'Has Social Media and Audience Participation Played an Important Role in the 'Stop Funding

Hate' Campaign?'

Media and Market Research Assignment 1

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The Stop Funding Hate Campaign was started in August 2016 by Richard Wilson, to spread awareness to the audiences of newspapers and deter large companies from advertising in tabloid newspapers who spread racism and hate through their journalism. The three main newspapers the campaign aims to target are, The Sun, The Daily Mail and The Daily Express which, according to the campaign use "fear and division to sell more papers" (Wilson, 2016 cited by Ridley 2016) to create an influence on their readers. Since the campaign began it has become viral on social media, with over 70,000 likes on its Facebook page within the first 3 days (Ridley, 2016). This shows how audience involvement is a huge aspect of how the movement is spreading its message across social media, and also displays to both the newspapers and brands involved that audiences agree with the campaign's motives.

Aims and Objectives:

The aim of my research is to critically assess and evaluate how audience participation on two different types of social media (Twitter and Facebook) have contributed to the success of the Stop Funding Hate Campaign, and what implications and pressures this has put on the brands involved. I plan to do this by following three objectives:

- To assess and evaluate how audiences become involved in social media campaigns.
- To compare the differences within audience participation on Twitter and Facebook.
- To establish the positive and negative impacts the campaign has had on the companies it targets.

Literature Review:

The purpose of this part of the project is to look at what pre-existing literature has said about audience participation on social media and the implications this has had on other campaigns, as well as this campaign. As the Stop Funding Hate campaign is in it's early stages, there is not a lot of theoretical knowledge associated to it, creating limitations around researching this topic. However, other campaigns similar to it have taken place in the past, for example The News of the World losing major advertisers after the phone hacking allegations. Thus, this knowledge can be applied to. In addition, because the nature of the campaign promotes active audiences and looks into tarnishing the brand image of tabloid newspapers and retail brands.

An interview with the leader of the Stop Funding Hate Campaign, Richard Wilson (cited by Ridley, 2016) explained what his incentive was. He promised to "call out" advertisers who preach values of honesty but fund newspapers that the campaign claims trade in hate. He explains that newspapers need advertising to survive, so by trying to persuade companies who are advertising in them to change this, the newspapers promoting hate will be forced to either change their ways or will no longer be able to run.

From of the nature of the campaign being looked at in this project a definition of the word 'hate' could be seen as important, as it creates one of the main themes to the project being undertaken.

In addition it is necessary to consider the relevance to the journalistic world, both on it's own and within the context of a hate crime, as suggested by the campaign's name.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary Online (2016) 'hate' as a noun is "intense dislike, denoting hostile actions motivated by… prejudice".

Moreover, Perry (2001) describes hate crimes as being a form of assault against a whole group of a stigmatised and marginalised community. She believed it can be referred to as "ethnoviolence" and more than just "mean-spirited bigots" (p.1). The effects of these being dependent on the exposure they receive and the size of the audience that sees them. In terms of the three newspapers the Stop Funding Hate campaign targets these figures hit hundreds of thousands; the Daily Mail has a circulation of 2,246,196, The Sun being just under at 2,207,429 and the Daily Express much lower with 429,517 (Mail Classified 2014), meaning that many of their headlines and articles which are claimed to be prejudice commit large scale hate crimes.

In terms of audience theory and participation in campaigns on social media, one recent, successful social media campaign that took place was a video from Greenpeace which convinced Lego to end a marketing deal with the petrol company Shell (2014). The campaign started because of drilling in the arctic and promoted that "Everything Is Not Awesome" (YouTube 2014) creating a chilling version of one of the recent Lego adverts to raise awareness of what Shells plans, and what Lego were backing by being in association with them. Like the Stop Funding Hate campaign it targeted a position of power in society and used social media, to spread its message to a mass audience. Hash-tagged discussion and shared information then emerges without control or proximity, meaning that anyone anywhere can "respond with great

speed to emerging issues and acute events." (Bruns and Burgess, 2011). Stop Funding Hate Campaign, today in 2016, these are used to show how audiences have created their own activism, either through tweeting the targeted brands directly about their views or by posting images of letters and other physical activism users have participated in outside social media.

The rapid growth of online social media now means that it is easily possible for one person to communicate to a mass audience with the click of a few buttons. Gillin (2007, p.4) points out that users have "the tools to tell 10 million". Thus, the impact of consumer-to-consumer communication has started to have a huge influence on the way campaigns work, whether for marketing or to create awareness like Stop Funding Hate. Gillin (2008) also notes that while traditional media platforms are still vital for disseminating information, these are becoming more and more influenced by online social media. Showing strengths in both print and social media. For example, now users can view traditional media, such as an advert, through their social media livefeed, and can also interact with others, creating convergence. Meanwhile, this may also be a weakness for the newspapers targeted by this campaign as it shows a way in which the companies can still advertise without being involved in those deemed to be related to hate (Wilson, 2016 cited by Ridley, 2016).

In comparison to the active audience types that become promoted in social media campaigns, traditional media such as print, are seen to have a passive audience which absorb the information given to them (Munday and Chandler, 2011). This could be a key reason as to why the Stop Funding Hate Campaign has taken to using social media instead of traditional media to raise

awareness of its values and aims. In addition, the readership and circulation of social media in the digital age is far higher than that of print media. Within three days of the Stop Funding Hate Campaign starting on Facebook (August 2016) it had over 70,000 followers, and now currently in December (Facebook, 1st December 2016) it has rapidly increased to 208,378 followers. Additionally according to Zephoria Digital Media (2016), Facebook had over 1.79billion active Facebook accounts in November 2016, alone, showing just how much further the dissemination of media goes via social media. Further showing the importance of social media to the campaign. However Wilson (2016), the campaigns leader, has argued that whilst only a small portion of the population actually buy these newspapers, they are still seen everywhere; if you are shopping there is a chance you will see one, creating consideration for why he wants companies to stop funding them.

Summary:

This review demonstrates the significance that social media and active audience types have played in the past for online campaigns and shows the need for investigating further how successful the Stop Funding Hate Campaign will be. In addition, it suggests that the brand image of the three newspapers being targeted are becoming more negative as the campaign carries on, with advertisers such as Lego publicising that they will be making changes to their advertising strategies in the future. Meanwhile, this research has also found limitations within itself, as there is little primary research solely about the campaign available yet. Therefore this study will aim to

overcome this weakness by creating primary research about the topic, breaching some of the gaps.

Methodology:

To perform primary research for this project one possible method is a focus group. This is a strong, qualitative research option which collects a broad amount of unique views on a focused, topic within exploratory research (Hennink, 2007). The method is also successful when exploring new topics (Bailey et. al, 2011), which have had little research done on them already, like the Stop Funding Hate Campaign.  The group environment also means that it is easier to identify community norms, showing what is agreed shared opinion and where views vary. The structure of a focus group also means that participants can challenge one another, so more detail is uncovered about the topic than perhaps expected (Bailey et.al, 2011).

 One weaknesses to consider when doing a focus group is that a group environment can lack confidentiality, and therefore some participants may not be comfortable sharing personal information (Bailey et.al, 2011). However, this is unlikely to be an issue during this research project as the issue being discussed is not of a personal nature. Another is that participants may not be aware of the campaign the research project is about. This would mean needing to give the participants some background knowledge, earlier obtained from secondary research, and the chance to do their own research before taking part.

Morrison (1998) suggests that to run a successful focus group six to ten participants is an ideal size, as it provides enough people for a lively discussion but not too many that the moderator has difficulty note taking. In addition, using a group of people who know each other are likely to settle easily and be more comfortable sharing their views. This would suggest using a group of people of a similar age and background. In this case, I plan to use a group a friendship group of university students because they are easily accessible to me, and of an age demographic which regularly use both Twitter and Facebook: with 94 million 18-29 year olds using Twitter, and 42 million 18-24 year olds using Facebook (Statista, 2015). This will also show evidence of agreement and conflict within a homogenous group around the topic (Morrison, 1998). Furthermore, the discussion will be held for around 40 minutes, to make sure that all participants have the chance to answer questions and that the moderator (myself) has time to record notes. One weakness to consider is that participants may be bias and give similar opinions to be alike, affecting the data collection process. In addition to taking notes the focus group will be recorded, with consent of all group members, to ensure detail is not missed.

Before the focus group can take place secondary data about the topic must be collected to find prominent issues that can create a discussion guide. This essentially acts as a prompt for the moderator to ensure key topics are covered (Bailey et.al, 2011). To do this, it is important to look at the original hypothesis and project objectives to make sure that the questions formulated to be asked relate to the project and will help answer the question when later writing up the analysis. In addition, a variety of open and closed questions will be asked to make sure that opinions can be offered, with depth to the answers.

Word count: 1,950

Appendix:

In order to be well prepared for the focus group a list of questions (see below) have been created to ask. As I am the group moderator, I will also provide another set of questions to ensure that the full time limit is filled and to prompt the participants if they are stuck or need more direction with their answers. This will also help the moderator to stay impartial whilst the data is being collecting, and prevents them from influencing the answers.

During the focus group, time consideration will be necessary for each question to make sure that no key topics are missed and that all members get to speak. This may mean adapting questions along the way if the conversation flows and cover more than one questions answer at one time, or if context changes then the order the questions are asked in may need changing too. Furthermore, extra questions will be needed to ensure the group do not spin off on a tangent and can be refocused on the current agenda.

Here are some example questions:

1. How often do you use social media? Specifically Facebook and Twitter.
2. How often do you read newspapers? Specifically The Sun, Daily Mail or The Daily Express.

3. What do you know about the Stop Funding Hate Campaign?

4. How did you hear about or find the campaign?

5. What do you think the campaign is trying to do?

6. Is this an effective method? Why?

7. Why do you think social media has been used to advertise it?

8. As a result, what age demographic do you think is most likely to respond or participate in its activism?

9. Do you think the campaign has been successful so far?

10. What does 'hate' mean to you?

11. Have you ever found a headline or article offense in one of the targeted newspapers? (The Sun, Daily Mail, or The Daily Express)

12. What do you think would happen to newspapers if the companies being targeted stopped their advertising deals with those companies?

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