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Examining Endorsement and Viewership Effects on the Source Credibility of YouTubers

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Examining Endorsement and Viewership Effects on the Source Credibility of YouTubers

by

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ABSTRACT

The growth of YouTube has resulted in the industrialization of a platform that redefines mainstream success. Success measures such as endorsements and viewership are serving as motivational factors for YouTubers. YouTubers and brands want more views, but are those motivations effecting perception? While much research has focused on the effects that YouTube has on the *brand,* this study focuses on the effects that the brand has on the *YouTuber*. It also determines whether viewership affects YouTuber perception and whether it's a success measure worth using. Using the constructs of the source credibility theory, this study assessed the main effect of brand endorsement and viewership on perceived expertise and trustworthiness of YouTubers. After conducting an online experiment, findings suggest that non-brand endorsed YouTubers possess higher-rated expertise and trustworthiness. While viewership did not make a difference in perceived expertise, it did result in higher-rated trustworthiness when a YouTuber possesses lower viewership.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

YouTube is transforming into a platform that is blurring the lines between informational and aspirational use. YouTube is a multimedia sharing site that allows users to upload, share and view videos. It encourages interaction through comments, thumbs-up and thumbs-down ratings, and through conversation via video dissemination. While the rise and success of Facebook and Twitter offer tailored communication, YouTube's "hyper-growth" proves that personalized media is prospering through video content. Consequently, what was once a YouTube cult phenomenon is now becoming an absolute mainstream (Neary, 2006; Jones, 2010).

YouTube's slogan, "Broadcast Yourself," turns traditional media on its head, reaching more U.S. adults from ages 18 to 34 than any cable network according to Nielsen (as cited in "Statistics," 2014). Vlogs (video blogs), music videos and commercials use YouTube as a hub for content, creativity and performance (Burgess & Green, 2009). YouTube has given rise toward a new generation of communicators – Generation Connected, or "Gen C". This generation, mainly between the ages of 18 to 34, thrives on their voices being heard on the same playing field of digital influencers and brands. Because they are superior communicators, they value content, media communication and the power of creation (Lieber, 2014).

After its first five years, YouTube received more than 2 billion views per day (YouTube, 2010). Now, more than 100 hours of video are uploaded onto YouTube every minute. What begins with a click becomes a shared experience. With more than one billion viewers, the

YouTube community allows content creators to be born, talent to be discovered, and voices to be heard like never before. YouTube encourages transparency, relatability and engagement unlike any other social media outlet, shaping public opinion, attitude and sentiment through popular user-generated videos (Borghol, 2008; Kiss, 2006). Users who subscribe to their favorite YouTube channels are the first to be notified of new content and in 2014, YouTube reported that "the number of people subscribing daily has tripled since last year" ("Statistics," 2014).

Beauty YouTube, Michelle Phan, started her once humble channel in the comfort of her own home with a far-from-perfect webcam. Since then, Phan has secured more than a billion views on YouTube and more than seven million subscribers. She has secured brand deals from Lancôme to Dr. Pepper, launched a cosmetics line with L'Oreal, spearheaded an e-commerce beauty startup, and published a self-help book (Bowles, 2014). Given her popularity, high views, partnerships and media exposure, she has become one of the biggest YouTube starlets and that's just one of the many success stories that have generated from YouTube.

Because of the heightened presence of social media as a marketing communication platform, phenomena like e-word of mouth (eWOM), buzz marketing and viral advertising have emerged. Every marketer seeking to reach their niche audiences through social media seeks the outcome of viral advertising. Viral is initiated by marketers through eWOM strategies designed to be spread by consumers (Golan & Porter, 2006). Viral videos on YouTube, which contain content that "feels 'discovered', 'original', 'fresh', and that arrives with the serendipitous feel of the spontaneous," are often considered to be user-generated content (UGC), the online material produced when users express themselves and communicate with others online (Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, & Kelly, 2009, p. 201). UGC is now professionally-produced and further increasing the institutionalization of YouTube. In addition, the infusion of traditional media

elements, such as paid advertising spots, brand endorsements, viewership, ratings, copyright and the legally-managed distribution of content, are making YouTube "a stepping stone to mainstream media" (Kim, 2013, p. 54-55). In fact, YouTubers have become rising stars in mainstream media, proving that one does not have to be a celebrity in order to be famous (Burns, 2009).

Khatri (2006) states that "endorsement celebrities usually lend their names to advertisements for product or services for which they may or may not be the experts" (as cited in Kansu & Mamuti, 2013, p. 677). Celebrity endorsement has proven to be a popular in marketing and communication for consumer products that helps build brand image (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta 2010; Byrne et al., 2003).

1.1: Problem & Purpose of Study

It is clear that people are using videos disseminated by YouTubers as an alternative source for information and YouTubers are monetizing that information (Tolson, 2010). Given these newfound motivations, is the source credibility of YouTubers being compromised as they gain popularity? And are YouTubers creating videos to engage with audiences and express themselves, or are other economic motives involved? One could argue that success measures like viewership and endorsement can add to the credibility of YouTubers. However, one could also argue that the more endorsement and viewership that a YouTuber receives, the more skeptical viewers will be. These mainstream influences that are being infused into YouTube are pivotal in determining the effects of source credibility. On the endorsement side, much research has focused on the effects that YouTube has on the *brand*. Instead of focusing on how YouTubers affect the brand, the current study focuses on the effects that the brand has on the *YouTuber*.

Using the constructs of the source credibility theory, this study will assess the main effect of brand endorsement as an independent variable on the perceived expertise and trustworthiness of YouTubers.

Additionally, the current study will examine the main effect of viewership on the perceived expertise and trustworthiness of YouTubers. Although there is empirical research on various video elements and its effects on perception, including Harris and Rae's (2009) findings on influence through comments and Mir and Rehman's (2013) findings on influence through quantity of posts, views and reviews, little research has honed in on the most dramatic element – viewership. Miller (2010) suggests that is the most sought-after success measure and yet existing research does not take it solely into consideration. Instead, many researchers have bundled it together with comments, shares, subscriptions and ratings. While all of those components are important, they portray very different qualities of a video and require unique attention separately. Because viewership represents popularity and monetization justification, it will be one of the independent variables of this study.

Finally, this study will examine the interaction effect between endorsement and viewership and how they work together to effect a YouTubers source credibility. If proven significant, the findings will determine at what point both factors produce the highest perceived expertise and the highest perceived trustworthiness. The rationale for determining the interaction effect stems from Lieber's (2014) research on several YouTubers with varying influential factors. In some cases, YouTubers with no endorsements and lower viewership had more influence than the more successful YouTubers. Determining the interaction effect will help determine if there is an ideal scenario for YouTubers who seek the utmost influence.

This study carries importance for both marketers and YouTubers. From a marketer's perspective, this study dissects how consumers are absorbing consumer-generated messages. Additionally, it seeks to understand if viewership effects perception in which case marketers should us as a re-evaluation tool when determining success measures for potential brand ambassadors. From a YouTubers perspective, this study provides insight into the implications of endorsements on their image, reputation and threat of losing viewer trust.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

YouTube has the strongest influence due to its culture of self-promotion, especially when compared to brand-related and user-generated content across Facebook and Twitter (Fischer, Smith, & Yongjian, 2012). Self-promotion stems from consumers commonly using "possessions, brands, and other symbols to construct their images in both offline and online contexts" (Belk, 1988; Fischer, Smith, & Yongjian, 2012, p. 104; Schau & Gilly, 2003).

The staggering growth of social media has been so profound that it continues to be a focal point for businesses around the world. Resources and investments are being put into social media because of the personalized and controllable content that allows businesses to easily conduct activities on a global level (Durbhakula & Kim, 2011). Furthermore, social media has opened a platform for brands to have relationships with their consumers. Brands use social media to build those relationships and make them stronger (Faulds & Mangold, 2009). And with UGC beginning to exceed brand-produced content in the digital space, marketers are taking notice (Fischer, Smith, & Yongjian, 2012).

2.1: Endorsing Digital Influencers

Brands that seek to reach their niche consumer resort to online video because it offers the brand capacity of television with the interactivity of the internet (Hayes & King, 2014). Over the

years, brands have become personified by their consumers. This has allowed consumer-brand relationships to blossom because of the self-expression that is reciprocated from the brand (Bourdieu, 1984). Once consumer-brand relationship is strong enough, brand trust, loyalty and commitment is strengthened as well (Hess & Story, 2005). Mangold and Faulds (2009) found that consumers perceive social media to be more trustworthy than traditional media in regards to disseminating brand information. Consequently, social media has revolutionized a consumer's purchase decision. It's allowed consumers to research a purchase before it made by consulting with a variety of sites that offer reviews and user-generated information. This ultimately helps a consumer make the best decision with the least amount of risk (Reigner, 2007; MacKinnon, 2012).

With the advance of technology and social media, consumer-generated advertising (CGA), or consumer-created brand messaging, has become a phenomenon among marketers and advertisers looking for way to reach consumers differently, but with the same intent as traditional advertising (Ertimur & Gilly, 2011). Due to its authentic nature, CGA has emerged as a successful marketing tactic. For example, Frito-Lay won awards for its Doritos CGA campaigns, making it the most successful marketing initiative in the brand's history. CGAs are consistently the most watched, most memorable and most-often-talked-about ads in the media, and the brands they represent continue to rack up accolades that generate the most positive sentiment. (Brunel, Fournier & Lawrence, 2013).

CGA creators have the ability to engage with their audiences and create personal connections, something that a traditional advertisement cannot do. However, CGAs have shown some backlash with brands and CGA creators as well. As CGA becomes more popular, consumers are more susceptive to the creator's intention. "Critics argue that, as the practice

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matures, the creator's status as a nonprofessional, everyday consumer becomes clouded by motives for professional advancement or profit, weakening CGA authenticity in kind" (Brunel, Fournier & Lawrence, 2013, p. 3).

Some researchers say that CGA is trustworthy and effective (Muniz & Schau, 2007), while some suggest it is critically-evaluated by consumers (Ertimur & Gilly, 2011). According to Thomaselli (2010), the more a company is involved with CGA, the less credible the creator of the CGA becomes. Although marketers are jumping on the CGA bandwagon due to some success stories and support via advertising rankings, there is very little empirical evidence on its consequences for the creators, specifically perceived expertise and trustworthiness.

"People are using YouTube not only for entertainment, but also as an alternative source of instruction. Consequently, YouTubers are blurring the lines between ordinary people and media people, and are being sought after as brand endorsers, similar to how celebrities are treated" (Tolson, 2010, p. 278). The benefits of traditional celebrity endorsements include enhanced consumer attention, increased brand recognition, improved financial value of a brand, and generation of more positive word-of-mouth. Furthermore, endorsements allow companies to better develop an identity or personality (Carrillat, 2013).Celebrities play a pivotal role in consumer self-identification in advertising.

> "Advertising is regarded as a form of social communication that reflects the cultural
> values of a society (Khairullah, 1995). Hong and Zinkhan (1987) state that cultural
> values, norms and characteristics are embedded in advertisements in such a way that
> viewers can find similarity between themselves and the characters in the advertisements"
> (as cited in Krampf & Ueltschy, 1997, p. 88).

These "characters" are no longer limited to the traditional celebrity. Although consumers admire celebrities, there is not a personal relationship attached to that admiration. The celebrity is merely an ideal to strive toward. On the other hand, a YouTuber can be like a relatable friend.

Consumers are skeptical to traditional advertising because the original source of the message comes from a brand that is intending to persuade people to buy its products (Calfee & Ringold, 1994). Tolson (2010) found that consumers are identifying more with YouTube celebrities than traditional celebrities because of their "conversational tone, interaction via comments, and production transparency, making them obvious choices for product endorsements" (p. 282). Typically, producer-generated content is consumed with skepticism and cynicism because they usually depict the positive aspects of products for the sake of preserving commercial interest. Because YouTubers are more likely to communicate positive and negative experiences about products, consumers tend to trust user-generated content over producer-generated content. This is assuming that the YouTuber is sharing their beliefs in full disclosure and without economically-driven intentions (Cheong & Morrison, 2008; MacKinnon, 2012).

Oftentimes, the expertise of celebrities in traditional media is questioned based on products they publicly endorse. Now that some YouTubers are mirroring the path of traditional celebrities, their intentions may be questioned as well. What was once a distorted webcam conversation is now a fully-produced video with a strategic agenda, making the YouTube a serious profession (Lieber, 2013).

Motivation is a key factor in determining how receptive a consumer is to consumer-generated advertising (CGA). Credibility, authenticity, expertise and trustworthiness are all compromised if the creator's motivation is led by self-promotion of economic purposes (Campbell, 2008; Eagly, Eood & Chaiken, 1978).

As YouTubers continue to gain popularity, endorsements and other monetary gains, motivations are questioned. In 2007, content creators started seeing dollar sign potential in YouTube when the YouTube Partner Program introduced the monetization of content. The program allowed creators to make money off of their content by including advertisements before, after and during their videos ("What is…," n.d.).

Now, more than a million YouTubers are part of the YouTube Partner Program and thousands are making six figures from it ("Statistics,"n.d.). Those six figures still do not account for the additional brand deals and partnerships most YouTubers possess with other businesses.

2.3: Viewership as a Measure of YouTube Success

YouTubers have become digital influencers (Lieber, 2014). Their views are displayed on the right corner of every YouTube video and considered to be a success measure. Views are what help YouTubers monetize their videos and, therefore, make it the driving force in creating content that attracts and ultimately sells. According to SlateScore, YouTubers are making $1,300 to $54,000 monthly through YouTube's Partner program, and that's not including any brand endorsements the YouTubers secure (Ives, 2015). However, is it fair to suggest that the highest-viewed YouTubers are the only ones making noise as influencers? Miller (2010) suggests that viewership can be controversial in the YouTube arena, especially when it seems to be the most sought-after success measure.

Although subscriptions "represent a stable user base, one that has shown active interest and engage[ment] with the show or creators", the validity of it takes a back seat when compared to the more dramatic view counts. Only small percentages of views come directly from subscribers. According to Ben Relles, executive producer for *Barely Political/Barely Digital*,

"Our show 'The Key of Awesome' has been viewed over 250 million times this year, and less than 20 percent of that came from subscribers. The rest came from viewer discovery like search, 'viral' sharing, and blogs embedding our videos" (Miller, 2010).

The key in success measures include active engagement on a regular basis, and that is what is in question for mega-stars like Michelle Phan. Famous faces are pushing through with advertising campaigns and brand deals, but there are still over 45,000 non-brand-affiliated beauty vloggers on YouTube garnering fewer views (Lieber, 2014). The "middle class" on YouTube, who secure an average of 200,000 subscribers, can still be as influential as YouTube giants (Bowles, 2014; Lieber, 2014). For example, Casey Holmes has more than 728,000 subscribers, but still manages to have a higher subscriber-viewer ratio than Ingrid Nilson, or Miss Glamorazzi, one of YouTube's most successful beauty gurus.

It's natural to assume that the more famous one gets, the less "real", or relatable, they become. YouTuber Missy Lynn states:

> "I like to be as real as possible. I like them to feel like I'm their sister or cousin. They see us as celebrities, but that is not the way I want to go. I want them to know that I'm human, that I have flaws, and I want to be relatable, which is why I still film in my bedroom and haven't upgraded to a studio. I want them to feel like we're having a sleepover" (as citied in Lieber, 2014).

Michelle Phan, Ingrid Nilson and many others have upgraded to professional studios, top-notch video editing and strategic agendas. On YouTube, relatability - arguably trustworthiness under the source credibility model - falls through the cracks at the point of perfection and uber-professionalism. Viewers want to self-identify with these YouTubers, but they may struggle to relate.

2.4: Source Credibility Theory

The origin of utilizing celebrities in testimonial advertising came from choosing spokespeople who were closely related to the not only the product, but also the target audience (Miller, 1989). Ohanian (1990) noticed a trend in choosing actors/actresses, athletes and other celebrities as these spokespeople.

The source credibility theory (Ohanian, 1991) helps explain the criteria for this phenomenon. The model proposes three components that determine believability in a brand ambassador, in this case a YouTuber: expertise regarding the product, trustworthiness as a person, and physical attractiveness. The more a communicator fits these criteria, the more likely they are to positively affect purchase intent, and vice versa.

Researchers have been studying source credibility since the 1960s, with measurable scales including safety, qualification, dynamism, expertise, attractiveness, trustworthiness, likeability, objectivity and more. Ohanian (1990) noticed the inconsistencies in the measureable scales of source credibility and built a study that lead the way to a tri-component construct that provided a reliable and valid scale for the source credibility theory.

Source credibility indicates the positive attributes that affect a receiver, or a consumer's, acceptance of a particular message (Ohanian, 1990). The theory originated from two models – the source-credibility model and the source-attractiveness model. The source-credibility model suggests that two factors, expertness and trustworthiness, are the pillars to source credibility (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953). The source-attractiveness model suggests that familiarity, likability, similarity and attractiveness are what produce an effective message (McGuire, 1985).

Ohanian (1990) fuses those two models and using trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness as dimensions for the source credibility theory (see Figure 1).
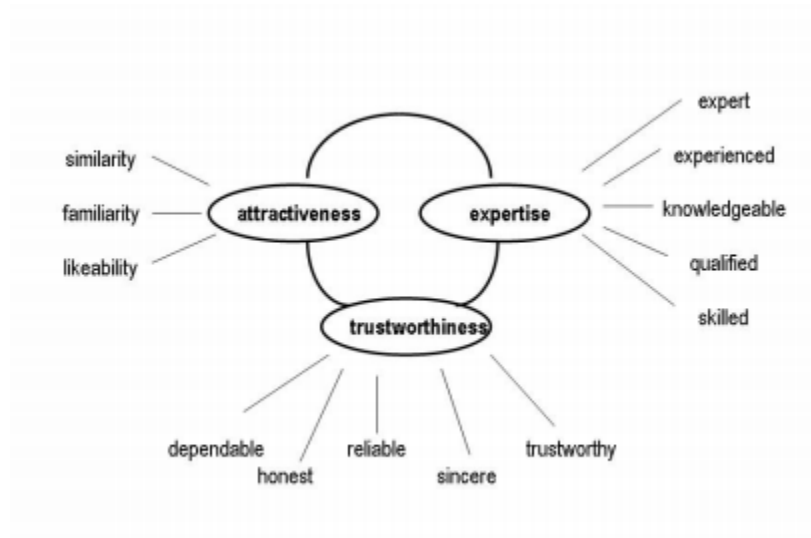
Figure 1: The Source Credibility Model
Source: Canning, L. E. (2005). Celebrity endorsement in business markets. In 22nd IMP Conference, Italy.

Trustworthiness is "the listener's degree of confidence in, and level of acceptance of, the speaker and the message" (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41). Several studies have proven that trustworthiness is directly correlated with persuasion and message effectiveness. Miller and Baseheart (1969) found that the more trustworthy a communicator is, the more effective their opinion will be to the receiver of that message.

Trustworthiness and transparency work hand in hand. Honesty, integrity, and believability are core characteristics in a good endorser. A large part of trustworthiness lies in the likeability of the endorser (Loggerenberg, Waldt & Wehmeyer, 2009). The culture of YouTube allows users to be transparent with vlogging, face-to-face production set ups, and interactive conversation.

Expertise is also known as the authority, competence and qualification a communicator possesses (Ohanian, 1990). Much research has proven that the more credible a person is, the more behaviorally compliant the receiver of that message will be (Ross, 1973). The theory suggests that endorsers are perceived as experts who have sufficient knowledge in a particular area of interest, in this case, beauty. It explains how consumers are persuaded based on the overall perceived credibility, regardless of format. As long as viewers perceive that the YouTuber has knowledge about the product, the YouTuber is considered an expert (Haig, Lowry, & Wilson, 2013; Loggerenberg, Waldt & Wehmeyer, 2009). However, Ohanian (1990) stresses that "highly credible sources are not always more effective than less-credible ones" (p. 42).

Attractiveness is another dimension that plays an important role in the initial judgment of the communicator (Baker & Churchill, 1977). Attractiveness has been defined by many researchers as chicness, sexuality and likability (Mills & Aronson, 1965; Steadman, 1969; Maddux & Rogers, 1980). Joseph (1982) concluded that attractive communicators are "consistently liked more and have more positive impact" than less attractive communicators (p.42). Several other researchers have agreed with those findings, reporting that attractiveness enhances positive attitudes (Simon, Berkowitz & Moyer, 1970; Kahle & Homer, 1985). According to Loggerenberg, Waldt & Wehmeyer (2009), "endorsers who are perceived to be attractive are more likely to lead tof purchase aspiration." Given the nature of the cosmetics industry, beauty and attractiveness continue to be significant factors in selection of endorsers and spokespeople.

Ultimately, YouTubers with higher viewership and brand endorsements can be seen as celebrities in this arena, but are their opinions skewed based on those partnerships and brand deals? Furthermore, can their source credibility be skewed because of it?

2.5: Present Study

Previous research has focused on the effects that social media have on the *brand* (Brunel, F., Fournier, S., & Lawrence, B., 2013; Faulds, D. J. & Mangold, W. G., 2009; Fischer, E., Smith, A.N., & Yongjian, C., 2012; Harris, L. & Rae, A., 2009; Mir, I. A., & Rehman, 2013; Riegner, C., 2007). Instead of focusing on how social media affect the brand, the current study focuses on the effects that the brand has on the social media producers, or in this case the *YouTuber*. Using the constructs of the source credibility theory, this study will assess the main effect of brand endorsement on perceived expertise and trustworthiness of YouTubers.

Although marketers are jumping on the YouTuber bandwagon due to some success stories and support via advertising rankings, there is very little empirical evidence on its consequences for the creators, specifically expertise and trustworthiness. HI stems the notion that consumer-generated advertising clouds a YouTubers non-professional status and, therefore, creates consumer skepticism (Calfee & Ringold, 1994). H2 follows the original notion of Ohanian's (1990) source credibility theory, which suggests endorsers are perceived as experts who have sufficient knowledge in a particular area of interest.

> *H1: A YouTuber who is not endorsed possesses **more** trustworthiness than a YouTuber with an endorsement.*

> *H2: A YouTuber who is not endorsed possesses **less** perceived expertise than a YouTuber with an endorsement.*

Empirical research has examined the elements of a YouTubers video profile and its effects on perception. Harris and Rae (2009) found that consumer purchase decisions are influenced by comments and reviews posted on social media. Mir and Rehman (2013) found that the quantity of posts, views and reviews have a positive effect on perceived credibility and usefulness of the product content.

Taking note of Mir and Rehman's limitation of bundling too many factors into one variable, this study will hone in on one variable – viewership. Miller (2010) suggests that viewership can be controversial in the YouTube arena, especially when it seems to be the most sought-after success measure. Consequently, the current study will examine the main effect of viewership on the perceived expertise and trustworthiness of YouTubers. H3 stems from the OpenSlate survey which found that audience engagement and overall influence is higher among some YouTubers who have less views than YouTube giants with higher views (Lieber, 2014). H4 follows Mir and Rehman's (2013) findings where high viewership positively affected credibility. Conversely, low viewership would negatively affect credibility.

*H3: A YouTuber with low viewership possesses **more** trustworthiness than a YouTuber with high viewership.*

*H4: YouTuber with low viewership possesses **less** perceived expertise than a YouTuber with high viewership.*

The study will also examine the interaction effect between endorsement and viewership and how both factors affect a YouTubers perceived expertise and trustworthiness. The rationale for determining the interaction effect also stems from Lieber's (2014) research on several YouTubers with varying influential factors. In some cases, YouTubers with no endorsements and lower viewership had more influence than the more successful YouTubers. Determining the

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interaction effect will help determine if there is an ideal scenario for YouTubers who seek the utmost influence. Given that postulation, viewership will tested in the online experiment alongside brand endorsement.

H5: Brand endorsement and viewership interact to affect expertise.

H6: Brand endorsement and viewership interact to affect trustworthiness.

Although it is an instrumental part of the source credibility theory, attractiveness was not tested in this study given the nature of the beauty content in the research design. The findings will ultimately determine whether viewers are consuming YouTuber information with the same skepticism they have for traditional celebrities. Examining endorsement and viewership, as it pertains to source credibility, will help determine whether both factors are benefiting or hindering the success of YouTubers.

CHAPTER 3:

METHOD

3.1: Research Design

An online experiment was conducted via SurveyGizmo following a 2 (endorsement) x 2 (viewership) factorial design to investigate the hypotheses. Participants were given one of four questionnaires featuring an excerpt of a makeup tutorial featuring Dulce Tejeda, classified under YouTube username, Dulce Candy.

Social media has a big appetite for beauty-related content. YouTube's beauty community is classified in the *How-to and Style* category. It includes thousands of beauty vloggers demonstrating cosmetic application techniques and uploading approximately 75 hours of content every day and receiving more than 700 million views per month (Lieber, 2014). Beauty is the most frequently searched item on YouTube and it is making beauty vloggers some of the most sought after YouTubers by marketers around the world.

Dulce Candy is a prominent beauty YouTuber, or "guru", who has turned into a lifestyle expert following her success on YouTube in the past seven years. She has garnered nearly 2 million subscribers and more than 255 million views on her YouTube Channel (YouTube, 2015). In addition, she has been endorsed by a plethora of beauty giants, including Too Faced Cosmetics, L'Oreal Cosmetics and Stigma Beauty among others.

For the purposes of this online experiment, I utilized her announcement video on her ambassadorship with Too Faced Cosmetics. The video, published on July 8, 2014, documents the beginning of her partnership with the Too Faced Cosmetics and follows with a tutorial using Too Faced products exclusively.

3.2: Participants and Procedure

Data was collected from females ($N = 316$) throughout the United States, with 93 females exposed to the *non-brand endorsed-low viewership* stimulus, 72 females exposed to *non-brand endorsed-high viewership* stimulus, 81 females exposed to *brand endorsed-high viewership* stimulus, and 70 females exposed to *brand endorsed-low viewership* stimulus. The experiment was exclusive to females given the beauty content discussed in the video shown. Samples were drawn using Amazon's Mechanical Turk on June 13. Participants were compensated 50 cents for taking part in the survey. Mechanical Turk linked participants to a Wix website which hosted the SurveyGizmo link. The link was changed once each questionnaire reached at least 70 responses.

To give a brief description of the resulting sample we can state that 25% were between ages 18 and 24, 48.1% were between ages 25 and 34, and 26.9% were 35 or above. Racially, participants characterized themselves as white (81%), Asian/Pacific Islander (5.7%), Black/African American (7.3%), Hispanic (4.4%), Native American/American Indian (0.6%) and 0.6% classified as "other".

3.3: Measures

Participants were exposed to one of the four experiments, they were asked a series of questions testing the expertise and trustworthiness of the YouTuber. To measure the constructs, I

adapted scalable items from Ohanian's (1990) source credibility theory (see Appendix C). Ohanian's (1990) measurable scales for source credibility were incorporated when testing trustworthiness and expertise. *Trustworthiness* scales were incorporated in questions using 4-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree* (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.909$). Questions for trustworthiness asked whether participants believed if Dulce Candy was honest, dependable, reliable, sincere and trustworthy. *Expertise* was also measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree* (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.900$). Questions for expertise asked whether participants believed if Dulce Candy was knowledgeable, skillful, experienced, qualified and an expert. Although included in the source credibility theory, *attractiveness* was not tested in this online experiment given the nature of the beauty content. Since the YouTuber is beautifying herself and further contributing to her noticeable attractiveness, we wanted to hone in on the expertise and trustworthiness of the content.

3.4: Manipulations

To determine the effect brand endorsements have on expertise and trustworthiness, an excerpt of Dulce Candy's original video about her ambassadorship with Too Faced Cosmetics was used (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-91P0g26k4U). The video was then edited to exclude the partnership (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3nsOiIf41J0). The announcement of the partnership, as well as voiceover material during the tutorial, were removed for the purposes of testing the effectiveness of the endorsement.

To determine the effect that viewership has on expertise and trustworthiness, the video views were manipulated. In doing so, one video profile remained the same (see Appendix A), while the other depicted the same video, but with low viewership. The low viewership count was

determined by the average amount of views per video in the *How-to and Style* category on

YouTube. Using in-depth data from Tubular, a video intelligence platform, Marshall (2015)

found that the *How-to and Style* category averages about 8, 332 views per video. This was the

view count that was portrayed in the low viewership profile (see Appendix B).

CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS

4.1: Reliability

The high Cronbach's Alpha values for expertise ($\alpha = 0.900$) and trustworthiness ($\alpha = 0.909$) indicated that the items used to measure these variables were highly reliable and, therefore, internally consistent. Given the reliability test results, the items used to measure expertise and trustworthiness were averaged to create composite measures of the two dependent variables.

4.2: Main Effects on Perceived Trustworthiness.

ANOVA results indicated that the main effect of brand endorsement was statistically significant $F(1,310) = 19.414$, $p = .000$ (see Table 1). The main effect of viewership was statistically significant as well $F(1,310) = 4.454$, $p = .036$.

Table 1

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Between Endorsement and Viewership on Trustworthiness

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	15.483ª	3	5.161	8.618	.000
Intercept	4759.400	1	4759.400	7947.763	.000
Endorsement	11.626	1	11.626	19.414	.000
Viewership	2.667	1	2.667	4.454	.036
Endorsement * Viewership	.134	1	.134	.224	.637
Error	185.639	310	.599		
Total	5047.520	314			
Corrected Total	201.122	313			

Note: R Squared = .077 (Adjusted R Squared = .068)

Non-brand endorsed conditions resulted in higher-rated trustworthiness ($M = 4.1200$) than brand-endorsed conditions ($M = 3.7168$). This supports H1 as it suggests that a YouTuber with an endorsement possesses *less* trustworthiness than a YouTuber without an endorsement

In addition, low viewership conditions resulted in higher-rated trustworthiness ($M = 4.0344$) than high viewership conditions ($M = 3.8146$). This supports H3 that suggests that YouTubers with low viewership possess more trustworthiness than a YouTuber with high viewership (see Table 2).

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Endorsement and Viewership on
Trustworthiness

Endorsement	Viewership	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Yes	High	3.6101	.95267	79
	Low	3.8371	.88615	70
	Total	3.7168	.92593	149
No	High	4.0389	.64010	72
	Low	4.1828	.58581	93
	Total	4.1200	.61239	165
Total	High	3.8146	.84383	151
	Low	4.0344	.74754	163
	Total	3.9287	.80160	314

The interaction effect of endorsement and viewership was not statistically significant $F(1,310) = .224$, $p = .637$. This does not support H6 that suggests that brand endorsement and viewership interact to affect trustworthiness (see Figure 2).
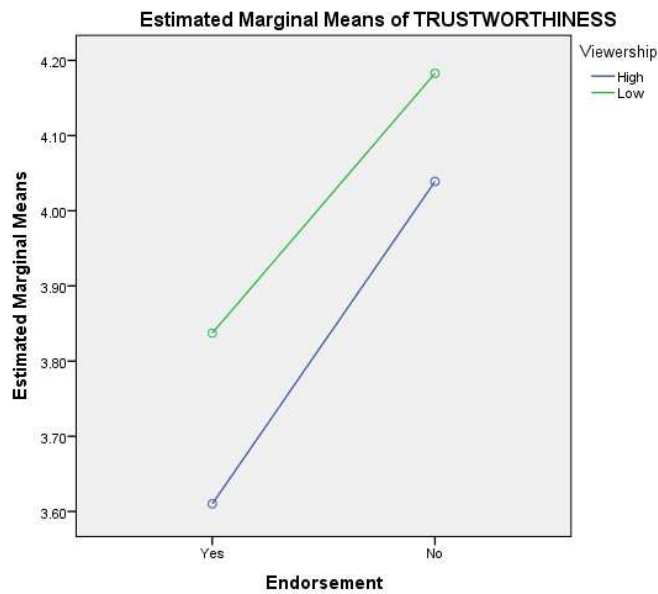

Figure 2: Interaction effect between endorsement and viewership in trustworthiness.

4.3: Main Effects on Perceived Expertise.

ANOVA results indicated that the main effect of brand endorsement was statistically significant, $F(1,310) = 4.928$, $p = .027$. However, the main effect of viewership was not statistically significant, $F(1,310) = 2.351$, $p = .126$. Furthermore, low viewership conditions resulted in higher-rated expertise ($M = 4.1669$) thna high viewership conditions ($M = 4.0159$). This does not support H4 that suggests that YouTubers with low viewership possess less perceived expertise than a YouTuber with high viewership.

Table 3
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Between Endorsement and Viewership on Expertise

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	4.661ª	3	1.554	2.666	.048
Intercept	5180.426	1	5180.426	8886.879	.000
Endorsement	2.872	1	2.872	4.928	.027
Viewership	1.370	1	1.370	2.351	.126
Endorsement * Viewership	1.704E-6	1	1.704E-6	.000	.999
Error	180.708	310	.583		
Total	5448.960	314			
Corrected Total	185.370	313			

Note: R Squared = .025 (Adjusted R Squared = .016)

Non-brand endorsed conditions resulted in higher-rated expertise (M = 4.1915) than brand endorsed conditions (M = 3.9866). This does not support H2 that suggests YouTubers with an endorsement possess more perceived expertise than a YouTubers without an endorsement (see Table 4).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Endorsement and Viewership on Expertise

Endorsement	Viewership	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Yes	High	3.9241	.90712	79
	Low	4.0571	.67686	70
	Total	3.9866	.80729	149
No	High	4.1167	.78704	72
	Low	4.2495	.66702	93
	Total	4.1915	.72258	165
Total	High	4.0159	.85464	151
	Low	4.1669	.67596	163
	Total	4.0943	.76957	314

4.4: Interaction Effect

The interaction effect of endorsement and viewership was not statistically significant, $F(1,310) = .000$, $p = .999$. This does not support H5 that suggests that brand endorsement and viewership interact to affect expertise (see Figure 3).
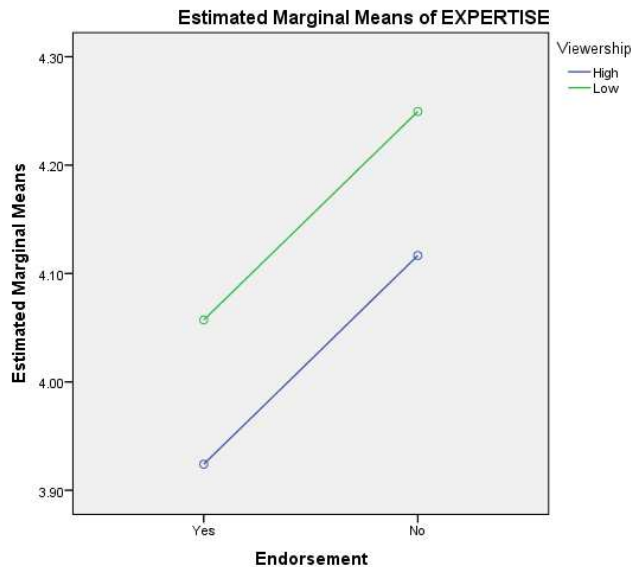

Figure 3: Interaction effect between endorsement and viewership in expertise.

CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION

The overarching research goal was to provide a greater understanding of the effects of endorsement and viewership as it pertains to expertise and trustworthiness of YouTubers. Findings suggest that non-brand endorsed YouTubers possess higher-rated expertise and trustworthiness. While viewership did not make a difference in perceived expertise, it did result in higher-rated trustworthiness when a YouTuber possesses lower viewership. In addition, there was no interaction effect between endorsement and viewership in regard to trustworthiness and expertise. The following limitations are influential factors that could have led to the lack of significance in some of the hypotheses.

5.1: Limitations and Direction for Future Research

As with all studies, this research has limitations. One change that can be implemented in future research is honing in on one factor – endorsement *or* viewership. While the findings were significant, the interaction effects, hypothesized in H5 and H6, were not supported and that is normally the purpose behind factorial designs. Perhaps positioning interaction effects as a research question would leave the idea open for discussion, especially because while endorsement is heavily researched, viewership on its own is not.

Another limitation was the wide range of ages in the participant pool. The pool did not capture the ideal video-using, social networking demographic that the study deserved. The ideal

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audience would be between the ages of 18 to 34, given the exemplary video use and social networking of this age group. This age group is also classified as Generation C, the superior communicators who "value content, media, communication and the power of creation" (Lieber, 2014). Future studies should have this particular age range be a qualification before taking part in the experiment.

The method employed by this study was an online experiment. Given the parameters of the instrument, participants' initial perception and intention could only be captured. Ideally, pre and post-tests would be conducted among the same group of participants to capture behavior and motivations.

The manipulated video in the online experiment is another limitation. Henning and Phillips (2012) state that novelty is an important factor in regard to consumer intention. If a participant was familiar with Dulce Candy's work, her answers would have been skewed based on preconceived perceptions of expertise and trustworthiness of the YouTuber. Overall, 9.9% of participants had watched one of Dulce Candy's videos prior to participating in the online experiment. In addition, 15.3% had heard of Dulce Candy prior to participating in the online experiment. Participants could have also had familiarity with Too Faced Cosmetics and perception could have skewed data as well. Future research should screen participants and filter out those who are familiar with the stimulus that is being manipulated within the experiment.

Another question that could be asked to participants is whether they believed the views given to each video were perceived as high or low. This would determine whether the manipulation was significant enough to generalize the results. Finally, excluding males from the online experiment prevents generalizations in the aforementioned findings. Utilizing the beauty

category limited the participant pool to females. Future research should include gender-neutral conditions within the research design.

5.2: Subscriber Consideration

H4 suggested that YouTubers with low viewership possess less perceived expertise than a YouTuber with high viewership. This was not supported and considering subscriber counts versus view counts could be something that researchers can consider in the future. Subscribers are a YouTubers user base and they receive updates on new video content. The number of viewers subscribing daily is tripling and is worth considering since it is considered a stable fan base. Subscriptions often take second place when compared to viewership, but Marshall (2015) postulates that views are not always the best metric for performance success and Miller (2010) states that subscribing shows active interest and engagement. Additionally, YouTube announced in 2013 that the subscriber button was clicked over a billion times (Miller, 2010). Building followers increases engagement and in turn may be a better factor than viewership when measuring the interaction effect with endorsements.

5.3: Consumer Trust Consideration

H2 suggested that YouTubers with endorsements possess more perceived expertise than YouTubers without endorsements. This was also not supported. This hypothesis stemmed from Ohanian's (1990) source credibility theory, which suggests endorsers are perceived as experts who have sufficient knowledge in a particular area of interest. However, Ohanian (1990) did stress that "highly credible sources are not always more effective than less-credible ones" (p. 42).

Furthermore, a consumer's positive or negative reaction toward a YouTuber may not solely be because of endorsement. Consumer trust, or source trust, should be another factor in examining perceived trustworthiness and expertise. Many researchers have found that consumer trust in brands is extremely important and affects how their behavior toward the brand. (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Fourner, 1998). Source trust dissects the source credibility theory and focuses more on the relational characteristics involving the sender and receiver interacting and forming relationships (Huh & Shine, 2012; King, Reid & Soh, 2009). Faber and Nan (2004) determined that source trust is an important part of viral advertising because of how its traditional advertising elements and interpersonal elements intertwine.

Cho, Faber and Huh (2014) used source trust in their study regarding the influence of trust in senders of viral advertising. Given the findings of this current study and the significance of the positive effect non-brand endorsed YouTubers have on their audience, future research should consider source trust as a variable. Cho, Faber and Huh (2014) found that trust may prove to be a more useful construct than credibility. Furthermore, if a person has a preconceived favorability to the communicator before hearing a message, it can positively influence the message effectiveness and induce greater persuasion. This is what Ohanian (1990) also stresses when she states that "highly credible sources are not always more effective than less credible ones" (p.42).

The social exchange theory also suggests that relationships strengthen when there is a benefit attached to it, similar to a cost-benefit proposition (Frenzen & Nakamoro, 1993). Cook and Yamagishi (1992) theorize that relationships strengthen when both parties equally benefit. If a YouTuber is producing content that is benefitting the viewer, and if the viewer continues to watch, ultimately contributing to that YouTubers paycheck, then a relationship is nurtured.

5.4: Conclusion

Despite limitations, the insights provided in the findings are valuable in showing how endorsement and viewership play a role in a YouTubers perceived expertise and trustworthiness. From a marketer's perspective, it is important to note how consumers are absorbing the consumer-generated advertising that they are spending marketing dollars on each year. If brand endorsements are negatively affecting a YouTubers expertise and trustworthiness, then it negatively affects their relationship with their viewers. This ultimately could lead to disinterest of the YouTuber and, therefore, the brand. This also has implications with viewership. As discussed earlier, Miller (2010) suggests that viewership can be controversial in the YouTube arena, especially when it seems to be the most sought-after success measure. When marketers are determining which YouTuber to endorse, viewership may not be the best determination factor. According to this study, lower viewership resulted in higher-rated trustworthiness.

From a YouTubers perspective, these finding are pivotal in determining which endorsement opportunities to accept. The greatest asset a YouTuber possesses is their relationship with their viewers. At times, these YouTubers have more influence than makeup companies because their fans see them as friends (Lieber, 2014). The threat of losing trust and expertise because of endorsements is something to consider when partnering with brands.

As YouTube continues to grow as a revenue-generating platform, further research is necessary in determining the source credibility of its producers. Additionally, it is important for those producers to understand the implications of entering the social media hemisphere for profit. Either way, the cross pollination of social media and mainstream media is a phenomena that should continue to be empirically dissected for the benefit of marketers and consumers alike.

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APPENDIX A:

VIDEO PROFILE – HIGH VIEWERSHIP

APPENDIX B:

VIDEO PROFILE – LOW VIEWERSHIP

ONLINE EXPERIMENT DESIGN AND QUESTIONAIRE

This research study is being conducted by Stephanie Fred, School of Mass Communications, University of South Florida, 4202 E. Fowler Ave., CIS1040, Tampa, FL 33620-7800.

Your responses are voluntary and will remain confidential to the extent provided by law. You may withdraw from the research at any time. There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation. Your grade in any course will not be affected by your participation in this survey or lack thereof.

If you have any questions concerning the procedures used in this study, you may contact the principle investigator at e-mail address leahchampion@mail.usf.edu or. Questions or concerns about your rights as a participant can be directed to the University of South Florida Institutional Review Board at (813) 974-9343.

What is your gender?

___ Male   ___ Female

How often do you watch YouTube?

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently

How often do you watch makeup tutorials on YouTube?

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently

How often do you wear makeup?

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently

How often do you purchase makeup?

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently

Please review the following YouTuber profile, paying close attention to the video views (show manipulated handout).

[INSERT PROFILE]

Watch the following excerpt of Dulce Candy's YouTube video (show video).

[INSERT VIDEO]

Have you ever watched on of the Dulce Candy's videos?

___ Yes   ___ No

Had you ever heard of Dulce Candy before watching the excerpt?

___ Yes   ___ No

Answer the following questions about the featured YouTuber, Dulce Candy:

Dulce Candy is knowledgeable about makeup.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

Dulce Candy is skillful with makeup.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

I would consider Dulce Candy experienced in makeup.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

I would consider Dulce Candy qualified in giving advice about makeup.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

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I would consider Dulce Candy an expert in makeup.

       Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

Answer the following questions about the featured YouTuber, Dulce Candy:

Dulce Candy is honest.

       Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

Dulce Candy is dependable.

       Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

Dulce Candy is a reliable source.

       Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

Dulce Candy is sincere.

       Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

Dulce Candy is trustworthy.

       Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

Answer the following questions about the featured YouTuber, Dulce Candy:

I think Dulce Candy is credible.

       Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

I think Dulce Candy is believable.

       Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

I can relate to Dulce Candy.

       Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

I think Dulce Candy is attractive.

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree

Rate the importance of the following video characteristics when deciding what to watch on YouTube:

Number of views on YouTube video.

Very Unimportant   Somewhat Unimportant   Somewhat Important   Very Important

Number of subscribers YouTuber has.

Very Unimportant   Somewhat Unimportant   Somewhat Important   Very Important

Number of "likes" versus "dislikes" on YouTuber video.

Very Unimportant   Somewhat Unimportant   Somewhat Important   Very Important

Description box of YouTube video.

Very Unimportant   Somewhat Unimportant   Somewhat Important   Very Important

Production quality of YouTube video.

Very Unimportant   Somewhat Unimportant   Somewhat Important   Very Important

How likely are you to do the following:

Try this makeup routine.

Very likely   Likely   Unlikely   Very Unlikely

Purchase products used in the video.

Very likely   Likely   Unlikely   Very Unlikely

Watch another Dulce Candy YouTube video in the near future.

Very likely   Likely   Unlikely   Very Unlikely

Watch another makeup tutorial on YouTube in the near future.

Very likely   Likely   Unlikely   Very Unlikely

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Subscribe to Dulce Candy.

Very likely   Likely   Unlikely   Very Unlikely

What is your age?

___ Under 18

___ 18-24

___ 25-34

___ 35+

What is your race/ethnicity (Check all that apply)?

___ White

___ Hispanic or Latino

___ Black or African American

___ Native American or American Indian

___ Asian/Pacific Islander

___ Other

APPENDIX D:

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

USF
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 ● Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 ● FAX (813) 974-7091

June 12, 2015

Stephanie Fred
Mass Communication
Tampa , FL   33612

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**
IRB#:   Pro00022605
Title: Deal or No Deal: Source Credibility of YouTubers with Brand Deals

Study Approval Period: 6/12/2015 to 6/12/2016

Dear Ms. Fred:

On 6/12/2015, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents outlined below.

Approved Item(s):
Protocol Document(s):
Stephanie Fred IRB Protocol

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:
Stephanie Fred Informed Consent Statement   **Granted a waiver

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent document(s) are only valid during the approval period indicated at the top of the form(s). ** Waivers are not stamped.

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

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(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your study qualifies for a waiver of the requirements for the documentation of informed consent as outlined in the federal regulations at 45CFR46.117(c) which states that an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects if it finds either: (1) That the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each subject will be asked whether the subject wants documentation linking the subject with the research, and the subject's wishes will govern; or (2) That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval by an amendment.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

Kristen Salomon, Ph.D., Vice Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board