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FROM THE EDITORS

This revised issue of *Quarterly Review of Business Disciplines* begins with an article written by Earney Lasten, Randall Upchurch, and Jason Stiles who explore the world of interval ownership and the marketing advantages and/or disadvantages of offering an additional product or service to existing customers in Aruba.

Karin Reinhard of Germany together with Diren Bulut of Turkey explore online platforms as communities for self-expression and socialization and the formation of virtual communities, specifically eksisozluk.com. H. Paul LeBlanc III explores why individuals choose specific genres of music and the lived experience of music listening through his own experience and the experiences of other music enthusiasts. Gregory Chase explores the impact of religion on corruption and its influence on economic growth.

Marlene Preston and Brandi Quesenberry bring us back to the virtual world, but this is the virtual world of a public speaking course that must maintain the rigors and outcomes of an on campus class.

We wish you a happy holiday season with colleagues & friends.

Margaret A. Goralski, *Quinnipiac University*, Editor-in Chief
Kaye McKinzie, *University of Central Arkansas*, Associate Editor

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Manuscript Guidelines/Comments. *QRBD* is a blind peer-reviewed journal that provides publication of articles in all areas of business and the social sciences that affect business. The Journal welcomes the submission of manuscripts that meet the general criteria of significance and business excellence. Manuscripts should address real-world phenomena that highlight research that is interesting and different – innovative papers that begin or continue a line of inquiry that integrate across disciplines, as well as, those that are disciplinary. The Journal is interested in papers that are constructive in nature and suggest how established theories or understandings of issues in business can be positively revised, adapted, or extended through new perspectives and insights. Manuscripts that do not make a theoretical contribution to business studies or that have no relevance to the domain of business should not be sent to *QRBD*. Submissions to *QRBD* must follow the journal's Style Guide for Authors, including length, formatting, and references. Poorly structured or written papers will be returned to the authors promptly. Manuscript length is approximately 16 – 20 pages. Acceptance rate is 25-28%.

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ABSTRACT

The growth of the shared ownership industry, also known as the timeshare industry, has been noted to be one of the few tourist sectors which has experienced continual growth since its inception. The product lifecycle of the shared ownership industry has, however, not been without challenges due to worldwide economic woes, taxation issues, and changing consumer needs, wants, and expectations. The present study set in the island country of Aruba assessed owner interest in car club membership, an extension of the timeshare/shared ownership product.

Keywords: interval ownership, timeshare ownership, car club membership, product extension strategy

CAR CLUB MEMBERSHIP – A PRODUCT EXTENSION OF INTERVAL OWNERSHIP

The timeshare resort product, alias shared ownership, is a concept that originated in Europe and quickly spread to the United States during the 1960's. Resorts that are positioned as shared ownership product offer consumers an option of purchasing, under a deeded or non-deeded agreement, a vacation stay at a resort using weekly increments with one week historically being the most common interval of purchase (Upchurch & Dipetro, 2010).

The American Resort Development Association (ARDA) serves as the shared ownership industry's lobbying arm, tracks industry metrics associated with development of shared ownership products, and serves as a gateway for consumer information concerning a wide array of products and services. In 2013, ARDA noted that product development and expansion efforts were negatively impacted by world pressures were at a record time high and as a result the industry was at the point of retooling their business plans. These pressures noted by ARDA ranged from wars on foreign soil, the unpopularity of the United States in certain regions of the world, the collapse of the housing industry within the United States, Congress' reaction to financial lending practices and the general propensity of state and local governments to tax consumers thus negatively impacting discretionary income of baby boomers reaching retirement. In light of those challenges, ARDA noted that the timeshare industry has stabilized and shows promise of expanding, albeit at a modest rate via product extensions in tourist destinations located throughout the world (ARDA, 2013). From a strategic planning standpoint, the business strategies which are evolving indicate that the interval (timeshare) ownership industry has adjusted product, price, promotion, and to some degree location offerings in an effort to address owner needs, product and service opportunities, and the worldwide challenges as previously noted.

A glance at a few of the global key metrics from ARDA note the presence of 5,325 resorts located in 106 countries, 774,369 intervals sold, a sales volume of $14 billion, average occupancy of 76%, rental income of $2.2 billion, and an overall estimated economic impact of $114 billion US dollars (ARDA, 2013b). Traditional share ownership sales volume totaled $6.9 billion in 2013 as representative of new sales as reported by shared ownership resort developers (ARDA, 2013b). However industry research noted that sales volume for new inventory sales declined 40% in the last quarter of 2008 and 2009, yet interval sales stabilized and in 2010 and 2011 some regions boasted modest growth. Overall, average sales price per interval declined during this period to $19,000 per interval and projections indicate an upward trend in consumer interest in product offerings via non-traditional intervals. It should be noted that throughout the economic downturn resort occupancy remained elevated at 76.9% for 2012. To fill the sustained consumer interest along with an occupancy gap, resort developers are leveraging new business strategies such as rental programs designed to open up access to unused inventory to leisure and recreational travelers (ARDA, 2012; ARDA 2013a).

During the 2011 Shared Ownership Investment Conference (SOIC), various strategies were discussed that have helped many developers remain solvent. Commonly, there are four factors that drive a business to deploy rejuvenation strategies: money, time, space, and technology. For instance, the reduction in discretionary household income, a state of “time impoverishment” (as expressed by vacationers), the desire to travel shorter distances and for less time, and a drastic reduction in lender funding for site development and consumer loans have all changed the way developers sell and market their products. In terms of technology, developers are leveraging data-mining and predictive consumer models to more effectively and efficiently position their resorts in ways that appeal to changing consumer preferences. One rejuvenation strategy designed to ameliorate revenues is for developers to make their sales and marketing services available to other companies that need assistance in selling and promoting their products and services. This strategy, known as “fee-for-service,” prevents staff reduction due to lowered developer sales and replenishes, or at least lessens, the drop in developer revenues. Another strategy that has been refined over time is the packaging of “shares” in such a way that fits the consumer’s wallet. For instance, in the fractional market, shares are now being sold in smaller increments to induce sales. The most defining rebound strategy is displayed by developer focus on existing consumer product and service satisfaction. The key here is the shift from a new-consumer focus to that of servicing existing owners, thereby enhancing their vacation experiences and increasing their future propensity to “reload,” refer, or simply share their positive experiences with others. The concept of reloading is not new to the industry—but what is new is the range and fervor associated with owner satisfaction.

The trends cited above bring attention to three major factors that have impacted consumer acceptance and therefore the life cycle of shared ownership products. First, there is a reduction in available discretionary household dollars; secondly, those consumers who do have discretionary dollars remain mindful of purchasing a shared ownership product that matches or exceeds their price-value expectations; and lastly, for those consumers and developers who need loans, the reality of unavailable financing is negatively impacting the industry (whether on the resort development or consumer loan side). This has led to a general stagnation on both fronts.

Overall, the growth of the shared ownership industry has remained strong over the years with the exception being the recent downturn of the world economy. Relative to Aruba, the timeshare industry has remained a significant source of resort accommodations for that country.

THE ARUBA CASE STUDY

The aforementioned growth indicators associated with shared ownership products attests to the fact that this vacation stay alternative is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry (ARDA, 2013b; Powers & Barrows, 2006). Timeshare resorts are a preferred travel accommodation for many tourists throughout the world as noted by the fact that shared ownership resorts are located in more than 120 countries (ARDA, 2013b). Aruba is no exception to this trend in that Walker (2006) noted the Caribbean region is one of the most popular regions for timeshare owners to buy a timeshare. In fact, Aruba dominated the timeshare market in 2003 with about one third of all the sales in the Caribbean (Ham, Lasten, Upchurch & Peterson, 2007). However, previous research about the timeshare industry in the Caribbean and especially Aruba is limited. Ham, et al. (2007) have proposed a call for research about the timeshare industry in the Caribbean, and especially in Aruba, in order to better understand the concept and to better understand its impact on the island. According to Upchurch and Lashley (2006), the timeshare industry is in its early phases of the development stage of Butler's product life cycle. Since this time, and as noted previously, world conditions and consumer preferences are driving changes to how the shared ownership product is packaged. One such new product extension that may be appealing to the shared ownership consumer is car club membership.

The car club membership concept originated in Switzerland, in 1987, and over ensuing years this membership idea spread throughout Germany and the rest of Europe. Specific to Aruba, an Aruban car dealer offers timeshare owners automobile usage as an add-on package to their timeshare interval (Where can…, 2012). Under this type of agreement, consumers "lease" the same car during the time they have contracted to use their timeshare interval while on the island of Aruba. Specifically, shared ownership owners have exclusive access to this automobile while they are on the island, without full ownership or need to enter into car rental contracts as offered by car rental companies. Since this concept is new, it is important first to assess consumer interest in this project enhancement in terms of consumer acceptance. The main question of this research study refers to: 'If there is significant interest in car club membership in order to implement the concept in Aruba?'

METHODOLOGY

A purposive data collection procedure layered with a clustered sampling process of shared ownership (e.g., timeshare) owners was deployed using a tourist database collected by the government of Aruba. The Tourist Database in Aruba provided the researchers access to a comprehensive list of timeshare owners collected by Aruba's Timeshare Association, the only recognized body of shared ownership properties in operation on the island.

The population of timeshare owners completed an online, and confidential, survey on a private website, www.fhtms.net. All timeshare owners were contacted via their officially recorded email address. The population of respondents therefore encompassed all timeshare owners within this database. An email invitation requested the owner complete a survey designed to assess their propensity to purchase a car club membership for the explicit purpose of evaluating interest in an exclusive car club for repeat visitors to Aruba. The invitation noted that the proposed program offered the consumer a hassle free, unparalleled experience, of owning a private car during the period of their annual island stay. The survey was conducted during the month of July which only captured those owners who were using their interval during that month. This process yielded an estimated response rate of fifteen percent. There were a total of 348 total respondents of which 224 timeshare owners completed the online survey in entirety while 124 were classified as incomplete submissions. Unfortunately those 124 surveys contained less than one-fourth of the information completed which rendered them meaningless for this study. The survey consisted of twelve questions, including both quantitative and qualitative questions. In general, the researchers sought timeshare owner opinions regarding their car rental experiences while staying in Aruba, followed with an assessment of interest in an exclusive car club membership. There were email reminders submitted during week one, two, and three of this period but only to those who had not responded previously.

Study Intent and Research Questions

The intent of this study was threefold; first, to acquire an assessment of timeshare owner car rental experiences in Aruba; second, to determine timeshare owner interest in an automobile club membership program as comprised of eight features; and third to determine owner interest in purchasing a car club membership.

> R_1. To determine timeshare owner impressions of car rental services in Aruba as segmented by a) an assessment of the car rental process, b) condition of car, and c) an assessment of car rental services with impact upon decision to purchase a car club membership.
>
> R_2. To determine timeshare owner interest in car club membership features. The rated features are:
>
> a. exclusive availability to new cars
> b. free pickup and drop off by shuttle bus
> c. hassle free check-in and checkout
> d. insurance included as part of membership fee
> e. free use of exclusive VIP lounge upon check-in and checkout
> f. complimentary beverages at VIP lounge
> g. free wifi at business center/VIP lounge
> h. long term storage space at VIP lounge for personal items

R_3. To determine the relationship between previous car rental experience with interest in the proposed car club program.

STUDY FINDINGS

Participant Profile

All participants who responded were residents of the United States. The majority of the respondents (48%) lived in the South Eastern part of the United States, in New York (15%) and New Jersey (13.5%). When asked for the number of visits to Aruba, the majority responded that they had visited Aruba for 10 years (49%), and many (49%) considered the island as their second home. Moreover, timeshare owners spent on average one week (31%) to two weeks (47%) in Aruba. About seven out of ten respondents replied that they always (52%) or sometimes (23%) rented a car on the island. The types of cars respondents typically rented and preferred were classified as a compact car (40%) or a midsize car (26%). The overall quality rating of their car rental company experience/services was rated as good (40%) and fair (40%), thus indicating a need for an alternative provider for high quality and consistent car services.

Based on the expressed need for high quality and consistent car services, the respondents were asked to evaluate eight possible car membership features. The car membership features which were of the greatest appeal were 1) hassle free check in and check out of your car with limited paperwork (69.5%); 2) free pick up and drop off by shuttle bus from the airport and back, access to a VIP lounge (67.4%); and 3) bundled insurance included as part of the car membership (57.1%).

Car Rental Service Findings (R_1)

The respondents were asked three questions concerning their previous car rental experiences using a three points scale where 1=Poor, 2=Fair, and 3=Good. When asked 'how simple was the car rental process' the Mean response was 2.47 with a standard deviation of .613. When asked 'what was the general condition of the rental car' the Mean profile was 2.23 with a standard deviation of .634. When asked 'how would you rate your overall car rental experience' the Mean rating was 2.42 with a standard deviation of .585. Therefore it would appear that there is room for improvement in car rental services as provided in Aruba which implies the introduction of higher quality car services via a membership shows great promise for this group of consumers.

Car Club Membership Feature Preference (R_2)

In an effort to determine if consumer interest existed for the car club membership concept, the researchers posed eight car membership program features deemed to be of value to consumers. In Mean score rank order, the respondents indicated that 'hassle free check-in and check-out services were of highest value' (Mean=4.71; s.d.=.812); followed by 'free pick up and drop off shuttle bus services' (Mean=4.61; s.d.=1.013); 'all insurance is included in membership fee' (Mean=4.31; s.d.=1.305); 'exclusive access to new vehicles' (Mean=3.81; s.d.=1.327); 'free use of exclusive VIP lounge' (Mean=3.15; s.d.=1.652); 'availability of storage space at VIP lounge' (Mean=2.87; s.d.=1.73);'free wifi at VIP lounge; (Mean=2.68; s.d.=1.69; and 'free complimentary coffee, tea and drinks at VIP lounge' (Mean=2.45; s.d.=1.68). In order of highest mean score were most attracted to convenience.

The respondents noted a preference for transportation and onsite services at the point of check-in and check-out along followed by the membership being bundled into their ownership fees. However, a word of caution is in order due to the fairly wide standard deviations, and therefore lack of agreement, on the rated items. This implies that these respondents were attracted to what could be considered convenience factors although they were not totally convinced of the overall merit of this membership as adding a personal or social status benefit to their present interval ownership.

Interest in Car Club Membership (R_3)

Relative to determining if previous car rental experiences were associated with consumer (timeshare owner) interest, the researchers deployed a regression procedure with a particular focus on determining the influence of the respondent's previous car rental experience, car condition, and overall car rental satisfaction upon their interest in the proposed car club membership concept. The resultant analysis indicates that two of the items were significant in their relationship with interest in the car club membership program. In particular, the general condition of the rented car along with the consumer evaluation of their overall car rental experience showed a significant relationship to interest in the proposed car club membership program. Granted the regression model has low correlation and an R-square factor; however the generalized trend is that a lowered consumer rental car experience rating increased the likelihood of the timeshare owner's expressed interest in a car club membership program. This finding, therefore, implies that the provision of a more stable and higher quality car service is of interest to this group of timeshare owners.

Table 1. Relationship of car rental experiences upon interest in car club membership

Regression Model	R	R-square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of Estimate
	.298	.089	.072	.419
Anova	Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig.
	2.85	3	.953	.001
	Beta	t	Sig.	
Was the car rental process simple?	-.005	-.045	.964	
What was the general condition of the rental car?	.379	3.839	.000	
How would you rate the overall service of the car rental company?	-.338	-2.65	.009	

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Generally, the polled timeshare owners were interested in the concept of a car club membership program although their interest was guarded. In particular, the respondents expressed concern as to how a car club membership would ‘enhance the value’ of their existing interval ownership, and if so, how this membership could be bundled into their timeshare interval purchase either on the day of contract signing or, perhaps, as an add-on feature to their original interval purchase. This general sentiment of ‘cautious interest’ was also echoed by the varying range of standard deviations reported for the scaled car membership program features. Clearly the reported low R-square scores indicates a certain level of ambiguity concerning immediate adoption of the proposed car membership program.

From a theoretical modeling perspective, this profile of cautious interest is undoubtedly related to other car rental options which are available in Aruba. When reflecting upon Michael Porter’s Five Forces model there are five forces that impact an organization’s ability to be competitive in a given market. Those forces are supplier power, threat of new entrants, threat of substitutes, buying power, and degree of rivalry (Porter, 2008). Within the context of this study, the two specific elements of Porter’s model which come to mind are a) supplier power and b) buyer power. In terms of supplier power, the existing car rental companies (supplier power) is very well entrenched which implies that convincing the timeshare owner to convert to a car membership option is a daunting task. In terms of buyer power, there is however significant buyer power in that the island of Aruba has significant timeshare as well as resorts which draw travelers from across the globe. What this implies is that, relatively speaking, there is a broad base of consumer potential in a car club membership program (Porter, 2008; Kotler, Bowens & Makens, 2010) as long as the consumer views the pricing point to be a return on their personal investment.

In closing, and within the context of Porter’s Five Forces model, there is no direct car club membership competition in Aruba thus indicating that the market potential is promising in terms of bundling a car club membership into the owners’ purchase experience. Still a significant threat does exist by the mere presence of existing car rental services which are therefore a cause of concern for the introduction of this car club membership concept. The bargaining power of car rental agencies is entrenched within this island economy and as such remains a competitive threat and barrier to entry into this car club membership concept. The differentiating factor which may tip the scale centers on the fact that the automobile dealer who is evaluating this car club membership program is strongly recognized as an industry leader who also has strong financial and political backing. Also, and as noted previously, this car club membership program is best positioned as an owner benefit if it is bundled with their timeshare purchase. As such, and if there is sufficient owner appeal, then the probability of switching from existing car rental services to car club program may indeed be a profitable venture.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has several limitations. First, the study was conducted during the month of July thus limiting the representative nature of owners that had purchased a resort interval in Aruba during other weeks throughout the year. This restricted sampling process skewed the results by excluding shared ownership owners from other weeks not surveyed. Second, the research findings are exclusive to the island country of Aruba thus generalizing interest in car club membership to other island countries is limited in scope. It is therefore recommended by the researchers to conduct this study in other countries and with other owners to determine if the concept of car club membership is a viable product enhancement to the existing shared ownership experience. Relative to seeking timeshare owner input it is also important to reflect upon the benefits associated with wrapping a car membership into the purchase of their interval, if this concept is even feasible from a financial and practical standpoint for timeshare interval owners.

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Appendix: Car Club membership survey questions

1. How many years over the past ten years have you visited Aruba?
2. How many weeks on average do you visit Aruba per year?
3. Where do you stay in Aruba?
4. During you stay, did you rent a car in Aruba?
5. What type of car did you rent in Aruba? a. Compact b. Midsize c. Full size d. other
6. Rate your car rental experience: a. How simple was the car rental process? b. What was the normal condition of the car that you rented? c. How would you rate the service offered by this car rental company?
7. How much did you pay for your rental car?
8. Which month did you visit Aruba?
9. Rate the importance of the following car club membership features: a. Exclusive availability of new cars b. Free pickup and drop off by shuttle bus c. Hassle free check-in and checkout d. All insurance included as part of your onetime membership fee e. Free use of exclusive VIP lounge upon check-in and checkout f. Complimentary beverages at VIP lounge g. Free Wi-Fi at business center at VIP lounge h. Long term storage space at VIP lounge for personal items
10. To what degree are you interested in becoming a car club member?
11. What is your home country and state?
12. If you are interested in car club membership, please provide your name and email address

Car Membership Assessment			
	% approval		
Hassle free check in	69.5		
Free pickup and drop off	67.4		
VIP lounge access	67.4		
Bundled insurance	57.1		
	Mean	s.d.	
How simple was the car rental process*	2.47	.613	
What was the general condition of the rental car*	2.23	.634	
How would you rate your overall car rental experience*	2.42	.585	
* 1=Poor to 3=Good			
	Mean	s.d.	
Hassle free check in	4.71	.812	
Free pick up and drop off	4.61	1.013	
Bundled insurance	4.31	1.305	
Exclusive access to new vehicles	3.81	1.327	
VIP lounge access	3.15	1.652	
VIP lounge storage	2.87	1.73	
VIP lounge wifi	2.68	1.69	
VIP lounge complimentary beverages	2.45	1.68	
Scale: 1 lowest preference to 5 Highest preference			

SOCIAL MEDIA IN A DICTIONARY FORMAT: ONLINE COMMUNITY OF eksisozluk.com

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ABSTRACT

Internet technologies help people to reach information easily, but the reliability of the source or the appropriateness of the website is debatable. Using virtual communities as an example, people tend to add their personal opinions and very subjective comments, based on their past experiences. However, virtual communities should not just be viewed as a source of learning or information, but also a platform for self-expressing and socializing. This paper reviews the concepts of communities and virtual communities. These concepts are further developed using the example of a virtual community from Turkey, called eksisozluk.com. The paper describes how the system at eksisozluk.com works, how people communicate, and the special aspects, which make this online dictionary a community rather than a website.

Keywords: Virtual communities, online communities, user-generated content, communities of practice, Eksisozluk, suser

INTRODUCTION

The average person in Turkey spends long hours behind the computer screen and with online-based technologies. It is not just limited to work, the average Internet usage of Turkish people between the ages of 12-34 is 50 hours per month (Turkish Institution of Statistics [TUIK]). This time is not just used for work/school. People use the Internet for many purposes from information seeking to shopping, entertainment, and socializing.

Eksisozluk.com can be defined as a virtual community, user-generated online dictionary. The slogan “sacred source of information” is quite assertive for a user-generated medium, since none of the parties are evaluated for the accuracy of their information or comment. Even the structure is based on sharing information, definitions, and personal points of view. Eksisozluk is more than an online information panel; it is a virtual community, which allows people to communicate virtually in a way that they would never share in their real life.

This paper aims to analyze and understand the factors, which make eksisozluk.com not just a “dictionary,” but a virtual community. It also discusses the basic structural modeling for building such a large user-generated virtual community. Accuracy and reliability are the key attributes when one searches for information (online or not). This paper debates if it is possible to build that trust in the context of a user-generated community platform.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communities

The term community derives its scientific basis from the field of sociology and is usually examined comparatively with the definition of "society." Communities refer to relatively smaller, informal, more emotionally attached groups, which have a common history, rituals, and values (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Communities are dynamic and vital systems, which depend on interaction. Bellah (1985) defines communities as participant dominated organizations, where individuals discuss, contribute, share and make decisions. Even though communities have been examined and defined, using a variety of different examples, most studies refer to their characteristics of common consciousness (Fraering & Minor, 2006; Gusfield, 1978), self-sufficiency (Hillery, 1955), participation and integration (Selznik, 1996). The core of the community that brings people together could be an idea, a belief, a function or an activity, a person or a story (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). The core that glues people together in a community eventually creates a culture of its own.

Community by definition includes more than one individual, and features relationships, sharing and communication. The communication style, frequency and how individuals enter and leave the community shape the structure of the community (Bateman, Gray, & Butler, 2006; Carlson, Suter, & Brown, 2008).

Virtual Communities

Defining communities as networks based in a geographical territory (Jones, 1997) and limiting the idea of core value by the location makes it difficult to elaborate the concept of virtual communities. Virtual communities could be defined as ; *"... a number of people who team up due to a common interest, a common problem or a common assignment and for whom the interaction is independent of space and time as well as of their actual physical location"* (Leimeister, Bantleon & Kremar, 2002, p. 3). This independency relies on the technological developments and the presence of Internet and mobile communication channels. There are examples in literature referring to such virtual communities only as a community, brand community or consumer subculture, independent from their medium. More often the focus of academic literature is on the purpose of the community itself (Cova & Pace, 2006).

Vrasidas and Veletsianos (2010), state that "interaction" is key to virtual communities and define virtual communities in the context of constructivism, cognition and communities of practice. Learning or data processing is a constructive process, which requires the cognitive involvement of a person.

Communities of Practice

Community of practice defines individuals, who are engaged in support of an aim and form a group around that aim. Communities of practices are useful for collecting and sharing knowledge and experiences within the groups, and also may attract new individuals through interaction (Daniel, Sarkar, & O'Brien, 2004). Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002, p. 4) state that *"Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis."* While this statement refers to the continuity of the communities, it also places the emphasis on shared values (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

Communication and Trust

Online communities may have different levels of usage for their participants and could be used for many purposes from searching for information to learning (Soylu, 2009), social engagement (Bateman, Gray, & Butler, 2006; Nonnecke & Preece 2003) and self-expression (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Nevertheless, the core function and value of a virtual community is communication (Klang & Olsson, 1999). This inter-personal communication shapes the community structure and defines communities/virtual communities as opposed to traditional communication channels.

As with all forms of communication, there is a possibility of misunderstanding between the parties. The parties to the communication should evaluate the accuracy and their understanding of the information they receive from other users.

The trust for the information generated within the community can be built upon having experience with the community. Leimeister, Ebner, and Kremar, (2005), define two main trust building dimensions; perceived competence and perceived goodwill. Even though these concepts are discussed for the organization providing the information, in a user-generated community these dimensions could be generalized and apply also for the users.

Eksisozluk

Eksisozluk (meaning "sour dictionary") is a popular virtual community in Turkey, which provides information, a source of learning, entertainment, and socialization (Soylu, 2009). It is a user-generated content website and has a collaborative hypertext dictionary structure, which provides personal definitions from the users of the community in Turkish (Gurel & Yakın, 2007). Furthermore, eksisozluk is used as a point of reference for study concepts and dissertations, and a source of definitions (Ozipek, 2013).

There are very few studies on eksisozluk, which usually concenter around user-generated content sharing (Dogu, Ziraman, Z., & Ziraman, D. E., 2009), the learning community concept (Soylu, 2009), and the cultural perspective (Gurel, & Yakın, 2007). This paper seeks to analyze eksisozluk.com not only as a virtual community with its own culture, language, and structure, but also examine how it is evaluated to ensure the provision of real, credible, and accurate information to its users.

EKSISOZLUK

Structure

Eksisozluk was founded in 1999 by Sedat Kaplanoglu (who writes under the nickname "ssg") with the slogan "sacred source of information." The website resembles the "Everything2" website, with user-generated contributions on different subjects (Dogu et al, 2009). The structure of the website consists of different words or phrases, called "titles," under which authors form the content, chronologically by their definitions, which are called "entries." The titles are not supposed to be just a word to be defined; situations, dates, people even feelings or imaginary words are allowed to be titles.

Access and Membership at eksisozluk.com

Eksisozluk defines the community membership in different stages. The eksisozluk community uses the term "suser" (dictionary user) for all the users, but allows them to have access to different applications. As a public website, with open access to the online entries, any individual can go online, access, and read the content on eksisozluk, without requiring any membership (De Valck, 2005). This access level does not allow any reader to like or dislike the "entries." Searches can be made by title, entry, or author using the community search engine. Susers can get a better view about a specific topic or the author and check their older entries too.

Registered susers access the virtual community with a nickname and password and can evaluate any entry. Rookies are members who have submitted ten entries and are waiting for their entries to be evaluated and approved, so that they are qualified to provide content, which meets the standards of the community. Rookies are new-comers, whereas authors are experienced (in various generations) members of the community.

Eksisozluk has many applicants, who want to become an author. For a period of time the author approvals were processed in "generations," where many authors were approved on the same date. Some authors create content in order to dominate some topics, while other authors take on an observer role and contribute in a very limited way to the content. The way in which an author can choose when and how to contribute to the community is one of the keys that give liberty for the susers. There is a serious level of seniority among the susers, by the time they become authors. Older generation authors have more experience, usually more entries and a degree of reputation related to their field of interest. They share their expertise with other susers.

Anonymity and Freedom of Speech

Unlike face-to-face interactions, online communities have different levels of self-exposing, especially with virtual communities, which allow the user to remain anonymous and use nicknames instead (Jeppesen & Frederiksen, 2006). The anonymity factor is relevant for eksisozluk (Dogu et al, 2009); nicknames give community members a more flexible environment for engagement. People are more eager to express their thoughts without feeling social constraints, as no one knows (except the moderation) about their personal information (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Klein Pearo, 2004). Anonymity allows authors to declare as much as they wish to declare about themselves.

Community Control Mechanisms at eksisozluk.com

Of course there are also some rules in the virtual community. Authors are bound to the penal codes of the Turkish Republic (Dogu et al., 2009) as well as the structural definitions. Every entry requires a definition (personal or structured). Titles are not supposed to be in question form (e.g. what should I cook tonight?), or in survey style, where everyone would add an item or two but not really make a definition (e.g. the best beverage ever). Even though the unlimited content is defined by Godwin (1994) as one of the features that a good virtual community is supposed to have, titles are limited to characters. If a title is linked to a previous title, with similar content, the moderation could change the suser status back to rookies waiting for approval, delete or edit the entry.

The community control mechanisms work quite well, in addition to an additional self-audit system. Some of the experienced authors help the moderation to find entries, which are not definitions, nor designed according to the guidelines. “Moderators” evaluate the entries and make necessary warnings or changes. “Hacivats” are few in number, but evaluate the entries by Turkish grammatical structure, and help moderation with the language. There are “snitches” who inform the moderation about unqualified entries, while “praetors” evaluate the entries, which may cause legal problems for the virtual community.

The praetors have one of the most important roles within the moderation process. The community consists of very many members, who have ideological differences and sometimes very strong views about political, religious or lifestyle topics. People expressing their views about other people or ideas have offended many people within and outside the community. Some authors of the community have been sued for their views or comments (Sabah.com, 2013). Eksisozluk also sued a journalist for defamation and won the case (Marketingturkiye.com, 2013).

Statistics Related to eksisozluk

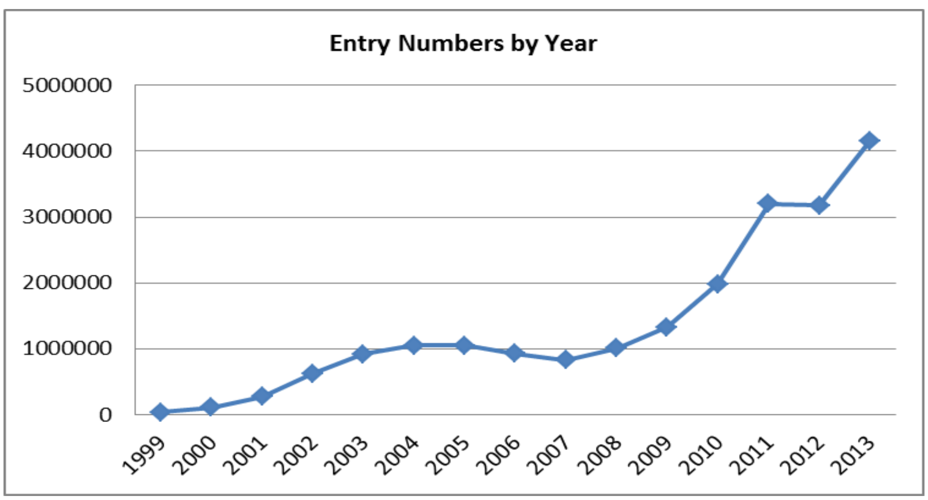
The general statistics of the website are provided and updated regularly. As shown in figure 1, the dominant group of susers are male and between 18-25 years old. This information is derived from self-reported data of the susers and is dependent on the honesty of such individuals. To demonstrate this aspect, it is the personal belief of the authors that there are no susers who are older than 100 years old, as has been declared.

Figure 1. Gender and Age Profile of Susers (15/11/2013)

Gender	
Male	240672
Female	97504
Not specified	8594
Age	
Under 18	7825
18-25	199741
25-30	73885
30-40	50762
40-60	9553
60-100	1523
100+	123
Not Specified	3427

The number of entries per year is also available on the website; this gives a hint at the growth of the community, especially since 2009 (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Number of entries per year (15/11/2013)



By 2013, eksisozluk's author population reached 54,575; many more are still waiting for approval (figure 3).

Figure 3. General Statistics (15/11/2013)

Total Entry	20665094
Total Title	3062778
Total "Suser"	367177
Registered Reader	70
Rookies	292194
Rookies waiting for approval	82522
Authors	54575
Entries Per Author	386
Titles per Author	57
Entries per Title	6

Content Creation at eksisozluk.com

Godwin (1994) lists nine important aspects of creating a good online community. One of these nine aspects is to use good software to promote good discussion. On eksisozluk, the most popular topics are listed on the left hand side of the screen, in chronological order and show how many entries have been added to a particular topic on a particular day. This gives susers an opportunity to catch the hot topic of the day, and also create their own specific content on the topics.

"…when I saw so many entries about him/her, I thought he/she was dead" is one of the very well-known entries about any name that becomes popular on the list. People, even if they are not very interested in that person, check the title when they realize it is a popular topic.

It is also possible to recognize the connection between some expressions or topics from an author. Some topics are full of entries from the same author. *"Recognizing lara gofret's titles from a mile"* is a very popular title. The author with the nickname "lara gofret" has 1054 entries just on his/her nickname title, and often shows disagreements and disputes about her/his views on men.

Having a well-known nickname is not always a sign of bad reputation. There are also topics attached to celebrities as well. Some people repeatedly provide quality information on certain topics that they are interested in. The author with nickname "Mr asil" has numerous entries about Japan, the Japanese, learning Japanese, a master's degree in Japan, and mistakes made while speaking Japanese.

Conflict in the eksisozluk Community

Disagreements or conflicts are not unusual. While the concept of common history and culture is key to a community (Shouten & McAlexander, 1995), the eksisozluk community has different subcultures of its own. Different authors may have clicks and supporting ideas of their own. Topics such as religion, politics, and male-female relationships have some strong supporters on both sides.

While the conflicts provide a space for people to express their ideas, it also sometimes causes law suits, personal arguments and even provocations. The term “troll” is used for the authors, who have a contrary opinion on a sensitive subject and usually communicate their ideas with provocative language. The aim of a troll is not just to express themselves, but to disturb other people with their comments about their beliefs, a loved person, or politics. Private messaging facilities are available for authors to continue a dispute out of the public eye, although some authors prefer to express their anger publicly. Some authors step in with an entry such as, “don’t feed the troll,” which usually ends the accumulated entries on the topic.

Culture at eksisozluk.com

The susers of eksisozluk share a common history since 1999, and the act of accumulating entries has formed a culture over time. Every culture has different features. The culture of virtual communities tends to be defined through their language or common jargon.

Eksisozluk has developed its own abbreviations, words, and terminology over time. Authors are usually warned to avoid using curse words, as it could cause eksisozluk or the author legal problems. To overcome this issue and still manage to express themselves, authors use the expression “gg,” instead of a curse word.

Even though it is an old name for females, “kezban” has a totally different meaning at eksisozluk. It expresses females (generally Turkish), who think that every male is interested in them and has, therefore, alternative motives for being around them. This female stereotype is defined as very shallow, self-absorbed and not very beautiful, even if they believe otherwise. “Kamil” represents the male version of this stereotype. Both terms are commonly used to attack other susers, although many authors feel it unfair to generalize and judge individuals in this way.

The word “Şakirt” actually means apprentice or student, but for the eksisozluk readers it represents the extremely religious Muslim authors or those who want to be seen as such. The entries and comments of a sakirt usually suggest that other people, who are not thinking or living like them, are sinners and will be punished in the afterlife. The atheists and şakirts have an ongoing dispute, which does not always stay within the lines of mutual respect. The provocation from both sides could provide the impulse for another entry-title war, and very rude personal messaging.

Socializing in the eksisozluk community

Even though some subcultures do not seem to get along well, the anonymity prevents real life chaos. People express their radical ideas about various subjects, such as politics or sexual orientation in a way that would not be possible in face-to-face interactions. Eksisozluk organizes get-together parties for authors, where no one is allowed to give their own nicknames. The so-called “eksifest” is now only held in open-air venues, as the number of authors has increased so significantly that no enclosed venue can safely host such an event. Concerts, parties, and an environment, which allows people to come together on a face-to-face level, is the key to eksifest. By attending the eksifest, people can improve their online socialization and attain a more personal level of community bonding.

Some subcultures or groups organize their own events within the group. Football games, movie nights and fishing trips are the preferred mode of socializing for some groups. One major group in Ankara closed a premier night movie theater, to watch a follow-up movie for a loved TV show.

"Limon" (lemon) is a function of the community which helps authors to follow any event in their area of interest or location. The organizer adds the details of the get-together, and anyone who wants to participate can access the information.

Buddies are people you already know, or get to know due to their entries, who are added to a special list. When you access a quick link to your buddies, the system only lists the entries from your buddies, in the last week.

Credibility, Accuracy and Reliability of other Users

Information sources such as newspapers, books or television undergo a rigorous verification process, whereas the Internet is a free area, where an individual can write without any source, credit or proof (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). Some websites are very careful about checking facts, such as news websites. Others ask an author to refer to the source, where he or she gathered the information. Wikipedia also warns readers when there are not enough references to back up the information (Wikipedia). Verification becomes much more complicated when the web site has user-generated content and has many users like eksisozluk.com.

The suser-generated information pool consists of millions of titles and entries and is increasing rapidly on a daily basis. There is no way for the moderation team to check the credibility of the information in all entries. It is also not possible, because the source of most of the entries is highly personal. Some would define "Madonna" as a phrase in Italian language meaning "my lady," where another would define as "my childhood love." Both are considered as definitions and it is not possible to check or discuss the accuracy of these entries.

In such cases, the reliability of the information usually lies with the reliability of the source. As Leimeister et al. (2005) stated perceived competence and perceived goodwill determine the extent to which a suser can test the reliability of the information in an entry. Some authors have a reputation for providing quality, reliable entries on specific subjects. When verifying information, susers go through many entries, sometimes with conflicting data or opinions in order to decide which entry is more reliable. The ability to access an author's other entries, could provide additional insights to the reader about the particular author's experience or view on a subject, enabling them to verify the level of trust that can be afforded.

Referencing is also a possibility. It is possible to upload a link about the topic you are writing about. A new website link, a picture, or a scientific article can be linked to an entry. It is also possible to refer an author's own entry, as well as other authors' entries. The entries have numbers attached to a link and you can send the reader to those entries with just a click of the mouse.

In some debate topics, over a celebrity's tweet, a Facebook posting, or a YouTube video, authors usually prefer to add a screen shot, in case the tweet or the posting is removed or disabled for others to see.

Editing an entry is always a possibility. The eksisozluk.com community also developed a self-auditing system. When an author shares inaccurate information, the following entries can correct the mistake and give more detailed information. Sometimes the author is warned by personal messaging. In such cases, either the owner of the entry makes the required editing and explains why he/she wrote such an entry, or he/she tries to prove that the entry is correct by providing more detail. Sometimes the author apologizes or indicates that irony was intended in the erroneous entry.

Even with these precautions, there is still a large possibility of accessing inaccurate, unreliable or discreditable information, as with all Internet sources. One should also consider that eksisozluk has more of a microblog-structured dictionary format and is not a news website or encyclopedia. There should always be room for doubt when evaluating the entries.

CONCLUSION

Within the paper, the eksisozluk website is examined not as an online dictionary, but as a virtual community. The interaction between the community members create an environment for self-expression and socializing through entries and titles, with personal messaging and other "sub-etha" functions like "eksi-survey" or "limon."

The mode and outcome of self-expression is key on eksisozluk. Some authors create a reputation for themselves, as an expert on a specific topic or general style of writing. Other authors just share information or personal opinions/stories; some of them use eksisozluk as their unwinding platform, to communicate their anger, frustrations or disappointments. Troll authors like to provoke others, to initiate a fight, conflict or an argument.

Socializing in the virtual eksisozluk environment does not seem to be enough, for some authors. The socializing is transported to another level and the individuals meet in person and become friends; some even meet online and get married.

One of the most important aspects of eksisozluk is that people write with nicknames; as long as they are not sued, this anonymity allows them to share every critical, contentious thought, thus creating a free environment for open discussion.

Even though entries can be very subjective and personal, people still access the community for information gathering, learning and information sharing. Susers can communicate with each other to ask questions, learn and search for a better understanding on a particular topic.

It is not fair to evaluate it just as a dictionary or a website. Eksisozluk has its own culture, and provides a base for several subcultures and even replica online communities. With its own terms, language, trolls and contributions from well-known Turkish celebrities, eksisozluk is a dynamic community, which evolves with every new author, entry or title.

Having reviewed the facts, perceiving and evaluating eksisozluk.com, as a "sacred source of information" presents some difficulties. Despite the presence of moderation, esksisozluk.com still gives the majority of responsibility to its susers, to evaluate the reliability of the entries. Even though checking other entries shared by a particular author, the editing system and peer corrections, the accuracy of the entries cannot be 100 per cent guaranteed. The perceived competence and goodwill of an author can assist susers in evaluating the trustworthiness of the information more efficiently (Leimeister et al, 2005).

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LIVING THE HEAVY METAL LIFE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLICATION OF MUSIC AS IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

To answer the question why do individuals choose a particular genre of music as a favorite, the lived experiences of music listeners were explored. The researcher interviewed five adults about their music listening. In-depth interviews were recorded and transcribed. Empirical phenomenology was used to analyze responses. Respondents experienced life-changing moments in the selection of music genre preference. Themes common to all respondents are described. Implications of music listening to health are discussed.

Keywords: Music, Transformation, Identity, Catharsis, Phenomenology

INTRODUCTION

For some, music is part of their daily experience. But what is music, and how can it mean something different to different listeners? Music, like communication, is created with intentionality. However, the experience of music is non-intentional, like being immersed in the world (Welton, 2009). According to Welton, "hearing music is the manifestation of the inner that makes possible all 'intentional' forms of hearing" (2009, p. 279). Music is on the "immediate level of affection" (Welton, 2009, p. 279).

Welton (2009) goes on to argue that audibility and visibility are manifestations of the affective layer of subjectivity. Nelson (1989) argues that the subject experiences bodily affective responses to the 'tele'visual but does so often "in order to withdraw" from the world, or to "escape from the Self" (p. 394). Welton (2009), however, distinguishes the experience of the visual from the auditory in that music is not visible. Music affects listeners at a different, and possibly more primal level. "Music is about pure sentiments, feelings, suffering and joy" (Welton, 2009, p. 285). Listening to music evokes "definite, though perhaps less specific, mood responses" (Myers, 1927; cited in Meyer, 1956, p. 266).

What is less clear about the experience of music is how or when does the individual become aware of the connections between listening to music and its primal affect? Subsequent to that awareness, does music take on new meaning in the life-world of the music listener? If so, what is that effect?

METHOD

The phenomenological method has as its focus the lived experience of the individual (van Manen, 1990). It attempts to describe the lived-world at the pre-reflective state before the experience has been categorized. This method is interested in the description of phenomena as it is presented to the individual consciousness. The purpose of the method is to understand the meaning of the experience for the individual as opposed to the characteristics of the experience that may be manipulated.

To construct a model of the experience of music, I interviewed five adult males between the ages of twenty-three and twenty-nine. It is important to note that one structural element across all interviews was that of a particular mode of musical experience: taste in music. The purposive sample of five interviewees were chosen based on my familiarity with their interests in music listening through previous casual conversations. None of the five interviewees were involved in the academic study of music. To gather data, I used a guided, semi-structured interview protocol (Creswell, 2007). Each interview was audio taped and transcribed verbatim. The interviewees' names have been fictionalized in the transcripts to protect their confidentiality. Following the guidelines of the American Anthropological Association, a researcher protects the confidentiality of interviewees in qualitative research by assigning aliases (Glesne & Pesjkin, 1992; cited in Creswell, 2007). All interviews occurred during October 1995.

I used the tripartite phenomenological approach of description, reduction and interpretation to analyze the interviews, as described by Lanigan (1988). Themes emerged from the transcribed data as common elements in the interviewees' discourse. In particular, reduction consists of locating phrases within and across interviewee responses that share common expression of lived experience.

DESCRIPTION AND REDUCTION OF COMMON THEMES

Three primary themes emerged in the review of transcriptions: Transformation, identity, and catharsis. Through reflection, I could see how the topic of the lived experience of music was important and brought to the fore as a topic of study out of casual conversations with the five interviewees who subsequently were approached for the study. In the course of the interviews it was discovered that myself, as well as the five interviewees, all experience music from the perspective as a listener and/or performer. All of the interviewees, except one, admitted to either dabbling or performing music on a regular basis. The lone exception expressed vicarious performance through interaction with a close personal associate who also performs music. I had, throughout my life, either performed as an amateur, or taken classes in music performance, though never with an intent to perform professionally.

Transformation

An experience common to all interviewees was an experience of time before and after in which music served a markedly different purpose. For all, an event marked a change in "awareness" of the important role music played in our lives. Before that event, music was a background for other activities and was for "entertainment" purposes or as an "escape." After the event, music became "big" and "essential." One interviewee, John, put it this way:

> When I was younger I probably listened to music as an escape. But not so much now. I mean sometimes, but it's not the same now…. Now when I was a teenager, I was introduced to the band Def Leppard, their High 'n' Dry album. And that opened a whole new world for me. That was probably my first metal experience…. I had never heard anything like it. So, that's what drew me to it.

Another interviewee, Sam, was more explicit in making a distinction between music before the event and music after the event:

> I was just listening to all this stupid music for a while that really didn't make any sense to me. [I said to myself], "Wow, everything else is ridiculous. I don't know why I have been spending my time listening to it. This is what I need to listen to."

The event typically comes in the form of an introduction, usually by a friend or family member. Although the individuals involved may play an important role in the lives of the music listener, the relationship each listener has with the music is an individual experience. A third interviewee, Devin stated:

> There were a couple of kids that came down from Chicago...to my home town, and out of sheer accident I suppose we kind of got together and hit it off. I don't know what made us do it, but one day we were going through this old record store in town, a used record store, and they had a small punk section, and we each bought a record. To me it [this new music] was so much more real than what I had heard on the radio; at least that is what I felt at the time.

Through the event of introduction to a form of music previously unheard, the music listeners "found" a "new" relationship to the music. A fourth interviewee, Keith, specifically mentioned the newness of the music:

> A buddy got me into AC/DC, Aerosmith, and a couple of what I call now the hard rock groups. Bon Jovi and stuff like that. But back then, that stuff was new and fresh to me as all this stuff is now.

However, it is more than just newness to these music listeners. After the event, the music listeners spoke about transformation in their relationship to music. Sam described the event as life-changing:

> We had heard one of my friends [say], "You gotta check out this one band. They're really different, they're weird. And they will just blow your head off." That album changed my life. It did. It totally changed the way I looked at the world, and really from that point on music played a critical role in my life.

Indeed, this transformational life-changing event could be experienced as a spiritual rebirth. The fifth interviewee, Tim, described it in those terms:

> It was kind of like being born again, being baptized in Christian terms, you know, because when I was ten years old I went to a church camp, and every year they invited this group of African-American women Gospel singers. Whenever I heard these women sing, you know, that was kind of like an aesthetic rebirth. You know, that was a discovery of music that changed my whole life…. I think it was an energy. Something fundamental to the order of the world because it affected me that deeply, it was that kind of discovery.

The introductory event seemed to raise awareness of music in a way that allowed listeners to explore new genres. Though typically listeners dove headlong into this new form of music, in time they began to expand their repertoire into new genres through active choice, as described by Devin, "My favorite genre [now] is hard to say because it is becoming more diversified, as I come to the ripe old age of twenty six," and Sam, "Especially I find as I'm as I'm getting a little bit older, not old but older, that my taste in music is broadening more."

Sam described his openness to expand the musical repertoire in relational terms, aware that the experience from the initial transformative event could be continued:

> So as he [his brother] has started to get into that [new form of music], he has introduced me to a little bit. So, as a result of forming these kind of close interpersonal relationships with other people, I really think that led to a broadening of my musical interests.

Identity

These transformative events also initiated the development of a self-identity among music listeners. Sam put it this way: "My entire personality had just completely changed all based on the music." Music continues to serve that identity for music listeners. Tim added: "[Music is] kind of like a daily sustenance kind of thing. I mean, it is essential to my daily life and to the maintenance of my identity, you know, as much as food and sleep and oxygen and that type of thing."

Like daily sustenance, music serves to ground values for music listeners. Keith stated: "To me music is very big. It is honesty." It is those values that help serve the music listener's self-identity. Devin expressed it this way: "I identified with that [music] movement. I think whatever [music] has integrity, I like." John stated, "I mean it just fit in with what I was going through at the time." Tim also expressed what he values this way: "I like alternative music because people are taking risks. People are being much more individual, you know, striving for that individuality."

Music also helps the listener with grounding identity and self-understanding. According to John, "Music just seems to put me in touch with myself…. Sometimes I find that a song relates to me. Music sometimes gives me a lot of insights because a lot of the people who write music that I listen to are going through the same or similar things that I have gone through or [are going] through at the time or whatever.” Devin described the process of identity grounding this way:

> It kind of defines where I came from, especially since I have dabbled in the experience of playing music, and singing music…. If my sense of identity is being questioned, then I want to go back to that. It is like going back to my roots. And it helps to find who I am…. [I am] building my self-identity through music.

Identifying with music also influenced some music listeners’ choice in becoming performers. According to John, “I determined that that was the direction I wanted to go [play music], and I basically went by word of mouth with my friends of what was going on.” The influence of the transformative event on music listening tastes also had an affect on the type of music some chose to perform. In short, these music listeners seem to engage directly with the music of their experience.

This group of music listeners believed identification with the culture surrounding the genre of music of their preference was important. For some, it was the idea of challenging the status quo. For Sam, “Generally, I like to listen to music that is stuff that challenges the status quo, stuff that's along my kind of thinking.” However, for others identifying with the culture was a method for surviving the vicissitudes of teenage life. According to Keith:

> I was always sort of an outcast at school. I really rebelled at school. I kept off to myself or with a couple of my buddies. Although we were snubbed by everybody else, we snubbed them right back. It was like, if they don't want us screw them, 'we're above you.' With the Johnny Rotten - Sex Pistols kind of attitude.

Tim was even more explicit:

> I don't have much respect for the mainstream. I was always isolated by the people who, I guess, defined the mainstream or that the mainstream defined, you know, or both probably. I was always isolated by that. You are not accepted as a part of the mainstream culture, well you have got to find a community somewhere, you've got to find a culture to define who you are, you know. And, music helped me define my culture because music was that culture.

That sense of self-identity seems to have grown then stabilized after the transformative event. Sam reflected on a recent event in which music became part of a conversation with someone from his past who influenced his taste in music:

> I [ran into an old friend] last weekend. We were talking about how important music was to us and the kind of lifestyle we had and the perspective, the worldview that we had adopted in college. And, that music that we listened to was the core of our worldview, and it influenced our perceptions of everything that we did.

Catharsis

Music serves as a transformative, identity management device for this group of listeners. Music grounds their daily activities. Music as a daily grounding activity assists listeners with mood. For Keith, "To me music is basically a representation of whatever kind of mood I am in." Although some admitted that music could change their mood, more often the music listeners used music to represent or enhance their mood. Keith continued, "I listen to music to emphasize my mood." Tim was more descriptive:

> Whenever I am in a melancholy mood I listen to melancholy music. I want to hear music that expresses how I feel in that moment. I know it is therapeutic. I know that my melancholy would be a lot worse, a lot more hollow during those times if I didn't have that companionship of music, of people who are singing my songs at that time.

These music listeners intentionally select music for mood enhancement. According to Sam, "I definitely pick the music that I want to listen to based on the particular mood that I am in or the mood that I want to get in." Tim expressed feelings associated with music choice: "[When I listen to music] I feel essential…. Music is like the inspiration. If I am extremely low in energy, I can listen to certain music especially and be more invigorated."

Music listening has specific cathartic effects for these listeners. Keith stated: "[After listening to music], I feel better." According to Sam, "[Music has] a calming effect." Devin expressed, "I would say that [after listening to music] I feel happy and content, and a warm glow through my body, if that makes any sense, which I suppose is some sort of slight adrenaline rush." John added: "It [music] usually lifts my spirits. It makes me more energetic, usually. It's more stimulus than anything else." John described music listening as transportive: "It was almost like being somewhere else."

Sam was more descriptive about the effects of music listening:

> Music is almost like a drug for me. I've actually had a tingling sensation, you know, it's just like, wow, like an altered state of being. It was just like I shivered inside. I said, 'Wow.' I was moved greatly. I'm not exactly sure how this happens but the structure of the music, the way the music flows, the rhythms in the music, the vocal qualities of the singer or whatever, were soothing to me. That's something about that music would just - it's a form of music that would stimulate my thought.

Finally, for Tim, listening to music provided an opportunity for self-expression in a safe environment: "No one can hear you [sing when driving] on a country road. So I mean that gives me that opportunity to participate when other contexts were too frightening for me."

INTERPRETATION

According to Kvale (1983), the qualitative interview rests on subjective understanding of the researcher and interviewees. All of the participants, this author included, experienced some type of transformation in which a new awareness of music came to the fore: music had affect. The transformation brought with it the development of an individualized sense of self-identity. However, that self-identity associated with a subculture of music genre. Although the experience of music listening transformed identity and meaning following some introductory event, once the awareness came, identity stabilized: awareness was a life-changing event. Plato had come out of the cave and could never truly return (1941).

In contrast to the "eyes out of your head," or out of body televisual experience, as noted by Nelson (1989), the auditory experience from music listening was more like an immersion of the inner-self with the immediate surroundings. As Kandinsky (1994) noted (cited in Welten, 2009, p. 275):

> The street may be observed through the window pane, causing its noises to become diminished, its movements ghostly, and the street itself, seen through the transparent but hard and firm pane, to appear as a separate organism, pulsating "out there". Or one can open the door: one can emerge from one's isolation, immerse oneself in this organism, actively involve oneself in it and experience its pulsating life with all one's senses. Sound, with its constantly changing frequencies and rhythms, weaves itself around the individual, spiraling to a crescendo and suddenly falling away as if lamed.

The interviewees also acknowledged that once they became aware of the affect of music, through introduction to a "new" form, they utilized music for cathartic purposes. Music enhanced their moods, or allowed them to work through feelings or stress, and was utilized for that purpose on a daily basis. Music made them feel "better," whether that feeling was stimulation or calming.

The transformative and cathartic nature of music can have health implications for those who listen. Clynes (1991) posited that healing powers of music relate to the cathartic effect of releasing repressed negative emotions, which de-stresses through a non-threatening activity. Clynes (1991) also argued that some aspects of the immune system are directly affected by emotion, therefore music listening may induce immunity. According to Campbell, "Music can be the medicine, the healing agent…" (1993, p. 5).

It has long been posited that health and music go hand-in-hand. McLellan, McLachlan, Perkins and Dornan (2013) interviewed musicians with interests in health, both professionally and from a lay perspective. Through phenomenological analysis, McLellan and colleagues discovered that music affected people's emotions and sense of self and identity. More specifically, music listening and performance promoted health and well-being, even among seriously diseased individuals. Similarly, Nicol (2010) found that music listening offered comfort to those with chronic illnesses. While Moss, Donnellan and O'Neill (2012) argue that such qualitative approaches (such as conducted by this author, as well as McLellan, et al. (2013), and Nicol (2010)) are scarce and do not provide sufficient evidence for claiming efficacy for therapies. Moss and colleagues recognize the importance of such studies for furthering our understanding of the relationship between music and health.

Phenomenology is an approach that intends to uncover commonalities of lived experience. For these participants, the author included, listening to music was transformative. For each, some chance event in life brought music from the background to the forefront of the development of their identity. The relationship music played, the connection it created, was cathartic. All three themes (transformation, identity, and catharsis) played a role in the overall development and maintenance of self-identity. The first element involved a transformation to awareness of self-identity in music. The second element served to enhance and solidify that self-identity. The third element maintained that identity. In this sense of connection to self, listening to music is health.

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RELIGIOSITY, CORRUPTION, AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

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ABSTRACT

The World Bank (2013b) views reducing corruption as a method to decrease poverty and promote economic growth around the world. This study considers religiosity as a factor that could reduce corruption and in turn promote economic growth. There are a large number studies that have looked at the relationship between corruption and economic growth and others that have considered the influence of religion on corruption. However, few have considered their combined influence, and those that did only considered the type of religion and not the influence of the level of religiosity on corruption and economic growth. This study attempts to fill the void in the literature by combining these factors to consider the impact of religiosity on corruption and in turn its influence on economic growth within a nation. The basic premise is that the more a nation's citizens practice their religion, the more they will incorporate their beliefs in their personal and business lives and be less corrupt, hence promoting economic growth. The results suggest that the negative impact of higher levels of religiosity dominated the possible positive impact it had on corruption and did not lead to an increase in economic growth.

Keywords: Religiosity, Economic Growth, Corruption

INTRODUCTION

Corruption has become a major obstacle to the integration of some nations in the world's economy and a more equal distribution of wealth in the world (Rose-Ackerman, 1997). High levels of corruption are viewed as a major constraint to economic growth within a nation (Landes, 1998; Stapleford, 2007; Stark, 2005). While corruption significantly influences the growth of per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) within a nation, it can be in a positive or negative way depending on the nation and its institutions (Swaleheen, 2011). One institution that matters for economic growth within a nation is the institution of organized religion (Noland, 2005). There is a relationship between religion and economic growth which is positive, resulting in religion promoting economic growth within a nation (Ishola, 2012). Many of the tenants of religious beliefs which influence the ethics of individuals are also ones that promote growth in economic activity and wealth (Barro & McCleary, 2003; Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993; Bodea & Plopeanu, 2011; Wilson, 2002). These tenants include honesty, having a good work ethic, and being frugal (Weber, 1905). When people are more active in the practice of their religion, this promotes a growth of trust in others, the government, and the rule of law in a nation (Fase, 2005). The rule of law and level of corruption in a nation can both be influenced by a country's religious past (North, Orman, & Gwin, 2013). Government regulations that limit the practice of religion stimulate corruption, which has a growth reducing impact on economic activity within nation (Hylton, Rodionova, & Deng, 2011). The relationship between religion and the level of corruption is dependent on political institutions (Sommer, Bloom, & Arikan, 2013).

Economic freedom dominates culture in its influence on economic growth, with religion being a major component of culture. However, when there is a lack of economic freedom then culture becomes a major factor (Carden & Verdon, 2010; Williamson & Mathers, 2011). Corruption can increase economic growth when there is a lack of economic freedom in a nation, but the benefit of corruption decreases as the level of economic freedom increases (Graeff & Mehlkop, 2003; Heckelman & Powell, 2010; Nwabuzor, 2005; Shen & Williamson, 2005). Corruption has been found to be helpful in promoting economic growth in a nation that has an overbearing governmental section by getting around rules and allowing business activity to increase that would not happen without corruption (Swaleheen, 2011; Swaleheen & Stansel, 2007). The two most important factors of economic freedom that decrease corruption are reducing the size of the government and the number of regulations (Heckelman & Powell, 2010; Shen & Williamson, 2005).

Previous studies between religiosity and ethics have yielded inconsistent results, with some studies finding negative relationships, others finding no relationship, and still others finding positive associations (Walker, Smither, & DeBode, 2012). Bentzen (2012) found that corruption reduced economic growth and developed a model to calculate the amount that it reduced growth as the level of corruption increased.

Barro and McCleary (2003, 2006) argued that a high frequency of participation by individuals in religious services has a negative influence on economic performance. As a whole, if a nation is more religious, it tends to have lower per capita income. As religiosity declines per capita income tends to rise in a nation (Win-Gallup International, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

The base model used as the starting point was from Alon and Chase (2005). The model used the average rate of economic growth in a nation for ten years as the dependent variable. The ten-year average was selected since it removes the variability that could be present with using just a single year. The ten-year average used was from 2003-2012.

There are four independent variables in the base model:

1. Political Stability: Political Stability is added as a control variable since the relationship between religion and lower levels of corruption are dependent on political institutions (Sommer, et al., 2013).

2. Law: The rule of law variable is included, since the rule of law and level of corruption in a nation can both be influenced by a country’s religious past (North, et al., 2013).

3. Economic Freedom: “Economic freedom is the fundamental right of every human to control his or her own labor and property. In an economically free society, individuals are free to work, produce, consume, and invest in any way they please. In economically

free societies, governments allow labor, capital and goods to move freely, and refrain from coercion or constraint of liberty beyond the extent necessary to protect and maintain liberty itself." (Heritage Foundation, 2014, p. 1).

Many previous studies have shown that the index of economic freedom has an impact on economic growth within a nation. Since the index of economic freedom used for this study includes a corruption component, to isolate the effect of corruption, the corruption component of the economic freedom index was removed (Fraser Institute, 2014). In addition, the rule of law component was removed and a separate variable was considered for this so that this effect could be isolated.

4. Religious Freedom: religious freedom is the right of individuals to practice their religion without fear of persecution by the government or others (World Values Survey, 2013).

There were four additional variables added to the base model:

1. Religiosity: "The religiosity index represents the percentage of the population who self-describe themselves as a religious person, irrespective of whether you attend a place of worship or not, would you say you are a religious person, not a religious person or a convinced atheist" (WIN-Gallup International, 2012, p. 9).

2. Corruption: "The abuse of public office for private gain…. Public office is abused for private gain when an official accepts, solicits, or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit" (World Bank, 2013b, para. 2).

3. Corruption Squared: Corruption can have a non-linear negative impact on economic growth in a nation and as a result, a quadratic term for corruption was included in the model (Swaleheen, 2011).

4. Interaction Term: An interaction term was created to consider the effects that religiosity and corruption can have on each other to impact economic growth. No other study was found that included this as an explanatory variable for economic growth.

From the different data sets, 53 countries had data for all aspects considered. The dependent variable, ten-year average economic growth rate percentage, was from the World DataBank. Political stability, rule of law, and corruption were on a scale from -2.5 to 2.5, and were also obtained from the World DataBank. However, due to the corruption variable being squared in the model, '2.5' was added to each value to create a scale from 0-5 to adjust for the problems which would have been created using a quadratic. A higher number indicated more political stability and a stronger rule of law, while for corruption a higher value meant less corruption. Religious freedom data was from the World Values Survey on a scale from 1 to 10 (higher being more). Economic freedom data was obtained from the Heritage Foundation on a scale from 1 to 100 (higher being more economic freedom), with rule of law and corruption removed from the index. Religiosity data was obtained from a WIN-Gallup Poll survey that showed the percentage of the population in a nation considered to be religious, irrespective of the type of religion. The coefficient and the P-value are shown for each variable included in the different versions of the model. Significance is considered at the 5% level and marginal significance at the 10% level.

Results

Regressions were run starting with the base model from Alon and Chase (2005), and then using all of the variables with the results shown in table 1. Model A shows the results of the base model with all of the variables being significant except economic freedom. Surprisingly, the coefficients for freedom of religion and rule of law were both negative, which is the opposite of what was expected. As a result of economic freedom being not significant, it was dropped from base model in Model B and all of the remaining variables were significant. However, the overall significance of the model dropped as measured by adjusted R squared. Model C included all of the variables under consideration and rule of law became insignificant and economic freedom was once again insignificant, political stability became marginally significant, but religious freedom remained significant. Religious freedom and rule of law continued to have negative coefficients. Of the additional variables added, only religiosity was significant in the expanded model with a negative coefficient. Model D included all of the variables except economic freedom and the only significant variable was religious freedom with political stability and religiosity becoming marginally significant. Overall the significance of both models A and C dropped, as measured by adjusted R squared, when economic freedom was excluded, so economic freedom was included in the rest of the models.

Table 1. Base Model and all Variables

Model	A		B		C		D	
	Coeff	Pvalue	Coeff	Pvalue	Coeff	Pvalue	Coeff	Pvalue
Economic Freedom	0.0569	0.1895			0.0735	0.1028		
Political Stability	1.2879	0.0277	1.1955	0.0403	1.1112	0.0559	0.9838	0.0921
Rule of Law	-2.0940	0.0003	-1.7655	0.0006	-1.6101	0.2307	-1.2883	0.3401
Religious Freedom	-0.3960	0.0071	-0.4085	0.0058	-0.3341	0.0250	-0.3580	0.0182
Religiosity					-0.0344	0.0312	-0.0293	0.0642
Corruption					8.3411	0.2755	10.0362	0.1951
Corruption Squared					-3.3868	0.2391	-3.8107	0.1927
Inter Action					0.3828	0.2444	0.4181	0.2119
Adjusted R2		0.3827		0.3730		0.4110		0.3877

Table 2 shows the results when the variables were added one by one to the base model. Model E included only the addition of religiosity to the base model and the overall significance of the model increased compared to all the previous models. Only economic freedom was not significant, but it was marginally significant. Model F added corruption to Model E and as a result rule of law dropped from significant to marginally significant and corruption was insignificant. The overall level of significance of the entire model also dropped. Model G added the quadratic version of corruption to the model, but it was not significant and the significance of none of the other variables changed. In addition, the overall level of significance of the overall model dropped once again. The rule of law and religious freedom continued to have a negative coefficient.

Table 2. Adding Variables to the Model One by One

Model	E		F		G	
	Coeff	PValue	Coeff	PValue	Coeff	PValue
Economic Freedom	0.0780	0.0713	0.0788	0.0710	0.0769	0.0888
Political Stability	1.2491	0.0268	1.2353	0.0300	1.2260	0.0337
Rule of Law	-2.5890	0.0000	-2.0996	0.0837	-2.1618	0.0893
Religious Freedom	-0.3646	0.0102	-0.3471	0.0187	-0.3485	0.0197
Religiosity	-0.0332	0.0334	-0.0335	0.0334	-0.0338	0.0347
Corruption			-0.4953	0.6411	-0.0661	0.9792
Corruption Squared					-0.0594	0.8515
Inter Action						
Adjusted R2		0.4280		0.4183		0.4059

Table 3 shows variations of the model with religiosity included in all of the models, but with different variables dropped from the full model. Model H dropped the corruption variable and only considered the quadratic version of corruption and this improved the overall level of significance of the model. However, the quadratic variable was insignificant and the other variables remained the same in terms of their individual significance. Model I dropped both of the corruption variables and added the interaction variable. The interaction variable was not significant, while the other variables remained near the same in terms of their individual significance. There was a slight drop in the overall significance of the model. Model J added the corruption variable back into Model I, but it was not significant and the interaction term continued to be insignificant. In addition, the rule of law variable dropped to being marginally significant. Model K dropped the corruption variable and replaced it with the corruption squared variable. However, it was insignificant and the interaction term and rule of law continued to be insignificant. However, the overall level of significance for the model improved slightly as measured by adjusted R squared.

Table 3. Variations of Variables in the Models with the Inclusion of Religiosity

Model	H		I		J		K	
	Coeff	PValue	Coeff	PValue	Coeff	PValue	Coeff	PValue
Economic Freedom	0.0767	0.0789	0.0763	0.0815	0.0782	0.0832	0.0801	0.0743
Political Stability	1.2252	0.0316	1.2300	0.0311	1.2331	0.0326	1.2244	0.0334
Rule of Law	-2.1814	0.0319	-2.3305	0.0083	-2.1213	0.0990	-1.8252	0.1715
Religious Freedom	-0.3491	0.0168	-0.3542	0.0147	-0.3476	0.0201	-0.3385	0.0234
Religiosity	-0.0339	0.0322	-0.0338	0.0328	-0.0336	0.0357	-0.0335	0.0358
Corruption					-0.4111	0.8224		
Corruption Squared	-0.0669	0.6153					-0.3447	0.6158
Inter Action			-0.0087	0.6809	-0.0021	0.9547	0.0448	0.6799
Adjusted R2		0.4188		0.4177		0.4054		0.4081

Table 4 shows Models L through O which dropped the religiosity variable with different combinations of the other variables in the models. The only variables that were significant in any of the models were political stability and religious freedom, which were significant in all of the models. The overall significance of the models did not improve and were below any of the models that included religiosity.

Table 4. Variations of the Model with the Exclusion of Religiosity

Model	L		M		N		O	
	Coeff	PValue	Coeff	PValue	Coeff	PValue	Coeff	PValue
Economic Freedom	0.0573	0.1902	0.0576	0.2077	0.0541	0.2370	0.0588	0.1970
Political Stability	1.2775	0.0307	1.2784	0.0330	1.1719	0.0529	1.2826	0.0322
Rule of Law	-1.7073	0.1685	-1.7008	0.1890	-1.1768	0.3938	-1.6559	0.2056
Religious Freedom	-0.3826	0.0123	-0.3824	0.0135	-0.3696	0.0171	-0.3811	0.0139
Religiosity								
Corruption	-0.3874	0.7253	-0.4346	0.8686	7.4225	0.3505	-0.5962	0.7538
Corruption Squared			0.0065	0.9842	-3.1046	0.2994		
Inter Action					0.3581	0.2955	0.0051	0.8921
Adjusted R2		0.3712		0.3575		0.3592		0.3578

Table 5 includes Models P, Q, and R that dropped the religiosity and corruption variables from the regressions to consider the impact of the corruption squared term and interaction term. Political stability and religious freedom were significant in all of the models. In Model R, which included only the interaction term, rule of law was significant in addition to the two other variables previously mentioned. However, the overall level of significance of all of the models was below those that included the religiosity variable as measured by adjusted R squared. A stepwise regression was used as a final check for robustness. The only variable that was included in the model was corruption, but the overall significance of the model was the lowest of all the models evaluated.

Table 5. Quadratic, Inter-Action Term, and Stepwise

Model	P		Q		R		S	
	Coeff	PValue	Coeff	PValue	Coeff	PValue	Coeff	PValue
Economic Freedom	0.0558	0.2038	0.0604	0.1819	0.0558	0.2056		
Political Stability	1.2731	0.0316	1.2715	0.0332	1.2785	0.0310		
Rule of Law	-1.8277	0.0773	-1.3793	0.3116	-1.9567	0.0276		
Religious Freedom	-0.3866	0.0106	-0.3726	0.0160	-0.3910	0.0093		
Religiosity								
Corruption							-1.3134	0.0000
Corruption Squared	-0.0427	0.7568	-0.3963	0.5787				
Inter Action			0.0570	0.6134	-0.0045	0.8381		
Adjusted R2		0.3708		0.3607		0.3701		0.2910

DISCUSSION

Religiosity was a significant variable in all of the models tested in which it was included, suggesting it is an important factor when considering levels of economic growth. The coefficient was negative indicating that as religiosity increased the level of economic growth declined in a nation which supports the results from previous studies. Increased religiosity means more time devoted to religious activities and less time to economic activities which is the cause of lower economic growth. The inclusion of only religiosity to the base model produced the best overall model in terms of the highest adjusted R squared. All but one of the variables were significant with the remaining one marginally significant.

The coefficients for rule of law and religious freedom were negative, which did not seem in line with other studies which considered these factors as being positive for economic growth. The negative coefficient for rule of law could be due to the time period considered with the flood of new business regulations that were imposed due to the global economic crisis during this time period. These new regulations might have caused an over-regulation of the economy, which would have a negative impact on economic growth. Also, many of the nations with the strongest rule of law were also those nations most impacted by the global economic crisis. As for the negative coefficient for religious freedom these could be explained by two factors. First, the rise in oil prices over the time period of this study which would increase the GDP of the oil producing nations. Many of these oil producing nations have some of the lowest levels of religious freedom. Second, the high rates of economic growth in some communist nations, such as China, which restrict religious freedom for fear of losing control of its grip on power.

Corruption did not appear to be a significant variable in any of the models except the stepwise regression model. It may be due to the fact that the other variables accounted for the influence that corruption has on economic growth. The interaction term between corruption and religiosity was also not significant in any of the models, even at the marginally significant level. This suggests that corruption and religiosity does not have an influence on each other in terms of promoting economic growth within a nation. The positive influence of religious beliefs on corruption could also have been dominated by the negative impact of religiosity.

The stepwise regression was run on all of the variables and surprisingly the resulting model included only corruption, but the model had the lowest adjust R squared of all of the models considered. This could suggest that corruption is a possible proxy for the other variables that were dropped from the model and has the potential to provide a better explanation of economic growth. This could be based on the idea that as people are able to carry out the economic activity without the presence of corruption a more positive outcome happens.

CONCLUSION

Religiosity seemed to be a good predictor of economic growth within a nation, with that effect being negative. However, religiosity did not seem to influence corruption to a level that it had a positive impact on economic growth that outweighed the negative influence that religiosity had on economic growth.

Several of the variables in the regressions had negative coefficients, which seemed to go against general belief that they should have a positive influence on economic growth. However, the time period of the study could be the cause of this result. Using this model for a different time period could produce results that are more in line with these generally held beliefs and may alter the overall findings of the model.

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VIRTUAL PUBLIC SPEAKING CASE STUDY: MAINTAINING RIGOR, MEETING OUTCOMES, AND ENHANCING RELEVANCE FOR DIGITAL NATIVES

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ABSTRACT

This case study reveals the development of a successful online public speaking course over a three-year period. Designers reviewed current approaches to online Public Speaking and considered the challenges identified across institutions and those specific to this southeastern research university. In order to meet student and faculty needs, this Virtual Public Speaking with a Professional Focus model includes traditional principles of public speaking, while capitalizing on current technology commonly used in the workplace to deliver the course online and to teach online professional presentation strategies for synchronous and asynchronous delivery. The course design is described, including the learning outcomes, the nature of specific assignments, and opportunities for student interaction. The logistics for implementation, especially technology training, are also discussed. Finally, student and faculty feedback are provided, including the current survey of students participating in the most recent iteration of the model. Findings highlighted students' positive perceptions of growth regarding their expanded skills with public speaking and the use of technology. Although the challenges seemed great, the current model maintains rigor while providing a highly relevant course to business students who learn development and delivery strategies not only for this class, but also for their future oral presentations in college and careers.

Keywords: public speaking, virtual presentations, learning outcomes, professional preparation

While Public Speaking is essential to vast numbers of students, faculty, and departments, faculty may struggle to maintain foundational principles and rigor as stakeholders push for more flexibility, heightened access, cross-disciplinary learning outcomes, efficient delivery models, and the use of new technologies. Faculty who teach Public Speaking recognize that taking courses fully online may be one solution--one that presents many challenges.

This paper offers a case study of one department’s efforts to provide an innovative solution that allows students to meet learning outcomes, by increasing knowledge and skills of public speaking in new presentation modes; enables faculty to maintain their standards and satisfy themselves that students will have useful strategies to meet audience needs in their public presentations; and meets institutional demands for heightened access and cross-disciplinary goals for majors such as Business or Engineering. The approach described in this case study could be useful across varied institutions and faculty, as a jumping off point for other effective designs, and/or as a point of discussion among faculty who are still trying to keep a "public" in online public speaking courses or those whose majors could benefit from a more professional focus.

Constraints/Demands--Online Public Speaking

Faculty who teach Public Speaking enumerate the pressures they feel to provide a high-quality course. Institutions, departments, colleagues, students, alums, and employers all have something to say about the ways the course might be taught. Dannels & Gaffney (2009) list these constraints: "increasing calls from business and industry for attention to communication, pressure from upper administration to produce evidence of success, competitive funding battles among initiatives at many institutions, and limited faculty to administer such programs" (p. 142).

General education. Because Public Speaking is taught to majors and non-majors alike—often as part of a general education requirement--we must consider the perspectives of faculty in other disciplines across the curriculum. The course must meet curricular demands of many departments and achieve assessment goals related to those departments and the institution. For example, business majors might be expected to demonstrate competency in the use of ethical persuasive techniques with clients.

Design and pedagogy. Some stakeholders may even emphasize efficiency over efficacy, pushing for increased enrollments and ease of access, assuming that a design for face-to-face courses can easily translate to online delivery. Many traditional Public Speaking classrooms use fairly similar course designs and pedagogy, which have evolved to address learning goals for both speakers and listeners. Both speakers and listeners are building skills for their future classes and careers as they present and respond to in-class speeches. Meeting the learning needs of speakers and listeners is more difficult once the course moves online.

In *Basic Communication Course at Two- and Four-Year U. S. Colleges and Universities*, (2010) Morreale, Worley, and Hugenberg offer a comprehensive picture of the course with survey responses citing the challenges of teaching Public Speaking online: "(a) achieving sufficient levels of immediacy with students, (b) evaluation of speaking assignments, [and] (c) lack of peer interaction" (p. 422). Despite these challenges, numerous departments have shifted to online course delivery with students submitting speeches they taped in isolation in their dorm rooms or with groups of friends as an audience. Tolman (2012) provides more detail in her study, funded by a National Communication Association Grant, and describes online courses that have a wide range of requirements for audience; the live speaking exchange with an audience of other students enrolled in Public Speaking doesn't make the list of formats. A minority of the courses studied included some requirement for peer review, usually with an asynchronous review of a speech via a course website. Actually the course that many of us refer to as "online Public Speaking" includes online delivery of course materials; students are taping their speeches and submitting them, not speaking online to a live audience.

While these online models may include audience analysis, they seemed to be lacking in a synchronous exchange – one that Zarefsky explains to students as interplay: "Throughout the speech—beginning with its preparation and lasting through its presentation—you will be sensitive to how well your ideas match your audience, and you'll use feedback to improve the fit as you speak" (2010, p. 16). He reminds students that ". . . the speaker and listeners simultaneously participate in creating the message" (p. 16). Beginning speakers can certainly learn to manage question-and-answer sessions after their speeches—but only if those listeners are present, either in the classroom or participating in a synchronous online exchange.

A fairly typical model of online Public Speaking is described in the National Communication Association's *Spectra* (Corum, 2013) with taped speeches submitted to an instructor. However, as noted in a subsequent edition of *Spectra* in a letter to the editor, "There is no instant feedback loop. There is less chance to use one's presence to command attention. And there is no expectation of real-time reciprocity" (Woodward, 2013, p. 21).

Despite constraints, Linardoupoulos (2010) reveals that students reported positive impressions of a fully online public speaking course, one in which students taped and submitted speeches. He states, "Both the quantitative and qualitative responses from the survey clearly indicate that the vast majority of the respondents had a positive and valuable learning experience in the online sections of public speaking" (p. 200). He discusses as a challenge the lack of an audience and suggests solutions that involve requiring students to find their own audience for speeches and technology allowing increased interaction (p. 207). Unfortunately such technology is often exclusive to the academic setting.

Students' needs. Finally, contemporary students, in their roles as college students and budding professionals, have new expectations for the dissemination of messages; they are devouring presentations across all forms of the media. According to Prensky, "Our students today are all 'native speakers' of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet" (2001, p. 1). These "digital natives" are increasingly glued to their texts, posts, and tweets, but their experience with synchronous professional communication is limited. Because of their incessant use of online media, they may even be overly confident about their mastery of technology.

Enhancing the Course Design for Online Public Speaking

At Virginia Tech, students who take Public Speaking are primarily non-majors who take the course for various departmental requirements, including those in Business, Computer Science, and Engineering; consequently, the course necessarily has broad applicability to a variety of student needs. Those students respond positively to the current "interchange" model, which is partially online--for readings and quizzes--and partially face-to-face--for practice and presentations (Preston, Giglio, & English, 2008). This version of a flipped classroom has been very successful, providing consistency across sections and meeting needs of the undergraduate students, the graduate students who teach the class, and the faculty who have oversight.

As faculty considered the transition to a fully online model, they recognized the potential for increased learning opportunities, but they wanted to preserve the spirit and the rigor of the existing hybrid model. <u>Non-public</u> speaking was not a fit with the course description, which included "in-class delivery of speeches." Faculty at this institution needed to find a way to provide an "in-class" experience with classmates who would respond to speakers, overtly sharing the public speaking experience between speakers and audience. Consequently, this department waited to go fully online until the technology could better support the goals of the course.

One early decision about online Public Speaking was that it would have to be a version of the current course, not a new course. While the designers knew that the evolved course would be different, they resolved to meet the learning goals of the “interchange model” of Public Speaking so that students could take the course and meet requirements on their curricular checksheets.

Clearly, such a model would require an entirely new design with the integration of technology into the experience of learners. That design process was extensive. In 2010, the designer of the “interchange” model, proposed a concept for the online model and invited the department’s Director of Public Speaking to co-design the new plan; they worked together with these goals in mind: maintain the integrity of the current course (description and outcomes) in a fully online delivery model, with essential content and effective pedagogy; demonstrate relevance of content and technology to students' academic and professional lives; capitalize on new technologies to enable faculty-speaker-audience interaction, to engage digital natives and to enhance learning; increase access, especially to build summer enrollments; and create a sustainable model that could be taught by instructors and graduate teaching assistants (GTAs).

The designers met routinely during the academic year 2010-11, searched the literature for best practices, and sought advice from specialists on campus as they considered approaches to meet these goals. The new model, Virtual Public Speaking (VPS), was born out of these efforts.

Virtual Public Speaking—Characteristics

Course integrity. The new course design uses the same learning outcomes, texts, and number of speaking assignments as does the department's “interchange” model. Thus students in the VPS model gain the knowledge of content and strategies that can be transferred from online speaking to face-to-face speaking once the course is completed. The course also uses a similar sequencing, based on a "spiral curriculum," allowing students to build skills as they move through increasingly complex, yet related assignments (Bruner, 1960).

Learning outcomes. So that VPS would be comparable to the “interchange model,” both designs share the same assessable learning outcomes—outcomes that are important for students in any discipline and are adapted from The National Communication Association’s “Speaking and Listening Competencies for College Students” (Morreale, Rubin, & Jones, 1998). Including synchronous and asynchronous speech assignments, VPS enables students to explore strategies for informative and persuasive speech creation, preparation and delivery in various online speaking situations with live audiences and real-time feedback. Additionally, students practice active listening skills and learn strategies to reduce speaker apprehension.

Interaction. While the course delivery has shifted to include different technologies, it maintains an emphasis on peer-to-peer interaction and critique so that students see themselves as part of a community of learners. Even though they’re online, they support, learn from, and provide feedback to peer speakers. The design provides for synchronous speaker-audience exchange. Speakers learn to use delivery strategies to connect with a live audience, to respond to nonverbal feedback, and answer questions. Audience members learn appropriate audience behaviors and strategies for offering tactful and honest feedback as they critique presentations.

Relevance. The revised content of the virtual course emphasizes a professional focus because students are seeing increased requirements in upper-level courses for pre-professional presentations to hypothetical or actual clients. Furthermore, professional presentation skills through mediated communication channels are increasingly important as students turn to the Internet to find internships and jobs, and companies utilize the Internet for business meetings, training and project updates. This new focus provides learning opportunities that will serve students in college and career, even ultimately allowing job-searchers to offer important skills to employers, such as experience with commonly used professional online meeting programs.

Technology advancement and availability. Once the technology was readily available, the designers were able to overcome other challenges that some institutions had faced with online models. The new course design enables instructors to avoid common pitfalls, such as student isolation, and create a rich class dynamic between the instructor and the students. These digital natives are skilled in many aspects of technology, but they are mostly self-taught and are very casual in such interactions. The course necessarily includes not only the "how to" components for using technology, but also strategies for meeting needs of professional audiences.

Enhanced access. Public Speaking is a high-demand class that students often can't get into until their senior year. An online course gains some efficiency because some size-related factors, such as time for speech days, are no longer a factor once the course moves online. The new VPS design allows for increased course capacity, enabling students to complete the course through the university (instead of a community college), thus maintaining the same rigor currently expected in the on-campus "interchange" model.

Sustainable model for faculty and GTAs. The designers provided enough detail for the course so instructors and GTAs could teach it with some uniformity. With an emphasis on consistency across sections, all faculty and GTAs use the same texts, syllabus, resources, grading scale, and grading rubrics. They collaborate to iron out problems and share strategies.

VPS Course Components

As with a traditional public speaking course, students in the VPS course develop or refine skills in the five basic canons of rhetoric--Invention, Arrangement, Style, Memory and Delivery--which have been acknowledged to be important in public speaking since the 5th century B.C. However, students also learn new technologies and related delivery strategies to effectively present messages in the virtual world.

Student grades are based on three categories, 1) completion of all formal speeches, 2) online assessments comprised of unit-specific tests and a final exam, and 3) a participation grade based on active involvement in speech group meetings and the timely completion of all pre-speech activities. Pre-speech participation assignments prove to be an essential component of the virtual classroom, opening lines of communication between students and instructor that are often under-utilized in a virtual classroom. Adherence to the sequence of 1) unit readings, 2) completion of online tests, and 3) participation in pre-speech activities helps students develop the presentational and technical skills necessary to successfully navigate oral presentations. Through the use of a spiral curriculum, the four formal speaking assignments are designed to help students practice and build related skills in increasing complexity across the course. Additionally, speech groups are formed within each virtual classroom. Speech groups enable individuals to work together without having a formal full-class meeting time, and it assists with building community amongst students. Groups of eight students are established based on common availabilities, and a weekly meeting time is assigned to each speech group. Instructors can choose to meet with the groups, or watch the speech recordings. The use of peer speech groups creates a "public," which allows for synchronous assignments and encourages interaction and creates a rich class dynamic.

Speech I: Podcast. The first formal speech is a self-introductory podcast about a club or organization in which the student is currently involved. The Podcast Speech is a 3-4 minute manuscript speech that utilizes familiar audio-based software programs, such as iTunes, thus reducing students' apprehension about the use of technology. Beginning with an audio-only speech allows students to concentrate on a limited number of basic public speaking skills, such as vocal delivery and content development. Additionally, the asynchronous nature of the first speech enables students to focus on their message rather than their speech anxiety or the use of mediated communication. Students build upon the skills and feedback garnered from the first speech, and move forward to incorporate advanced presentational strategies in subsequent units.

Speech II: Interview. The Interview Speech is the first synchronous speech and is delivered within speech groups. Due to the changing nature of professional interviews, most students are aware of the increasing reliance on virtual interviewing and are therefore eager to learn techniques to master the unfamiliar speaking situation. To prepare for this assignment, students complete an online mock interview. The Interview Speech is delivered using the online meeting program Cisco WebEx. Although the formal speech assignment requires each member to serve as both interviewee and interviewer, grades are assessed based on the student's professional communication as the interviewee. Each student extemporaneously delivers a prepared 2-minute opening statement and concludes the interview with a 1-minute closing statement. This approach provides context to their interview situation and allows students to showcase their understanding of audience analysis by tailoring their opening and closing statements to the organization and the position for which they are applying. Once the speaker presents the opening statement, a group member acts as the interviewer; the speaker then answers questions in impromptu-style delivery, thus creating an authentic interview environment. The Interview Speech introduces the synchronous public speaking component and provides practice with various delivery styles.

Speech III: Informative Progress Report. The Progress Report speech is a synchronous informative speech detailing a personal project in which the student is currently involved. Students discuss a wide variety of projects, such as research with faculty, the status of an internship or application to graduate school, or an upcoming philanthropic or social event. This speech is the first to require the oral citation of documented research and provides an opportunity to discuss the importance of ethical considerations. Students are advised that they must give their audience a true picture of their progress, even though they might want to provide only positive information. Using Cisco WebEx, an online meeting program, students present their Progress Report speeches in groups of six-eight students. During the speech session, each speaker transitions between the role of presenter and audience member. To further enhance the semblance of a real-time business meeting, the Progress Report speech includes requirements for PowerPoint and a mandatory question and answer session during the conclusion of each speech.

Speech IV: Persuasive Webcast. The Persuasive Webcast speech requires students to deliver a persuasive presentation that could be posted to an organization's website or distributed on behalf of the organization; however, students understand that this type of webcast might be viewed asynchronously by other interested parties. The final speech follows Monroe's Motivated Sequence and is presented to a speech group of approximately eight students, utilizing the Cisco WebEx program. The incorporation of a persuasion speech helps students build upon their knowledge of informative speaking and explore the fundamentals of argument by focusing on the ethical use of persuasive strategies and the incorporation of scholarly research. To help students critically analyze the use of persuasion, a pre-speech activity requires critiques of sample persuasive messages. Examples showcase the effective and ineffective use of emotional appeals and logical reasoning, helping students become critical consumers of persuasion and avoid using fallacies and unethical tactics.

Audience responsibility. Students learn skills to become competent speakers and listeners. As active members in the virtual classroom, students are assessed on their ability to analyze presentations and to behave as engaged listeners. According to Morreale (1998), competent listeners demonstrate a multitude of behaviors, such as attending with an open mind, perceiving the speaker's purpose and organization of ideas and information, distinguishing between emotional and logical arguments, recognizing the speaker's attitude, recognizing discrepancies between verbal and nonverbal messages, and employing active listening techniques. Just as with a traditional public speaking course, students sharpen their critical listening skills by serving as audiences for their peers and taking on roles as team members for synchronous speech assignments. Students learn to recognize the common features of presentations by using a customized version of the Competent Speaker Speech Evaluation Form (Morreale, Moore, Taylor, Surges-Tatum, & Webster, 2007) for each speech. Critical listening skills and competent speaking skills remain an integral component of the virtual classroom, thus allowing students to increase competency across a multitude of communicative behaviors.

Implementation and the Technology Learning Curve

When planning for the launch of the department's first fully online public speaking course, there were many questions regarding the right textbooks, distribution of instruction, and choice of appropriate technologies. Designers decided on a well-known Public Speaking handbook-style text (although there are several options that could work for this design) since most of the instruction was online; it was also necessary to find a text that included information on virtual presentations. Instructors also had to make decisions regarding options for providing feedback. In the virtual classroom, feedback can be typed onto the grade sheet, or presented orally through the use of audio-based feedback programs. With either method, students need to quickly receive feedback from faculty and peers, thus addressing another of the barriers to online public speaking mentioned earlier.

The distribution of course material was also carefully considered. Of course, all essential course materials, such as syllabus, assignment descriptions, and grading rubrics were presented in written format. Since students might not actively and thoroughly read through those documents, though, faculty were also responsible for creating podcasts or videos highlighting important information such as an Instructor Introduction and Weekly Unit Overview. Additional video or audio files can be used to share lecture material or provide other assignment details.

Speech-recording technology was possibly the most important factor in the VPS plan. Designers wanted 1) a free program, 2) a program that would be user-friendly for both students and faculty, and 3) a program that students would likely encounter again in their post-college endeavors. Several web-based conferencing programs emerged as possibilities, but with further exploration, the designers determined that the most commonly used professional online meeting program was Cisco WebEx. Finally, privacy issues and the posting of speech files were considered. Course designers agreed that although posting to a private YouTube channel could work, students could post hyperlinks of recorded speeches to the class Scholar site (a version of Sakai, a course management system) to ensure the highest level of privacy and involve the fewest external programs. This approach was also the most seamless for students and instructors, since the online nature of the course required routine access to the class Scholar site.

In the pilot offering of the course, the use of a mid-term questionnaire was essential to uncovering students' experiences in and perceptions about the class. The course was designed with public speaking as the focal point, simply using the technology as the vehicle to deliver the speeches. However, it quickly became apparent through mid-term responses that students were more focused on the proper use of the technology than they were on crafting and presenting speeches. Based on this feedback, instructors worked to help re-focus student attention on the speech assignments and provide additional tips for navigating the software programs. Instructional faculty identified strategies for simplifying the technology learning curve and keeping the focus on the art of public speaking. The use of detailed directions, screen shots, links to program-specific FAQ pages and instructional YouTube videos helped to support those students who were most uncomfortable with the technology. Additionally, instructors made efforts to meet periodically in WebEx, using the course technology to gain first-hand experience with the program's tools and to exchange course and technology-related tips and best practices.

Data Collection & Preliminary Evaluations

Feedback was collected after the first course offering. Students were asked to complete a reflection essay in addition to a standard semester-end course evaluation. Although some students were apprehensive about mediated presentations, they recognized the trend toward virtual presentations and believed online public speaking to be an important skill to possess. The course feedback was mostly positive; specifically, students reported improved presentational skills, decreased anxiety levels, and increased proficiency with presentational technology. Sample student comments include the following:

- "It was great that the course had a professional focus. I really learned a lot that I will be able to take with me.... I'm glad I had the opportunity to take this course online instead of in the classroom and feel that I learned much more in this setting than I would have in a traditional classroom."

- "I had chosen to take this specific class because of its unique online format. This allowed for me to focus on understanding the material I had learned and applying it to my speeches…"
- "…I am coming out of this class better prepared for my future…. I feel prepared to apply the knowledge I have obtained in this class to my future occupation. I know that speaking to groups of people is inevitable in my field of study and knowing that I am well on my way in mastering the basics allows me to feel confident that I have the ability to have my voice heard."
- "I was applying for jobs and getting interviews, so WebEx was great practice for my professional life."
- "I had never used that kind of technology before but after learning the techniques, I found it was an easy task to perform…. I feel that the course did better prepare me for real-life public speaking situations. I am glad I took this course and believe the material will cross over to my professional life."
- "Before taking this course I had no experience with any online public speaking tools: I had never even heard of WebEx. I now feel that I am more than prepared to use WebEx. During my internship this summer I learned that they use WebEx to communicate with their subsidiaries in other countries, so learning to use the tools WebEx offers will be very helpful for me as I begin my career."

Although the feedback was largely positive, a minority of students still expressed concerns similar to those found in the mid-term questionnaire. Students noted that with the use of new technology, there was confusion and frustration that often took center stage. As students focused on the proper use of the software programs, they had less time to devote to the speech itself. In fact, some students stated that they spent more time figuring out the technology than they did preparing for and practicing certain speeches. Also, some students believed that the use of technology created an artificial sense of comfort with public speaking. A few students stated that although they felt fairly comfortable presenting online, they still expected to feel anxious when presenting in a face-to-face environment. Finally, some respondents preferred a traditional class format for public speaking, or they wanted an online class with a less structured schedule.

In the summer 2013 offering, VPS students were asked to participate in a pre and post-instruction survey that allowed them to rate their skills on a 5-point scale across various presentational competencies as well as score their proficiency with specific course technology. Initially 99 students agreed to participate in the IRB-approved study; by the time of the final survey 70 responded. (No incentives to participate were offered.)

With the assistance of Dr. John Tedesco, researchers evaluated the data. The pre and post means on the items related to students' perception of competence with speech development and presentation and technology are reflected in Tables 1-3. As noted in the following tables, post-instruction results showed statistically significant improvement in all categories. Students reported growth in speech delivery and development, such as the ability to manage pre-speech anxiety ($t=5.83$ (167); $p \leq .001$, manage anxiety during a speech ($t=7.14$ (167); $p \leq .001$, and to create a speech thesis ($t=8.69$ (167); $p \leq .001$.

Table 1. Students' Perceptions of Competence with Speech Development and Delivery

Rate skill level on the following:	Pre-instruction mean; N=99	Standard Deviation	Post-instruction mean; N=70	Standard Deviation
1. Speech thesis	3.06	.97	4.23	.68***
2. Speech outline	3.10	.98	4.21	.68***
3. Tailor content for audience	3.35	.94	4.21	.68***
4. Establish credibility	3.33	1	4.23	.71***
5. Build persuasive arguments	3.43	.93	4.20	.71***
6. Avoid logical fallacies	3.32	1.03	4.13	.72***
7. Manage PRE-speech anxiety	2.81	1.07	3.72	.89***
8. Orally cite sources	2.85	1.07	4.03	.85***
9. Speaks concisely	3.10	.88	4.10	.68***
10. Engages audience	3.12	.90	4.10	.66***
11. Manages anxiety DURING speech	2.82	1.05	3.96	.98***
12. Incorporate visual support for message	3.43	.86	4.36	.64***
13. Answer post-speech questions from audience	3.35	1.00	4.40	.69***

*** t-test comparison indicates significant difference at p≤ .001

At the beginning of the course, students rated their competence with public speaking higher than their competence with specific technology (Table 2). That is, they seemed to assume some competence at the beginning of the course when they described public speaking, but they were more aware of gaps when it came to the specifics of utilizing some technologies.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of Competence with Technology (N=70)

Rate your expertise with the following:	Pre-instruction mean	Standard Deviation	Post-instruction mean	Standard Deviation
1. Technology for recording & uploading speeches	2.82	1.28	4.20	.73***
2. Creating effective podcasts	2.48	1.21	4.11	.75***
3. Participating in effective online meetings	2.59	1.2	4.36	.59***
4. Participating in successful online interviews	2.30	1.17	4.27	.72***
5. Developing effective video presentations for websites	2.38	1.21	4.16	.73***

*** t-test comparison indicates significant difference at p≤.001

By the end of the course, students indicated growth on every item! While the main focus in Public Speaking is hardly technology, faculty needed to know how students perceived themselves at the beginning of the course. A significant number of students who felt weak in technology might necessitate the increased use of tutorials or other support services. By the end of the class, higher numbers of students rated themselves as having competence above or significantly above that of their classmates (Table 3).

Table 3. Students' Perceptions of Competence with Technology Compared to Peers

Compared to classmates, rate your technology skills:	**Pre-instruction mean: 2.85**	**Standard Deviation: .71**	**Post-instruction mean: 2.47**	**Standard Deviation: 0.7*****
Percentages:				
Significantly above	5%		11%	
Above my classmates	18%		30%	
Even with classmates	63%		59%	
Below my classmates	14%		0%	
Significantly below	0%		0%	

*** t-test comparison indicates significant difference at $p \leq .001$

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the use of synchronous and asynchronous online presentations, the course designers upheld the integrity and rigor of a traditional public speaking course by addressing message development for specific audiences, managing and reducing apprehension, and enabling real-time audience interaction. Students demonstrated their achievement of learning outcomes. Furthermore, the utilization of accessible technology enabled the students to learn virtual presentation techniques while also honing technical skills they will likely need in the future.

Currently, VPS is being offered as a summer offering only, not in competition with traditional Public Speaking offered during the academic year. For those considering the shift to a similar model, several considerations are important. While the responsive audience—the public—may be smaller in a VPS course than one normally found in a traditional face-to-face class, presenters and speakers benefit from the live exchange. Many smaller institutions have minimum class sizes between 6-10 students, especially for summer enrollments; the VPS course design provides a live audience and an opportunity for rich exchange regardless of class size.

Faculty may not be interested in confronting challenges presented by a virtual model. To make the transition, they have to recognize that VPS requires mastery of new delivery strategies; they can't just move their usual strategies from face-to-face teaching to online. Instructors may need training to master the technology so as to best serve student and departmental needs.

Students may be operating on two misconceptions: (1) online courses are easier than face-to-face courses and (2) their "digital native" status makes them experts at online applications. They need advance information about the expectations of the class and some openness to learning new strategies for communicating online. An early course survey about presentation and technology experience may help them to recognize gaps and the need for instruction and experience. Survey results can also help the instructor attend to specific themes.

Additional research should be collected to confirm initial findings of student growth in areas of speech creation and delivery, as well as with use of technology and overall competence. Business students could be asked to highlight specific current or future professional implications.

Finally, because the course is geared to business majors, it must be built on learning outcomes that are relevant for those students. Whether a formal requirement or not, the VPS course must assure that students will be able to achieve oral presentation competence as they build on the strategies they learned in the core courses before they move on to other advanced courses and professional experiences. Faculty and administrators may also need information about the course and its emphasis on "live" presentations once it moves past the pilot stage.

Despite the challenges, Virtual Public Speaking has offered many advantages. The VPS course model is designed to foster relevant and meaningful experiences while incorporating the learning outcomes and some features of a traditional public speaking class. However, this fully online model capitalizes on emerging technologies, allowing students to communicate with real-time audiences online. The professional nature of the coursework makes this class relevant to business majors, and allows for immediate application in subsequent college and career settings. Students who successfully complete the course are equipped with the knowledge and experience to recognize, create, and deliver effective messages to a target audience.

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