Persuading through Organizational Storytelling:
A Case Study

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Introduction

Statement of Problem

Over the years, organizations have attempted to find new ways to effectively connect and form relationships with their publics. Organizations understand that connecting with publics is imperative, for it creates resiliency with the organization’s brand, thereby harvesting organizational trust. Creating resiliency among publics ultimately helps to lead the organization to be successful in its longevity (Flynn, 2009).

In efforts to build resiliency with publics, organizations must address the problem of how to effectively communicate with publics to harness the connection between publics and the organization. This paper attempts to address this problem of organizational connectivity with publics through the use of organizational storytelling.

Tim Hortons is an example of a corporation that has effectively connected with its customers across Canada. Tim Hortons has aligned its corporate identity with the Canadian identity through using such advertising tactics as stating: “It’s our Canada, Our Coffee” (Tim Hortons, n.d.). This paper will attempt to analyze Tim Hortons’ use of organizational storytelling as an effective form of persuasive communications, along with identifying inherent persuasive themes that are consistent throughout Tim Hortons’ storytelling through the social media platform, YouTube. Such information will help to create a fuller understanding of the effective use of persuasive organizational storytelling in the digital age.

Existing Literature on Storytelling
Baruch (2009) states: “stories come to give us a message, to entertain, [and] to educate” (p.17). From an organizational perspective, Baruch extends this thought, mentioning that storytelling can be used “to learn, to direct action, to plan for the future, and to develop organizational reputation and image” (p. 17).

A story can properly be defined as:

“A sequence of actions and experiences done or undergone by a certain number of people, whether real or imaginary. These people are presented either in situations that change or as reacting to such change. In turn, these changes reveal hidden aspects of the situation and the people involved, and engender a new predicament which calls for thought, action, or both. This response to the new situation leads the story toward its conclusion” (Ricoeur, 1984, p.150).

Although a story can take many different forms, it often has three components: a beginning, middle, and an end (Dugan, 2008). Organizations can tell their stories through multiple platforms, and through a variety of different ways, including the use of: social media, public relations, marketing, and traditional media (Pulizzi, 2012).

From the perspective of the media, Grant (2013) states that storytelling is the notable marketing trend of the year 2013. Although the idea of using organizational storytelling as a mode of communications is viewed as a new, innovative marketing strategy (Pulizzi, 2012), organizations have used stories to build their brands for years, and in some cases, organizations have built their brand off of a story, such as the coffee chain Starbucks. Its name was inspired by the boat in Herman Melville’s classic novel, Moby Dick. Although Starbucks did not use the name of the
boat in the novel (its name being Pequod), the organization settled for the name of the first mate on the boat, Starbuck, which was deemed to be a more favourable name (Dugan, 2009).

When exploring the importance of storytelling, Shank (1999) reminds us that “human memories are based on stories” (p.12). McAdams (1993) states that using narratives as a way to communicate allows the individual to not only makes sense of the world around them, but also to make sense of themselves and their role in society. For the organization, collective storytelling is “a key part of members’ sense-making and a means to allow to supplement individual memories with institutional memory” (Boje, 1995, p.1000). When it comes to persuasion, McKee (2003) advocates that the best way to persuade someone is by telling a compelling story. Although it may prove tricky, he states that storytelling “demands vivid insight and storytelling skill to present an idea that packs enough power to be memorable” (p.52). In efforts to create an effective story, Kanzler (2007) reminds us that the basis of good storytelling is akin to newsworthiness; that good stories can often constitute having news value. This includes impact, timeliness, revelation, proximity, oddity, entertainments, and celebrity.

Whether writing a fairy tale, or attempting to tell an organization’s story, both contain similar elements that help to collectively hold the story images in the audiences’ minds.

**Storytelling in the Digital Age**

Roach (2012) discusses that storytelling in the age of social media allows for the organization’s story to be told in different ways. A picture can be shared on Facebook, linked to on Pinterest, and tweeted on via Twitter. The use of multiple mediums can “create the appearance of a kind of consensus where dominating themes shared through these stories on multiple platforms become common place due to high frequency” (p.33).
At the same time, Deighton and Kornfield (2009) reflect on the fact that storytelling in the digital age allows for the co-creation of content, with social media offering opportunities to network, create relations, and interactions between consumers and the organization. Such co-created content does not allow for the organization to have complete control over the narrative, however, Singh & Sonnenburg (2012) note that it is in the organization’s interest to somewhat control the processed stories so that they speak to the overarching brand narrative with lasting meaning. Such processes can be executed by using authentic voices that are regulated to keep messaging consistent and succinct.

Digital storytelling, in its use of multimedia, has been argued to allow “discursive techniques of and for empowerment” (Li, 2008, p.25). Individuals participating in video storytelling feel empowered in the process of telling their story. As well, such stories have been noted to empower the audience in different ways, including: community building, activism, and allowing for the cultivation of connections between people’s culture and values (Soundsararajan, cited in Lambert, 2006).

**Connecting Literature with the Case Study**

Tim Hortons is Canada’s largest quick-service restaurant chain, owning 22% of the Canadian market with over 2800 coffee shops across the nation (Cormack, 2008). Tim Hortons originated in 1964, and even then it began its marketing as ‘always fresh’ (Tim Hortons, n.d.). Throughout the years, Tim Hortons has been consistent with its branding, maintaining the same classic image inside the stores, on the coffee mugs, and even similar employee uniforms. Since its inception, Tim Hortons has effectively managed to integrate its image with that of the Canadian identity (Cormack, 2008).
Tim Hortons differs in its marketing when compared to competitive coffee chains by using a simplistic approach (Elliot, 2002). Other coffee chains appear to have capitalized on such themes as exoticism, worldliness, sophistication, etc). This is interesting to note because Canada itself does not grow or produce coffee. Cormack (2008) then poses the question: “How could Tim Hortons generate a home-grown version of national identity around a coffee brand when Canadians have little connection with the history and development of coffee” (p.6)? Cormack argues that there are a number of components that Tim Hortons did to create such brand structure, including: 1) minding the gap between government and the Canadian identity (i.e., no real existing identity with government nationalism) ; 2) identifying the nation’s identity with alluring, yet mundane consumptive desire; and, 3) by playing on existing ambiguities in the Canadian identity and thereby reifying them with Tim Hortons brand (i.e., Canadians are laid back; enjoy hockey). In summary, Cormack sites other scholars in stating that Canada is an ‘absent nation’, which cannot really identify itself individualistically, except with its technologies (broadcasting of ‘Canadianness’ through the CBC and like technologies) (Charland, 2004).

Undeniably, Tim Hortons’ identity has become interweaved with the Canadian identity. Part of this has to do with how it effectively markets its brand in a non-intimidating, genuine way. Palmer (1998) defines such identity creation as ‘banal nationalism’, where a nation’s identity can be constructed based on the ideals of the every-day citizen. Palmer connects such nationalism with body, food, and landscape; that these symbols are labeled as ‘flags of identity’, even more so than coins, anthems, etc. Indeed, the Tim Hortons coffee cup and frequent location stores speak to the every-day citizens, and this is apparent through its genuine storytelling marketing.
Purpose

The purpose of this research paper is to explore the use of Tim Hortons organizational storytelling through its use of the social media platform, YouTube. Through analyzing a variety of channels, it can then be determined whether or not organizational storytelling is an effective tool for persuasive communications on such social media platforms as YouTube.

Research Questions

1. What persuasive forms of storytelling does Tim Hortons use?
2. What persuasive forms of Tim Hortons storytelling were most effective based on video popularity?
3. How did Tim Hortons persuasively use the social media platform, YouTube, to tell its stories?
4. Does YouTube prove to be an effective social media platform to communicate organizational stories?

Introduction to Case Study – An Analysis on Organizational Storytelling

For the purpose of this paper, Tim Hortons has been chosen as a case study to evaluate the use of organizational storytelling. It has been noted by the authors that Tim Hortons tells theme-based stories to serve different purposes. For example, some themes that Tim Hortons use in their organizational storytelling are children’s hockey, endearing friend and family moments, and roll-up the rim contest campaign. Such commonplace understanding has thus lead the authors to examine its use of organizational storytelling through YouTube.

Selecting Delimiting Samples
Tim Hortons storytelling narrative will be examined using the social media platform, YouTube. The following selected Tim Hortons YouTube playlists were analyzed for the purpose of this paper includes:

- TimmyRun™: Epic Coffee Runs (3 videos)
- Coffee Partnership (6 videos)
- The Great Coffee Conversation (15 videos)
- Tim Hortons Children Foundation (4 videos)
- Tims Coffee Moments (8 videos)

Tim Hortons has a total of 8 playlists on its YouTube channel. The authors attempted to select a significant yet diverse pool of playlists to understand how Tim Hortons engages in organizational storytelling in different ways. Both ‘Coffee Partnership’ and ‘Tim Hortons Children Foundation’ highlight Tim Hortons’ involvement in philanthropic work. ‘The Great Coffee Conversation’ and ‘Tim Coffee Moments’ are genuine stories of employees and customers of Tim Hortons. Finally, the ‘TimmyRun™: Epic Coffee Runs’ is a creative, scripted, and demonstrative way of the trials and tribulations that people will endure to get a Tims coffee.

**Identifying Units of Analysis**

To evaluate the effectiveness of Tim Hortons’ organizational storytelling, this analysis on organizational storytelling will use Robert Cialdini’s ‘weapons of influence’. Cialdini (1985) outlines the six different ‘weapons’ as fundamental components of persuasive content: 1) reciprocation; 2) commitment and consistency; 3) social proof; 4) liking; 5) authority; and, 6) scarcity.
Brief descriptions of each weapon of influence are discussed below. Each description acted as guiding parameters to use when analyzing each YouTube video, through the selected playlists.

**Reciprocation:** “The rule requires that one person try to repay, in kind what another person has provided” (Cialdini, 1985, p.49). As Cialdini notes, there is a sense of future obligation involved in reciprocation which makes possible the development of connections with others, and ultimately lasting relationships.

In determining the use of reciprocation in persuasive communications, one must be observant for a positive or negative tangible exchange between individuals and/or institutions. Such an exchange must take weight on both parties in so to demonstrate both giving from one to the repayment of another.

With respect to coding Tim Hortons’ storytelling as a form of persuasive communications, some of the following reciprocation characteristics to look for include:

- Sense of ‘giving back’ (i.e., charitable contributions, giving to the community)
- Friendly interactions that weight on both customer and employee
- Effective use of employee relations (i.e., looking after its employees)

**Commitment & Consistency:** “Commitments are most effective when they are active, public, effortful, and viewed as internally motivated (uncoerced)” (Cialdini, 1985, p.94). Cialdini discusses that consistency is valued in society and can be beneficial to a daily lifestyle. Overall, consistency allows for a ‘shortcut’: “by being consistent with earlier decisions, one reduces the need to process all the relevant information in future similar situations; instead, one merely needs to recall the earlier decision and to respond consistently with it” (p.94).
In determining the use of commitment and consistency in persuasive communications, one should be aware of the engagement in repetitive actions that collectively help to create a form of lifestyle. Indeed, if customers feel a sense of commitment and consistency with a product’s brand, the organization benefits immensely.

With respect to coding Tim Hortons’ storytelling as a form of persuasive communications, some of the following commitment and consistency characteristics to look for include:

✓ Customers dedication to the brand (i.e., making it part of a daily routine)
✓ Does the corporation make a consistent (for many years) commitment to employees?
✓ Does the corporation make a consistent (for many years) commitment to social responsibility?

Social Proof: “The principle of social proof states that one important means that people use to decide what to believe or how to act in a situation is to look at what other people are believing or doing there” (Cialdini, 1985, p. 137). Cialdini notes that social proof is most influential under two conditions: 1) when someone feels unsure about the given situation; and, 2) when there is similarity (i.e., people will follow the lead of others).

In determining the use of social proof in persuasive communications, one should be aware of the use of others to generate acceptance through the idea that ‘everyone is doing it’, also known as the bandwagon effect.

With respect to coding Tim Hortons’ storytelling as a form of persuasive communications, some of the following social proof characteristics to look for include:
✓ The use of a ‘like’ individual to target a specific audience (i.e., using youth to specifically target youth through marketing)

✓ Power in numbers (i.e., do they present substantial data that back up the information?)

✓ Do they present the idea that this is something that has wide-spread influence? (i.e., multiple people participating)

**Liking:** “People prefer to say yes to individuals they know and like” (Cialdini, 1985, p.171).

Cialdini notes that one way in which we establish the ‘liking’ of others is through physical attractiveness. He discusses that those who are generally attractive also appear to be more kind, talented, and intelligent; further, they can influence behaviour more effectively. Additional ways in which we establish ‘liking’ other is through similarities between the given individual and the self, increased familiarity, and association with other positive parties.

In determining the use of liking in persuasive communications, one should ask the overall question: how does this form of communications make me feel? If positive sentiments are experienced, then you probably have engaged in some sort of liking on the given topic.

With respect to coding Tim Horton’s storytelling as a form of persuasive communications, some of the following liking can include:

✓ Attractiveness of the individual(s)

✓ Similarities of the individual(s) and the target audience

✓ Association with positive organizations/institutions/charities

✓ Familiarity (i.e., is it something that the target audience sees often?)

**Authority:** “The strength of this tendency to obey legitimate authorities comes from systematic socialization practices designed to instill in society members the perception that such
Obedience constitutes correct conduct” (Cialdini, 1985, p.197) Additionally, Cialdini discusses that there are three kinds of symbols that have been known to effectively determine whether one thinks a person is in a position of authority, identified as: titles, clothing, and automobiles.

In determining the use of authority in persuasive communications, one should examine whether the given individual(s) appear to have a sense of authority based on the three symbols listed above. Such uses of authority provide credibility to the product and name of the organization.

With respect to coding Tim Horton’s storytelling as a form of persuasive communications, some of the following authority can include:

- Titles (i.e., does the person speaking have a title, and do they provide credibility)
- Clothing (i.e., do they look the part?)
- Automobiles & Accessories (i.e., do such objects add credibility of the speaker?)

**Scarcity:** “According to the scarcity principle, people assign more value to opportunities when they are less available” (Cialdini, 1985, p.224). Cialdini discusses that the scarcity principle holds for two reasons: 1) things that are scarce are typically more valuable; and, 2) as things become scarcer, consumers lose freedom of choice. In efforts to respond to scarcity, customers choose to want more.

In determining the use of scarcity in persuasive communications, one should ask whether the given item or issue is limited or has a constrained time frame. If such is the case, one should ask whether its scarcity has an effect on consumers’ willingness to want the item.

With respect to coding Tim Horton’s storytelling as a form of persuasive communications, some of the following scarcity can include:
✓ Discussing limited-time-only products
✓ Short-term campaigns (i.e., do they express that the campaign has a strict time frame?)

Creating Categories / Collecting the Content

To analyze the effectiveness of Tim Hortons’ organizational storytelling, each story was evaluated based on Robert Cialdini’s weapons of influence. If it appeared that a weapon was used during the respective video, the analyst selected the weapon as being used in the video. Once all data was collected, the authors were able to identify what weapons of influence were most popular in Tim Hortons organizational storytelling through the social media platform, YouTube. Factors such as popularity are also included in the analysis by recording how frequently the videos were viewed. This also helped the authors to indicate whether such videos were popular in a persuasive context, and in a social media environment.

The following table was created for the use of analyzing each story:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weapons of Persuasion</th>
<th>Reciprocation</th>
<th>Commitment / Consistency</th>
<th>Social Proof</th>
<th>Liking</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Scarcity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This Video Contains:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Methodology**

Two separate analysts conducted the coding for the 5 selected YouTube channels, amounting to 36 Tim Hortons YouTube videos in total. Each analyst was familiarized with Robert Cialdini’s six weapons of influence and equipped with the coding parameters outlined in the identifying units of analysis section of this paper. These parameters defined reciprocation, commitment and consistence, liking, social proof, authority, and scarcity. A brief description was provided for each weapon, along with a characteristic checklist specifically relevant to the Tim Hortons organization.

The analysts viewed the videos individually, in the same order, and completed a coding table for each video. In the coding table, the analysts indicated which weapon(s) were used and the amount of views the video received. In the comment section of the table, qualitative information was recorded on how each weapon was utilized, trends that were appearing, memorable quotes by storytellers, etc.

After the initial coding was completed, the two sets of data were brought together and compared. Unavoidably, several discrepancies arose between the indicated weapons used in the two sets of
coding. These discrepancies were found largely in areas in which personal biases could play a role (i.e. ‘liking’ the interviewee). To compile a fair and true set of data, a third analyst conducted another set of coding for these specific videos where discrepancies arose. The results of the three sets of data were then averaged. After conducting the coding, the third analyst collected the data and pooled all of the information together, creating tables and figures to display results. These tables and figures illustrate which weapons were most and least prominent throughout Tim Hortons’ storytelling via YouTube, as well as the popularity of each selected channel.

Results

Weapons Used

Tim Hortons uses five of the six ‘weapons of influence’ in its storytelling. Void of using the weapon scarcity, Tim Hortons uses (starting with the most widely used) commitment and consistency, liking, reciprocity, social proof, and authority. Such results are displayed in Figure 1a and Figure 1b.

Figure 1a

![Weapons of Influence used by Tim Horton's](chart.png)

Note: Commitment/consistency is most popular; scarcity is not used.
Popularity

The popularity of the Tim Hortons’ channels on YouTube displayed polarized favourability to one channel: TimmyRun: Epic Coffee Runs. Popularity was determined by taking the total number of views for all videos analyzed and dividing the sum of that number by the total number of views per channel. Figure 2 displays the percentage of views each channel received, and also illustrates that TimmyRun: Epic Coffee Runs, was the most popular channel. Tables 1-5 (see Appendix B) display the amount of views each video received in their respective channels.

Note: Commitment/consistency is the most frequently used weapon with authority is the least frequently used weapon.
**Top Weapons of Influence used by Tim Hortons YouTube Storytelling**

The top weapon in Tim Hortons’ YouTube content, as illustrated in Figure 1b was commitment and consistency. Though, three weapons in particular were used frequently: 1) commitment and consistency which accounted for 32.14% of Tim Hortons total weapon use; 2) liking which accounted for 25.90% of Tim Hortons total weapon use, and; 3) reciprocity, which accounted for 24.10% of Tim Horton’s total weapon usage.

The three weapons highlighted above were used in every YouTube channel analyzed, and in most cases ranked as the top three weapons used in each respective channel. One exception to this trend was highlighted in the Tim Hortons Coffee Partnership channel (see Appendix A, Figure 4) This particular channel’s top three weapons were the following: 1) social proof; 2) commitment & consistency (tied with social proof); and, 3) reciprocity. Indeed, liking as a

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**Note:** *TimmyRun: Epic Coffee Runs* was by far the most popular YouTube Channel as the second most popular channel was *Tim Hortons’ Coffee Partnership* which only received 4.98% of the total views.
weapon did not place within the top 3 weapons for this channel. Additionally, authority surpassed liking in this channel.

Ties of weapon usage occurred in *Tim Hortons Coffee Partnership* where commitment & consistency, reciprocity, and social proof all ranked as the most frequently used weapon (Appendix A, Figure 4). Additionally, the *Tim Hortons Childrens Foundation* had four weapons that tied as the most frequently used weapons: commitment & consistency, reciprocity, social proof, and authority (see Appendix A, Figure 6).

**Summary of the Analysis**

Below highlights the summary of findings based on the Tim Hortons’ YouTube videos analyzed, along with addressing the posed research questions.

1. **What persuasive forms of storytelling does Tim Hortons use?**

Based on the results from the Tim Hortons YouTube videos analyzed, it is apparent that Tim Hortons engages mostly in three persuasive forms of storytelling: 1) commitment & consistency; 2) liking; and, 3) reciprocity.

The most popular form of storytelling, commitment and consistency, speaks to customers’ interpretation of the Tim Hortons brand. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, storytelling can be used “to learn, to direct action, to plan for the future, and to develop reputation and image” (Baruch, 2009, p. 17). In using commitment and consistency as a predominant persuasive factor in a majority of its YouTube storytelling, the organization has created a ‘trusted’ branded image that its customers can count on. The repetition of messages from customers and employees was noted by the analysts in the ‘comments’ section. This was particularly relevant
when it came to *The Great Coffee Conversation* channel videos, where customers and employees spoke about their unique Tim Hortons experience. Again, this speaks to the existing literature on the fact that an organization can create a consensus based on similar information being provided through a variety of platforms.

Additionally, these top three weapons of influence can collectively be considered as demonstrating a sort of societal commitment; that these weapons demonstrate a level of caring and dedication that the organization has for the community and by extension, the nation. Such persuasive forms of storytelling truly connect with what Soundsararajan (2006) discussed as aiding in cultivating the connections between people’s culture and value. Indeed, such uses of persuasion are favourable to customers in a non-intimidating, open fashion.

2. **What persuasive forms of Tim Hortons storytelling were most effective based on video popularity?**

*The TimmyRun: Epic Coffee Runs* channel proved to be most popular (holding 88.25% total views when compared with other analyzed channels), with the YouTube video of the Trapeze Instructor being the most popular (garnering 106,906 views). Although this video may not effectively speak to the every-day citizen, the theme of commitment and consistency in this video certainly resonates. After all, the video displays an extreme extent of what someone will do to receive their daily cup of Tims. The second most popular video also falls under the same channel: *The Crane Operator*. This video again does not speak to the every-day citizen but certainly demonstrates a level of ‘liking’ as the people in the video could be fathers, sons, or brothers. Videos from other channels analyzed accrued little views compared to these two videos.
The popularity of the Trapeze Instructor and Crane Operator do effectively speak to what Robert Cialdini describes when he discusses the weapons of influence and their persuasive power. Although multiple weapons were not highlighted in these two videos, Tim Hortons effectively used one weapon (commitment and consistency), almost bringing it to an extreme example to draw attention to the viewer. Due to the high popularity of these videos and their low weapon usage, it could be extended that it does not really matter how many weapons of influence are used as long as one is executed effectively.

An interesting point to note is that all the videos on TimmyRun: Epic Coffee Runs channel were scripted, and not true, authentic stories from customers or employees. Although they presented the appearance of true stories, it is evident that significant production time was allocated for the creation of these videos. This offers some interesting insight for further research on whether or not the creation of pseudo-narratives are more effective than authentic first-voice narratives.

3. How did Tim Hortons persuasively use the social media platform, YouTube, to tell its stories?

Tim Hortons used YouTube to tell its stories of its customers, its employees, and of those involved in its charitable work. The stories did not appear scripted, though; it appeared that similar questions were asked to each video participant for the respective channel. Such non-scripted responses provided a sense of authenticity to the viewer. The videos using authentic voices were persuasive in representing the every-day citizen, using the weapon of influence liking.

Tim Hortons demonstrated its community commitment through the use of personal testimonials and authoritative figures describing programs in the channels Tim Hortons Children Foundation
and Coffee Partnership. The videos in these two channels included the prominent use of a variety of weapons of influence (see Appendix A, Figure 4 & Figure 6). Although these videos were not significantly popular, they did adequately carry structured messaging surrounding Tim Hortons beneficial work.

4. Does YouTube prove to be an effective social media platform to communicate organizational stories?

YouTube proved to be an effective social media platform for storytelling, particularly with respect to digital storytelling. All videos analyzed used at least one weapon of influence to persuade the viewer in favour of the Tim Hortons brand. The authors noted that the videos appeared authentic and overall provided a positive image for the organization.

It was anticipated that videos would be more popular, however, as few videos proved to have a significant amount of views (over 1000). Through the above analysis it can then be determined that although YouTube serves as a successful platform to digitally tell organizational stories, it may not be the most effective interface to engage in storytelling with publics.

Limitations/ Recommendations

Due to the fact that only one social media outlet was analyzed, the authors noted that they could not explicitly speak to Tim Hortons’ overarching use of organizational storytelling, nor its overarching use of organizational storytelling through the social media interface. Although YouTube provided a solid, well-defined platform of storytelling to analyze, the single use of this tool only allowed for the findings to speak to a certain type of storytelling, that of digital storytelling. In terms of influence, we found that portraying storytelling through video form was very effective, however; the authors noted that the YouTube platform was not as effective as
originally anticipated. It is recommended that if a full interpretation of Tim Hortons’ organizational storytelling through social media is to be understood, that other social media platforms are analyzed as well.

An additional limitation that arose when analyzing the popularity of videos was that the authors were solely basing the video popularity on number of views. Further, the authors had no knowledge of how the videos were promoted by Tim Hortons. This poses such questions as: Did Tim Hortons purposely promote certain videos on its website (or other platforms) in prominent places? Were certain stories promoted more than others? These variables were not considered and thus, serve as a limitation on the analysis.

The two popular YouTube videos discussed demonstrated an extreme, scripted case of commitment and consistency. Both videos were produced with high quality, whereas almost all the other videos analyzed included mostly authentic, first-person voices. It is noted in the summary that this poses an interesting question for further research: Are scripted pseudo-stories more persuasive than authentic, first-voice stories? Although this is an interesting insight, the authors cannot properly deduce this from the limited data analyzed. Further research is recommended on comparing scripted and authentic storytelling.

The authors highlighted that YouTube proved to be a successful platform for digital storytelling though, it may not be the best way to engage audiences. This was deduced based on low view popularity among a variety of videos. Further research into what constitutes effective digital storytelling for organizations like Tim Hortons would have helped the authors to gain a fuller understanding through comparing and contrasting with other like-organization (i.e., Starbucks,
Just Us! Coffee, etc.). It is recommended that further research in this area is explored to understand the benchmark for successful digital storytelling on YouTube.

**Conclusion**

Overall, it is apparent that Tim Hortons engages in persuasive storytelling through its YouTube videos when analyzed using Robert Cialdini’s weapons of influence. All videos interpreted used at least one weapon of influence, highlighting that its use of digital storytelling is effective. The most popular weapon of influence used was that of commitment and consistency, which spoke to the organization’s overarching mission statement: ‘Always fresh. Always’ (Tim Hortons, n.d.).

Information analyzed noted that persuasive storytelling does not require multiple weapons of influence as long as one weapon is used effectively. As well, persuasive videos based on number of views demonstrated that scripted stories were more popular than authentic, real stories. Such findings require further research though, as only a small set of data can speak to this point.

Although Tim Hortons uses its YouTube channels persuasively to tell its organizational stories, most videos did not prove to be very popular. It is further recommended that other social media platforms should be analyzed to interpret whether other interfaces are more engaging to audiences when it comes to organizational storytelling. As well, it is recommended that other like-organizations are observed to pinpoint a benchmark for effective organizational digital storytelling.

Tim Hortons has created a strong brand image that is closely aligned with that of the Canadian identity. Such strong brand messaging demonstrates that Tim Hortons is communicating with its customers in a successful fashion. Indeed, the YouTube videos analyzed for the purpose of this
paper do not fall short of what Tim Hortons consistently delivers. Such effective storytelling helps to create resiliency among its customers, thereby allowing for the continued success of the organization.
References:


Grant, R. (2013). THE YEAR FOR SHARING STORIES. Marketing Week (01419285), 45

Kanzler, F. (2007). It's all about the story: Differentiating your organization from the rest. *Public


Tim Hortons (n.d.) Welcome to Tim Hortons. Retrieved March 31, 2013, from
Appendix A:

Tables and graphs based on Tim Hortons’ YouTube weapons of influence usage.

Figure 3

**Weapons of Influence Used in TimmyRun: Epic Coffee Runs**

Note: Displays the amount of use each weapon got in the TimmyRun: Epic Coffee Run channel

Figure 4

**Weapons of Influence used in Tim Hortons Coffee Partnership**
Figure 5

**Weapons of Influence used in The Great Coffee Conversation**

Note: Displays the amount use from each weapon in *The Great Coffee Conversation* channel.

Figure 6

**Weapons of Influence used in Tim Hortons Childrens Foundation**

Note: Displays the amount use from each weapon in *Tim Hortons Childrens Foundation*. 
Figure 7

Weapons of Influence used in Tims Coffee Moments

Note: Displays the amount use from each weapon in the Tims Coffee Moments channel
Appendix B:

Tables and charts based on video popularity.

Table 1
Number of Views: TimmyRun Epic Coffee Run

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YouTube Video</th>
<th>Number of Views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trapeze Instructor</td>
<td>106906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crane Operator</td>
<td>87756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron Goes on a TimmyRun</td>
<td>1158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Views</strong></td>
<td><strong>195820</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The vast majority of the views go to Trapeze Instructor and Crane Operator.

Table 2
Number of Views: Tim Horton’s Coffee Partnership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YouTube Video</th>
<th>Number of Views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>5415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Farmers Story</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Pillar</td>
<td>571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Pillar</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Pillar</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>2361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Views</strong></td>
<td><strong>11050</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The majority of views for this channel were received by the overview video, it has nearly half of the views for the entire channel.

Table 3
Number of Views: The Great Coffee Conversation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YouTube Video</th>
<th>Number of Views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part 1</td>
<td>872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2</td>
<td>744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 3</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 4</td>
<td>1001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 5</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 6</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 7</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 8</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 9</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 10</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 11</td>
<td>754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 12</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 13</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YouTube Video</th>
<th>Number of Views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I'm the Person I Wanted to Be</td>
<td>2054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 Hours to Discover</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of Camp</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Leadership Program Leader</td>
<td>674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3597</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Shows the number of views each video in the Tim Hortons Children Foundation Channel received. *I'm the Person I Wanted to Be* received the vast majority of the views for this channel.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YouTube Video</th>
<th>Number of Views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part 16</td>
<td>1176</td>
</tr>
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<td>Part 17</td>
<td>243</td>
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<td>Part 18</td>
<td>237</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part 19</td>
<td>611</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part 20</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 21</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 22</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 23</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3184</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Shows the number of views each video in the Tims Coffee Moments channel received. There is a clear majority of views for *Part 16*. 