MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

ARTICLE OR ADVERTISEMENT? HOW LEGACY AND NEW MEDIA ARE BLURRING LINES AND CREATING NEW HYBRID CONTENT THROUGH NATIVE ADVERTISING

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ABSTRACT

This Master of Professional Communication Major Research Paper (MRP), a pilot study, examines how native advertising is used by new and legacy media publications in an effort to determine whether the lines between advertisement and editorial content have been blurred. The literature reviewed outlines the creation of added-value content through framing, recognition of *persuasion attempts* and the creation of synergy through contextual similarity. Within this MRP, a qualitative content analysis was conducted on 5 samples of native advertising from legacy publication The *New York Times* and 5 samples from new media publication *BuzzFeed* within the 2015 calendar year. The results of the content analysis have indicated that through framing, persuasion and contextual similarity, the lines between advertisement and editorial content in both publications appear to have softened.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

Introduction

Native advertisements–advertisements that have been formulated to appear as editorial content–have become increasingly popular in the past three years (Ponikvar, 2015, p. 1187). These advertisements, now specifically formatted for the digital age, are typically labeled: 'Advertisement', 'Sponsored Content' or 'Presented by [Brand Name]' and are a preferred method of advertising by many marketers due to their success in appealing to consumers (Interactive Advertising Bureau[1], 2013), strengthening brand awareness and brand perception (Cision[2], 2014) and guaranteeing viewership of content (Agius, 2015). Native advertisements were first known as advertorials–advertisements in print publications that were organized to look like editorial content (Cameron & Curtain, 1995; Cameron & Ju-Pak, 2000). In today's digital age, however, advertorials have moved off of the paper and onto the screen, becoming native with the editorial environment and incorporating a variety of multimedia elements into the content (Wojdynski, 2016; Cision, 2014).

Today, all native advertising involves some degree of input from advertisers and has two primary characteristics in common: integration with the publisher's platform and the presentation of information that will appeal to the publisher's existing readership (Wojdynski, 2016, p. 6). The overarching objective of native advertising put forward by the Interactive Advertising Bureau (2013) is that a native advertisement should be "so cohesive with the page content, assimilated into the design and consistent with the platform behaviour that the viewer simply feels they belong" (p. 4). In-feed advertisements, the focus of this MRP, are one of the most

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[1] The Interactive Advertising Bureau comprises 86 per cent of online advertising organizations in the United States. A non-profit organization, it develops both widely used technical standards and best practices for digital marketers across the world (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2016).
[2] Cision is a global public relations software company that provides a range of free industry resources in the form of content marketing, including the whitepaper referenced.

common forms of native advertisements. They are produced by or in partnership with the publisher and appear side-by-side editorial content (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2013). And, just as editorial content now appears in a variety of formats, native advertising is also being presented in a range of ways, including videos, social media posts and written content (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2013). Increased integration of multimedia elements within a native advertisement has in fact been found to enhance a reader's experience with the advertisement (Mitra, Raymond & Hopkins, 2008). As these authors recommend, advertisers should incorporate multimedia elements into these formats, especially for consumers who may not have heard of or used the product being advertised.

Effective native advertisements are also increasingly emphasizing the importance of storytelling, a concept that has forced many brands to think beyond traditional advertising techniques in order to stand out in a much wider arena, competing against the stories found within editorial content (Dumenco, 2014). This concept of a brand becoming a storyteller builds upon practices already underway through content marketing, which Pulizzi (2015) defines as: "creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content ... with the objective of driving profitable customer action by changing or enhancing consumer behavior" (This is Content Marketing section, para. 1). Here, native advertising should be differentiated from content marketing because while both types of marketing aim to present consumable, relevant information related to a brand, content marketing occurs on platforms an organization already owns, while native advertising involves "renting someone else's content distribution platform" (Pulizzi, 2015, This is Native Advertising section, para. 3).

Native advertising can thus attribute some of its success to the current journalism landscape, with both legacy and new media–two broad categories of journalism–in search of new

revenue streams and opting to rent out their platforms to advertisers. Legacy media refers to outlets that were created prior to the current digital age–like The *New York Times*, *Vogue* or *ABC* while new media refers to those that are digitally native–like *BuzzFeed*, Vice Media and The *Huffington Post* (Riordan, 2014). In the print media industry, with newspaper circulation and advertisement revenue continuing to decline (Barthel, 2015), legacy publications have turned to native advertising as a way to supplement their crippled subscription revenue streams (Sebastian, 2015). In 2013, The *New York Times* created its native advertising unit–T Brand Studio (Sebastian, 2015). This unit is staffed by the newspaper's advertising employees and produces high-quality content aligned with the style of the publication's editorial content, but with no other affiliation to editorial staff. By 2014, T Brand Studio had produced content for 40 different brands, selling up to $18 million worth of native advertisements (Sebastian, 2015). In many cases new media has been quicker to adopt native advertising into their business model. In fact, *BuzzFeed*, a highly popular new media outlet, has built its entire business model on native advertisements. In 2014, it is estimated that the publication generated $120 million in revenue from native advertisements through a variety of brand partnerships (Agius, 2015).

Native advertising offers both brands and publications a new frontier for content production and presentation, but the industry still has its obstacles. Journalists and industry watchdogs have regularly criticized advertisers for attempting to mislead consumers and pass off native advertisements as editorial content (Wojdynski, 2016), masking selling intent–an advertiser's resolve to sell a product (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012). Critics have argued that advertising is fundamentally different than editorial content, with the latter being seen as trustworthy and objective since the development of journalistic ideals in the United States in the 19th century (Mindich, 2000). Native advertising has been criticized for playing with this

dynamic, with critics worrying that because consumers may not recognize native advertisements as paid content, they will process the information presented as if they are reading objective, editorial information (Wojdynski, 2016). This potentially has significant implications for the ways consumers engage with and share information. If consumers cannot identify a native advertisement as paid content, they may unknowingly process or present the information as unbiased content from a neutral source–a reality that presents both an ethical grey area and a range of implications for both the media and society as a whole (Wojdynski, 2016). With native advertisements being presented in a similar format to editorial content, readers may not be able to distinguish an advertisement as paid. They may not recognize a brand's *persuasion attempt*– processes or materials used with the intention to influence a consumer (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Readers may then unknowingly consume and share the content within their own networks, believing it to be unbiased (Cameron & Curtain, 1995). As native advertising proliferates, advertisers will be increasingly able to reach individuals in ways that they, as consumers prefer (Vranica, 2016). And, as brands take the helm on content published through major media organizations, editorial content within the same publications also could be affected by both viewership and engagement rates on paid content (Wojdynski, 2016). While these implications must be examined within a larger scope, researchers have already begun to examine how consumers process native advertisements.

Some studies have in fact indicated that consumers may not be able to distinguish between a native advertisement and a piece of editorial copy, and that high quality content affected a consumer's perception of a brand. In a 2015 *Contently*[3] study of native advertisements

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[3] Contently is an award-winning content marketing platform used by some of the world's biggest brands. The organization offers a range of industry resources in the form of content marketing, including *The Content Strategist* magazine.

using male and female consumers of different ages, almost all of the respondents thought that the native advertisements presented were actually editorial articles (Lazauskas, 2015). When respondents in the same study did recognize an advertisement as paid content, their perception of the brand changed based on the quality of the content. Respondents that read native advertisements and felt that they were high quality indicated that they felt a significantly higher level of trust for the sponsoring brand (Lazauskas, 2015). High-quality native advertisements can also correlate with high engagement rates, as a 2015 study done by The *New York Times* on their native advertisements indicated (Wegert, 2015). In this study comparing engagement rates of native advertisements versus editorial content, The *New York Times* found that half of their native advertisements measured were engaged with more than the editorial content measured (Wegert, 2015).

As this introduction has outlined, academics, such as Ponikvar (2015); Tutaj and van Reijmersdal (2012); and Wojdynski and Evans (2014 and 2015), have only recently begun analyzing native advertising within the digital environment. As such, this pilot study hopes to contribute to the evolving field by beginning to examine whether the lines between advertising and editorial content have been blurred with the rise of native advertising. What follows immediately after this section is an overview of the literature to examine how native advertising has been both framed and presented. The theories and concepts of added value (Mayer, 1958), framing (Entman, 1993); *persuasion knowledge* (Friestad & Wright, 1994); selling intent (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012); visual hierarchy (Faraday, 2000); context-ad synergy (Micu & Pentina, 2014); source credibility (van Reijmersdal, Neijens, & Smit, 2005); categorization (Cohen & Basu, 1987); and Gestalt similarity and proximity (Wong, 2010) will be explained. This will be followed by a presentation of the research questions this MRP seeks to answer as

well as an explanation of the methodology employed to perform a content analysis of both

BuzzFeed and The *New York Times* native advertising samples. As native advertisements become

an increasingly popular method of advertising, examining how they are constructed and

presented will begin to shed light on best practices as well as offer a description of persuasion

practices. The results of this content analysis will then be presented and analyzed to demonstrate

how truly native native advertising has become in today's digital age. Given the pilot nature of

this paper, this MRP will conclude with an overview of limitations as well as suggestions for

future research. The literature review that now follows presents some of the dominant terms and

themes that have occurred within scholarly analysis of advertising as related to advertisement

construction and purpose, processing theories and consumer behaviour.

Literature Review

Scholarly literature on digital native advertising is relatively limited due to the recent rise of digital marketing. Advertorials–the printed precursor to today's native advertisements–have historically been analyzed through a variety of media, marketing and socio-psychological theories. The literature review that follows applies these theories and concepts within the current climate outlined in the introduction–one in which native advertisements are increasingly being utilized by new and legacy media, aligning content with editorial practices to better engage consumers. The literature reviewed within this section falls into three categories:

1) Creating added-value content through framing

2) Recognizing *persuasion attempts*

3) Creating synergy in contextual surroundings

Creating Added Value Content Through Framing

Scholarly literature on advertising, such as the work undertaken by Preston (1967); Levin, Schneider and Gaeth (1998) and Entman (1993), highlights how certain theoretical frameworks have been employed to influence how a consumer will process information. This section begins with an explanation of added value theory and follows with an overview of framing theory and the variations of framing that can occur, altering how a consumer may perceive a message.

In order for an advertisement to be effective, scholars such as Preston (1967) and Mayer (1958), argue that advertising must present information in a way that adds value for a consumer. Mayer's added value theory (1958) suggests that advertising's intent is to make a product signify something the consumer values highly (Preston, 1967, p. 212). Advertising involves more than informing consumers. It also involves framing the consumer's product experience with the end

goal of altering a consumer's perception of a brand (Levin & Gaeth, 1988). This is done through the elevation of certain features of the product or brand (Levin & Gaeth, 1988). Deighton (1984) writes, "advertising arouses an expectation…the subject tends to confirm the expectation upon exposure to more objective information (such as evidence or product experience)" (p. 765). In order for consumers to be convinced to engage with the content, Preston (1967) argues, advertisements must serve a genuine purpose to the public.

Tutaj and van Reijmersdal (2012) suggest consumers will perceive an advertisement's value based on: informativeness, entertainment and irritation (p. 7). In the context of native advertising, Steve Rubel, chief content strategist at top public relations firm Edelman, states: "Native ads get most disruptive the closer they are to being straight up advertorial in nature, and interruptive as opposed to additive" (Cision, 2014, Content is Still King section, para. 4). Additive content can be seen as content with which consumers want to engage, a purpose which many proponents of native advertising see as core to the practice (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2013). When advertising is conveyed in a similar format to editorial content, consumers are more likely to further process the information and remember parts of the advertisement later on (Lord & Petrevu, 1993). Ponikvar (2015) argues that because of this dynamic, the boundary between advertisement and editorial content has been distorted. Given the potential implications of these blurred lines, as discussed in the introduction, this MRP seeks to examine whether this could be the case.

In order to produce added value content, advertisers must decide which elements of an advertisement to highlight. Framing theory is one of the dominant theories utilized in the scholarly literature on advertising intent. Entman (1993) identifies framing as the selection of certain information in a text in order to make it appear more salient (p. 53). For example lean

ground beef could be labeled 75% lean or 25% fat; in each instance a certain attribute of the

product is being highlighted, which affects how a consumer perceives the product. (Levin et al.,

1998, p. 159). A variety of types of framing exist, including goal and attribute framing (Levin et

al. , 1998). Goal framing determines how impactful persuasion will be by framing the

consequence or implied goal of behaviour. In attribute framing, the evaluation of an item is

affected through the framing of an object or event's attributes. Consumers will process these

attributes differently depending on their previous experience with the product or brand (Mitra,

Raymond & Hopkins, 2008). Even after a consumer has interacted with a product, attribute

framing has been shown to affect how the consumer evaluates the product (Levin & Gaeth,

1988). While most advertisements are positively framed, other factors such as the competitive

landscape or a consumer's past experience with the product also affect how a consumer

perceives the framed text (Ganzach & Karsahi, 1995).

Within advertising, the way content is framed relates closely to the way it is presented. In

order for a consumer to process an advertisement as such, advertisers must clearly distinguish

content as paid for by a third party. The next section of this literature review will outline the

theoretical bases that underlie the way advertisements are presented to consumers.

Recognizing Persuasion Attempts

As discussed, native advertising aims to present advertisements in a way that aligns with

editorial content in order to generate more engagement (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2013),

with advertisers choosing to frame certain elements of the content in order to elevate these

aspects to salience. Scholars argue that these types of persuasive efforts activate a consumer's

recognition of advertisement (Friestad & Wright, 1994; Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012;

Wojdynski & Evans, 2014). This section begins with an explanation of how consumers view

advertisements and the factors that must exist in order for the Persuasion Knowledge Model, developed by Friestad and Wright (1994), to be engaged; following this the importance of disclosure labels is discussed, concluding with an overview of visual hierarchy as related to both content and disclosure label positioning.

A variety of cognitive processes occur when a consumer sees an advertisement. Friestad and Wright (1994) developed the Persuasion Knowledge Model, also known as advertising literacy (Rozendaal, Lapierre, van Reijmersdal & Buijzen, 2011) as the process by which consumers process *persuasion attempts*, like advertisements. In their model, targets (the intended consumer) and agents (the advertiser) interact in a *persuasion attempt* whereby the agents strategically present information designed to influence beliefs, attitudes, decisions or actions (Friestad & Wright, 1994, p. 2). Targets bring in their own opinions about the tactics being used by agents. They also process information related to the agent itself as well as the topic being communicated in the *persuasion attempt.* A target's *persuasion knowledge*, or understanding of the intent to persuade, will continue developing throughout their life as they are exposed to more agents and *persuasion attempts* (Friestad & Wright, 1994).

In order for *persuasion knowledge* to be activated, consumers analyze three elements when looking at an advertisement: recognition that advertising is occurring, understanding of persuasive and selling intent, and advertisement skepticism (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012, p. 9). The authors studied the effects of native advertising versus banner advertisements as related to the elements consumers process when viewing an advertisement. They found that subjects experienced more irritation when they clearly understood the advertiser's intent to sell a product. In their study, native advertising–integrated and generally viewed as more subtle (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2013)–was seen as more useful and entertaining than banner

advertisements, which were found to be more irritating. Their study also found that banner

advertisements were recognized more as advertisements than sponsored content and that they

were viewed with more skepticism than native advertising. Tutaj and van Reijmersdal (2012)

indicate that because of this, there is an increased chance native advertising will be seen and

positively affect a consumer's attitude towards a brand.

By presenting content in a method aligned with a publication's editorial content, an

advertiser can make their selling intent less evident. While cohesion is important, native

advertisements run the risk of deceiving consumers who may view the content as editorial

instead of advertisement (Ponikvar, 2015). In order to prevent consumer confusion and clearly

display that content has been paid for by a third party, in the United States, advertisers and

publications are now legally required by the Federal Trade Commission to label native

advertising as paid content through the usage of disclosure labels (Interactive Advertising

Bureau, 2013). Wojdynski and Evans (2014) note that these disclosures will vary in appearance

from publication to publication, but in order for them to be effective, consumers must both notice

them and understand the message they are attempting to convey. Consumers will be more likely

to recognize a native advertisement as paid content when the disclosure language explicitly

conveys whether the content has been paid for, if a third party has been involved in its

production and whether it is marked differently than the publication's regular content

(Wojdynski & Evans, 2015).

While advertisers must now legally display disclosure labels on native advertising, some

studies have shown that this still may not be enough to differentiate advertisement from non-

editorial content (Lazauskas, 2015; Wojdynski & Evans, 2015). As Cameron and Curtain (1995)

reference, in the 1980s, publishers and advertisers often disagreed about the placement of

advertorials in print publications. Advertisers believed that clear labeling would distinguish an advertisement from editorial content, but editors wanted to retain ownership of the content to ensure that advertorials "[didn't] look like editorial, and that the physical volume, layout, and language [was] very different" (Cameron & Curtain, 1995, p. 179). The authors undertook a study of young adults to measure whether they could differentiate a print advertorial from editorial copy. Their study indicated that merely labeling advertorials as paid content was not enough to differentiate the two products. As discussed in the introduction, above, findings such as these may confirm a range of implications regarding how readers process and share information they believe to be objective. Publications can also receive potential backlash from readers who later learn that a native advertisement is paid content. For example, in 2013 *The Atlantic* magazine dealt with criticism after publishing a native advertisement for the Church of Scientology without adequately labeling it an advertisement (Ponikvar, 2015, p. 1192). In a 2015 *Contently* study, 48 percent of respondents felt deceived once they realized a piece of content was actually a paid advertisement (Lazauskas, 2015).

The efficacy of disclosure labels has been argued by some to be directly related to *persuasion knowledge*. Cain (2011) argues that the main purpose of disclosure labels is to activate *persuasion knowledge* by reducing the likelihood of deception. Rozendaal et al. (2011) believe that *persuasion knowledge* should actually be divided into two dimensions, each of which are activated at different times using different processing methods. In the "conceptual dimension", consumers recognize advertising, the agent, and selling intent. In the "attitudinal dimension", consumers bring in critical feelings regarding credibility and trustworthiness of the *persuasion attempt*. Boerman, van Reijmersdal and Neijens (2012) found that disclosure labels activate both types of *persuasion knowledge*–first conceptual and then attitudinal. Since

attitudinal *persuasion knowledge* is activated upon recognition of the source as an advertisement, the authors note that this could lead to resistance of the persuasive message. While the existence of disclosure labels may activate *persuasion knowledge*, the placement of the disclosure labels also affects how a consumer views the content.

Faraday's (2000) model of visual hierarchy suggests that in order for a disclosure label to be effective, its physical format including its positioning on the page must be taken into account. According to this model, consumers will scan a page for entry points; these entry points will serve as the primary areas consumers will choose to process more information around. In the case of native advertisements, since content such as the headline is typically much larger than the disclosure label itself, the first part of content will be an automatic entry point (Wojdynski & Evans, 2015). In turn this means that information posted above this content, such as a disclosure label will not have a viewer's attention, as confirmed by an eye-tracking study done by the authors. This study found that when disclosures were positioned in the middle of the content, participants spent more time looking at the disclosures than they did if they were placed at the top of the content (Wojdynski & Evans, 2015.) Results also suggest that disclosures placed at the bottom of the content may also attract more attention than disclosures placed at the top of the content. Additionally, this study found that despite articles being labeled in native advertising's most recognized language 'sponsored content,' few viewers recognized the content as a paid advertisement. The model of visual hierarchy can also be used when examining other elements on a page such as calls to action (CTAs), which may appear in a different format than the rest of the content. Here, CTAs are defined as "words that urge the reader, listener, or viewer of a sales promotion message to take an immediate action" (Business Dictionary, 2016, Definition section, para. 1). Their format on a page may also create new entry points for readers.

In addition to discussions on content and disclosure, a common theme found amongst the literature is the impact positioning and organization can have on the credibility and acceptance of an advertisement. The efficacy of a native advertisement is impacted by the visual presentation of the content, a topic that this literature review will now turn to.

Creating Synergy in Contextual Surroundings

Both the way an advertisement is framed and the manner in which persuasion is utilized affect how a consumer perceives an advertisement. The manner in which an advertisement is organized and positioned in relation to other content also affects how an advertisement is perceived, as demonstrated by the work done by Micu and Pentina (2014); Coyle and Thorson (2001); and Wong (2010). This section begins with an explanation of context-ad synergy and content class and follows with an overview of categorization theory concluding with a look at the Gestalt theories of proximity and similarity in order to examine how synergy can be created in an advertising environment contextually similar to an editorial one.

Native advertisements do not exist in a vacuum–they are presented on a publication's website or other editorial properties, sometimes in close proximity to editorial content. The contextual placement of an advertisement in relation to other content is known as context-ad synergy (Micu & Pentina, 2014). Context-ad synergy affects how a consumer processes an advertisement; advertisements are most effective and seen to be most credible when they appear alongside news about the brand (Micu & Pentina, 2014). This is due to what the authors identify as the third-party endorsement framework–where advertising that is made to look similar to editorial content gains credibility due to the perceived reliability of the original source. This practice may subvert source credibility theory, which van Reijmersdal et al. (2005) define as readers' wariness of advertisements due to known selling intent. The authors note that readers

will take less time to process the information in advertising because the source is seen as less credible than editorial content. Cole and Greer's 2013 experimental study of participant views on framed advertising versus editorial content seemed to validate this theory, with editorial content being seen as more credible than pure advertising. Another study done by the Interactive Advertising Bureau in 2014 surveyed 5,000 people who visit U.S. news sites and found that an editorial site's seeming credibility created a 33 percent overall increase in the perceived credibility of an online advertisement's content and that consumers tended to spend as much time looking at these ads as they would news content on the same site (Ponikvar, 2015, p. 1194).

Buijzen, van Reijmersdal and Owen (2010) explain that there are three types of integration that occur between a persuasive message and its contextual surroundings. In "format integration", the message's format is integrated into the context, as is the case for native advertisements that appear alongside editorial content. With "thematic integration", the fit between the persuasive message and contextual surroundings is more conceptual, for instance the inclusion of a native advertisement about Volvo in a newspaper's special insert on car safety. Finally, in "narrative integration", semantic elements of the persuasive method within the contextual environment occur, for example in a television show like *Hannah Montana* that builds hype around a brand to sell *Hannah Montana* merchandise (p. 428).

Context-ad synergy can also be understood through the marketing term "brand extension." Herr, Farquhar and Fazio (1996) identify this concept as the stretching of a brand to other products in order to build the business as a whole (p. 136). Typically, consumers are more likely to accept a brand extension if the existing brand dominates its category and if the proposed extension is similar to the existing brand. As Cohen and Basu (1987) explain, brand extension is based on Categorization Theory, which the authors identify as the theory that consumers will

categorize something unknown based on their previous experience and knowledge, which is often affected by their own goals and values. Marketers use this in brand extension to get approval from consumers on a new product (Cohen & Basu, 1987).

Context-ad synergy is not the only concept that affects how an advertisement is perceived. Authors such as Anderson and Meyer (1988) argue that media content can be differentiated according to content class, which in turn affects how readers process information (Hallahan, 1999). Depending on its format, content follows a specific set of rules or contracts that govern the relationship between the author and the reader. Anderson and Meyer (1998) argue that news content appears under a "reality contract"; readers believe in the validity of the information and the relevance of it to their own lives. Part of this validity comes from the usage of quotations and facts, which serve as a measure of external validation (*Reuters Handbook of Journalism,*[4] 2016). As the handbook states: "Quotes personalize stories and add color to other evidence provided by data or logical argument" (Quotations section, para. 1). Advertisements on the other hand appear under an "advertising contract," which dictates that readers will understand and then scrutinize persuasive attempts (Anderson & Meyer, 1998). In addition to the literature on content class, other research has suggested that direct product experience affects how a consumer categorizes a product or a brand.

The visual layout of content can also affect how consumers categorize information. Gestalt theory outlines that things are not interpreted alone, but in the context of the whole (Preston, 1967). One of the tenets of this theory is the "Gestalt principle of proximity," which Wong (2010) identifies as the way we visually assemble individual objects into groups, with

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[4] This handbook outlines the rules and practices that Reuters journalists, who make up the world's largest multimedia news agency, must follow when creating news stories (Reuters, May 16 2016).

objects that are placed close together more likely to be perceived as a group (p. 863). Wong

(2010) also identifies the "Gestalt principle of similarity," which outlines that factors like colour,

size and shape are used to organize information into categories (p. 863). This parallels the

"exemplar view of categorization" which states that consumers will compare an unfamiliar

exemplar to known ones based on the similarity of their characteristics (Cohen & Basu, 1987, p.

460). In visual practice, elements like font, type size, organization and white space are unified to

make information seem related.

In sum, this literature review has provided an overview of some of the dominant themes

that scholarly literature has analyzed through discussions on native advertising. The literature has

covered the creation of added-value content through framing, recognition of *persuasion attempts*

and the creation of synergy in contextual surroundings. This literature, presented within the

context of native advertising becoming an increasingly popular form of advertising by both new

and legacy media, has closely informed the research questions, identified in the next section.

Research Questions

This MRP seeks to answer two research questions, both aligned with the main themes outlined in the literature review: the creation of added-value content through framing, the recognition of *persuasion attempts*, and the creation of synergy in contextual surroundings. A pilot project, this MRP will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. How do in-feed native advertisements in *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* comparatively utilize attribute and goal framing as a method of persuasion?

2. To what extent do in-feed native advertisements in *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* comparatively demonstrate persuasion and similarity to contextual surroundings?

These research questions will be answered by analyzing the samples described in the Methodology section that follows.

Methodology

Data Collection

Native advertisements present paid content in a manner aligned with a publication's editorial content, employing framing, persuasion and contextual similarity to engage readers without hiding the content's sponsored nature. In order to answer this MRP's research questions, a qualitative content analysis was performed. To ensure that the methodology matched the scope of this MRP, 10 samples of native advertising were manually gathered from two of North America's most popular online publishers–*BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* (Alexa Internet Inc., 2016). These samples provide examples as to how both new and legacy media are utilizing native advertising. Samples selected were published online within the 2015 calendar year and were produced by publication staff. All of the samples were also examples of in-feed native advertisements, given this method's popularity within the industry (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2013). Before choosing the final samples, a long-list was first created. The *New York Times* has displayed the 56 in-feed native advertisements their T-Brand Studio has created in 2015 on the native advertising unit's website. This figure served as the baseline when gathering *BuzzFeed* samples since *BuzzFeed* had hundreds of examples of native advertisements throughout 2015. In the absence of a fully-functioning site search bar, the 56 examples of *BuzzFeed* native advertising were taken from a Google search using the search terms 'brand publisher site: *BuzzFeed*' within the past year, as 'brand publisher' is the nomenclature *BuzzFeed* uses to identify sponsored content (Vinderslev, 2015). The 56 most recent results formed the *BuzzFeed* portion of the 112 sample long list.

After the long-list of 112 total samples was gathered, each was labeled according to the month they appeared as well as their general thematic category. Examples of these categories

include: tourism, entertainment, food, technology, financial and transportation. The long-list was then narrowed down systematically so that five samples from each publication were ultimately chosen for analysis. This was done by selecting the five months with the most sample content in each publication and then randomly choosing sample advertisements within 10 different categories. The final sample set is shown in Table 1.

Given that this MRP examines how digital native advertising currently functions in major publications, choosing samples from the most recent calendar year ensured that the data reflects current practices. Selecting samples that cover a wide range of thematic categories also ensured the sample set is a diverse reflection of native advertising published for a variety of brands in both publications, which produces more overarching answers to the research questions. The samples identified were analyzed using a multi-modal qualitative content analysis, as described in the Data Analysis Method, below.

Table 1

Sample Set Chosen for Content Analysis

Sample #	Advertisement Title	Sponsor	Publication	Month
BF1	10 Truths all Pasta Lovers Can Relate To	Barilla	BuzzFeed	December
BF2	11 Inspirational Posters That Perfectly Sum Up Friendsgiving	Dewar's	BuzzFeed	November
BF3	10 Things You Probably Didn't Know About Texas	Texas Tourism	BuzzFeed	March
BF4	Dear Kitten: Regarding Friendship	Friskies	BuzzFeed	August
BF5	22 CBC Shows Every Canadian Needs in Their Life	CBC	BuzzFeed	September
NYT1	Cruising Towards Zero	Volvo	New York Times	January
NYT2	Going the Distance	Cartier	New York Times	July
NYT3	College is Still Worth it, Despite Rising Costs	Discover Student Loans	New York Times	June
NYT4	Win at Digital by Combining Technologies	Accenture	New York Times	July
NYT5	Paths to Success	Walmart	New York Times	October

Data Analysis

The 10 samples identified in the data collection represented a range of in-feed native advertisements that appeared in *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* in 2015. These samples were analyzed using a multi-modal qualitative content analysis (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011) using a

codebook as the primary instrument for analysis. This method of analysis was chosen due to its

manageability given the limited scope of the MRP, as well as its flexibility in allowing for

features to be added to the codebook as coding continued. This method was also chosen because

it allowed for multiple types of media to be coded and included measurements for both the

frequency of words and the appearance of latent themes (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Full coding

results of all samples were captured in Appendix 3. Coding measured both visual and textual

elements within each sample. The elements the research questions sought to address, as defined

by the concepts and theories presented in the literature review, were included as features in the

codebook, ensuring that this information is tracked and measured directly. Each feature

measured was defined and explained in Table 2.

      After the 10 samples were coded, the results from each sample were summarized and

further discussed in relation to a number of the theories and concepts identified in the literature

in order to come to a general conclusion about how native advertising was framed and displayed

within both *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times*. The literature on salience and added value

content offered a preliminary overview for understanding the purpose native advertising aims to

serve. Tutaj and van Reijmersdal's (2012) concepts of perceived value and Preston's (1967)

explanation of added value theory provided a reference point for measuring whether this MRP's

samples were aligned with the identified purposes of native advertising. The literature on

framing also provided a point of measurement. As Entman (1993) explains, the major task in a

content analysis should be to identify and describe the frames used in order to measure the level

of salience of elements in the text (57). Levin et al.'s (1998) definition of attribute and goal

framing was also used to analyze what type of framing the samples employ.

The literature on *persuasion knowledge* (Friestad & Wright, 1994) and disclosure labels (Wojdynski & Evans, 2014) also provided several measurements for analysis of sample content. This includes the level of selling intent (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012) present in the samples as well as whether or not a disclosure label was present and what form it takes (Faraday, 2000). These factors helped explain whether native advertisements were presented as true advertising products. The level of selling intent present in each sample also offered some indication into how a brand inserted its product into the native advertisement.

Finally, the literature on credibility (Ponikvar, 2015) and brand extension (Herr et al., 1996) provided valuable measures to analyze whether context-ad synergy (Micu & Pentina, 2014) was present in the chosen samples and whether the identified publishers utilized brand extension when presenting their native advertisements. By looking at how native advertisements are organized in relation to editorial content on the page and what forms of media the advertisements utilize, this MRP also examined whether the samples employed contextual similarity through the lens of context-ad synergy (Micu & Pentina, 2014), source credibility (van Reijmersdal et al., 2005), categorization (Cohen & Basu, 1987) and the Gestalt principles of perception and similarity (Wong,2010).

The findings of the research questions as they relate to the coded samples are presented in the Findings section below. The results of the content analysis have indicated how native advertisements were framed and structured across both new and legacy media and offered insight into how the lines between promotional and editorial content are blurring through native advertising.

Table 2

Definition of Features Measured in Content Analysis

Feature	Definition and Explanation
1. Framing	The elevation of certain elements to salience (Entman, 1993).
1.1 Attribute Framing	Framing of an object's attributes or characteristics (Levin et al. , 1998). See Table 3 for examples.
1.2 Goal Framing	Framing of the consequence or implied goal of behaviour (Levin et al. 1998). See Table 3 for examples.
2. Persuasion	The usage of elements that affiliate the content with the sponsoring brand.
2.1 Selling Intent	Language used to convince a reader to take the action of purchasing a product. See Appendix 2 for an example.
2.2 Positive Positioning	Usage of words and phrases that highlight the positive attributes of a brand or product. See Appendix 2 for an example.
2.3 Mention of Brand Name	The inclusion of the company name within the native advertisement's content. This demonstrates selling intent (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012)
2.4 First Mention of Brand Name	The earliest instance of the inclusion of the company name within the native advertisement's content. This demonstrates selling intent (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012).
2.5 Inclusion of Traditional Ads	The addition of traditional (non-native) digital ads on the page. This demonstrates selling intent (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012). See Figure 5 for an example.
2.6 Company Logo	The inclusion of the company's visual identifier. This demonstrates selling intent (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012)
2.7 Call to Action (CTA) Frequency	The amount of times an image or line of text prompts the reader to do something (Business Dictionary, 2016). This demonstrates selling intent (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012).
2.8 Main Variation of CTA	The specified action the image or line of text prompts the reader to take (Business Dictionary, 2016). This demonstrates selling intent (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012) and visual hierarchy (Faraday, 2000). See pages 34-35 for examples.
2.9 Disclosure Label Positioning	The location of the disclosure label on the native advertisement. This allows for recognition of advertising (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012) and demonstrates visual hierarchy (Faraday, 2000).
2.10 Disclosure Label Frequency	The amount of times the disclosure label appears on the native advertisement. This allows for recognition of advertising (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012).
3. Similarity to Contextual Surroundings	Factors that make the advertisement look like editorial copy.
3.1 Type of Content	The visual format the advertisement appears in. This demonstrates context-ad synergy (Micu & Pentina, 2014) and categorization (Cohen & Basu, 1987).
3.2 Validity	The usage of quotes or facts. This demonstrates credibility (Reuters Handbook of Journalism, 2016).
3.3 Typeface	The page's font style and size in relation to links to editorial content. This demonstrates the Gestalt principle of similarity (Wong, 2010).
3.4 Distance	The distance between paid and editorial content on the page. This demonstrates the Gestalt principle of proximity (Wong, 2010).
3.5 Main Variation of Visual	The type of visual the native advertisement utilizes the most.

Findings

Thus far, this MRP has looked at the dominant themes that have emerged through both scholarly and industry literature on native advertisements. This section provides an overview of the results of the content analysis as related to the two research questions. It first looks at how framing was utilized across the sample set and then examines how usage of persuasion, and similarity to contextual surroundings appeared within the samples. Examples of each feature are illustrated with screenshots from the samples where possible. Findings are displayed comparatively using tables and charts when the results were found to be meaningful. Samples are referred to by both their sample number (shown in Table 1), and their sponsoring brand. Full samples can also be found in Appendix 1. Definitions of the elements measured can be found in Table 2.

Usage of Framing

This section presents the findings of the content analysis in relation to the following features: attribute framing and goal framing. Examples from the sample set displaying each feature are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Examples of Framing Features Found in Sample Set

Feature	Example
1.1 Attribute Framing	"The Plateaus is a twisted, dark, punk-rock comedy" (BF5)
	"It contains a dive-time indicator and the watch face is visible in the dark and underwater thanks to its Super-Luminova® coating." (NYT2)
1.2 Goal Framing	"Make perfectly 'al dente' pasta even easier with Barilla Pronto." (BF1)
	"In another car, I easily could have died. Now I feel really good about having bought a safe vehicle." (NYT1)

Usage of attribute framing.

Nine of the samples utilized attribute framing to some degree to frame a product's attributes or an associated event's attributes, as seen in Figure 1.
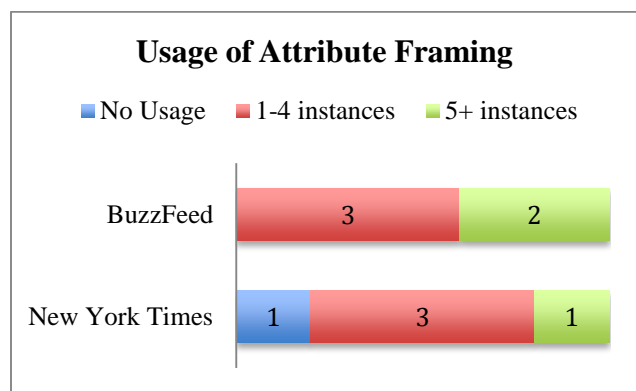

Figure 1-Usage of Attribute Framing

The type of attributes framed and the overt or subtle connection to the brand or product differed between the two publications. Attributes framed that specifically referenced the brand name or product were understood as overtly framed, while attributes framed that were tangentially related to the product or brand were understood as subtly framed. Attribute framing occurred the most in BF5–paid for by the CBC. In this sample–a list of CBC shows to watch– every caption was a description of the show's attributes. Here, attribute framing appeared to be used to make a very overt connection to the sponsoring brand–in this instance a media organization. BF4–paid for by Texas Tourism–also used attribute framing within every fact listed about Texas. The other *BuzzFeed* samples used attribute framing more subtly without reference to a specific product. In BF1–paid for by Barilla–attributes framed included sauciness and texture. Neither of these overtly related to the company's Barilla Pronto product mentioned at the end of the advertisement, but they did frame elements of the overarching product (pasta). This method of attribute framing also occurred in BF3– paid for by Dewar's. In this sample, Dewar's was framed in relation to an event–Friendsgiving. The event's attributes that were

framed included leftovers and good lighting. BF2– paid for by Friskies–used attribute framing only once in reference to "moist, delicious wet food" (2:00-2:05).

The *New York Times* samples displayed similar results, although one sample– NYT4-paid for by Accenture– did not use attribute framing at all. Two of the samples–NYT1–paid for by Volvo– and NYT2–paid for by Cartier–used attribute framing frequently to refer to a product's features in relation to safety and utility. In NYT1, attributes of the product that were framed included quality materials and safety features. These were overtly mentioned throughout the advertisement. NYT2 similarly used attribute framing to overtly highlight product features as related to utility. In NYT5–paid for by Walmart–attributes framed were directly related to the company's values, like their "strategic priority to engage employees" (para. 6). And, in NYT3– attribute framing was used to demonstrate Discover Student Loans' expertise in the industry– framing characteristics of student loans in general, rather than the official product. Overall, this portion of the content analysis found that while both *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* utilized attribute framing, The *New York Times* appeared to do so more overtly.

Usage of goal framing.

Goal framing was not used as often as attribute framing, but it did still occur in 7 of the 10 samples, as seen in Figure 2.

Usage of Goal Framing

■ No Usage   ■ 1-4 instances   ■ 5+ instances

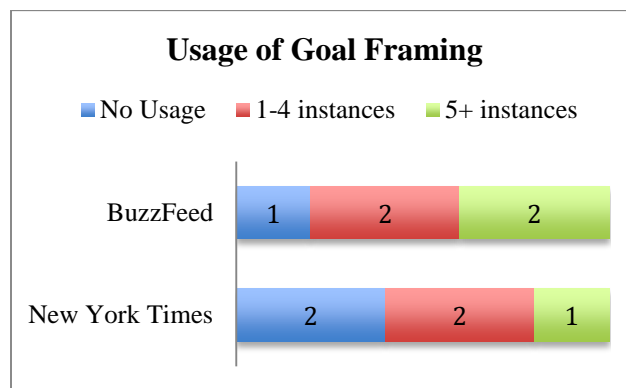|	No Usage	1-4 instances	5+ instances
BuzzFeed	1	2	2
New York Times	2	2	1

Figure 2-Usage of Goal Framing

The *BuzzFeed* samples contained the most instances of goal framing between the two publications, but here, the goals were implied in a lighter tone. *BuzzFeed* utilized goal framing by highlighting the action the reader should take when engaging with the product. For example, in BF1–paid for by Barilla–goals framed included eating more sauce, eating more pasta and making "perfect" pasta easily. All of these goals were framed through the usage of text and images, which appeared as GIFs within the sample. Rather than saying: 'eat more sauce' or 'eat more pasta,' the GIFs framed these messages subtly and were drawn out by attempting to understand what message the text and image conveyed to the reader. This method of goal framing also occurred in BF3–paid for by Dewar's–again by subtly suggesting the action the reader should take when engaging in the event–for example, staying out of the kitchen, saving space for dessert and drinking Dewar's. In BF5–paid for by CBC–goal framing was closely related to the attributes framed. For example, following attribute framing of the *Newborn Moms* TV show–goal framing occurred, inviting readers to "Party in the comfort of your own home! Grab a drink and join these women" (para. 1).

In The *New York Times* samples, goal framing was used to subtly reference changes in behaviour in relation to themes like safety and knowledge. In NYT1–paid for by Volvo–goal framing was used to highlight safety practices one should utilize while driving, such as: "Sleep-deprived drivers pose an all-too-common danger" (Actively Safer section, para. 4). Here, the goal framed was for one to not drive when tired. In NYT3–paid for by Discover Student Loans–goal framing was used to encourage parents and students to become more informed about the student loan process. And, in NYT4–paid for by Accenture–goal framing was used to encourage a change in company operations to increase efficiency and adopt digital practices. In general, this

portion of the content analysis found that goal framing was utilized less by both publications than attribute framing and that when it was used it was used very subtly.

Usage of Persuasion

This section presents the findings of the content analysis in relation to the following features: usage of selling intent, positive positioning, mention of brand name, first mention of brand name, inclusion of traditional ads, company logo, CTA frequency, main variation of CTA, disclosure label positioning and disclosure label frequency.

Usage of selling intent.

Selling intent occurred in seven of the 10 samples and occurred more often in the *BuzzFeed* samples than The *New York Times* samples. In the *BuzzFeed* samples, selling intent occurred only one time in three of the samples–BF1–paid for by Barilla, BF2–paid for by Friskies and BF3–paid for by Dewar's. In BF1 and BF3–selling intent appeared at the end of the content with a brief statement that summed up the product ("Make perfectly 'al dente' pasta even easier with Barilla Pronto. One pan. No boil. No drain pasta" in BF1 and "Dewar's 12-For those that Live True but also Give True." in BF3). In BF2, selling intent occurred mid-way into the video, with "Nothing shows that the human loves us more than her offerings of moist delicious wet food, it says so much more than she could ever say" (2:00-2:05). And in in BF5 paid for by CBC–selling intent occurred 22 times..

In The *New York Times* samples, selling intent occurred only once in three of the samples–NYT1–paid for by Volvo, NYT3–paid for by Discover Student Loans and NYT4–paid for by Accenture. In each of these examples, selling intent was demonstrated by showing how the sponsoring brand's product offered a solution to a given problem. In NYT1, the advertisement talked about the issue of safety, and selling intent was demonstrated through this

quote with a Volvo user: "In another car, I easily could have died. Now I feel really good about having bought a safe vehicle, and about being around to see my little boy grow up" (para. 3). In NYT3, the advertisement addresses a lack of knowledge about the student loan process; selling intent was demonstrated by presenting the findings of a Discover Student Loans annual survey throughout the content, and then linking the reader to the company's website to learn more. NYT4 follows a similar approach, indicating that a problem for businesses is a lack of centralized strategy and then demonstrating selling intent very subtly by presenting Accenture as a company that offers a solution. This portion of the content analysis found that selling intent occurred throughout most of the *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* samples, but that it did occur more within the *BuzzFeed* samples.

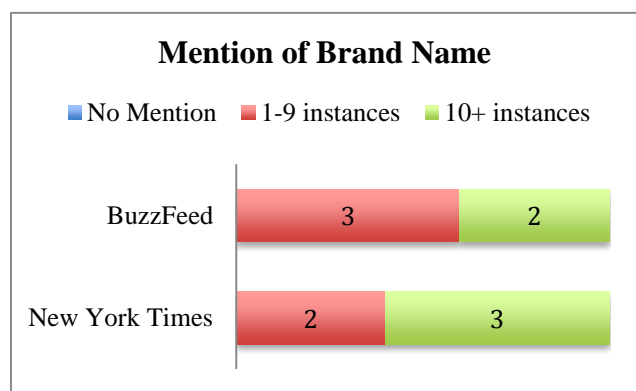**Usage of positive positioning.**

All the samples utilized positive positioning, with the majority of samples using low amounts (1-4 instances per advertisement) and others using high amounts (over 5 instances per advertisement). The results were consistent between both the *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* samples. In the *BuzzFeed* samples, brands were positively positioned in relation to overall themes such as happiness (BF1–paid for by Barilla and BF2–paid for by Friskies), giving (BF3– paid for by Dewar's), place (BF4–paid for by Texas Tourism) and uniqueness (BF5–paid for by CBC).

In The *New York Times* samples, brands were positively positioned in relation to overall themes such as quality (NYT1–paid for by Volvo), exploration (NYT2–paid for by Cartier), knowledge (NYT3–paid for by Discover Student Loans and NYT4–paid for by Accenture) and opportunity (NYT5–paid for by Walmart). Altogether, this portion of the content analysis found

that both *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* used positive positioning, with little difference

between the two publications.

Mention of brand name.

All of the samples mentioned brand name within the content, as seen in Figure 3. In the

BuzzFeed samples, the majority of content–BF1–paid for by Barilla, BF3–paid for by Dewar's

and BF4–paid for by Texas Tourism–had low mention of brand name (under 9 mentions per

advertisement). In BF2–paid for by Friskies, there were 7mentions of brand name, but this was

only presented visually within the video and never mentioned verbally. In BF5–paid for by CBC,

there was also high mention of brand name (over 10 mentions per advertisement), but this was

largely in relation to the names of certain shows or stations like "CBC News" or "CBC Arts."

Mention of Brand Name

■No Mention ■1-9 instances ■10+ instances

	1-9 instances	10+ instances
BuzzFeed	3	2
New York Times	2	3

Figure 3-Mention of Brand Name

The majority of The *New York Times* samples had high usage of brand name within

visuals, text and verbal instances. NYT1–paid for by Volvo–displayed the highest mention of

brand name, with 39 mentions of the brand name throughout the content. Most of these mentions

occurred within the content's text and within the two videos (where there was an even divide

between the brand name being displayed visually and mentioned verbally.) NYT5–paid for by

Walmart, displayed 14 mentions of brand name and NYT2–paid for by Cartier, displayed 11

mentions. NYT3–paid for by Discover Student Loans and NYT4–paid for by Accenture, displayed low mention of brand name with seven and six mentions respectively.

First mention of brand name.

The first mention of brand name varied between the two publications, as seen in Figure 4. All of The *New York Times* samples first mentioned brand name mid-way into the content or earlier, while two of the *BuzzFeed* samples–BF1–paid for by Barilla and BF3–paid for by Dewar's–did not mention brand name until the end.

In sum, this portion of the content analysis found that while both *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* displayed the sponsoring brand's name within the content, The *New York Times* did this at a higher volume and mentioned the brand name earlier than *BuzzFeed.*
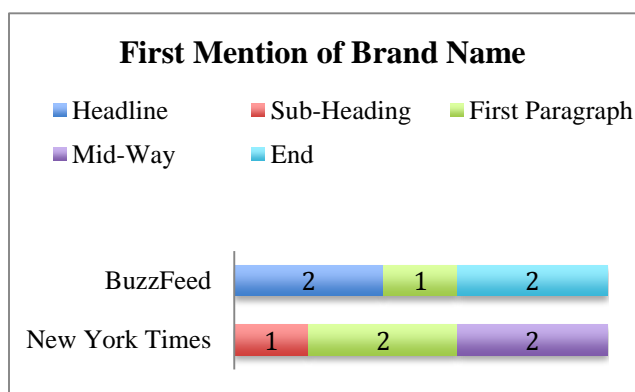
Figure 4-First Mention of Brand Name

Inclusion of traditional ads.

Traditional advertisements were not included in any of the samples with the exception of NYT2–paid for by Cartier. This example can be seen in Figure 5. This advertisement appeared at the bottom of the native advertisement, immediately above the bottom disclosure label. This portion of the content analysis found that traditional advertisements were very uncommon within The *New York Times* samples and did not occur at all within the *BuzzFeed* samples.

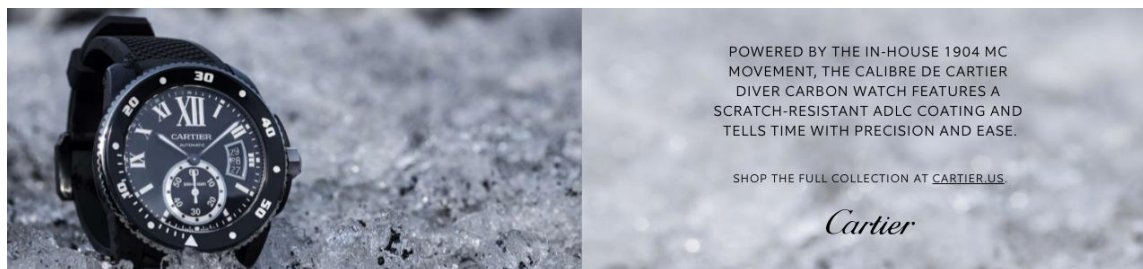**Figure 5-Example of a traditional advertisement within a *The New York Times* sample.**
Source: NYT2

Inclusion of company logo.

Eight of the 10 samples included the company's logo at least once on the advertisement's

page. Results were consistent between both *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* samples. In the

BuzzFeed sample BF2–paid for by Friskies and in The *New York Times* sample NYT5–paid for

by Walmart–there was particularly high usage of the logo, appearing seven times in BF2 and

eight times in NYT5. Generally, this portion of the content analysis found that the majority of

BuzzFeed and The *New York Times* samples included the brand's logo on the content page.

Call to action frequency.

All of the samples used calls to action, but the *BuzzFeed* samples used a greater overall

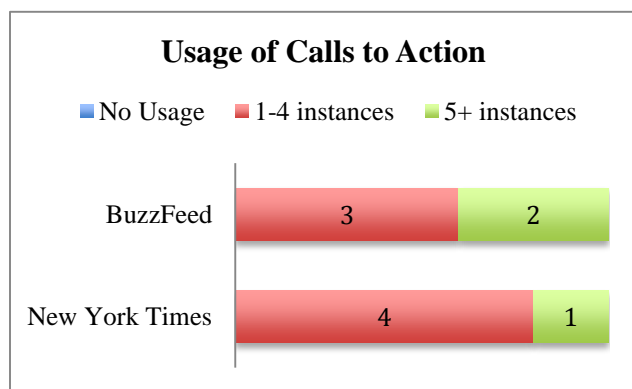quantity of them than The *New York Times* samples, as seen in Figure 6.
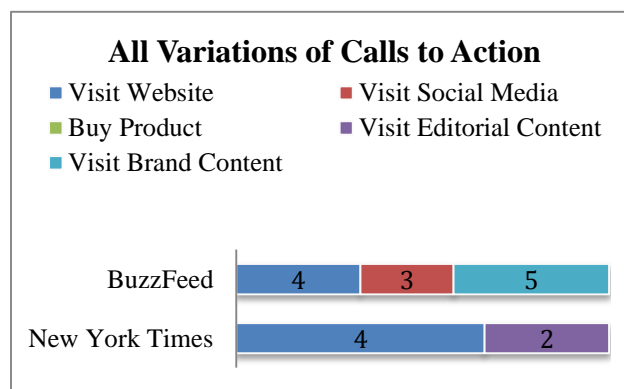

Figure 6-Usage of Calls to Action

Figure 7-All Variations of Calls to Action

Main variation of call to action.

The two publications varied in the types of CTAs they used, as seen in Figure 7. The most popular form of CTA on *BuzzFeed* content was to visit related brand content. This occurred in all of the *BuzzFeed* samples. An example of this variation, taken from BF5–paid for by CBC, is shown in Figure 8.
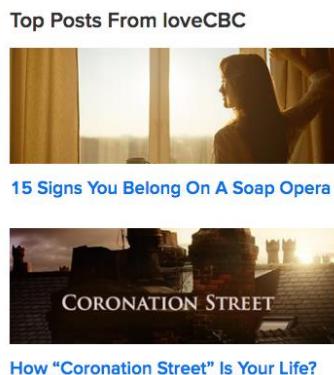
Figure 8-Example of CTA to visit related brand content.
Source: BF5

Figure 9-Example of a CTA to visit social media.
Source: BF2

CTAs to visit social media also occurred in *BuzzFeed* samples BF2–paid for by Friskies, BF3–paid for by Dewar's and BF5–paid for by CBC. An example of this variation, taken from BF2, is shown in Figure 9. *BuzzFeed* samples BF1–paid for by Barilla, BF2, BF4–paid for by Texas Tourism and BF5 also all included CTAs to visit external websites, mainly the product or brand's websites. These CTAs appeared as hyperlinks throughout the text.

In The *New York Times* samples, the most common form of CTA was to visit external websites. While all samples did this through hyperlinks within the text, some also appeared as buttons at the bottom of the page, as seen in an example from NYT3–paid for by Discover Student Loans, in Figure 10.

Figure 10-Example of CTA to visit external website.

Figure 11-Example of CTA to visit related editorial content.

Some of The *New York Times* samples also included CTAs to visit related editorial content, as seen in an example from NYT1–paid for by Vol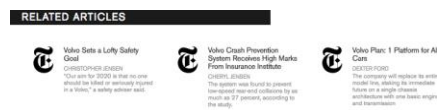vo–in Figure 11. In NYT1 this was the most common form of CTA to appear. This type of CTA also appeared in NYT3–paid for by Discover Student Loans. Overall, this portion of the content analysis revealed that CTAs were popular in both publications, but that the variation of them differed between the two.

Disclosure label positioning.

In the *BuzzFeed* samples, disclosure labels appeared at the top of each sample as "Brand Publisher," which was placed beside the brand's name and logo at the top of the page under the advertisement's headline, but above the content. An example of this can be seen in Figure 12.
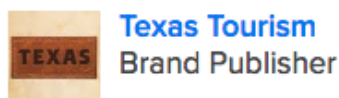
Figure 12-Example of *BuzzFeed* disclosure label.
Source: BF4

In all of The *New York Times* samples, the label "paid post" appeared at the top of every sample alongside the brand name and remained floating at the top as you scrolled down the page so that the disclosure label was always visible. An example of this can be seen in Figure 13.
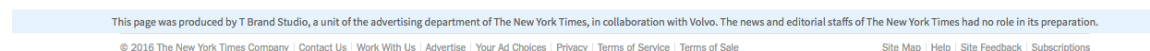

Figure 13-Example of The *New York Times* disclosure label at the top of page.
Source: NYT4

Disclosure label frequency.

In the BuzzFeed samples, four of the five advertisements had only one disclosure label, although there was no indicator provided as to what a brand publisher was. In BF3–paid for by Dewar's–an additional disclosure in the form of copyright text also appeared at the bottom of the text ("Enjoy Responsibly. C 2015. John Dewar & Sons Company").

In every The *New York Times* sample, two disclosure labels appeared. All The *New York Times* samples also included a line at the bottom of the content that stated that the paper's editorial staff had no involvement in the native advertisement's creation. An example of this can be seen in Figure 14.

In sum, this portion of the content analysis found that the appearance and placement of disclosure labels varied greatly between *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times*, with the latter publication using more disclosure labels and language that clearly indicated that the content had been paid for.

This page was produced by T Brand Studio, a unit of the advertising department of The New York Times, in collaboration with Volvo. The news and editorial staffs of The New York Times had no role in its preparation.

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Figure 14-Example of The *New York Times* disclosure label at the bottom of page.
Source: NYT5

Similarity to Contextual Surroundings

This section presents the findings of the content analysis in relation to the following features: type of content, usage of validity, difference in typeface, distance and main variation of visuals.

Type of content.

All of the samples followed formats typically used by editorial stories within each publication. The formats varied depending on the publication, reflecting the different editorial styles of the two publications as well as their different audiences. The differences in format are

illustrated in Figure 15. All of the *BuzzFeed* samples with the exception of BF2–paid for by

Friskies, were listicles. BF2 was presented as a video. The *New York Times* samples used both

feature (NYT1–paid for by Volvo and NYT5–paid for by Walmart) and graphic formats (NYT2–

paid for by Cartier and NYT3–paid for by Discover Student Loans) equally while NYT4–paid

for by Accenture was presented in a news story format.

Overall, this portion of the content analysis seemed to showcase that *BuzzFeed* and The

New York Times employed very different formats for their native advertising, reflecting both the

diverse formats available and the differences in editorial content between the two publications.

Format of Content

■ Feature ■ News ■ Listicle ■ Video ■ Other

BuzzFeed: 4, 1
New York Times: 2, 1, 2
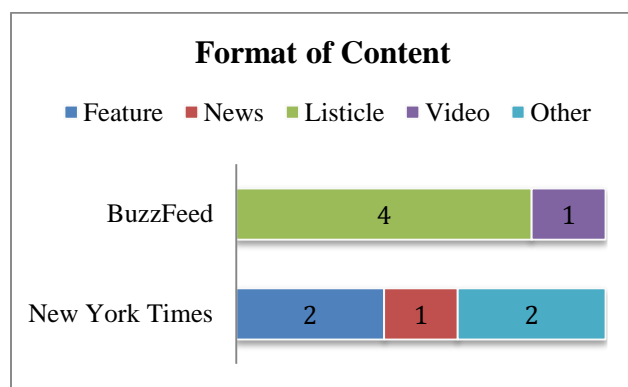
Figure 15-Format of Content.

Usage of validity.

The two publications differed widely in their usage of validity. Only one *BuzzFeed*

sample–BF5–paid for by CBC–used quotes. These quotes–for example "Beta-it's the future"

(Young Drunk Punk section, para. 1) and "intimate relations with intelligence targets" (The

Romeo Section section, para. 1) were not attributed and were merely used to describe aspects of

each show. The *New York Times* samples, on the other hand, all used quotes with the exception

of one–NYT3–paid for by Discover Student Loans. In all of these samples, quotes were used

multiple times throughout the content and were attributed to multiple sources. Generally, this

portion of the content analysis found that *BuzzFeed* rarely utilized quotes, while The *New York Times* utilized them consistently.

These results were consistent with the findings regarding facts. Only two *BuzzFeed* samples–BF1–paid for by Barilla and BF4–paid for by Texas Tourism–contained facts. In BF1 the only fact used described the cooking format of the product at the end of the advertisement: "One pan. No boil. No drain pasta." In BF4 facts about Texas, like: "Palo Duro Canyon in the panhandle is America's second-largest canyon" made up the entire advertisement (para. 1). All of The *New York Times* samples utilized facts multiple times throughout the content. Facts were displayed throughout the various visuals and text. Some referenced specific product features like NYT1–paid for by Volvo: "the Volvo XC90's City Safety system uses a mix of forward-looking cameras and radar to I.D. vehicles" (Protecting Pedestrians section, para. 2). Others referenced facts in relation to place, like NYT2–paid for by Cartier: "The best known fact about this small northern town in the Atacama desert is that it's in the driest place in the world" (San Pedro de Atacama section, para. 1). Others, like NYT3, NYT4–paid for by Accenture and NYT5–paid for by Walmart–mainly used facts that referenced statistics or report findings, like this example in NYT5-Walmart: "According to a 2013 study by Gallup, when organizations successfully engage their customers and employees, they experience a 240% boost across key business outcomes compared with organizations that don't" (para. 2).

In summary, this portion of the content analysis found that overall, measures of validity were used sparingly by *BuzzFeed* and much more often by The *New York Times*.

Difference in Typeface.

No links to editorial content were found in *BuzzFeed* samples. In The *New York Times* samples, links to editorial content appeared in NYT1–paid for by Volvo and NYT3–paid for by

Discover Student Loans. While NYT3–as seen in Figure 16–utilized a different typeface between advertisement and editorial content, the font size was not noticeably different. In NYT1–as seen in Figure 17, both the typeface and font size of 'Related Articles' appeared the same as the 'Towards Zero' part of the advertisement. This portion of the content analysis largely found that both *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* had minimal distance between the native advertisement and links to editorial content and that when direct links to specific editorial content were found on the page, such as in two The *New York Times* samples, there was not consistently a difference in typeface between the native advertisement and editorial content.
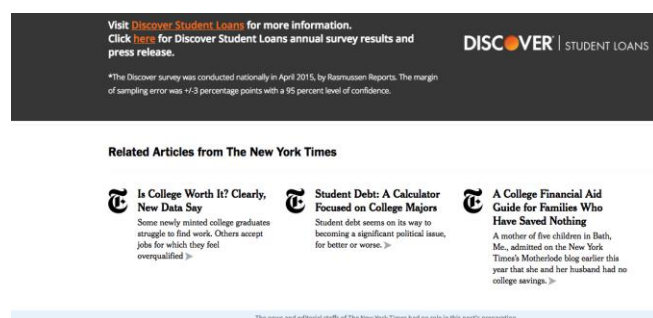
Figure 16- Typeface and Distance.
Source: NYT3

Figure 17-Example of Typeface
Source: NYT1

Distance.

While none of the samples had editorial content directly on the page, the majority of them included links to editorial content. An explanation of the measures of distance can be found in Appendix 2. In the *BuzzFeed* samples, the headline of each advertisement sat immediately below the website's menu, which linked to various editorial pages across the website. An example of this from BF4–paid for by Texas Tourism can be seen in Figure 18. This level of distance is consistent throughout all *BuzzFeed* samples.

Figure 18-Example of distance.
Source: BF4

In The *New York Times* samples, links to related editorial content appeared immediately below the end of the native advertisement. In NYT3–paid for by Discover Student Loans–three articles written by The *New York Times* editorial staff about Discover Student Loans were linked immediately below the native advertisement, as seen again in Figure 16. This finding was consistent with NYT1–paid for by Volvo–which also linked to editorial content.

Main Variation of Visual.

Each publication used visuals differently, as shown in Figure 19. *BuzzFeed* samples BF1–paid for by Barilla and BF5–paid for by CBC used GIFs to visually present information. In BF1 these GIFs were graphical depictions of pasta. In BF5 these GIFs were screen captures from each CBC show advertised. BF4–paid for by Texas Tourism–used photos to visually depict facts about Texas, and BF3-Dewar's–used photos with text overlaid to depict elements of "Friendsgiving."[5] Given the content format of BF2–paid for by Friskies, the only visual used was a video.

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[5] Friendsgiving is the colloquial term for celebrating Thanksgiving with your friends, as opposed to your family (Spiegel, 2013).
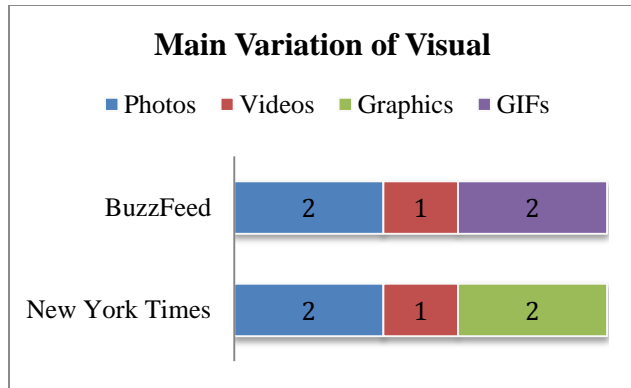
Figure 19-Main Variation of Visual.

In The *New York Times* samples, content was presented through multiple methods. Most of the samples used multiple variations of visuals to present content. Graphics and photos were the most commonly used visual. NYT1–paid for by Volvo, NYT3–paid for by Discover Student Loans, NYT4–paid for by Accenture and NYT5–paid for by Walmart all utilized graphics. NYT1, NYT2–paid for by Cartier and NYT5 utilized photos, although they appeared in different forms. In NYT1, the photos appeared in a photo gallery at the end of the content. In NYT2 photos appeared as backdrops to the text and in NYT5, they were integrated throughout the content and appeared with captions. Three of the samples–NYT1, NYT2 and NYT3 also contained videos. While the videos in NYT1 and NYT2 were interviews with subjects mentioned in the content and related to the overall story, in NYT3, the video appeared as a static, silent video.

In sum, this portion of the content analysis found that there was variation in the visuals utilized by *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times*, but that photos were the main commonality between the two publications.

Summary of Findings

This section has presented the findings of the qualitative content analysis of *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* samples through the themes of framing, persuasion and contextual

41

similarity. In the following section, these findings are discussed and analyzed further through the

theoretical and conceptual lenses outlined in the literature review, answering this MRP's

research questions.

Discussion

This section discusses and analyzes the findings of the content analysis outlined in the previous section, in relation to the theories and concepts mentioned in the literature review and research questions. Usage of framing is first discussed in relation to framing theory (Entman, 1993) and added value theory (Mayer, 1958). Then, usage of persuasion is discussed in relation to selling intent (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012), the persuasion knowledge model (Friestad & Wright, 1994) and the model of visual hierarchy (Faraday, 2000). Finally, similarity to contextual surroundings is discussed in relation to context-ad synergy (Micu & Pentina, 2014), source credibility theory (van Reijmersdal et al., 2005), categorization theory (Cohen & Basu, 1987) and Gestalt theory (Wong, 2010). This is followed by a general discussion of the findings.

Usage of Framing

This section discusses how the findings of the content analysis answer RQ1: How do in-feed native advertisements in *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* comparatively utilize attribute and goal framing as a method of persuasion? The findings indicate that advertisers in both publications opted to frame product or event attributes within native advertisements. Goals were not framed as often as attributes, but advertisers in both publications also utilized this method of framing. Framing allows an advertiser to position a brand in a specific way–selecting attributes and goals most aligned with the brand's interests. The implication of both types of framing being utilized by both publications is that advertisers in all instances have been able to control how the brand or product is presented, highlighting the attributes and goals deemed relevant. Consumers may then not be presented with the full picture of the product, as they might in a piece of editorial content about the same product.

Framing theory analysis.

Framing theory suggests that advertisers choose to highlight certain information in order to elevate it to importance (Entman, 1993). Based on the findings, it is evident that both *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* utilize framing to present the reader with specific information about the product or brand. In every sample coded, the brand has attached its product to the advertisement's story theme. This theme forms the topic of the content. Through attribute and goal framing, the brand inserts its product into the native advertisement itself.

While there was not a particularly meaningful difference between the amount of attribute and goal framing used by *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* samples, the findings demonstrate a difference in the overtness or subtlety employed by each publication. The majority of *BuzzFeed* samples only faintly referenced the attributes of the products being advertised, and most also utilized goal framing subtly. The *New York Times* samples that utilized attribute framing all utilized it overtly to describe the attributes of the products being advertised, but they subtly used goal framing as related to issues of safety and knowledge. These results suggest that while native advertisements in *BuzzFeed* contained elements of framing, these elements may not be immediately clear to readers since they were not overtly tied to the product or brand. Native advertisements in The *New York Times* presented the attributes of each product, but the goals the advertiser opted to frame also may not be immediately clear to readers, since they were implied rather than directly stated.

Added value theory analysis.

Added value theory (Mayer, 1958) suggests that in order for an advertisement to be effective, it must provide the reader with useful and interesting information. By framing certain features of the brand or product, a consumer's perception of the brand will change. Given the

scope of this MRP, a pilot study, it was not possible to measure whether consumers found the samples informative, entertaining or irritating (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012, p. 7) and whether they chose to engage with the content (Lord & Petrevu, 1993) but it was possible to examine the elements framed in relation to both the general information provided in the advertisement and the brand itself.

BuzzFeed samples framed elements that were directly related to the general information provided in the advertisement. Framed elements like sauciness (BF1–paid for by Barilla) fit in with the topic "10 Truths All Pasta Lovers Can Relate To," a theme directly linked to the pasta brand. The *New York Times* samples framed elements that seemed to elevate the brand itself to salience, given the choice of elements framed. Elements like safety (NYT1–paid for by Volvo) and company values (NYT5–paid for by Walmart) both positively reflected on the companies themselves. These findings indicate that readers could associate each brand with the elements framed, depending on whether added value theory was met, a topic that could be examined with further study.

The remainder of this discussion examines how the findings of the content analysis answer RQ2: To what extent do in-feed native advertisements in *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* comparatively demonstrate persuasion and similarity to contextual surroundings?

Usage of Persuasion

Native advertisements in *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* displayed strong levels of persuasion by positively positioning the product or brand being advertised in the native advertisement, mentioning the brand's name throughout the content and including the brand's logo. The type of CTA varied between the two publications, but both used CTAs to invite readers to view other content related to the brand in some form. These results indicate that

brands have utilized a variety of methods within the native advertisements to increase a consumer's brand awareness and further engage them beyond the native advertisement by linking the brand's other digital channels throughout the advertisement.

The findings also demonstrate that both publications utilized disclosure labels in a consistent manner across all the samples, which meets the legal obligations outlined by the Federal Trade Commission (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2013). Their format and frequency differed between the two publications, which is consistent with Wojdynski and Evans' (2014) findings that the appearance of disclosure labels vary from publication to publication.. The *New York Times* samples contained disclosure labels that clearly indicated that the content had been paid for by a third party, which could help a reader understand that this content was not The *New York Times* editorial content. The *BuzzFeed* samples did not contain such clear language, which could lead readers to believe the content is *BuzzFeed* editorial content. A main implication of this potential confusion is an ethical issue of concealment. If an advertiser or publication has not used language that readers can understand as paid content, they may be unintentionally concealing their involvement in the production of the content as well as the brand's own interests and selling intent (Wojdynski, 2016).

Selling intent analysis.

Selling intent is one element consumers notice when looking at an advertisement (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012). Advertisements with higher degrees of noticeable selling intent have been found to be more "irritating" than ads with less noticeable or less frequent displays of selling intent (Tutaj & van Reijmersdal, 2012). Most of the native advertisements sampled in *BuzzFeed* and Th*e New York Times* appeared to contain minimal use of noticeable selling intent. *BuzzFeed* used more noticeable selling intent than The *New York Times*, but this was only

marginally different. Interestingly, only one sample – a The *New York Times* (NYT2) advertisement – also contained a traditional advertisement. Less noticeable forms of persuasion, related to the sponsoring brand – such as positive positioning, and inclusion of company logo were found consistently between both publications. While *BuzzFeed* utilized more CTAs, The *New York Times* had much higher mentions of brand name and displayed brand name much earlier than *BuzzFeed*.

Based on these overarching findings, native advertisements in The *New York Times* displayed more *persuasion attempts* than native advertisements in *BuzzFeed*. Further research should be done to examine whether this leads to greater consumer irritation with the native advertisements in The *New York Times*, or if other elements, such as the high-quality content format subvert the effects of selling intent as demonstrated by the high usage of persuasion.

Persuasion knowledge model analysis.

As Cain (2011) argues, the main purpose of disclosure labels is to activate *persuasion knowledge*, which Friestad and Wright (1994) identify as the method by which consumers process persuasive attempts. In order for *persuasion knowledge* to be activated, consumers must first be able to recognize an advertisement as paid content. The disclosure labels used by both *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* were worded differently and contained varying amounts of information, which could impact whether a reader perceived the content as an advertisement or as editorial content. *BuzzFeed* used the disclosure label "Brand Publisher," but there was no indication as to what this meant. Clicking on the hyperlinked brand name lead to a page with related brand content on the *BuzzFeed* site. Finding out what "Brand Publisher" meant required further research on the website. The *New York Times,* on the other hand, clearly indicated that

specific companies had paid for the native advertisements and that only advertising staff were involved in the production of the content.

These findings indicate that readers may not activate *persuasion knowledge* when viewing *BuzzFeed* native advertising since they may not recognize the content as advertising. Readers of The *New York Times* native advertisements may activate *persuasion knowledge* since the advertisement is labeled as paid multiple times throughout the content. While it is beyond the scope of this MRP to measure how consumers could in turn process these *persuasion attempts*, the Persuasion Knowledge Model suggests that feelings about the topic and the advertiser will also influence how a consumer processes the native advertisement (Friestad & Wright, 1994).

Visual hierarchy analysis.

The presence of disclosure labels is not the only factor that impacts whether a consumer can adequately process an advertisement as paid content. The location of the disclosure label also has implications. According to Faraday's (2000) model of visual hierarchy, disclosure labels posted above the content will not gain a reader's attention in the same way that disclosure labels posted in the middle or at the end of the content would. This model suggests that the *BuzzFeed* disclosure labels, which all appear above the content, may not gain a reader's attention. In contrast, the *New York Times* top disclosure labels appear as readers continue to scroll down the page and they also appear at the bottom of each page, suggesting that this placement will gain a reader's attention.

This analysis can be directly related to the analysis of *persuasion knowledge*. Since disclosure labels catalyze recognition of advertising, if they themselves are prone to not being seen, as the model of visual hierarchy suggests for *BuzzFeed* content, it is unlikely that the native

advertisements in *BuzzFeed* are recognized as advertisements by readers. Further research should be done to test this theory in this environment.

Similarity to Contextual Surroundings

BuzzFeed and The *New York Times* native advertisements both demonstrated a high degree of contextual similarity with editorial content. Both publications utilized formats akin to editorial content in each publication and also included multimedia elements. While The *New York Times* included far more examples of validity than *BuzzFeed*, both publications had minimal distance between the native advertisement and links to editorial content. The *New York Times* also had minimal differences in typeface between the advertisement and links to editorial content. Both publications appear to be treading a grey area regarding whether their native advertisements are adequately presented as different than editorial content. While The *New York Times* used more clear disclosure language, the publication also did not consistently differentiate the visuals of the advertisement from links to editorial content. *BuzzFeed's* close proximity of native advertisement to the top menu full of editorial content also has created a grey area.

Context-ad synergy analysis.

The findings demonstrate that native advertisements in both *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* appear to have created context-ad synergy by utilizing a similar format to editorial content within each publication (Micu & Pentina, 2014). All the native advertisements analyzed used format integration and thematic integration (Buijzen et al., 2010). While it is beyond the scope of this MRP to measure semantic structure, it is possible that native advertisements in *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* also used narrative integration. Some of the native advertisements in The *New York Times* could also be affected by the third-party endorsement framework to

increase credibility of the advertisement by including news about the brand on the same page (Micu & Pentina, 2014).

Source credibility theory analysis.

Source credibility theory suggests that selling intent causes readers to be more wary of advertisements than editorial content, since editorial content is seen as more credible than paid content (van Reijmersdal et al., 2005). Editorial content usually contains facts and quotes as measures of validity within an article. The findings show that *BuzzFeed* had little to no usage of validity within its native advertisements, while the bulk of The *New York Times* native advertisements used validity throughout the content. Source credibility theory suggests that *BuzzFeed* native advertisements could be perceived as less credible than The *New York Times* native advertisements due their omission of measures of validity.

Categorization theory analysis.

Based on the findings, both *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* appear to have utilized brand extension by producing native advertisements in the same format as editorial content within the publications (Herr et al.,1996). Categorization theory suggests that readers visiting these native advertisements for the first time will categorize them based on their past experience with the sites. While it is beyond the scope of this MRP to test how readers perceive native advertisements due to context-ad synergy, it is possible that readers may categorize a native advertisement as editorial content based on their past knowledge of how *BuzzFeed* or The *New York Times* content is presented.

Gestalt theory analysis.

Based on the Gestalt theories of proximity and similarity, the native advertisements sampled fit within the editorial environment of the publication. This was especially true in all of

the *BuzzFeed* samples, where a cursor could easily flow from the native advertisement's headline to the editorial content above it, which demonstrates the Gestalt theory of proximity. The same was true for some of The *New York Times* samples, where there was minimal distance between the advertisement and links to editorial content. In one The *New York Times* sample, the usage of the same typeface between the advertisement and the link to editorial content demonstrates the Gestalt theory of similarity.

Wong (2010) explains that when the Gestalt theories of proximity and similarity are employed, objects seem related to each other in the eyes of the viewer. With this in mind, a viewer could perceive *BuzzFeed* native advertisements and some The *New York Times* native advertisements as editorial content based on their relation to editorial content on the same page.

General Discussion

This MRP sought to answer two research questions by analyzing the results of a qualitative content analysis of *BuzzFeed* and Th*e New York Times* native advertisements. In response to RQ1, this MRP has found that while *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* both utilized attribute and goal framing in their native advertisements as a method of persuasion, attribute framing was the more popular method of framing. Each publication utilized framing in different ways, with *BuzzFeed* subtly framing product and event attributes and The *New York Times* overtly framing these attributes. As framing theory suggests, these attributes have been elevated to salience. A key conclusion is then that the advertisers in The *New York Times* opted to frame aspects of their product or brand in a way that may be quite evident to readers, while advertisers in *BuzzFeed* did not appear to have made these attributes as obvious.

With respect to RQ2, this MRP has found that native advertisements in both *BuzzFeed* and The *New York Times* used strong amounts of persuasion, with The *New York Times* utilizing

more general selling intent. Based on the persuasion knowledge model and the model of visual hierarchy in relation to disclosure labels, *BuzzFeed* native advertisements may not be clearly labeled as paid posts, while The *New York Times* native advertisements appear to be labeled as paid for by a third party. In addition, this MRP has found that based on context-ad synergy, source credibility theory, categorization theory and Gestalt theories of proximity and similarity, both *BuzzFeed* and Th*e New York Times* appear to have created native advertisements similar to the contextual environment specific to each publication's editorial content. In summary, this pilot study seems to indicate that the lines between advertisement and editorial content are blurring. This has potentially significant implications for media consumption habits, the proliferation of brand messaging and the changing business models of media organizations. There is lots of opportunity for future research into the effects of native advertising on society, business and media, given that this MRP was limited in scope. Both the limitations and suggestions for future research are discussed in the following section.

Limitations and Future Direction

While this MRP has provided an overview of how native advertising functions across both new and legacy media, it was limited in scope. Enlarging the sample size to include more samples from each publication or including additional samples from other legacy and new media publications would have produced more comprehensive results, resulting in more conclusive findings. With a larger scope, research could have reached beyond content analysis, allowing for the research questions to adapt to include how elements like framing, persuasion and contextual similarity affect how consumers process advertising efforts. These research questions could have been answered, for example, through surveys or interviews with readers.

As native advertising becomes increasingly popular, there is much opportunity for future research. One avenue to examine would be looking at native advertising from an ethical lens by measuring whether current efforts violate the ethical framework proposed by Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1998). This framework establishes disguise–the degree that the source is concealed within the advertisement, and obtrusiveness–the degree to which the message is displayed as secondary to more prominent communication–as ethical violations. Future research could also examine the long-term effects of exposure to native advertising as a source of content–particularly how young consumers, who have grown up using new media as a source of information, process and engage with media in years to come.

Other avenues for future research could include engagement rates with different formats of native advertisements. In a 2015 study done by The *New York Times*, T Brand Studio native advertisements were found to have the most engagement when they offered a documentary-style approach to exploring an issue (Wegert, 2015). It would be interesting to measure what content formats received the best engagement rates across a variety of publications

and demographics. Narrative structure of native advertisements in comparison to editorial

content in the same publications would also be an avenue for further research, as would a content

analysis that analyzed how native advertisements' structure in relation to editorial content has

changed over a defined time period as advertisers have become more accustomed to the medium.

       The final section of this pilot study offers a review of the concepts and theories

touched on, a summary of the results of the content analysis and a discussion of the potential

implications for society, business and media.

Conclusion

Native advertising has changed how brands engage with consumers. It has altered the relationship between publications and their readers, transforming the media landscape altogether. It has created a new kind of content. Michael Zimbalist, senior vice president of advertising products and research and development at The *New York Times* says*:* "Great stories can come from anywhere, and certainly from brands… audiences will engage with great content regardless of its provenance, provided they have a sense of where it's coming from" (Wegert, 2015, para. 6). Native advertising has, perhaps most importantly, created an environment where added value content in a media rich environment can be presented to readers in a similar format to objective journalism, for a price.

This pilot study has explored how new and legacy media organizations utilize native advertising in the digital age. Through a qualitative content analysis of native advertisements in The *New York Times* and *BuzzFeed*, this MRP has found that legacy media has made an effort to distinguish the formats – with proper usage of disclosure labels and a high degree of persuasion. New media, on the other hand, has created a meld of the formats–producing a strong brand experience aligned with editorial content, without going to the same lengths as legacy media to label advertising as paid content multiple times within the advertisement.

This MRP has attempted to contribute to the growing body of research on native advertisements. The general findings suggest that the lines between advertisement and editorial content are blurring. This potentially has a wide range of implications for society, advertisers and media, which should be examined in future research. From a societal standpoint, how does a consumer unknowingly treating paid content as editorial affect their understanding of an issue or a brand? If they then share this content with other consumers who are unaware of selling intent,

what kind of effect can this level of information sharing have on society's overall understanding

of an issue or a brand? Proponents of native advertising believe that readers want informative

and interesting content, regardless of the source. If this is true, will there come a point where

media organizations, staffed by unbiased and trained journalists, become increasingly obsolete,

as advertisers pump more of their resources into creating their own channels for information

dissemination? From a business standpoint, native advertising expects brands to have both the

resources to put into native advertising and the ability to frame their brand or product through

storytelling. For smaller businesses or brands without the capacity to translate their information

into consumable content, how will this affect how consumers perceive their brand? And from a

media standpoint, will the proliferation of native advertising mean that all media outlets must

soon rely on this as a key revenue stream? How will publications ensure the quality of native

advertisements do not affect engagement rates of editorial content? If a native advertisement is

done poorly, how will this affect how consumers view the publication?

As native advertising becomes increasingly popular, scholars will have more

opportunities to examine the practice and draw conclusions about how consumers process

persuasion attempts and how media and advertisers should react accordingly. Ultimately, it will

be up to consumers to decide whether quality content, regardless of whether it has been paid for

by a brand, is worth consuming.

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Appendix 1-Samples

Since these samples were all created for a digital environment, they have been

hyperlinked below.

Label	Title	Publication
BF1	10 Truths all Pasta Lovers Can Relate To	BuzzFeed
BF2	11 Inspirational Posters That Perfectly Sum Up Friendsgiving	BuzzFeed
BF3	10 Things You Probably Didn't Know About Texas	BuzzFeed
BF3	Dear Kitten: Regarding Friendship	BuzzFeed
BF5	22 CBC Shows Every Canadian Needs in Their Life	BuzzFeed
NYT1	Cruising Towards Zero	New York Times
NYT2	Going the Distance	New York Times
NYT3	College is still worth it, Despite Rising Costs	New York Times
NYT4	Win at Digital by Combining Technologies	New York Times
NYT5	Paths to Success	New York Times

Appendix 2- Coding Legend

1.1	BF5-"The Plateaus is a twisted, dark, punk-rock comedy"	(1)- No use of attribute framing (3)-Some usage of attribute framing (1-4 instances) (5)-High usage of attribute framing (5+ instances)
1.2	BF5-"Party in the comfort of your own home!"	(1)- No use of goal framing (3)-Some usage of goal framing (1-4 instances) (5)-High usage of goal framing (5+ instances)
2.1	BF1-"Make perfectly 'al dente' pasta even easier with Barilla pronto. One pan. No boil. No drain pasta."	(1)- No use of selling intent (3)-Some usage of selling intent (1-4 instances) (5)-High usage of selling intent (5+ instances)
2.2	BF2-"Nothing shows that the human loves us more than her offerings of moist delicious wet-food, it says so much more than she could ever say.")	(1)- No use of positive positioning (3)-Some usage of positive positioning (1-4 instances) (5)-High usage of positive positioning (5+ instances)
2.3	N/A	(1)- No use of brand name (3)-Some usage of brand name (1-9 instances) (5)-High usage of brand name (10+ instances)
2.4	N/A	(1)-Mention of brand name in headline (3)-Mention of brand name in sub-heading (5)-Mention of brand name in first paragraph (7)-Mention of brand name mid-way (8)-Mention of brand name at end (9)-No mention of brand name
2.5	N/A	(1)-No inclusion of traditional ads (3)-Inclusion of traditional ads
2.6	N/A	(1)- No use of company logo (3)-Some usage of company logo (1-4 instances) (5)-High usage of company logo (5+ instances)
2.7	N/A	(1)- No use of CTA (3)-Some usage of CTA (1-4 instances) (5)-High usage of CTA (5+ instances)
2.8	N/A	(1)-CTA to visit website

			(3)-CTA to visit social media channels (5)-CTA to buy a product (7)-CTA to visit related editorial content (8)-CTA to visit related brand content (9)-CTA for other
2.9	N/A		(1)-Top of page (3)-Bottom of Page (5)-Side of page (9)-No label
2.10	N/A		(1)-Disclosure label appears once (3)-Disclosure label appears multiple times (9)-No label
3.1	N/A		(1)-Feature (3)-News story (5)-Listicle (7)-Video (9)-Other
3.2	N/A		(1)-No quotes/facts (3)-Inclusion of quotes/facts
3.3	N/A		(1)-Typeface same between ad and content (3)-Typeface different between ad and content (9)-Not applicable
3.4	N/A		(1)-Minimal distance between ad and content (Cursor can reach editorial content without having to scroll) (3)-Some distance between ad and content (Cursor can reach editorial content with minimal scrolling) (5)-Lots of distance between ad and content (Cursor can only reach editorial content with lots of scrolling)
3.5	N/A		(1)-Photos (3)-Videos (5)-Graphics (9)-Other

BF1-Codebook

Feature	Result
1.1 Attribute Framing	(3)-In this sample, attribute framing occurred four times - three within the body of the article and once within the sub heading. In this case, attribute framing was used to frame attributes of the product (pasta). Attributes framed included sauciness (sub-heading and #4), technique (#9) and texture (#10).
1.2 Goal Framing	(5)-In this sample, goal framing occurred five times - four within the body of the article and once in the CTA. In this case, goal framing was used to frame the behaviour the reader should take when engaging with the product. Goals framed included using more sauce (#1), eating more pasta (#3), eating more cheese with pasta (#6), always licking the bowl after eating pasta (#7) and making perfect pasta easily (CTA).
2.1 Selling Intent	(3)-Since the selling intent is preceded by the article's text, there is direct correlation between the article and selling intent.
2.2 Positive Positioning	(5)-While none of the text directly references the brand or the product, the majority of the images equate pasta and sauce with happiness and therefore positively position the brand in relation to these two elements.
2.3 Mention of Brand Name	(5)-The article itself does not mention the brand name until the end.
2.4 First Mention of Brand Name	(8)
2.5 Inclusion of Traditional Ads	(1)
2.6 Company Logo	(3)
2.7 Call to Action (CTA) Frequency	(3)-4 CTAs appear throughout the page.
2.8 Main Variation of CTA	(3,8)-Two variations of CTAs appeared. At the end of the article, the product name was hyperlinked to the product website. At the top of the article in the right sidebar, two additional Barilla articles were labeled 'Top Posts from Barilla' and each had a photo and hyperlinked headline.
2.9 Disclosure Label Positioning	(1)
2.10 Disclosure Label Frequency	(1)-While the article does note that a Brand Publisher has written the piece, there is no context given as to what a brand publisher is on this specific page.
3.1 Type of Content	(5)-Each graphic references some element of the pasta making/eating process and references the correlation between eating pasta and experiencing happiness. The final graphic, which is delivered in the same style as the listed 10 (but not labeled as number 11) depicts the visual difference between undercooked, perfectly 'al dente' and overcooked pasta, ties in directly to the CTA at the end of the article.
3.2 Validity	(3) No quotes were used, but the one fact present is directly related to the brand's product and its attributes.
3.3 Typeface	(9)
3.4 Distance	(1)-While there is no editorial content on the page, immediately above the article's title is the Buzz feed menu, which links to editorial content.
3.5 Main Variation of Visual	(9)-Graphical GIFs are used as the article's form of content (illustrations alongside words.)

67

BF2-Codebook

Feature	Result
1.1 Attribute Framing	(3)-In this sample, attribute framing is only used once. Attribute framing is used to frame the product's attributes - texture and taste.
1.2 Goal Framing	(1)
2.1 Selling Intent	(3)-Selling intent is demonstrated once in the video by equating human love for a cat with the Friskies product.
2.2 Positive Positioning	(3)-The majority of the video does not reference the brand or the product, but the two moments that do equate Friskies wet food with a cat's happiness.
2.3 Mention of Brand Name	(5)-Although a video is used as the form of content, the brand name is only presented visually and is never mentioned verbally.
2.4 First Mention of Brand Name	(5)
2.5 Inclusion of Traditional Ads	(1)-While no obvious traditional ad was included on the page or within the video, there is one section of the video which looks as if it could be part of a traditional ad (3:27-3:33): Friskie's logo, human opens Friskies cat food and puts in bowl, cat runs to it and eats it and then looks content and falls asleep.
2.6 Company Logo	(5)
2.7 Call to Action (CTA) Frequency	(5)-12 CTAs appear throughout the page.
2.8 Main Variation of CTA	(1,3,8)-Three of the CTAs were for social media, 8 were for other Friskies content on Buzz feed and one was to visit the Friskie's website.
2.9 Disclosure Label Positioning	(1)
2.10 Disclosure Label Frequency	(1)-While the article does note that a Brand Publisher has written the piece, there is no context given as to what a brand publisher is on this specific page.
3.1 Type of Content	(7)-The sample is comprised of a video, which is part of an ongoing series called 'Dear Kitten'. The video features an older cat providing a kitten with advice - in this case about friendship. The cat's voice is provided by a male narrator and the video provides shots of the cat and kitten partaking in various activities and the cat providing guidance on the rules of friendship. The video has humour integrated throughout, as well as several shots of the kitten doing cute things. A human is also featured in the video, but she does not speak. The cat is the main focal point.
3.2 Validity	(1) No quotes or facts were used.
3.3 Typeface	(9)
3.4 Distance	(1)-While there is no editorial content on the page, immediately above the article's title is the Buzz feed menu, which links to editorial content and appears above all Buzz feed articles (including editorial ones.)
3.5 Main Variation of Visual	(3)

BF3-Codebook

Feature	Result
1.1 Attribute Framing	(3)-In this sample, attribute framing occurred twice, both within the body of the article. In this case, attribute framing was used to frame attributes of the event (Friendsgiving.) Attributes framed included leftovers (#3) and good lighting (#6.)
1.2 Goal Framing	(5)-In this sample, goal framing occurred 10 times, eight within the body of the article and once at the end. In this case, goal framing was used to frame the behaviour the reader should take when engaging with the event (Friendsgiving.) Goals framed included: staying out of the kitchen (#1,4), learning how to cook (#5), remembering to bring presents (#7), letting friends watch sports (#8), dressing for winter (#9), stocking up on antacid (#10), saving space for dessert (#11) drinking Dewar's (#12, "Enjoy Responsibly")
2.1 Selling Intent	(3)-There is limited selling intent in this article, but by positioning the above example as the last meme within the list, the brand has associated its product with Friendsgiving and the positive connotations it has outlined with this event previously.
2.2 Positive Positioning	(3)-In the only example of positive positioning within this sample, the brand is associated with living, giving and honesty. The photo that the text overlays shows a group of friends smiling and cheering with drinks in hand, which also positively positions the brand.
2.3 Mention of Brand Name	(3)-The brand name is mentioned twice in the article, both at the end of the article.
2.4 First Mention of Brand Name	(8)-The first time the brand name appears is in the final meme of the story.
2.5 Inclusion of Traditional Ads	(1)
2.6 Company Logo	(3)-The logo is used beside "Dewar's, Brand Publisher" and is only used once.
2.7 Call to Action (CTA) Frequency	(3)-4 CTAs appear in the article, all at the end.
2.8 Main Variation of CTA	(1,8)-All of the CTAs appeared at the bottom of the article.
2.9 Disclosure Label Positioning	(1,3)-2 disclosure labels appear - one indicates that the article is written by a brand publisher and one provides the copyright information.
2.10 Disclosure Label Frequency	(3)-While the article does note that a Brand Publisher has written the piece, there is no context given as to what a brand publisher is on this specific page. It is further implied that Dewar's wrote the piece through the inclusion of the copyright information following the article.
3.1 Type of Content	(5)-Each meme represents some element of Friendsgiving, from the food, to the atmosphere to the weather and feelings of fullness.
3.2 Validity	(1) No quotes or facts were used.
3.3 Typeface	(9)
3.4 Distance	(1)-While there is no editorial content on the page, immediately above the article's title is the BuzzFeed menu, which links to editorial content and appears above all Buzz feed articles (including editorial ones.)
3.5 Main Variation of Visual	(1)-Memes are used as the article's form of content (photos with text on top.)

Appendix 3-Codebook

BF4-Codebook

Feature	Result
1.1 Attribute Framing	(5)-Every example uses a fact as a way of pointing out the product (Texas's) attributes
1.2 Goal Framing	(3)
2.1 Selling Intent	(1)
2.2 Positive Positioning	(3)-Used in relation to facts.
2.3 Mention of Brand Name	(3)-Texas is mentioned 3 times.
2.4 First Mention of Brand Name	(1)
2.5 Inclusion of Traditional Ads	(1)
2.6 Company Logo	(1)
2.7 Call to Action (CTA) Frequency	(5)-This sample had 15 CTAs, most were hyperlinked information to visit external sites.
2.8 Main Variation of CTA	(1,8)-Most were external links, some were for Buzz feed branded content.
2.9 Disclosure Label Positioning	(1)-The only real disclosure label is the one at the top of the page, although there is no context as to what this means.
2.10 Disclosure Label Frequency	(1)
3.1 Type of Content	(5)-Each image is a photo that depicts the fact being described.
3.2 Validity	(3) No quotes were used, but each of the 10 points is a fact.
3.3 Typeface	(9)
3.4 Distance	(1)-While there is no editorial content on the page, immediately above the article's title is the Buzz feed menu, which links to editorial content and appears above all Buzz feed articles (including editorial ones.)
3.5 Main Variation of Visual	(1)

BF5-Codebook

Feature	Result
1.1 Attribute Framing	(5)-In this sample, attribute framing occurred 17 times - in almost all of the TV shows reference. Attribute framing was used to highlight the main premise of each show.
1.2 Goal Framing	(5)-In this sample, goal framing occurred 6 times, often close to text that had been attributed framed.
2.1 Selling Intent	(5)-Selling intent wasn't used to convince readers to purchase CBC, but it was used in every example to convince the reader to tune in.
2.2 Positive Positioning	(5)-Positive positioning was used 11 times to refer to the uniqueness or funness of each show. As a reader, the style and amount used seemed excessive.
2.3 Mention of Brand Name	(5)-CBC was mentioned 12 times, usually within the context of one of the station's series like CBC Arts or CBC News.
2.4 First Mention of Brand Name	(1)
2.5 Inclusion of Traditional Ads	(1)
2.6 Company Logo	(3)
2.7 Call to Action (CTA) Frequency	(5)-28 CTAs appear -each show listed has one following the summary of the show, hyperlinking to the online portion or stating the date and time the show airs.
2.8 Main Variation of CTA	(1,3,8)-Most of the CTAs link to the CBC website, but others include the Coronation Street Facebook page, the CBC Twitter page, 3 other pieces of Buzz feed branded content.
2.9 Disclosure Label Positioning	(1)-The only real disclosure label is the one at the top of the page, although there is no context as to what this means.
2.10 Disclosure Label Frequency	(1)
3.1 Type of Content	(5)-Each image is a screenshot within each individual show.
3.2 Validity	(3)-Quotes were not attributed and were used to describe aspects of each show. Other quotation marks were used in addition to the examples provided, but they just defined the name of an episode. Facts were not used.
3.3 Typeface	(9)
3.4 Distance	(1)-While there is no editorial content on the page, immediately above the article's title is the Buzz feed menu, which links to editorial content and appears above all Buzz feed articles (including editorial ones.)
3.5 Main Variation of Visual	(9)

NYT1-Codebook

Feature	Result
1.1 Attribute Framing	(5)-In this sample, attribute framing occurred 8 times within the article. It did not appear in the videos. Attribute framing was most commonly used to frame features of the product (in this case Volvo's 2016 XC90) in relation to safety. Attributes of the product that were framed include: quality materials and safety features.
1.2 Goal Framing	(3)-In this sample, goal framing occurred 3 times within the article. It did not appear within the videos. Goal framing was used to subtly convince readers to engage in safe behaviour as related to driving. This included buying a Volvo to increase the chance of survival in an accident, avoiding distracted driving.
2.1 Selling Intent	(3)-Since the entire article showcases the safety features of Volvo's cars (which could be understood as trying to convince readers to buy cars), these instances were recorded in the positive positioning and framing sections since they do not overtly reference the transaction of buying the car, as the example from the article does here.
2.2 Positive Positioning	(5)-In this sample positive positioning occurs 11 times (9 within the article and twice within the videos.) In the examples, the Volvo brand is associated with quality, innovation, research, safety and dedication.
2.3 Mention of Brand Name	(5)-Within the sample, the brand name is mentioned 39 times total. Within the article: Volvo is mentioned 26 times (13 within the article text, 10 within the photo captions and 3 as an image within the photos.) Within the videos, Volvo is mentioned 13 times (7 visually and 6 verbally)
2.4 First Mention of Brand Name	(7)-The first mention of the brand name occurs after one of the Volvo safety engineers has provided commentary about his approach to work. The video then shows a test car crashing, with the Volvo logo on the car.
2.5 Inclusion of Traditional Ads	(1)
2.6 Company Logo	(1)-While the logo is not used, the Volvo name and campaign slogan floats on the page - when you scroll down, the name/slogan is always present.
2.7 Call to Action (CTA) Frequency	(3)-The videos don't feature any CTAs.
2.8 Main Variation of CTA	(7)
2.9 Disclosure Label Positioning	(1,3)-The "Paid Post" disclosure label appears as a floating label on top of the article. When you scroll down the page, the disclosure label remains.
2.10 Disclosure Label Frequency	(3)-2 disclosure labels appear.
3.1 Type of Content	(1)-This article takes a close look into a specific topic (car safety) by employing various journalistic devices and including a range of formats, like videos, photos and photo galleries.
3.2 Validity	(3) In this sample 7 quotes are used, 5 within the text, 2 within the photo gallery. Quotes are not used in the same way in the videos because the videos are already interviews with one person (therefore the whole video could be classified as a large quote.) In this sample, 12 facts are used, 9 within the text and 3 within the videos. Some of the facts reference external studies or statistics, while others point to specific product features of Volvo cars
3.3 Typeface	(1)-The sub heading "Related Content" is the same typeface as the other labels. The font size between the ad and the links to editorial content is different (the editorial content is smaller)
3.4 Distance	(1)-Immediately following the article are three links to "Related Articles": "Volvo Sets a Lofty Safety Goal.", "Volvo Crash Prevention System Receives High Marks From Insurance Institute" and "Volvo Plan: 1 Platform for All Cars." All of these articles are NYT editorial content about the brand.
3.5 Main Variation of Visual	(3)-In addition to videos, a photo gallery featuring 10 captioned photos is used, as well as a graph.

NYT2--Codebook

Feature	Result
1.1 Attribute Framing	(3)-In this sample, attribute framing occurred 3 times within the article. It did not occur in the video or the photo galleries. Attribute framing was used to frame features of the product (in this case the Caliber Diver Watch) in relation to utility.
1.2 Goal Framing	(1)
2.1 Selling Intent	(1)-This sample contains no usage of selling intent. Cartier attempts to tie their product (a diver's watch) to a sense of adventure.
2.2 Positive Positioning	(3)-The sample uses positive positioning overtly three times, but the overarching theme of the video and the text creates an emotional experience for the reader. Therefore, it is not just the brand and product that are being positioned positively, but the entire environment they exist in. Visuals of the watch also appear within shots of adventure or happy-looking explorers and this further positively positions the brand.
2.3 Mention of Brand Name	(5)-Within the sample, the brand name is mentioned 11 times. This also included visuals of the Cartier watch being advertised.
2.4 First Mention of Brand Name	(3)
2.5 Inclusion of Traditional Ads	(3)-A traditional ad is included at the bottom of the article, with the text: "Powered by the in-house 1904 MC Movement, the Calibre De Cartier Diver Carbon Watch features a scratch-resistant ADLC coating and tells time with precision and ease. Shop the full collection at Cartier.US
2.6 Company Logo	(3)
2.7 Call to Action (CTA) Frequency	(3)-Two CTAs appear - one in the body of the article and one in the ad that proceeds the article. Both link to external links.
2.8 Main Variation of CTA	(1)
2.9 Disclosure Label Positioning	(1,3)-The "Paid Post" disclosure label appears as a floating label on top of the article. When you scroll down the page, the disclosure label remains.
2.10 Disclosure Label Frequency	(3)-2 disclosure labels appear.
3.1 Type of Content	(9)-This sample begins with the story of an explorer in Iceland, told primarily through a short video, and then moves on to profile 4 other destinations through the inclusion of photos, and interactive icons which bring down text, as well as the inclusion of photo galleries with captions.
3.2 Validity	(3)-This sample contained 11 quotes from a variety of people. Some were embedded in the article, while others were presented as lift quotes or by themselves over the photo background. This sample contained 7 facts, all related to the places mentioned throughout the article.
3.3 Typeface	(9)
3.4 Distance	(9)
3.5 Main Variation of Visual	(1)-Photos are used as the backdrop for each portion of the text. A video is also used, as are icons to signify interactive portions of the page.

NYT3--Codebook

Feature	Result
1.1 Attribute Framing	(3)-Attribute framing occurred 4 times, all in relation to characteristics of the industry the content referenced (student loans), although not explicitly about Discover Student Loans.
1.2 Goal Framing	(3)-Goal framing occurred 3 times, all in relation to actions parents and students should take to gather more information or better finance education
2.1 Selling Intent	(3)-Within this sample, selling intent was used subtly based on the way the information was structured. Readers were told that most are not knowledgeable about the loan process and then provided with a bunch of data to back this up. From there, Discover Student Loans is presented as an option that can help them with this process.
2.2 Positive Positioning	(3)-Positive positioning was used to present Discover Student Loans as a thought leader in this space, a very subtle form of persuasion. No adjectives were used to describe the product or services for example, but by presenting data that had been put together by the company, this positively reflected on the company.
2.3 Mention of Brand Name	(3)-Brand name is mentioned 7 times.
2.4 First Mention of Brand Name	(5)-This appears in the first paragraph.
2.5 Inclusion of Traditional Ads	(1)
2.6 Company Logo	(3)
2.7 Call to Action (CTA) Frequency	(5)-CTAs were used 12 times, most commonly they were hyperlinks directly readers to external sources which backed up their data.
2.8 Main Variation of CTA	(1,7)-Most of the CTAs were to visit external sites, including the Discover Loans site. 3 were to visit related editorial content
2.9 Disclosure Label Positioning	(1,3)-The "Paid for and Posted by Discover Student Loans" disclosure label appears as a floating label on top of the article. When you scroll down the page, the disclosure label remains.
2.10 Disclosure Label Frequency	(3)-2 disclosure labels appear.
3.1 Type of Content	(9)
3.2 Validity	(3)-No quotes were used, 11 facts were included.
3.3 Typeface	(3)
3.4 Distance	(1)-Links to editorial content appear immediately under the closing box at the bottom of the page.
3.5 Main Variation of Visual	(5)

NYT4-Codebook

Feature	Result
1.1 Attribute Framing	(1)
1.2 Goal Framing	(3)-Goal framing occurred twice, both in relation to changes of behaviour required for efficiency/full digital adoption.
2.1 Selling Intent	(3)-There is only the slightest degree of selling intent present in this sample towards the end of the article. This is only evident if you know what the company is and what services they offer (digital strategy.) What they have done is present a lack of centralized strategy as a problem. Accenture offers a solution (although they don't advertise this as such.)
2.2 Positive Positioning	(3)-Positive positioning was used to present Accenture as a thought leader in this space, a very subtle form of persuasion. No adjectives were used to describe the product or services for example, but by presenting data that had been put together by the company, this positively reflected on the company.
2.3 Mention of Brand Name	(3)-Brand name is mentioned 6 times.
2.4 First Mention of Brand Name	(5)-This appears in the first paragraph.
2.5 Inclusion of Traditional Ads	(1)
2.6 Company Logo	(3)-Brand name is mentioned 6 times.
2.7 Call to Action (CTA) Frequency	(3)-CTAs were used twice, both to direct the reader to read a 2015 Accenture report.
2.8 Main Variation of CTA	(1)-Both CTAs directed the reader to hyperlinks to read the 2015 report.
2.9 Disclosure Label Positioning	(1,3)-The "Paid for and Posted by Accenture" disclosure label appears as a floating label on top of the article. When you scroll down the page, the disclosure label remains.
2.10 Disclosure Label Frequency	(3)-2 disclosure labels appear.
3.1 Type of Content	(3)
3.2 Validity	(3)-7 quotes were included. 17 facts were included
3.3 Typeface	(9)-
3.4 Distance	(9)
3.5 Main Variation of Visual	(9)

Appendix 3-Codebook

Feature	Result
1.1 Attribute Framing	(3)-Attribute framing was used four times including once within the graphic slider.
1.2 Goal Framing	(1)
2.1 Selling Intent	(1)-While selling intent isn't used, the piece reads very much like a PR piece, talking up the benefits of working at Walmart (rather than buying Walmart products)
2.2 Positive Positioning	(5)-Positive positioning is used throughout the three profiles, pointing to the types of opportunities Walmart provides workers for advancement.
2.3 Mention of Brand Name	(5)-The usage of the brand name is mainly to refer to the company itself, although once it is also used in reference to someone's title. (14 times)
2.4 First Mention of Brand Name	(7)
2.5 Inclusion of Traditional Ads	(1)
2.6 Company Logo	(5)-The company logo appears 8 times, primarily within images.
2.7 Call to Action (CTA) Frequency	(3)-Only one CTA appears
2.8 Main Variation of CTA	(1)
2.9 Disclosure Label Positioning	(1,3)-The "Paid Post" disclosure label appears as a floating label on top of the article. When you scroll down the page, the disclosure label remains.
2.10 Disclosure Label Frequency	(3)-2 disclosure labels appear.
3.1 Type of Content	(1)
3.2 Validity	(3)-This sample used 15 quotes from 4 different people including 3 employees. Facts were used 8 times, 4 within the beginning of the article and 4 within the graphic gallery mid-way.
3.3 Typeface	(9)
3.4 Distance	(9)
3.5 Main Variation of Visual	(5)-Both photos and graphics appear, but photos appear more frequently.