to share	3.90	3.91	3.78
<i>Usefulness of information features index (alpha = .853)</i>	<i>44.78</i>	<i>48.05</i>	<i>42.90</i>
Press releases	3.32	3.47	3.04
Speeches	3.25	3.46	2.84
Downloadable graphics	3.31	3.36	3.29
Audio components	3.60	3.96	3.45
Video components	4.06	4.39	3.86
Viewpoint on issues	3.95	4.12	3.80
Intended audience	3.65	3.59	3.51

Mission statement/philosophy	4.16	4.65	4.02
Information on becoming affiliated	3.96	4.46	3.86
Information on purchasing products	3.99	4.40	3.90
Celebrity spokespeople	3.13	3.79	2.86
Organization Logo	4.19	4.56	4.10
<i>Return visit features index (alpha = .885)</i>	<i>31.87</i>	<i>32.46</i>	<i>29.82</i>
Invitation to return	3.33	3.27	3.20
News forums	3.27	3.33	3.06
FAQ or Q&A	3.91	4.11	3.59
Invitation to bookmark or follow	3.82	3.81	3.73
Links to external related websites	3.52	3.46	3.45
Calendar of posts	3.38	3.21	3.20
Downloadable information	3.36	3.42	3.04
Opportunity to request more information	3.85	4.00	3.61
Press coverage	3.40	3.70	3.22
<i>Ease of interface features index (alpha = .859)</i>	<i>26.60</i>	<i>26.37</i>	<i>25.62</i>
Archive list	3.79	3.61	3.71
Tag cloud	3.24	3.11	3.27
Keyword tags	3.58	3.40	3.49
Post categories	3.76	3.77	3.53
Search engine	3.95	4.00	3.63
Page links	4.04	4.09	3.90

Appropriate use of graphics	4.29	4.52	4.12
<i>Conservation of visitors features index (alpha = .794)</i>	<i>21.59</i>	<i>22.28</i>	<i>20.76</i>
Easy to find information	4.47	4.67	4.18
Short loading time	4.58	4.70	4.43
Publication dates displayed	4.21	4.11	4.25
Link to organization website	4.33	4.47	4.25
Social media links or invitations	4.01	4.33	3.65

Note. Items asked on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

TABLE 3
RELATIONAL MAINTENACE STRATEGY INDEX ITEM MEAN SCORES

	Overall	High Dialogic Cell	Low Dialogic Cell
<i>Dialogue index</i> (alpha = .842)	10.74	11.31	9.68
Invites visitors into conversation	3.38	3.54	2.96
Is open to dialogue	3.56	3.70	3.22
Communicates in a conversational style	3.81	4.07	3.51
<i>Conversational human voice index</i> (alpha = .733)	14.90	15.94	14.06
Communicates in a human voice	4.05	4.19	4.00
Is interesting in conversation	3.76	4.09	3.31
Uses a sense of humor	3.32	3.61	3.10
Makes communication un-enjoyable (reverse coded)	3.78	4.05	3.67
<i>Responsiveness to criticism index</i> (alpha = .534)	5.87	5.92	5.37
Admits mistakes	2.90	2.89	2.65
Prompt uncritical feedback when addressing criticism	2.98	3.05	2.73
<i>Communicated relational commitment index</i> (alpha = .901)	17.84	18.92	15.50
Treats visitors as humans	3.95	4.21	3.84
Commitment to maintaining relationships w/ visitors	3.51	3.81	2.94
Communicates desire to build relationship w/ visitors	3.61	3.88	3.02

Stresses commitment to visitors	3.40	3.56	2.86
Implies a long-term relationship with visitors	3.40	3.48	2.84
<i>Task sharing index</i> (alpha = .805)	<i>19.45</i>	<i>20.80</i>	<i>17.82</i>
Discusses the nature of the organization	4.16	4.53	3.84
Emphasizes relationship quality	3.68	3.91	3.14
Performs organizational responsibilities	3.91	4.18	3.61
Directly addresses organizational responsibilities	3.83	4.12	3.47
Avoids duties (reverse coded)	3.87	4.07	3.76
<i>Responsive/customer service index</i> (alpha = .761)	<i>10.55</i>	<i>11.16</i>	<i>9.82</i>
Accepts visitor feedback/comments	3.81	4.02	3.76
Accepts visitor emails	3.53	3.88	3.08
Positively addresses complaints or queries	3.23	3.29	2.98
<i>Positivity/optimism index</i> (alpha = .911)	<i>8.81</i>	<i>9.36</i>	<i>8.58</i>
Expresses cheer and optimism about the future	4.36	4.67	4.20
Uses a positive/optimistic tone	4.45	4.70	4.38

Note. Items asked on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

TABLE 4
ISSUE INVOLVEMENT ITEM MEAN SCORES

	Overall	High Dialogic Cell	Low Dialogic Cell
Interest level	2.47	2.51	2.12
Attention level	2.79	2.82	2.65
Follow level	2.08	2.09	1.94
Discussion level	2.35	2.37	2.29
Involvement level	2.22	2.28	2.18

Note. Items asked on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = low involvement measure and 5 = high involvement measure. Alpha for entire index is .782 and *M* for the entire index is 11.77. *M* for the high dialogic cell index is 12.07 and *M* for the low dialogic cell index is 11.17.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study sought to expand on Kent and Taylor's account of how dialogic approaches can be used by practitioners and scholars and provide an understanding of the benefits that can result from these approaches (2002). By doing so, existing research gaps are narrowed and the body of scholarship is provided with a true understanding of dialogic effect. This need to understand dialogic effect was acknowledged by Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) in their mention of limitations within the dialogic research stream. They stressed the need to understand the effect of dialogic feature exposure on online visitors or users. To measure these possible effects, this study examined causation between dialogic capacity of a blog and each of the dependant variables: relationship building, dialogic experience, dialogic feature importance, and issue involvement. This study is able to provide an initial understanding of dialogic effect by empirically measuring it through stakeholder manipulation and feedback.

Broadly, this study exposes ties between dialogic capacity and organization-public relationships and negates the possibility of a connection between dialogic capacity and individual levels of issue involvement. Even more, results reveal that dialogic capacity has a direct effect on visitor experiences but reveals that the incorporation of a select few features is most important.

Kent and Taylor (1998) recognized early on that organization Internet use can create, adapt, and change relationships with publics. This study provides the first empirical support that dialogic capacity has an impact on organization-public relationships. Specific results from this study confirm that the use of high dialogic online communication is more effective than low

dialogic communication at establishing and maintaining organization-public relationships. Even more, initial dialogic researchers recognized that technology itself does not affect organization-public relationships but that how technology is used is truly influential (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Results from this study support the proper use of technology by revealing that not only are relationships dependent on dialogic capacity but so are dialogic experiences. Findings confirm that high dialogic communication outlets are more effective than low dialogic outlets at providing positive dialogic experiences. To further this focus on the proper use of technology, this study identifies 11 features deemed most important to proper blog construction and use. These findings are key to the continued understanding of effective online communication, the dialogic theory, and online organization-public relationship building.

The final avenue of inquiry for this study pertained to the effect of dialogic capacity on individual levels of issue involvement. No previous research of this nature exists, but at this time, results reveal no cause-and-effect relationship and suggests this may not be a fruitful area of future study.

Dialogic Experience

In the examination of dialogic experiences, dialogic capacity served as the independent variable while the experimental dialogic principle indices were used to measure the dependent variable, dialogic experience. Previous research identified that the five dialogic principles serve as guidelines for the successful creation of dialogic communication (Kent & Taylor, 1998). However, this study expands on these guidelines by examining how the principles can be used to measure dialogic experiences and compares these experiences following exposure to blogs of different dialogic capacities. For each of the five dialogic principles, participant experiences were parallel to the dialogic capacity of the blog to which they were exposed. Thus participants

exposed to a high dialogic blog reported higher dialogic experiences for each of the principles, while participants exposed to low dialogic blogs reported lower dialogic experiences for each of the principles. In the direct comparison of a high dialogic blog versus a low dialogic blog, participants reported higher quality experiences when engaging with a high dialogic blog.

The greatest dialogic experience difference was in the return visit principle, revealing that ones likelihood of returning to an organizational blog is highly dependant on dialogic capacity. This suggests that users stress the inclusion of key dialogic factors, such as updated information and interactive elements when gauging their experience and probability of returning. This pressure placed on the return visit principle is extremely important as past research reveals that repeat interactions are a key component of successful and ongoing relationships (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Kent et al., 2003; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005/2007; Taylor et al., 2001). Quality, lasting relationships are dependent on attention in which organizations view publics as partners in communication rather than clients or customers (Kent et al., 2003).

Consistent differences were found for each of the other dialogic principles with varying degrees of disparity. This reveals that users factor two-way communication opportunities, the value of content and information, the ease of navigation, and the value of their visit time when gauging their overall experience but not quite to the degree of elements generating return visits. While users may evaluate their experience less on these four principles, organizations should think twice before discrediting the importance of the individual features within them. All eleven dialogic features identified a most important in research question two fall in three of these four principles.

In sum, this study reveals that stakeholders and their experiences are subject to dialogic effect. This confirms that although stakeholders may not be aware of the dialogic theory or its

principles and features, they recognize a difference in experience quality when interacting with a dialogic medium versus a non-dialogic medium. Accordingly, organizations should note the impact that dialogic capacity has on visitor experiences and should aim to be highly dialogic in order to provide visitors with positive online experiences. This can be achieved by ensuring all online communication including, websites, blogs, social media profiles, email blasts, and electronic newsletters are built to be highly dialogic and aimed towards relationship building. A positive experience resulting from online dialogic communication is indicative of future positive experiences with an organization. Taylor et al. (2001) point out, an organization's employment of dialogic principles in web design and communication may be indicative of an overall dialogic disposition.

As the first study to measure visitor experiences based on dialogic exposure, the strong association found between high dialogic blogs and positive experiences is an important contribution to the dialogic research stream. Past dialogic research has provided a solid understanding of how to properly design and execute online communication and facilitate and foster online dialogic relationships through the successful use of highly dialogic websites and blogs (Kent et al., 2003; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005/2007; Taylor et al., 2001). However, never before has it been questioned how dialogic capacity directly affects visitor experiences. The new knowledge gained in this study provides answers to this previously unanswered question and reaffirms past arguments that organizations should be strategic in web design and communication to meet a variety of visitor needs and produce positive visitor experiences (Kent et al., 2003). This is essential to understand and embrace when working to sort through all facets of the dialogic theory and its true cause-and-effect potential.

Dialogic Feature Importance

Further examination regarding dialogic capacity identified which dialogic features are considered most important to blog visitors. Here dialogic capacity served as the independent variable, while the importance of the individual dialogic features served as the dependent variable. It is posited that the proper incorporation of the features, identified as most important, enables an organization or an individual to build an effective blog that meets users' technological expectations.

Interestingly, it may be that level of feature importance is partially contingent on level of feature presence. Past content analysis research by Seltzer and Mitrook (2005/2007), Kent et al. (2003), and Taylor et al. (2001) assessed the presence of individual dialogic features on websites and/or blogs. Many of the individual features classified as important in this study were found to be present in a high percentage of the blogs or websites examined in these past studies. This comparative finding indicates that users may find a feature to be more important if its occurrence is common and users have become accustomed to and expectant of its presence.

In all three previous studies, the mission statement or philosophy feature was found to be present in 80 percent or more of the blogs or websites examined (Kent et al., 2003; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005/2007; Taylor et al., 2001). Meanwhile, in two of the three previous studies the organizational logo and how to become affiliated features were found to be present in at least 80 percent of the blogs or websites examined (Kent et al., 2003; Taylor et al., 2001). Lastly, in one of the three previous studies two features were present in 80 percent or more of the blogs or websites, speeches (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005/2007) and how to purchase products (Taylor et al., 2001). Hence, not only are these features commonly found on blogs, but this study uncovers that blog visitors find the presence of these features, among others, to be highly important.

It is important to note that past dialogic studies examined non-profit and activist websites and coded for *how to contribute money* (Kent et al., 2003; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005/2007; Taylor et al., 2001). However, because of the sales-focused organization featured in the blogs used in this study, this feature was relabeled *how to purchase products*. Both labels focus on transferring visitor money to the organization. Unique to this situation, donations and purchases are nearly identical considering the organization's One for One policy of giving one pair of shoes to the needy for every one pair sold (TOMS Shoes, 2013). Future corporate-based dialogic studies should consider different types of financial exchanges and modification to the feature wording.

The remaining six items are considered more important than they are likely to be present: posts published regularly, last post published recently, presence of video components, presence of audio components, presence of search engine, and celebrity spokespeople. This study posits that the current importance rankings may not be supported by the presence rates from past studies because of lapse in time between the studies.

In past dialogic content analyses, the blogs and websites were coded for whether they offered regular information and results showed they failed to do so (Kent et al., 2003; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005/2007; Taylor et al., 2001). This item was divided into two separate features in this study, posts published regularly and last post published recently, and both were found to be highly important. Advancements in blog creation and maintenance through programs such as Wordpress and Blogger have made blogging accessible and easy for both individuals and organizations. These popular sites and the ease with which posts can be generated may explain the frequency and currency expected from visitors. Thus, with WordPress' 2003 launch (WordPress.org, n.d.) and Google's 2003 purchase of Blogger (Gillmore, 2003), importance levels may be higher than past presence levels.

In terms of the audio and video features, past studies coded these as a combined variable, not measuring each item separately (Kent et al., 2003; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005/2007; Taylor et al., 2001). This study divided and measured these media separately, both being ranked highly important. The difference between current importance and past occurrence may be due to the increase in popularity of video and music websites and programs such as YouTube, Pandora, and iTunes. In both Taylor et al.'s 2001 study and Kent et al.'s 2003 study, the video/audio presence was below 10 percent. Following the official November 2005 launch of YouTube (YouTube, n.d), July 2005 launch of Pandora Radio (Pandora, 2012), and April 2003 launch of the iTunes Music Store (Apple, 2013), the audio/visual capacity presence in Seltzer and Mitrook's 2005/2007 study grew to 22 percent. Now years later, YouTube, Pandora Radio, and the iTunes Store are more established and their popularity has soared. This is especially true within the participant demographic targeted in this study. Internet activity among the millennial generation, ages 18 to 33, shows that listening to online music is more popular amongst this generation than any other (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2010). Even more 89 percent of adults ages 18 to 29 report to watch videos online (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2009). The now mainstream nature of online audio and video through programs such as these serves as a possible explanation for their high importance levels.

Search engine popularity has also soared. Search engine use is the second most popular online activity, only behind checking and sending email (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2004). Thanks to search engines such as Google and Bing, websites are easy to locate. When performing a search, 87 percent of search engine users report to find the information they are seeking for most of the time (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2004). Advances in technology have narrowed the scope of this feature, making search engines customizable and

limited to specific sites. Now within individual sites, it is common for web users to be able to search for items quickly and not have to spend much time browsing for desired information or features. This stress placed on search customization and quick results serves to explain the new-found importance of the search engine feature.

The last important feature, celebrity spokespeople, is an interesting finding that is best supported by the popularity of advertisements and endorsements. Profit-based organizations have the means to pay top dollar for high profile celebrity advertisements while not-for-profit organizations are highly reliant on in-kind endorsements. TOMS, the profit-based organization used in this study has featured celebrity support from Charlize Theron, Lenny Kravitz, and Lionel Richie just to name a few. Thus, the use of corporate blogs in this study may explain why this feature is ranked as important but why the non-profit and activist websites and blogs examined in past studies failed to include this feature consistently.

While it is key to know which individual features are most effective and important when building a blog, it is also essential to keep in mind the broader principles and their unique place within the overall dialogic theory. Ranked according to the number of important features, the principles align respectively: usefulness of information, dialogic loop, ease of interface, return visits, and conservation of visitors.

When examining the role of individual features within the grander scope of the dialogic theory and its abilities, it is important to note connections found in previous research between feature presence and relationship potential. Data from past research suggests that the incorporation of dialogic features in online communication design is necessary for organizations wanting to use online communication to build relationships with the public (Kent et al., 2003).

This study suggests that when working to meet this relationship-building goal special attention should be paid to the important features identified here.

Dialogic Capacity and Relationships

In 1999 Bruning and Ledingham identified a lack in scholarly attention towards the processes in which organizations can initiate, develop, and maintain relationships with publics. Since then, separate dialogic and relationship management research has worked to fill this void. This study takes this past research even further in an attempt to eliminate remaining gaps by merging dialogic and organization-public relationship research for the first time.

Past dialogic research outlined five principles, each containing a set of features, considered necessary for dialogic relationship building via online communication (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Kent et al., 2003; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2005/2007; Taylor et al., 2001). Guided by the dialogic theory and relationship management theory, this study sought to experimentally test this concept and determine how dialogic capacity of an organizational blog might impact organization–public relationships. Here dialogic capacity served as the independent variable while the previously established relational maintenance strategies were used to measure relationship effects, which served as the dependent variable.

Broadly, the data suggests that dialogic capacity has a direct effect on organization-public relationships. Results reveal that visitors engaging with a high dialogic blog report to establish a better relationship with the organization than visitors engaging with a low dialogic blog. Thus results from this study confirm that exposure to high dialogic online communication, aids organization-public relationship building. When high dialogic relationship building potential is directly compared to low dialogic relationship building potential, significant differences exist among all seven relational maintenance strategies, supporting that high dialogic levels should be

the first goal of any organization aiming to use blogs to build relationships. This finding provides support for Kelleher and Miller's (2006) notion that blogs have value in organization-public relationship building efforts and provides clarity to their notion by addressing the specific benefit of high dialogic blog use.

Knowing that high dialogic blog use is most beneficial to organization-public relationships, organizations must know what to do if faced with the situation of using a low dialogic blog or no organizational blog at all. Mixed results were found regarding the relationship potential of each option. Examining the relational maintenance strategies according to those aided by low dialogic blog use and those damaged by low dialogic blog use may be the best way to review these mixed results.

For three of the seven relational maintenance strategies, conversational human voice, positivity/optimism, and responsiveness/customer service, data supports the use of a low dialogic organizational blog. Data here reveals there are situations in which an organization's relationship with its public is better aided by the use of a low dialogic blog than the use of no blog. In these cases, not having an organizational blog would damage the organization-public relationship more than the use of a blog of any dialogic capacity.

The potential aid provided by a low dialogic organizational blog may be explained by a simple public desire to hear from an organization. This study posits that circumstances exist where individuals seek any positive, optimistic, enjoyable, humorous, interesting, or conversational communication, regardless of dialogic capacity. It is suggested this may hold more truth for smaller organizations with weak web and social media presences. Blog use is simple and low cost and could supplement for otherwise lacking web communication, thus filling visitors needs to connect to small or growing organizations.

Opposite results are true for the four remaining relational maintenance strategies, task sharing, relational commitment, dialogue, and responsiveness to criticism. Results reveal that an organization-public relationship is better aided by no blog use and a higher degree of damage would be caused by low dialogic blog use. Blogs of low dialogic capacity are generally set-up poorly and cause frustrating visitor experiences in which desired information is either not present or is difficult to find. This frustrating experience is likely to damage a relationship that could have been otherwise un-affected had no blog exposure occurred.

The items in these four strategies directly discuss relationship dialogue, commitment, future, and quality along with organization actions and responses. It can be considered that these strategies directly affect feelings toward an organization and a relationship, more so than the other three strategies, which focus on the nature of organizational communication. This consideration could explain why a relationship suffers more damage when low dialogic communication occurs.

These results reveal that less damage is associated with a higher number of relational maintenance strategies when no blog is used. Thus, this study posits that no blog use should be chosen over low dialogic blog use when working towards fostering organization-public relationships. However, the benefits of either option cannot begin to compare to the relationship benefits associated with high dialogic blog use.

In sum, organization-public relationships are subject to dialogic effect. The impact of dialogic capacity should be noted and it must be understood that research now shows that highly dialogic communication outlets must be used to foster the best organization-public relationship possible.

An organization's relationship with its public has been identified to be extremely vital (Bruning, 2000), making research that provides guidance for its creation and maintenance, such as this, very important to the field. Organizations, scholars, and practitioners, now have research-based information outlining blogs specific capabilities for organization-public relationship building. These result support Wright's notion that, when both the organization and its publics have access to online media, the Internet holds tremendous promise for facilitating the communication needed to develop and maintain organization-public relationships (1998, 2001). However to fill this promise, practitioners must actively use online media in a way consistent with these finding. This is where the field may fall short as past research has revealed a disconnect between practitioners willingness to use social media outlets, such as blogs, and the relationship benefits associated with them (Kelleher, 2008).

Dialogic Capacity and Issue Involvement

While tremendous strides were taken in terms of linking the dialogic theory and organization-public relationship building, no relationship was found to exist between the dialogic theory and individual levels of issue involvement. This study was ambitious in extending dialogic research beyond organization-public communication and relationships, and explored a new issue-driven concept. It was questioned whether dialogic capacity could affect individual levels of issue involvement. The inquiry was examined through the comparison of a high dialogic blog and a low dialogic blog and associated degrees of issue involvement. Here dialogic capacity served as the independent variable while issue involvement levels served as the dependent variable.

Results reveal that dialogic capacity of a blog has no impact on degrees of issue involvement for individuals. Consequently, higher or lower degrees of involvement with the

humanitarian issue of children without shoes were not established following exposure to high or low dialogic blogs.

To further explore this possible area of study, other relationships regarding issue involvement and the dialogic theory were sought by examining correlations between the issue involvement index and both the feature and principle indices. While involvement was found to statistically correlate with some of the dialogic indices, none of them correlated in meaningful ways thus confirming the void of an association.

As a final venture, a correlation was sought between the issue involvement index and levels of awareness, familiarity, and interaction with TOMS. Again, no relationship was found to exist.

In sum, this study posits that these results indicate that individual involvement with an issue is more deep-rooted than the structure, format, and content of one communication outlet such as a blog. The deep-rooted nature of issue involvement reinforced in this study corroborates Van Gorp et al.'s (2009) finding that levels are not affected by the framing of any one given news article.

Advancements for the Public Relations Field

The Internet has already been identified as essential to public relations (Sallot et al., 2004), however, implications from this study offer a clear understanding of how online communication tools can be better developed into dialogic communication outlets and used practically in the field. As Kent and Taylor (2002) point out, the term dialogic is being more frequently used to describe practical approaches to public relations. In practice, public relations has seen a recent shift away from managing publics and public opinion and toward establishing, nurturing, and maintaining relationships (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). To remain true to this

shift, research, such as this, must continue to outline specific methods that can be used in the field that contribute to organization-public relationships. Most importantly, practitioners must familiarize themselves with such research and act upon it.

It is incumbent upon organizations to develop exchanges with the public that provide building blocks for relationships (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999). This study asserts that dialogic communication is one of those key building blocks. By embracing the knowledge this study provides, practitioners can weigh the benefits and consequences to dialogic experiences and organization-public relationships when using online communication outlets of different dialogic capacities. These real world measures can be used to justify the need for highly dialogic communication and the inclusion of the 11 features deemed most important.

Kent et al. (2003) addressed that little evidence exists about the extent to which technologies can help organizations build relationships with their publics. Their dialogic content analyses worked to provide this desired evidence but the true cause-and-effect results presented in this study take dialogic research much further, especially in terms of understanding the relationship building potential of blogs. Seltzer and Mitrook (2005/2007) identified that potential exists for relationship building through the use of blogs and results from this study reveal that when a blog is highly dialogic this potential is achievable.

Hope exists that organizations, practitioners, and scholars will use this information to put an end to the inconsistencies identified by Seltzer and Mitrook (2005) regarding the design elements used in online communication outlets and desired relationship building objectives. It is widely known amongst scholars studying the Internet, that web-based communication outlets are often poorly used dialogic tools (Kent et al., 2003). Kent et al. (2003) suggest this is because a misunderstanding exists in terms of how design can actually facilitate relationship building. We

can not continue to provide clarity until scholars use the starting point provided by this study for future experimental dialogic theory research.

Future Research

Future dialogic research should look at blog use in the political sector as well as personal blogs maintained by individuals for profit. Scholars should also investigate other online social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Pintrest, Instagram, chat rooms, and discussion boards in order to observe the impact of two-way communication strategies on dialogic experience, dialogic feature importance, and relationship building. As Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) suggested in their ground-breaking study of dialogic communication on Twitter, dialogic research must move forward focusing on the communication outlets that businesses are becoming increasingly reliant on for stakeholder communication.

Even more importantly, future research should focus on experimental data that makes use of the experimental dialogic scales used in this study or similar variations. Dialogic research cannot be dependant on content analysis findings alone. Experimentally proven data must continue to emerge to provide solid cause-and-effect relationships between dialogue and an array of other mass communication and public relations topics. Through continued use of these scales, future dialogic theory research could be provided with a unified effective measurement system that is capable of accurately measuring dialogic effect and experience.

With a lack of any statistical data relating the dialogic theory and levels of issue involvement, this study posits that both areas are important to the practice and research of public relations but a direct cause-and-effect relationship between the two may be far-reaching. This may be due to the dialogic theory's strong focus on online communication design and the issue involvement scale's strong focus on personal levels of issue relevance or connectedness.

Future public relations research surrounding issue involvement should first explore the use of different scales. Issue involvement in this study was measured using a variation of Van Gorp et al.'s (2009) scale. While use of this scale served as a good starting point for this study, it is questioned whether a different, more commonly used scale, composed of more variables, and that did not require alteration would have yielded different results.

Lastly, future research involving this or any other issue involvement scale should focus on exploring its relationship to other key topics within the field such as credibility, trust, framing, crisis management, or brand management.

Limitations

As one of the first empirical dialogic theory studies, this research takes the needed step of further developing the dialogic theoretical concept. This initial investigation into the effects of dialogic capacity on dialogic experiences, organization-public relationships, and individual levels of issue involvement opens new doors for both public relations practitioners and scholars. However, this research is not without limitation. The findings here should be considered carefully, and not too broadly so as to be considered a full account of the potential of dialogic communication.

Only one social media tactic, the use of an online blog, was examined here. The concepts measured in this study cannot be confined to blog activity, but must be measured in a way that accounts for all aspects of communication and knowledge between parties. Additionally, although generalizations are made here extrapolating the current findings out to organizations as a whole, it must be noted that this experiment only tested one specific organization's blog, TOMS, and the results may not generalize to other companies in other industries or sectors.

Furthermore, it is important to note that while TOMS is a for-profit shoe company, it contributes to a cause, which may manipulate feelings of audience connectedness.

This study employed a convenience sample, which is known to reduce generalizability. Although the sample of southeastern college students selected here was specifically chosen because of its median age and likely familiarity with the Internet, online blogs, and the chosen organization, future studies should step out to examine publics beyond the targeted demographic. Such research would provide insight as to whether certain attributes of online blogs yield significant results with older, more diverse publics, as well as with younger publics in varying regions and economic circumstances.

In terms of measures, this study used exploratory dialogic scales in an experimental setting. Without any previous experimental dialogic research, this study was ambitious in its creation and testing of new investigative dialogic scales. The dialogic principles scale and the dialogic features scale, created for this study, were solidly based on a combination of all past dialogic theory definitions and code books that were accepted in past dialogic theory research. The infancy and untested nature of these scales serves as a limitation for this study but overall has little effect on the study's ability to close the dialogic theory research gap as it pertains to research method.

Lastly, exposure can be considered a limitation because of ecological validity. Participants were directed to visit and interact with the treatment blogs. However, it is unknown if these individuals would have visited these blogs naturally.

Conclusion

This study's findings are pioneering to the study of the dialogic theory as stakeholder exposure and related effects have never been examined before. The success of this experiment

provides empirical support for the application of the dialogic theory of communication in organization-public relationships and the effectiveness of dialogic blog use. Its findings illustrate what can happen if and when an organization provides an open, interactive mode of online communication with its public and offers a clearer understanding of how online organization communication tools can be developed into dialogic communication outlets. Findings such as these, and the many related ones to come as a result of future research, will ultimately influence the Internet's growth as a relationship-building tool.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAILS

Instructor Email Requesting a Class Visit Appointment

Dear _____,

Thank you for taking time to meet with me about my IRB-approved research project. I wanted to follow-up with additional information about my action plan.

I hope to collect data between (date) and (date) and would like to talk with your students during a class session the week of (date). I will only need two to three minutes to present the class with information about the study and my plea for help. Please let me know the day and time that works best for you and your class schedule.

Please let me know if you think an email to your students would be better than a class visit.

Best,

Megan Ward

Student Email in Lieu of Class Visit

Dear Students,

I am a student here at the University of Georgia in need of some help. I am working on a research project and would like to invite you to participate in my study. It will be very easy and fun! I am asking for 45 minutes of your time, where you will look at a website and answer some questions. No hard work involved!

The research study will take place between (date) and (date) in Grady lab (#). No additional trips to campus will be necessary. Please visit (link) to sign up for a time before, after, or in-between classes to help me out and enjoy a delicious snack!

Thank you,

Megan Ward

APPENDIX B

CODE BOOK

Both treatment blogs were coded to identify features related to each of the dialogic principles. The following 40 features were separately coded as either present or absent.

Answering yes to a question denotes that the item was present and receives a coding of “1.”

Answering no to a question denotes that the item was absent and receives a coding of “0.” A final coding score for each blog was calculated by summing all 40 items.

Ease of Interface

1. Archive list of posts on blog home page?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, an archive list of blog posts must be present on the blog home page.
- Location: An archive list is typically located on the bottom/side bar of a blog.
- Description: An archive list displays all of the months/years blog posts were published and the number of posts associated with each month/year. Clicking on a month/year directs a user to all of the blog posts that were published that month/year.
- Study: Previous dialogic studies coded for site maps and/or archive lists. Site maps were removed from this study due to the current common formatting of blogs.

2. Tag cloud on blog home page?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, a tag cloud of keyword tags must be present on the blog home page.
- Location: A tag cloud is typically located on the bottom/side bar of a blog.
- Description: A tag cloud is a box in which all of the post keyword tags are displayed and are sized from small to large according to the number of times a certain tag is used (small = rarely used, large = frequently used).
- Study: This feature was added to this dialogic study based on the current common formatting of blogs and the feature's contribution to a blog's ease of interface.

3. Blog posts contain keyword tags?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, all blog posts must contain at least one keyword tag.
- Location: Keyword tags are typically located next to the title or below the final text or graphic of a post.
- Description: Keyword tags are word tags that describe the different themes mentioned in a post. Generally, the same tags are used repetitively throughout a blog and clicking on a tag displays all posts that contain the respective tag. Posts are deemed similar when they share a tag. There is no limit to the number of tags that can be assigned to a post or the number of times a tag can be used.
- Study: This feature was added to this dialogic study based on the current common formatting of blogs and the feature's contribution to a blog's ease of interface.

4. List of post categories on blog home page?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, a list of post categories must be present on the blog home page.
- Location: A list of post categories is typically located on the bottom/side bar of a blog.
- Description: Some blogs categorize posts. A list of post categories displays the different categories and the number of posts in each category. The number of categories is unlimited but generally posts are only placed into one or two categories. By clicking on a category, a user is able to see all posts that fit into that specific category. Posts are deemed similar when they are in the same category.
- Study: This feature was added to this dialogic study based on the current common formatting of blogs and the feature's contribution to a blog's ease of interface.

5. Search engine box on blog home page?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, a search engine must be present on the blog home page.
- Location: A search engine is typically located on the bottom/side bar of a blog.
- Description: A search engine is typically a rectangular box with a "Search" button next to it. Typing a keyword into the box and "searching" for it allows a user to search for the presence of that keyword throughout all of the pages and posts on the respective blog. Results of the search are posted in reverse chronological order.

6. Links to other pages displayed on blog home page?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, links to the other pages on the blog must be present on the blog home page.
- Location: Links to other pages on the blog are typically located on a link bar. Link bars are generally included in the blog header.
- Description: Some blogs have multiple pages while others do not. To code this feature as present, the blog in question must have multiple pages and links to these pages must be present.

7. Appropriate use of graphics throughout blog posts and pages?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, graphics used on the blog must support, and not outweigh, the text throughout both the blog posts and pages.
- Location: Graphics may be located anywhere on the blog home page or one of its subpages. The location is not significant, as long as the graphic is used appropriately.
- Study: Previous dialogic studies coded for low reliance on graphics. Due to the commercial nature of TOMS, an appropriate use of graphics is more important than a low reliance on graphics for the purpose of this study.

Usefulness of Information

8. Press releases by the blog organization (TOMS)?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, at least one press release from the blog organization must be present on the blog.

- Location: Press releases may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages. Press releases tend to be aimed toward the media, thus subpages designed for the media tend to be the most common place to find press releases.

9. Speeches by the blog organization (TOMS)?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, at least one speech made by an official representative of the blog organization must be present on the blog.
- Location: Speech(es) may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages.
- Description: This feature may be satisfied by the video, audio, or transcript of a speech.

10. Downloadable graphics for the blog organization (TOMS)?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, the blog must contain graphics related to the blog organization that can be downloaded.
- Location: Downloadable graphics may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages.

11. Audio components?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, at least one audio component must be present on the blog.
- Location: Audio components may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages.
- Description: Audio components may include music, news casts, podcasts, or any other audio component, however, this feature can not overlap with the video (#11) or speech (#9) features.

- Study: Previous dialogic studies grouped this feature with video components (#12). Due to the individual importance of each feature, they were separated in this study.

12. Video components?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, at least one video component must be present on the blog.
- Location: Video components may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages
- Study: Previous dialogic studies grouped this feature with audio components (#11). Due to the individual importance of each feature, they were separated in this study.

13. Clearly stated positions on issues related to the blog organization (TOMS)?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, the blog must clearly state the blog organization's positions on issues related to the organization.
 - TOMS: The need for and benefits of shoes and the One for One movement.
- Location: The organization's positions on issues may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages. It is most common for this type of information to be on a static page such as an "About Us" page.

14. Identifies intended audience of blog?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, the blog must identify its intended audience.

- Location: Identification of the intended audience may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages. It is most common for this type of information to be on a static page such as an “About Us” page.

15. Statement of philosophy or mission statement of blog organization (TOMS)?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, the blog must include the blog organization’s statement of philosophy or mission statement.
- Location: The organization’s statement of philosophy or mission statement may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages. It is most common for this type of information to be on a static page such as an “About Us” page.

16. Information on how to become affiliated with blog organization (TOMS)?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, the blog must provide information on how to become affiliated with the blog organization.
 - TOMS: Employment opportunities, intern program, campus clubs
- Location: Affiliation information may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages. It is most common for this type of information to be on a static page such as a “Get Involved” or “Join Us” page.

17. Information on how to purchase products from the blog organization (TOMS)?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, the blog must provide information on how to purchase products from the blog organization.
- Location: Product information may be located on the blog homepage or one of its subpages.

- Description: Users cannot typically purchase products on the blog, however, links from the blog generally direct users to the organization website where they can browse and purchase products.
- Study: Previous dialogic studies coded for information on how to contribute money to the blog organization. Due to the commercial nature of TOMS, information on how to purchase products is more suitable for this study.

18. Endorsements by celebrity spokespeople?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, the blog must include endorsements by celebrity spokespeople.
- Location: Celebrity endorsements may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages.
- Description: Celebrity endorsements may be in any form (video, article, advertisement, etc.) but must come from a commonly recognized celebrity figure.
- Study: Previous dialogic studies coded for links to political leaders. Due to the commercial nature of TOMS, endorsements by celebrity spokespeople are more suitable for the purpose of this study.

19. Logo of blog organization (TOMS) prominently displayed?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, the blog must prominently display the logo of the blog organization.
 - TOMS Flag
- Location: Logos are typically a static feature in the header.

Conservation of Visitors

20. Important/useful information is available on or linked to from blog home page?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, important or useful information must be available on or linked to from the blog home page.
- Description: Important/useful information is different for different audiences, but it should be clear on the home page, through the use of links or other features, where a user can find the information that they consider personally important/useful.

21. Short loading time (less than 4 seconds)?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, all blog pages must load in less than 4 seconds when the URL is typed into the address bar or links are selected from blog pages or posts.

22. Date of post publication displayed?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, the date of all post publications must be displayed.
- Location: The publication date (month, day, and year) is typically located next to the title or below the final text or graphic of a post.
- Study: This dialogic study refocused this feature to address the inclusion of simply the publication date so that visitors are aware of the publication time frame and the currency of the blog.
 - Previous studies coded for time and date of post publication. Time was removed from this feature in this study, as it does not seem highly important or relevant.

- Previous studies also focused on the time and date of the last post/update to measure a blog's currency. In this study, features #38 and #39 address this concept.

23. Link to website of the blog organization (TOMS)?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, a link to the organization website must be present on the blog.
 - TOMS: www.toms.com
- Location: A link to the organization website may be present on the blog home page or one of its subpages. It is common for this type of link to be part of the blog text but be differentiated by the use of a different text color.
- Study: This feature was added to this study as an extension of the recommendation by Rybalko and Seltzer (2010), regarding social media sites serving as an extension of an organization's social networking presence. An organization's website serves as an extension of its web presence in a similar manner.

24. Invitation or links to social media profiles associated with the blog organization (TOMS)?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, an invitation or link to a minimum of one other social media profile associated with the blog organization must be present on the blog.
 - TOMS: Twitter (@TOMS) or Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/toms>)
- Location: Social media links are typically located on the bottom/side bar of a blog.

- Study: This feature was added to this study per the recommendation of Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) who stated that other social networking sites can be perceived as part of an organization's extended social networking presence.

Return Visits

25. Explicit invitation to return?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, text inviting users to return to the blog must be present on the blog.
 - Ex. "We hope you will return soon." or "Please return soon."
- Location: An invitation to return may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages.

26. Presence of regularly scheduled news forums?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, regularly scheduled news forums must be present on the blog.
- Location: News forums may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages.

27. Presence of FAQ or Q&A section?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, a FAQ or Q&A section must be present on the blog.
- Location: FAQ/Q&A sections generally have their own page on the blog and are linked from the link bar.

28. Invitation to follow the blog?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, an invitation to follow the blog must be present on the blog.

- Location: Invitations to follow are typically located on the bottom/side bar of a blog.
- Description: This invitation must be specific to following the blog. Following the organization on other social media outlets does not satisfy this requirement.
- Study: Previous dialogic studies coded for invitation to bookmark the blog. This study reasons that bookmarking and following are synonymous actions.

29. Links to external related websites?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, the blog must contain links to external related websites.
- Location: Links to external related websites may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages. It is common for this type of link to be part of the blog text but be differentiated by the use of a different text color.
- Description: These links should directly relate to the organization and the information on the blog. If links seem irrelevant and lead visitors permanently away from the blog this feature should not be coded as present.

30. Calendar of posts?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, a calendar of blog posts must be present on the blog.
- Location: A calendar of posts is typically located on the bottom/side bar of a blog.
- Description: A calendar of blog posts resembles a traditional calendar but clicking on a day displays all of the posts published on the blog that respective day.

- Study: Previous dialogic studies coded for a calendar of upcoming events. Due to the limited number of TOMS' events open to public participation, a calendar of posts, which includes events, news, and more, was appropriate for use in this study.

31. Downloadable information about the blog organization (TOMS)?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, downloadable information about the blog organization must be present on the blog.
- Location: Downloadable information may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages.

32. Opportunity to request information from the blog organization (TOMS)?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, opportunities to request information from the blog organization must be present on the blog.
- Location: Opportunities to request information may be present through the inclusion of organization contact information or opportunities to leave comments/replies. These features may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages.

33. Up-to-date news coverage of the blog organization (TOMS)?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, up-to-date/current news coverage of the blog organization must be linked to or present on the blog.
- Location: This feature can be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages.

Dialogic Loop

34. Option to send messages to the blog organization (TOMS) via email?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, information on how to send an email message to the blog organization must be present on the blog.
- Location: Email information may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages, but is typically a static feature contained with all other contact information.
- Study: Previous dialogic studies combined this feature with feature #35, opportunities to post comments. However, these features were separated in this study due to the different roles served by email communication and blog comments. While comments serve as a means for users to share thoughts and opinions and engage in discussion or conversation with each other, emails serve as a means for users to send messages directly to the organization.

35. Opportunity to post comments on the blog?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, opportunities for users to post comments on the blog must be present.
- Location: Comment boxes or “Leave a Reply” links are typically located at the bottom of each post directly below the last text or graphic.
- Study: Previous dialogic studies combined this feature with feature #34, option to send email messages. However, these features were separated in this study due to the different roles served by email communication and blog comments. Comments serve as a means for users to share thoughts and opinions and engage in discussion or conversation with each other, emails serve as a means for users to send messages directly to the organization.

36. Opportunity to vote on issues or complete a survey to voice an opinion?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, a voting ballot or a survey must be present on the blog and currently accepting responses.
- Location: Voting or survey features may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages.
- Description: This feature provides users the opportunity to interact with the blog and the organization by voting on issues or voicing an opinion. It is beneficial, but not dialogically required, for results from this feature to be displayed on the blog as well.
- Study: Previous dialogic studies coded voting on issues and surveys to voice an opinion separately. Due to the commercial nature of TOMS and the similarities between these two features, they were combined into one feature in this study.

37. Offers information through RSS/email subscription?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, the option to subscribe to the blog via email or RSS feed must be present on the blog.
- Location: An RSS/email subscription may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages, but is typically a static feature located on the bottom/side bar.
- Description: The RSS icon is a small orange square with a white dot in the bottom left corner and two white arcs increasing in size to the right of the dot. “RSS” is usually located next to the icon. Subscriptions via email or RSS feeds allow a user to receive information from the blog every time new information is added/posted.

- Study: Previous dialogic studies grouped this feature with regular information offered through timely updates (#38). To allow for more specificity, these features were separated in this study.

38. Offers regular information through timely updates (at least one post/month)?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, at least one post per calendar month must be present on the blog.
- Location: The post date (month, day, and year) is typically located next to the title or below the final text or graphic of each post.
- Description: Meeting this standard implies that the blog offers regular/current information and is updated timely and consistently.
- Study: Previous dialogic studies grouped this feature with email/RSS subscriptions (#37). To allow for more specificity, these features were separated in this study.

39. Last post published recently (within last 30 days)?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, the last (latest) post to the blog home page must have been published within 30 days prior to coding.
- Location: The post date (month, day, and year) is typically located next to or below the title or final text or graphic of each post.
- Description: Meeting this standard implies that the blog is current and information being communicated is up-to-date.

40. Invitation to share blog with others?

- Coding: To code this feature as present, an invitation to share the blog with others must be present on the blog.

- Location: An invitation to share with others may be located on the blog home page or one of its subpages, but is typically a static feature located on the bottom/side bar.
- Study: This feature is new to this dialogic study. It was added due to the frequency in which individuals in the blogosphere recommend or “share” blogs with others. This feature is related to other features such as; following the blog (#28), subscribing to the blog RSS feed (#37), and connecting to related social media profiles (#24).

APPENDIX C

HIGH DIALOGIC BLOG CODE SHEET

1 = Present - 0 = Absent

Ease of Interface

Archive List	1
Tag Cloud	1
Keyword Tags	1
Post Categories	1
Search Engine	1
Page Links	1
Appropriate Use of Graphics	1

Usefulness of Information

Press Releases	1
Speeches	1
Downloadable Graphics	0
Audio Components	1
Video Components	1
Viewpoints on Issues	1
Intended Audience	1
Mission Statement or Philosophy	1
Information on Becoming Affiliated	1
Information on Purchasing Products	1
Celebrity Spokespeople	1
Organization Logo	1

Conservation of Visitors

Easy to Find Information	1
Short Loading Time	1
Publication Dates Displayed	1
Link to Organization Website	1
Social Media Links or Invitations	1

Return Visits

Invitation to Return	1
News Forums	0
FAQ or Q&As	1
Invitation to Bookmark/Follow	1
Links to External Related Websites	1

Calendar of Posts	1
Downloadable Information	0
Opportunity to Request More Information	1
Press Coverage	1
Dialogic Loop	
Option to Send Email Messages	1
Opportunity to Post Comments	1
Opportunity to Vote on Issues or Complete Survey	1
RSS/Email Subscription	1
Posts Published Regularly	1
Last Post Published Recently	1
Invitation to Share	1
Score (Out of 40)	37

APPENDIX D

LOW DIALOGIC BLOG CODE SHEET

1 = Present - 0 = Absent

Ease of Interface

Archive List	0
Tag Cloud	0
Keyword Tags	0
Post Categories	1
Search Engine	1
Page Links	0
Appropriate Use of Graphics	0

Usefulness of Information

Press Releases	0
Speeches	0
Downloadable Graphics	0
Audio Components	0
Video Components	0
Viewpoints on Issues	0
Intended Audience	0
Mission Statement or Philosophy	0
Information on Becoming Affiliated	0
Information on Purchasing Products	0
Celebrity Spokespeople	0
Organization Logo	0

Conservation of Visitors

Easy to Find Information	0
Short Loading Time	1
Publication Dates Displayed	1
Link to Organization Website	0
Social Media Links or Invitations	0

Return Visits

Invitation to Return	0
News Forum	0
FAQ or Q&As	0
Invitation to Bookmark/Follow	1
Links to External Related Websites	0

Calendar of Posts	0
Downloadable Information	0
Opportunity to Request More Information	0
Press Coverage	0
Dialogic Loop	
Option to Send Email Messages	0
Opportunity to Post Comments	1
Opportunity to Vote on Issues or Complete Survey	0
RSS/Email Subscription	1
Posts Published Regularly	1
Last Post Published Recently	0
Invitation to Share	0
Score (Out of 40)	8

APPENDIX E

FACILITATION GUIDE

Set Up

1. Power up computers.
2. Sign into computers using UGA ID and password.
 - Computers do not automatically time-out or log-off after a given time period.
3. Check Internet connection.
4. Open one Firefox window (orange globe icon).
5. In the Firefox window, navigate to the appropriate website for the upcoming facilitation session. Downsize the window so that the desktop is displayed.
 - High Dialogic TOMS Blog: <http://blogfortoms.wordpress.com/>
 - Sign-in required.
 - Low Dialogic TOMS Blog: <http://blog4toms.wordpress.com/>
 - Sign-in required.
 - Control Cell Questionnaire: (Survey Monkey Control URL)
6. Make sure there are headphones plugged-in at all computer stations.
7. Place one consent form and one extra credit form at each computer.
8. Set snacks up in hallway.

Facilitating a Cell

1. As participants arrive:
 - Check each participant in using the sign-in sheet from Sign Up Genius.

- At check-in ask each participant to refrain from touching the computer until everyone has arrived and the study has begun.
 - Direct each participant to a computer.
2. When the session is scheduled to begin, welcome participants to the session:
- “Thank you for coming to this study. Please put your things aside. If you brought your cell phone, please make sure it is on silent. This study will take approximately 45 minutes.”
3. Direct participants to sign paper consent form:
- “Please be sure to read and accept the terms on the paper consent form that is set at your computer. It advises you of your rights as a participant and tells you a little about the purpose of this study and the research findings. There is a copy for you to keep for your records as well. If you will be receiving extra credit for your participation please make sure to legibly complete the extra credit form. I will be coming around to pick up the forms in just a minute. If you need a pen or have any questions please let me know.”
 - Pick-up consent forms as participants finish signing them.
 - Answer questions if there are any.
 - Provide pens as needed.
4. Direct all participants to maximize the blog that is downsized on the computer in the Firefox window:
- “Today you will be looking at an online blog. You will have 15 minutes to familiarize yourself with all aspects of the blog. Headphones are available at your computer if you would like to interact with an aspect of the blog that involves sound. Please do not talk

to other participants while surfing the blog. When time is up, I will direct you to stop surfing the blog and we will move on to the next portion of the study. Please click on the downsized Firefox window.”

- Skip this step for control sessions.
5. Begin timer and allow participants to explore the blog for 15 minutes.
 - Skip this step for the control sessions.
 6. At the end of the 15 minute exposure period, stop participants:
 - “Now we are going to move to the second phase of this study.”
 - Skip this step for the control sessions.
 7. Prepare participants for the questionnaire:
 - Treatment Sessions: “At this time I would like you to fill out a brief questionnaire based on your experience with the blog. This questionnaire has no right or wrong answers. Please take your time reading through the questions but answer with your gut feeling or initial reaction. Upon completion of the questionnaire you are dismissed. Snacks will be available in the hallway for your enjoyment. As I still have students who are scheduled to participate, please remember not to talk about your participation with anyone. I do not want others to be influenced before they participate. Thank you again for joining me today.”
 - Direct all participants to type the appropriate URL in the Firefox address bar:
 - “Please visit (Survey Monkey Low Dialogic - URL)” – Low Dialogic
 - “Please visit (Survey Monkey High Dialogic - URL)” – High Dialogic
 - Control Sessions: “At this time I would like you to fill out a brief questionnaire based on your perceptions of and previous experiences with blogs. This questionnaire has no

right or wrong answers. Please take your time reading through the questions but answer with your gut feeling or initial reaction. Upon completion of the questionnaire you are dismissed. Snacks will be available in the hallway for your enjoyment. As I still have students who are scheduled to participate, please remember not to talk about your participation with anyone. I do not want others to be influenced before they participate. Thank you again for joining me today.”

- Ask participants to maximize the Firefox window and begin.
- “Please maximize the Firefox window at the bottom of your computer screen and begin the questionnaire.”

8. Treatment questionnaires will conclude with debriefing.
 - If a participant selects “I Do Not Understand” they will be asked to see the researcher for a more detailed explanation of the manipulation.
 - Following the debriefing, participants have the right to have their data removed from the study. They will be prompted to see the researcher if they wish to exercise this right.
9. When all participants in a session are finished, prepare for the next session by completing set-up steps 1 through 8.
10. At the end of each day, quit Firefox, log out, and power down each computer.

General Rules and Things to Know

- Attempt not to disturb other students working in the lab.
- If a participant arrives early for a session, politely ask him or her to wait outside until the current session is finished. This will prevent the future participant from hearing the about the study and the different manipulations.

- Re-set all computers before letting a new group of participants into the lab.
- Do not let participants talk to each other while they are surfing the blog or answering the questionnaire. If they start to talk, say, “Please remember to be quiet as to not disturb others.”
- Do not reveal that there are different cells in the study.
- Do not leave the lab or computers unattended for any reason. Serve snacks after each session so that participants do not have food and drinks near the computers.

Recruiting Instructions

1. Arrive at class a few minutes early.
2. Introduce yourself to the instructor.
3. When prompted, read the script:
 - “Hi. My name is Megan. I am a graduate student in Grady College and I am conducting a research study that I would love for you to participate in. The study will include a brief interaction with media material and the completion of a brief questionnaire. It will take 45 minutes at most. There is only room for 15 participants per session and sign-ups are first come, first serve. To sign up please visit (Sign-Up Genius URL). Please make sure you write down the day and time that you agree to participate. All sessions will take place in Grady New Media Institute Lab 403C. We can not start until everyone has arrived for the session, so please be on time. As an exciting incentive I will be serving some delicious snacks! Please plan to join me before, after, or in-between classes. I would greatly appreciate your participation! Thanks for your time!”

APPENDIX F
TREATMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Blog Writing

1. Do you write a blog? (Skip Logic)

- Yes
 No

2. Do you blog for personal or professional reasons?

- Personal
 Professional
 Both
 Neither

3. On average, how many minutes do you spend writing a blog per week?

Blog Reading

1. Do you read blogs? (Skip Logic)

- Yes
 No

2. Do you read blogs for personal or professional reasons?

- Personal
 Professional
 Both
 Neither

3. On average, how many minutes do you spend reading blogs per week?

TOMS Awareness

1. Are you aware of TOMS? (Skip Logic)

Yes

No

TOMS Involvement

1. How would you rate your familiarity with TOMS?

Very Familiar

Familiar

Neutral

Unfamiliar

Very Unfamiliar

2. How many pairs of TOMS shoes do you own?

Dialogic Principle Experience

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral/No Opinion - Disagree - Strongly Disagree

Dialogic Loop (DPE)

1. TOMS Blog is interactive.
2. TOMS Blog communicates with visitors.
3. TOMS Blog provided opportunities for me to communicate with TOMS.

Usefulness of Information (DPE)

1. The information provided on TOMS Blog is useful to visitors.
2. The information provided on TOMS Blog is useful to me.
3. The information provided on TOMS Blog is purposeful.
4. The information provided on TOMS Blog is interesting.
5. The information provided on TOMS Blog is informative.
6. The information provided on TOMS Blog is not valuable. (RC)

Return Visits (DPE)

1. TOMS Blog is attractive for repeat visits.
2. TOMS Blog is up to date.
3. TOMS Blog contains interactive elements.

Ease of Interface (DPE)

1. TOMS Blog is easy to navigate.
2. TOMS Blog is not well organized. (RC)
3. TOMS Blog made it easy for me to find information pertaining to my individual needs.
4. TOMS Blog displays information in a logical structure.
5. My experience with TOMS Blog was positive because of its interface.

Conservation of Visitors (DPE)

1. I felt encouraged to stay on TOMS Blog.
2. Visiting TOMS Blog was a valuable use of my time.
3. TOMS Blog contained links that led me away from aspects related to TOMS. (RC)

Dialogic Feature Importance

Pertaining to the blog you just surfed, how important are the following features?

Not Important - Somewhat Important - Neutral/No Opinion - Important - Very Important

Dialogic Loop (DFI)

1. Option to Send Email Messages
2. Opportunity to Post Comments
3. Opportunity to Vote on Issues or Complete Survey
4. RSS/Email Subscription
5. Posts Published Regularly
6. Last Post Published Recently
7. Invitation to Share with Others

Usefulness of Information (DFI)

1. Press Releases
2. Speeches
3. Downloadable Graphics
4. Audio Components
5. Video Components
6. Viewpoint on Issues
7. Information on Intended Audience
8. Mission Statement/Philosophy
9. Information on How to Become Affiliated
10. Information on How to Purchase Products
11. Endorsements by Celebrity Spokespeople
12. Organization Logo

Return Visits (DFI)

1. Invitation to Return
2. Information on News Forums
3. FAQ or Q&A
4. Invitation to Bookmark or Follow
5. Links to External Related Websites
6. Calendar of Posts
7. Information that can be Downloaded
8. Opportunity to Request More Information
9. Organization Press Coverage

Ease of Interface (DFI)

1. Archive List
2. Tag Cloud
3. Keyword Tags
4. Post Categories
5. Search Engine
6. Links to Blog Pages
7. Use of Graphics

Conservation of Visitors (DFI)

1. Information that is Easy to Find
2. Short Loading Time
3. Post Publication Dates Displayed
4. Link to Organization Website
5. Invitation or Links to Organization Social Media Profiles

Relationship Management

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about TOMS.

Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral/No Opinion - Disagree - Strongly Disagree

TOMS... (Dialogue)

1. Invites visitors into conversation.
2. Is open to dialogue.
3. Communicates in a conversational style.

TOMS... (Conversational Human Voice)

1. Communicates in a human voice.
2. Is interesting in conversation.
3. Uses a sense of humor in communication.
4. Provides connections to competitors.
5. Makes communication un-enjoyable. (RC)

TOMS... (Responsiveness to Criticism)

1. Admits mistakes.
2. Provides prompt/uncritical feedback when addressing criticism.

TOMS... (Communicated Relational Commitment)

1. Treats visitors as humans.
2. Demonstrates a commitment to maintaining a relationship with visitors.
3. Communicates a desire to build a relationship with visitors.
4. Stresses a commitment to visitors.
5. Implies a long-term relationship with visitors.

TOMS... (Task Sharing)

1. Discusses the nature of the organization.
2. Emphasizes relationship quality.
3. Performs organizational responsibilities.
4. Directly addresses organizational responsibilities.
5. Avoids duties. (RC)

TOMS... (Responsive/Customer Service)

1. Accepts visitor feedback/comments.
2. Accepts visitor emails.
3. Positively addresses complaints or queries.

TOMS... (Positivity/Optimism)

1. Expresses cheer and optimism about the future.
2. Uses a positive/optimistic tone.

Issue Involvement

1. Based on your experience with TOMS Blog, how do you feel that your interest in the issue of children without shoes has changed?

- No Change
- Changed A Little
- Neutral/No Opinion
- Changed
- Changed A Lot

2. Based on your experience with TOMS Blog, how likely will you pay attention to future news coverage of the issue of children without shoes?

- Not Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Neutral/No Opinion
- Likely
- Very Likely

3. Based on your experience with TOMS Blog, how actively will you follow the issue of children without shoes in the future?

- Not Actively
- Somewhat Actively
- Neutral/No Opinion
- Actively
- Very Actively

4. Based on your experience with TOMS Blog, what is the likelihood that you will discuss the issue of children without shoes with your parents or friends in the future?

- Not Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Neutral/No Opinion
- Likely
- Very Likely

5. Based on your experience with TOMS Blog, how involved with the issue of children without shoes will you be in the future?

- Not Involved
- Somewhat Involved
- Neutral/No Opinion
- Involved
- Very Involved

Manipulation Check

1. The blog that you just interacted with contained a variety of media such as pictures, video, and audio?

Yes

No

2. The blog that you just interacted with contained information on how to become affiliated with TOMS?

Yes

No

3. The blog that you just interacted with contained important information on the TOMS movement?

Yes

No

4. The blog that you just interacted with asked for your opinion?

Yes

No

Demographics

1. What is your age?

2. What is your gender?

Male

Female

3. What is your major/area of study?

4. What is your UGA classification?

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Graduate Student

None of the Above

Debriefing

The blog used in this study was created by the researcher for the purpose of this study. It was not created or endorsed by TOMS in any way. Please select your level of understanding with this statement.

I Understand

I Do Not Understand

Follow Up Page: If you selected “I Do Not Understand” please see the researcher for a more detailed explanation of the manipulation. If being aware of the manipulation makes you uncomfortable you have the right to have your data removed from the study. Please see the researcher to exercise this right.

APPENDIX G

CONTROL QUESTIONNAIRE

Blog Writing

1. Do you write a blog? (Skip Logic)

- Yes
 No

2. Do you blog for personal or professional reasons?

- Personal
 Professional
 Both
 Neither

3. On average, how many minutes do you spend writing a blog per week?

Blog Reading

1. Do you read blogs? (Skip Logic)

- Yes
 No

2. Do you read blogs for personal or professional reasons?

- Personal
 Professional
 Both
 Neither

3. On average, how many minutes do you spend reading blogs per week?

Dialogic Principle Experience

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Neutral/No Opinion - Agree - Strongly Agree

Dialogic Loop (DPE)

1. Blogs are interactive.
2. Blogs communicate with visitors.
3. Blog provide opportunities for me to communicate with the sponsoring organization.

Usefulness of Information (DPE)

1. The information provided on blogs is useful to visitors.
2. The information provided on blogs is useful to me.
3. The information provided on blogs is purposeful.
4. The information provided on blogs is interesting.
5. The information provided on blogs is informative.
6. The information provided on blogs is not valuable. (RC)

Return Visits (DPE)

1. Blogs are attractive for repeat visits.
2. Blogs are up to date.
3. Blogs contain interactive elements.

Ease of Interface (DPE)

1. Blogs are easy to navigate.
2. Blogs are not well organized. (RC)
3. Blogs make it easy for me to find information pertaining to my individual needs.
4. Blogs display information in a logical structure.
5. My experiences with blogs are positive because of their interface.

Conservation of Visitors (DPE)

1. I feel encouraged to stay on blogs.
2. Visiting blogs is a valuable use of my time.
3. Blogs contain links that lead me away from aspects related to the sponsoring organization.
(RC)

Dialogic Feature Importance

How important are the following features to blogs?

Not Important - Somewhat Important - Neutral/No Opinion - Important - Very Important

Dialogic Loop (DFI)

1. Option to Send Email Messages
2. Opportunity to Post Comments
3. Opportunity to Vote on Issues or Complete Survey
4. RSS/Email Subscription
5. Posts Published Regularly
6. Last Post Published Recently
7. Invitation to Share with Others

Usefulness of Information (DFI)

1. Press Releases
2. Speeches
3. Downloadable Graphics
4. Audio Components
5. Video Components
6. Viewpoint on Issues
7. Information on Intended Audience
8. Mission Statement/Philosophy
9. Information on How to Become Affiliated
10. Information on How to Purchase Products
11. Endorsements by Celebrity Spokespeople
12. Organization Logo

Return Visits (DFI)

1. Invitation to Return
2. Information on News Forums
3. FAQ or Q&A
4. Invitation to Bookmark or Follow
5. Links to External Related Websites
6. Calendar of Posts
7. Information that can be Downloaded
8. Opportunity to Request More Information
9. Organization Press Coverage

Ease of Interface (DFI)

1. Archive List
2. Tag Cloud
3. Keyword Tags
4. Post Categories
5. Search Engine
6. Links to Blog Pages
7. Use of Graphics

Conservation of Visitors (DFI)

1. Information that is Easy to Find
2. Short Loading Time
3. Post Publication Dates Displayed
4. Link to Organization Website
5. Invitation or Links to Organization Social Media Profiles

TOMS Awareness

TOMS is a shoe company based on a one for one movement. For every pair of shoes purchased TOMS gives a pair to a child in need.

1. Are you aware of TOMS? (Skip Logic)

Yes

No

TOMS Involvement

1. How would you rate your familiarity with TOMS?

Very Familiar

Familiar

Neutral

Unfamiliar

Very Unfamiliar

2. How many pairs of TOMS shoes do you own?

Relationship Management

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about TOMS.

Strongly Agree - Agree - Neutral/No Opinion - Disagree - Strongly Disagree

TOMS...(Dialogue)

1. Invites visitors into conversation.
2. Is open to dialogue.
3. Communicates in a conversational style.

TOMS...(Conversational Human Voice)

1. Communicates in a human voice.
2. Is interesting in conversation.
3. Uses a sense of humor in communication.
4. Provides connections to competitors.
5. Makes communication un-enjoyable. (RC)

TOMS...(Responsiveness to Criticism)

1. Admits mistakes.
2. Provides prompt/uncritical feedback when addressing criticism.

TOMS...(Communicated Relational Commitment)

1. Treats visitors as humans.
2. Demonstrates a commitment to maintaining a relationship with visitors.
3. Communicates a desire to build a relationship with visitors.
4. Stresses a commitment to visitors.
5. Implies a long-term relationship with visitors.

TOMS...(Task Sharing)

1. Discusses the nature of the organization.
2. Emphasizes relationship quality.
3. Performs organizational responsibilities.
4. Directly addresses organizational responsibilities.
5. Avoids duties. (RC)

TOMS...(Responsiveness/Customer Service)

1. Accepts visitor feedback/comments.
2. Accepts visitor emails.
3. Positively addresses complaints or queries.

TOMS...(Positivity/Optimism)

1. Expresses cheer and optimism about the future.
2. Uses a positive/optimistic tone.

Issue Involvement

1. How do you feel that your interest in the issue of children without shoes has changed?

- No Change
- Changed A Little
- Neutral/No Opinion
- Changed
- Changed A Lot

2. How likely will you pay attention to future news coverage of the issue of children without shoes?

- Not Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Neutral/No Opinion
- Likely
- Very Likely

3. How actively will you follow the issue of children without shoes in the future?

- Not Actively
- Somewhat Actively
- Neutral/No Opinion
- Actively
- Very Actively

4. What is the likelihood that you will discuss the issue of children without shoes with your parents or friends in the future?

- Not Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Neutral/No Opinion
- Likely
- Very Likely

5. How involved with the issue of children without shoes will you be in the future?

- Not Involved
- Somewhat Involved
- Neutral/No Opinion
- Involved
- Very Involved

Demographics

1. What is your age?

2. What is your gender?

Male

Female

3. What is your major/area of study?

4. What is your UGA classification?

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Graduate Student

None of the Above

APPENDIX H
CONSENT FORM

Study and Sponsors: I, _____, agree to participate in the research study titled "Blog Questionnaire" conducted by Megan Ward, Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Georgia under the direction of Dr. Kaye Sweetser, Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Georgia (706-542-2409).

Participation: I understand that I must be 18 years old to participate and that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. Any questions that I do not wish to answer may be skipped. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed. In order to make this study valid, some information about my participation may be withheld until after the study.

Actions and Time: This study examines student awareness of and involvement with blogs. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I may be asked to do the following:

- 1) Engage with an online blog provided by the researcher.
- 2) Complete an online questionnaire regarding my familiarity, perceptions, and feelings toward blogs and/or the provided blog.
- 3) Answer basic demographic questions.

The study should take approximately 45 minutes to complete and no future participation will be requested or required.

Benefits and Risks: There are no direct benefits for participating in this study, but my assistance will contribute to advancing the knowledge of blog use as a business tool. If offered, I may receive

bonus/extra credit from course instructor(s), however, the extra credit provided will not exceed 1% of my total grade for the course(s). Individuals who decide to not take part in the study can discuss alternate procedures for receiving extra credit with their instructor(s). The researcher does not foresee any risks associated with participating in this study, nor is any discomfort or stress expected.

Confidentiality: Internet communications are insecure, and there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to the technology itself. However, upon receipt of data, the researcher will keep information confidential. No individually-identifiable information about me, or provided by me, will be shared with others. Only aggregate data from all participants will be analyzed.

Questions: The researcher will answer any questions about the research now, or during the course of the project, and can be reached at the email address below.

Agreement: My signature below indicates that the researcher has answered all of my questions to my satisfaction and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form for my records.

Researcher: Megan Ward

Email: viviendo@uga.edu

Signature _____ Date _____

Principle Investigator: Kaye Sweetser

Email: sweetser@uga.edu

Signature _____ Date _____

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

IRB Contact: Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 629 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602; (706) 542-3199; IRB@uga.edu.

APPENDIX I

EXTRA CREDIT FORM

If you are receiving extra credit for your participation please print your name and the name(s) of the instructor(s) providing the extra credit (this is optional).

Your Name (Print):

Instructor(s) Name(s):
