News You Can Use! Evaluating the Effectiveness of Newsjacking Based Content on Social Media

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Purpose

Newsjacking (real-time deployment of news stories in communications) is now ubiquitous for brands using social media. Despite its pervasiveness, little analysis of its effectiveness exists. In this research we test if newsjacking positively influences various consumer responses (attitude towards content, brand attitude, purchase intent). Taking an *audience* perspective supported by the elaboration likelihood model (ELM), the research also establishes if a higher level of news involvement, as well as an ability to recognize the story behind the content, enhances the effectiveness of newsjacking content.

Design

An experimental design using taglines (newsjacking versus non-topical content) from a real BMW campaign was tested on a sample of 252 consumers. Three research questions pertaining to the effectiveness of newsjacking were specified and analyzed within a structural equation modelling framework.

Findings

The findings support the conclusion that newsjacking *is* an effective communication tool. More favorable consumer responses were elicited in the newsjacking condition, as compared to content deploying a non-topical tagline. In addition, recipients reporting a higher level of *news involvement* rated the content more favorably in the newsjacking (versus the non-topical) condition. Deploying news stories that are more recognizable, increases the chances of

successful newsjacking. Messages received by those with higher *product involvement* (category-level: cars) were more effective regardless of the type of appeal.

Originality

We contribute to the communications and social media literatures by investigating the effectiveness of an emerging but popular tactic leveraged by content creators. Our work builds upon the limited research that has tested consumer responses to newsjacking. From a practical perspective, the research provides insight into the type of audience and situations most likely to yield a favorable outcome from newsjacking.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2017, Prince Harry and Megan Markle announced their engagement to be wed, a story of royal romance that grabbed the attention of the world and, most notably, social media content creators. Leveraging the rumor that Harry's proposal was accepted over fried chicken, KFC posted content of one of their buckets with gold trim, with the text "We declare a regal day of celebration, jubilation… And Fried Chicken". Dunkin Donuts leveraged the event by posting images of a horse and carriage pulling donuts. Similarly, in January 2009, to coincide with Obama's inauguration, Veet, a hair removal product, built a campaign around the slogan "Goodbye Bush". The common thread in all these examples is newsjacking, which can be defined as the referencing of topical news stories in marketing communications (Hunter and Burkhart, 2013). Whilst newsjacking can be leveraged using a wide range of media, its application is ubiquitous with enhancements in technology and, in particular, the use of social media.

Practical applications of newsjacking are becoming more common, with proponents arguing that by interlinking content with topical news stories in real time scenarios, content marketers have the potential to create more interesting and rewarding messages for recipients to decode (Hunter and Burkhart, 2013, Scott, 2011). However, newsjacking and, in particular, the effectiveness of its application has received scant academic attention. To demonstrate this the authors undertook an online search to check for prior research in the area. This was conducted on the 12th August 2019 through the Web of Science, Scopus and the EBSCO Business Source complete databases. "Newsjacking", "News jacking" and "News AND jacking" were used as search terms with no restrictions on year published, language or source. The EBSCO Business Source Complete search identified 10 hits of articles published largely for non-academic audiences and all in non-peer reviewed outlets e.g. in PR Week, Campaign

etc. Both the Web of Science and Scopus searches identified two additional research papers (Willemsen et al., 2018, Savyan and Bhanu, 2017), although the former concerns malicious attacks on online social platforms rather than newsjacking *per se*. Of greater relevance to this study, Willemsen et al. (2018) considers how Real-Time Marketing (RTM), an attribute embedded within the fabric of newsjacking, stimulates greater sharing behavior amongst social media users. From a content analysis of real campaigns, they conclude that newsjacking has the capacity to enhance sharing but does so more effectively when deployed news stories are less, rather than more, predictable in nature. Although sharing behavior represents an important communications metric in its own right, the barometer of success that content creators and marketers use to evaluate their work should, and often does, extend to other mindset-oriented metrics, such as changes in brand attitude and purchase intentions, all of which are established antecedents of brand performance (Rust et al., 2004). It is here that we seek to contribute to this emerging literature concerning RTM in social media, by evaluating the effectiveness of newsjacking.

In addition, recent calls in the information management systems literature challenge researchers to generate knowledge that helps content creators to engage better social media users (Potdar et al., 2018, Poulis et al., 2019, Tang et al., 2018). To stand out, content that is able to capture attention and engage is at a premium (Ashley and Tuten, 2015, Fransen et al., 2015), and so knowing when and with whom to operationalize newsjacking to optimize success is critical. In keeping with Willemsen et al. (2018), which explores the *type* of news (predictable versus unpredictable) that enhances sharing, we approach the study of newsjacking from an audience perspective. In doing so, we draw on theories of persuasion from the psychology literature – and in particular, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of Petty and Cacioppo (1986). Drawing on one of the central tenets of this dual processing theory - that is persuasion tends to be higher when recipients possess greater motivation and ability to attend to arguments

or messages – we establish if a higher level of news involvement, and an ability to recognize

underlying news stories deployed in newsjacking, enhances the effectiveness of its application.

Taken together, and in light of the infancy of research in this domain, the paper

addresses three fundamental questions relating to the effectiveness of newsjacking.

Specifically, we address (i) whether content using newsjacking messages elicits more favorable

consumer responses (attitude to content, brand attitude, purchase intentions) when compared

to more traditional (but non-topical) content? Next, and in line with the ELM, whether

newsjacking works more effectively when recipients have a higher motivation and ability to

attend to the underlying message. As such, for (ii) we aim to establish the role that an

individual's degree of news involvement plays in determining newsjacking effectiveness

relative to non-topical appeals, and thus (iii) whether or not successful newsjacking deployment

requires the recipient to correctly "solve the puzzle" – in other words, recognize and connect

the content to a related news story?

The following section expands upon the nature of newsjacking before developing the study's

hypotheses.

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BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT OF STUDY HYPOTHESES

Newsjacking

In 2017, *newsjacking* featured on the Oxford English Dictionary's shortlist for word of the

year. The term's etymology, which blends 'news' and 'hijacking', dates back to the 1970s and

references a period where profiteering from newspaper theft was rife. Its contemporary

iteration, however, dates from the early twenty-first century, and was first popularized in David

Meerman Scott's book, published in 2011, entitled: *Newsjacking: How to inject your ideas into*

a breaking news story and generate tons of media coverage. In essence, newsjacking involves referencing a contemporary news story, whether implicitly or explicitly in a tagline, image or both components. Interestingly, Meerman Scott (2019) claims that for most of the time since its inception, interest in newsjacking has been low, with increased application occurring only in recent years, dovetailing the rise of social media. Indeed, as Boland (2018) reports, newsjacking has now become "a prevalent theme in today's social media age". Two mechanisms elucidate why this might be the case. Firstly, newsjacking tends to employ stories that are breaking and "hot off the press". Social media facilitates such real-time and agile response, especially when compared to other forms of media that can take at least several days to plan, develop and execute. In contrast, via social media, design, copy and execution can all be delivered within the timespan in which a news story remains fresh (Wainwright, 2012). Secondly, viral processes, underpinned by consumer sharing and engagement driven algorithms, especially suit newsjacking, which is designed to be both shared and influence those that it reaches cheaply and efficiently (Marder et al., 2017). Regarding the latter point, Willemsen et al. (2018) provide support from a newsjacking perspective. Following a content analysis of brand tweets (n=1500) selected from a shortlist of the world's top brand advertisers, the authors conclude that RTM creates more meaningful content for consumers when it deploys news that is more unpredictable (i.e. novel) in nature. However, whilst these insights are important, little is known about whether or not newsjacking is an effective tactic when the goal is persuading consumers from an attitudinal perspective. To understand this issue more thoroughly, we progress to the study's hypotheses, which are underpinned by the ELM (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986).

Theoretical Underpinnings and Research Hypotheses

Since the highly influential work of Hovland et al. (1953), researchers have sought to explain variations in the ability of different message appeals to persuade people to respond more favorably (cognitively, affectively and behaviorally) to advertising (Kim et al., 2014) and, more recently, social media content (Colliander and Marder, 2018). One widely applied theory which has great potential for explaining *why* some forms of communication are more persuasive and, thus effective, compared to others is the ELM, which is a dual-process theory of attitude development and adjustment (Angst and Agarwal, 2009, Petty and Cacioppo, 1986, Petty et al., 1983). Akin to other dual process theories of persuasion (Xu, 2017), the ELM stresses that attitudinal change depends on the audience and context in which a message is delivered, a feature we argue is also central to the success of newsjacking. The ELM has been used to understand the effectiveness (i.e. attitude change) of, for instance, the deployment of more (versus less) attractive models in advertising (Trampe et al., 2010), crowdfunding appeals (Allison et al., 2017), electronic word of mouth in determining hotel bookings (Leong et al., 2019) and environmental cues in green advertising (Fernando et al., 2016), and remains the most cited model of persuasion in advertising (Kerr et al., 2015).

The ELM conceptualizes that responses to a message are largely the consequence of a person's motivation and/or ability to elaborate on a message. When people have the motivation to decode and/or ability to decipher a persuasive message, elaboration is believed to follow a central processing route, which leads to deeper and more thoughtful processing of new information. Generally, a message processed via this central route results in stronger and more favorable evaluations and responses (i.e. attitudes) (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981). In contrast, in low motivation / ability situations, message decoding occurs only via a peripheral processing route, initiated through a more passive thought process. Such processing relies more on, for example, associated aspects of the message, coupled with general brand perceptions or other easy-to-access cues such as product packaging. Even when the source of the message is

perceived in a positive manner, elaboration via a peripheral processing route tends to result in shorter-lived attitude changes, which only have a limited effect on subsequent behavior (Petty et al., 1983, Yang et al., 2006).

Content creators wish that to have their communications processed and elaborated in a deeper and more thoughtful manner, which Petty and Cacioppo (1986) propose requires the recipient to: (1) attend to the central arguments presented in the appeal; (2) access associations, images, and experiences from memory; (3) elaborate upon the externally provided message arguments in light of information available from memory; (4) draw inferences about the merits of the arguments of the appeal based on their analysis of information extracted from memory, before (5) evaluating their favorability towards the stimulus / brand. Following this framework, it is logical to assume that people who have a higher awareness and knowledge of current affairs will be better positioned, or in the terminology of Petty and Cacioppo (1986) - "motivated", to attend to steps (2) to (4). Indeed, the central route in the ELM is highly related to a person's *involvement* with the product, service or some other central feature presented in the message (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981). For example, Fernando et al. (2016) found that green advertising worked far more effectively when consumers had a higher situational involvement with related issues (i.e. they rated highly on a scale of environmental concern).

Following this logic and, in keeping with general models for understanding advertising evaluations (e.g. Mitchell and Olson, 1981, Shimp, 1981), we suggest that newsjacking messages work more effectively amongst people who report a higher level of involvement with current affairs. However, and taking this a step further (but also in keeping with the ELM) we aim to establish if recognizing the related news story is a prerequisite of newsjacking success. Hypotheses relating to each research question are, in turn, unpacked below.

Research Question 1: Comparative favorability of responses to newsjacking versus non-topical content

A person's *Attitude toward the content* (AtC)*,* represents a "predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner" to commercial *content* (Solomon, 1992, p.139). It denotes an affective judgment which precedes a more explicit evaluation of the brand (MacKenzie et al., 1986). Numerous studies consider how the *delivery* of content influences AtC (Yeshin, 2006, Ha, 2017). As previously outlined, advocates of newsjacking argue that deploying topical news stories embedded within content makes it more interesting, rewarding and arousing to the recipient (Hunter and Burkhart, 2013, Scott, 2011). Research supports the view that when content is novel, recipients have a higher level of motivation to encode and then decode the message, engaging central, rather than peripheral, processing (Sheinin et al., 2011). Adopting the perspective that newsjacking enhances perceived content novelty, we expect recipients to respond more favorably in their affective evaluations. As such:

H1: *Content that employs newsjacking will generate a more positive attitude towards the content (AtC), the brand attitude (Ba) and higher purchase intentions (PI) than comparable but non-topical content.*

In keeping with traditional models of attitude development in the marketing and communications literatures (e.g. Mitchell and Olson, 1981, Shimp, 1981), we also expect to observe a positive relationship between each of the dependent variables tested in H1. As such, for each of the proceeding hypotheses, a model positively linking AtC, Ba and PI's in a causal chain is assumed.

Research Question 2: Antecedents of Newsjacking Effectiveness (News Involvement)

Building on H1, we investigate the drivers of newsjacking effectiveness, from an audience perspective. In communications research, recipient involvement is a popular construct used to explain differences in attitudes towards advertising (e.g. Brisoux and Cheron, 1990, Celsi and Olson, 1988). Te'eni-Harari et al. (2009, p.204) assert that involvement is "created by the personal significance that an individual ascribes to the features of the object (message, situation, product)". Different types of involvement are therefore more or less salient depending upon the context.

News involvement represents and captures both the extent to which consumers perceive themselves to be engaged and up-to-date with current affairs, as well as the extent to which they consider this investment to be central to their self-image and identity. In keeping with the ELM, we expect that people who are higher in news involvement will be more likely to attend to newsjacking in an elaborated manner, because they are more motivated to do so. We now outline how this effect might manifest at a more granular level.

Broadbent (1958) introduced one of the first conceptualizations of selective attention theory. He proposed that individuals possess a limited ability to process information and therefore choose (often subconsciously) to elaborate on messages that are most readily available and relevant to them. Less available and relevant information tends to be filtered, even if not completely rejected (Treisman, 1960). As such, people with a predisposition for current affairs (higher news involvement) should be more sensitive to messages containing news-related information, especially if it is perceived as more relevant to them. This is in keeping with the theory of attention presented by Kahneman (1973), which assumes that greater attention is given to stimuli that heighten feelings of arousal and which are seen as relevant by the decoder.

We test the role of news and product involvement side by side for both newsjacking and non-topical content. For comparable but non-topical content, where there is no news linked

that can distract, product involvement should be more salient and strongly related to AtC than

news involvement. Therefore, it is predicted that:

__H2a__: News involvement will positively influence attitude towards content (AtC) for the

newsjacking appeal.

__H2b__: News involvement will have a more positive influence on attitude towards content

(AtC) for newsjacking appeals than for non-topical content.

__H2c__: Product involvement will have an influence on attitude towards content (AtC) for

both the newsjacking and non-topical appeals.

__H2d__: Product involvement will have a more positive influence on attitude towards the

content (AtC) for non-topical appeals than for newsjacking content.

Research Question 3: Comprehension and Evaluation of Newsjacking Advertisement

Whilst we expect that the effectiveness of newsjacking is enhanced when the recipient

has a higher level of news involvement, this does not necessarily mean that the specific news

story used in the message is recognized. Given that central processing in the ELM assumes that

recipients can access associations, images, and experiences from memory (Petty and Cacioppo,

1986, Petty and Cacioppo, 1981), it is logical that a comprehension of the related news story is

an important requirement of newsjacking. But is this comprehension or ability, based on pre-

existing knowledge to 'decode' the message, essential to its effectiveness? Because, if so, there

will be implications for the types of news stories that content creators can use.

Extant research provides an explanation for why comprehension is salient. For instance,

when ability is low and message decoding impossible, pleasure felt from elaborating is more

limited (McQuarrie and Mick, 1999). However, when a message is more complex, with some

cryptic properties, consumers report heightened favorability towards that content if they are able to make sense of it (McQuarrie and Mick, 1999, McQuarrie and Phillips, 2005). This suggests that cognitive ability in decoding a newsjacking message, and "solving the puzzle" enhances the pleasure felt by the message recipient, and contrasts significantly with the frustration felt from being unable to "crack the code" (Kang and Herr, 2006). This relationship is supported by prior work. For example, comprehension has been found to be significant predictor for the success of film trailers released through social media (Archer-Brown et al., 2018), as well as internet memes (Nissenbaum and Shifman, 2017). This does not automatically render less comprehensible content as useless, but will likely generate less favorable responses. As such:

H3: Recipients able, rather than unable, to correctly recognize the news story embedded within newsjacking content will have a more favorable attitude to the content (AtC), brand attitude (Ba) and a greater intention to purchase the advertised product or sevice (PI).

METHOD, DESIGN AND SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Consumer responses to newsjacking messages were investigated using a between-subjects 2 (newsjacking vs non-topical content) X 1 experiment. In each of the two conditions, the task involved a post-test evaluation following exposure to content for the German automotive brand BMW Mini (see Appendix 1).

The first variant used an actual piece of newsjacking content. This consisted of a visual for the Mini John Cooper Works Roadster, a high-performance version of the BMW Mini, with the tagline "Beef: With a lot of horses hidden in it". This tagline referenced the Meat Adulteration Scandal after the Food Safety Authority of Ireland reported detecting horse DNA in 37% of the beef burger products it tested. The story featured heavily in the British, European

and American press, with several leading supermarkets withdrawing products from their shelves. In the following months, further testing uncovered that the problem related to a much wider range of products, in multiple countries.

In choosing an appropriate stimulus for the second variant of the questionnaire, we conducted a workshop with postgraduate students. Students are commonly used to examine social media phenomenon due to their high levels of technology adoption and usage (Fogel and Nehmad, 2009, Kim et al., 2014). Students were electronically provided with the newsjacking content ("Beef: with lots of horses hidden in it") as well as seven non-topical versions, identical in all regards apart from different taglines that were used in the Mini Roadster campaign. These taglines were: (a) half the seats twice the fun, (b) think twice still do it, (c) survival of the quickest, (d) from a to b or not to b?, (e) made to cross the line, (f) get used to being followed, (g) choose your accomplice wisely. Participants evaluated each tagline with the overarching goal of finding a suitable, realistic and *non-topical* equivalent of the newsjacking tagline. To assist in this judgment the group was given three criteria: (i) level of perceived fit with the image of the ad, (ii) level of consistency with the BMW Mini brand image, and (iii) (lower) level of topicality (i.e. level of knowledge about topical subjects required for interpretation). The workshop moderator ensured through discussion that these criteria were understood unambiguously by attendees.

The taglines were considered as equally low in topicality. Discussions revealed that all taglines were deemed broadly consistent with the Mini brand image and picture of the automobile featured in the ad. We therefore selected "survival of the quickest" which represents another twist on a figure of speech, but in this case referencing the phrase "survival of the fittest" coined by Herbert Spencer and popularized by Charles Darwin to describe the process of natural selection and evolutionary theory. Both the newsjacking and non-topical content alluded to the speed and durability of the car.

Respondents (all social media users) were randomly assigned to either the newsjacking or non-topical variant of the questionnaire, which were identical in all other respects. A convenience sample was recruited via a street level intercept approach in a busy northern UK city central location. Bush and Hair (1985) contend this approach offers comparable quality of data to more conventional postal or telephone interviews. Respondents were assured that their data would be used exclusively for academic purposes and all responses would remain anonymous. The electronic questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes to complete. They first completed scales relating to interest in the news and product category (automobiles) as well as reporting how often they watched news / current affairs programs on TV or online. Next, respondents were presented with one of two pieces of content (newsjacking or non-topical variant) and told to imagine receiving it via their social media. Afterwards, they completed scales capturing their attitude to the content (AtC), brand attitude (Ba) and purchase intention (PI).

In total, 252 responses were collected, 126 for each condition. Table 1 outlines the sample characteristics for the two groups which comprised a similar proportion of men (50.4%) and women (49.6%). The vast majority (72.2%) were aged 20-29, with the entire sample being under 50 years of age. Most people (86.1%) claimed to engage with news and current affairs at least once per day. Chi-squared difference tests for gender ($\chi^2 = .14$; p >.10), age ($\chi^2 = 1.64$; p >.10) and engagement with news and current affairs on television or online ($\chi^2 = 3.48$; p >.10) revealed no differences between the two groups of respondents.

Insert Table 1 about here

Measurement Scales

The scales for news involvement and product involvement (automobiles) were adapted from the fashion product involvement scale of O'Cass and Choy (2008). This scale draws on longstanding work capturing consumers' interest in particular product categories and issues (Mittal and Lee, 1989). Both were measured on five-point Likert scales. The scale for attitude to the social media content (AtC) was adapted to the context from the advertising attitude scale of Holbrook and Batra (1987), while we adopted the measures of Leclerc et al. (1994) to establish brand attitude (Ba), and scale number 483 from Bruner (2009) to measure purchase intentions (PI). Scales were anchored on seven-point semantic differential scales, ranging from -3 to +3. Table 2 provides a complete listing of items and associated descriptive statistics.

Insert Table 2 about here

Analytical Strategy

Given that our hypotheses required testing for both mean differences in the dependent variables (attitude to content, brand attitude, purchase intention towards the car), as well as differences in the regression slopes associated with antecedents (product and news involvement) between the *newsjacking* and *non-topical* content, we employed a multi-group structural equation modelling (MGSEM) approach to analyze the data. Although MGSEM has not traditionally been used in information systems experimental studies, there are exceptions (Bang et al., 2018) and it has several notable advantages over more commonplace statistical methods (e.g., ANOVA). First, we acknowledge that the manifest variables (items) are imperfect measures of their associated latent constructs, so controlling for measurement error is desirable. Second, each manifest variable (item) may not equally reflect the underlying latent construct, so averaging items to form composite scales is not strictly appropriate. Third, we can

simultaneously test the relationships between latent constructs, rather than exploring in a piecemeal fashion, the 'causal' chain. This allows us to test data in a way that forces a relationship to be estimated between each of the dependent variables, which is in keeping with traditional advertising models. Fourth, with a modest sample size, MGSEM offers greater statistical power than more conventional methods. Given that information systems researchers have recently recommended greater care is given to construct validity (MacKenzie et al., 2011), and that the MGSEM approach has become widely accepted (Hair et al., 2017), our analytical strategy is in keeping with such heightened expectations within the discipline.

We begin by first thoroughly testing each construct in the two conditions (newsjacking versus non-topical) to ensure they separately exhibit sufficient convergent and discriminant validity. Next, we establish whether the constructs are interpreted equivalently (metric and scalar invariance) in both groups, a condition necessary when making structural (i.e., regression paths) and latent mean multi-group comparisons. Only once confirmed is it valid to test our three sets of focal hypotheses.

Newsjacking and non-topical measurement models: fit and construct validity

To test the scales' psychometric properties, a separate measurement model was specified for each of the two conditions (i.e. groups) and estimated using robust maximum likelihood in Mplus 6.2 (Muthén and Muthén, 2012). Measurement model fit statistics were as follows (Newsjacking: $\chi^2 = 367.49$, df = 199; CFI = .94; TLI = .93; RMSEA = .08; Non-topical ad: $\chi^2 = 289.18$, df = 199; CFI = .97; TLI = .96; RMSEA = .06).

We assessed convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement scales following the method suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981), based on the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) criterion. Convergent validity is evident when at least 50% (.50) of the factor variance is extracted from the corresponding items in the scale (see Table 3). Estimates ranged from

70% to 82% for the newsjacking ad and 69% to 84% for the non-topical message. Moreover, all standardized factor loadings exceeded .70, suggesting that suitably high associations existed between each item and its corresponding construct (Table 3).

Insert Table 3 about here

When the AVE is greater than the squared correlation between every pair of constructs it suggests that the measured concepts are distinct. Discriminant validity was confirmed in all cases. Table 4 details the correlation matrices.

Insert Table 4 about here

Measurement invariance

A multiple-group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) was specified to determine the appropriateness of using MGSEM for comparing construct mean-differences and regression paths across the groups. We followed the procedures outlined by Williams et al. (2009). Firstly, a baseline model (Model 1) with no equality constraints imposed between the two groups was specified, yielding a satisfactory result (χ^2 = 656.57, df = 398; CFI = .95, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .07)[1]. This was compared to Model 2 in which factor loadings, variances and covariances were held equal across the two groups (χ^2 = 677.89, df = 415; CFI = .95, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .07). A Chi-squared difference test to ascertain whether constraining these parameters to be equal yielded a worse fitting model was non-significant ($\Delta\chi^2$ = 21.32, Δdf = 17, p > .05). This provided sufficient evidence of *metric invariance*, meaning that factor loadings were equivalent across the two conditions, and that constructs shared similar meanings between

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[1] These fit statistics are akin to the sum of the separate measurement models outlined in the previous section.

participants exposed to the newsjacking and non-topical content.

Next, we tested for scalar invariance which establishes whether construct-mean score comparisons across groups are valid. We compared Model 2 (outlined above) with Model 3, this time also holding the intercept of each indicator equal across the two groups ($\chi^2 = 706.09$ df = 432; CFI = .95, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .07) (Williams *et al.,* 2009). Once again, the change in model fit was non-significant, suggesting scalar invariance to be evident ($\Delta\chi^2 = 28.20$, Δdf = 17, p > .05), and any comparisons of mean-score differences to be valid.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1

To test hypothesis 1, we specified a MGCFA, with constrained parameters across the newsjacking and non-topical conditions. Differences are calculated by subtracting the construct mean scores for each group. In this case it entailed subtracting the non-topical condition from the newsjacking version (Muthén and Muthén, 2012). As such, positive mean differences reflect higher scores for the newsjacking content. As an additional check of face validity, and as would intuitively be anticipated, no significant differences (Table 3) were found across either the *product involvement* or *news involvement* constructs (p > .05). Most importantly the results support H1. Participants in the newsjacking condition reported more positive attitudes towards the newsjacking content (AtC) ($\Delta \bar{x} = +.54$), more favorable brand attitudes (Ba) ($\Delta \bar{x} = .57$), as well as higher levels of purchase intention ($\Delta \bar{x} = .32$).

Hypothesis 2a-d

Since hypothesis 2a-2c required testing whether *news involvement* (and *product involvement*) was an antecedent of newsjacking effectiveness (i.e. *AtC*), and to a significantly different extent between the two conditions, we estimated a MGSEM in which both constructs were regressed

on AtC. We also completed the chain specifying paths between AtC and Ba, as well as Ba and PI. Gender and age were included as control variables. Nonetheless, the focus of this analysis remained the role of news and product involvement in determining AtC, and if this differed between the content types. Model fit was satisfactory (χ^2 = 783.35, df = 482; CFI = .94; TLI = .94; RMSEA = .07). Path (regression) coefficients for the model outlined above are presented in Table 5.

The effect of news involvement on AtC was significant for the newsjacking condition (β = .51; p < .01) in support of H2a. It was also found as an antecedent for the non-topical variant (β = .20; p < .05). To establish whether the relative strength of these regression slope coefficients differed across both conditions, we compared model fit statistics for the unconstrained model with a second model in which the path was constrained equally across the two groups. The result provided support for H2b since the unconstrained model yielded a significantly better fit ($\Delta\chi^2$ = 4.84, 1df, p <. 05) when the path between *news involvement* and *AtC* was allowed to differ between the two conditions. Thus, news involvement was, as expected, found to be more important in determining *AtC* for newsjacking type appeals. Next, we turned our attention to the role of product involvement in determining content effectiveness. This was found to be positive and significant for the non-topical message (β = .39; p < .01), but non-significant for the newsjacking content (β = .08; p > .05), meaning that H2c can only be partially accepted. We did however find that the path between *product involvement* and *AtC* produced a better fitting model when it was unconstrained ($\Delta\chi^2$ = 3.85, 1*df, p < .05*). This suggests that *product involvement* was more important in determining attitudes for the non-topical message, providing support for H2d. The latter is consistent with distraction theories, whereby resolving scheme incongruities or puzzles embedded within messages works to distract attention from processing other stimuli (Strick et al., 2013).

We expected to observe significant paths between *attitude towards the content* (AtC) and *brand attitude*, as well as between *brand attitude* and *purchase intention,* which is reflected in the results supplied in Table 5. We did not have any rationale for why the strength of these relationships should be moderated by type of message appeal, but in the interests of completeness, we tested for this. In both the newsjacking (β = .73; p < .01) and non-topical (β = .76; p < .01) conditions, AtC $\rightarrow$ Ba was positive and significant. No significant difference in model fit was identified after constraining this path equivalent ($\Delta\chi2$ = 0.38, 1df, p > .05). This suggests that the influence of At*C* on brand attitude (Ba) is not moderated by content type. A similar conclusion was reached for the relationship between brand attitude (Ba) and purchase intention (PI). The path was positive and significant for both the newsjacking (β = .57; p < .01) and non-topical conditions (β = .70; p < .01), and was of comparable magnitude ($\Delta\chi2$ = 0.83, 1df, p > .05).

Insert Table 5 about here

Hypothesis 3

Next, we tested Hypothesis 3 to see if people who were able to recognize the news story embedded within the *newsjacking* content responded differently from those who *did not*. In other words, to what extent does the success of newsjacking depend on the ability of the audience to correctly identify the news story behind the message? Using the *newsjacking* sample only (n=126), we re-estimated the same model, but changed the composition of the two groups by categorizing respondents into: (i) those who correctly identified the reference to the meat adulteration scandal (n=67) and (ii) those who did not (n=59). At the close of the questionnaire (after some demographic questions), respondents were asked whether they were familiar with the news story linked to the content (yes or no), and then asked to name and describe it in an open-ended question. Only six respondents misattributed and incorrectly

identified the story having claimed to recognize it, and consequently were reallocated to the "do not know" condition.

To test for latent mean differences across the two groups, we followed the same measurement invariance procedure outlined earlier. Scalar invariance was confirmed, making mean-score comparisons valid. We subtracted construct means for respondents who did not recognize the news story from those who correctly did. As would be intuitively expected, this revealed no significant difference in *product involvement* ($\Delta \bar{x} = .29, p > .10$). We did, however, find that those respondents who correctly identified the story had significantly higher levels of *news involvement* ($\Delta \bar{x} = 1.13, p < .01$), *attitude towards the content* ($\Delta \bar{x} = 1.32, p < .01$), *brand attitude* ($\Delta \bar{x} = 0.57, p < .01$), and *purchase intention* ($\Delta \bar{x} = 0.52, p < .01$). Whilst it is logical to expect that those who recognized the news story to have a higher level of *news involvement*, having correctly been able to "decode the message" and "solve the puzzle", the sizeable differences in each dependent variable provides strong support for H3, and the importance of using news stories that are highly recognizable to users on the relevant social media platform.

An obvious postscript is whether newsjacking works as a double-edge sword. While people who identify and understand the news story reward the marketer with enhanced attitudes and behaviors, do those who fail to make the connection end up being left confused and annoyed? If so, do they exhibit less positive evaluations than those presented with a standard non-topical version of the ad? If so, newsjacking may represent a potentially rewarding, but high-risk strategy. To investigate this we repeated the above multi-group analysis, but this time comparing those who failed to recognize the newsjacking ad with those in the non-topical condition. Perhaps not surprisingly, respondents failing to recognize the news story in the ad had a lower reported *news involvement* than those in the non-topical condition ($\bar{x}_{fail} = 2.65$; $\bar{x}_{non\text{-}topical} = 3.22$; $\Delta \bar{x} = .58, p < .01$). Nevertheless, there were no other significant differences in the

attitudinal or behavioral evaluations (all $p < .10$). In this instance, failing to recognize the news story did not unduly penalize the content curator. However, in more complicated situations, with more cryptic news references, this may not always be the case.

DISCUSSION

Recently, there has been a surge in newsjacking content fueled by social media, whereby content creators use topical news stories and embed them in their communications (Hunter and Burkhart, 2013, Scott, 2011). Yet, to date very little is known about its effectiveness and how this can be enhanced (Willemsen et al., 2018). In this research we take an *audience* perspective by establishing how differences between recipients of newsjacking might affect its successful application. This builds on Willemsen et al. (2018), which focuses on how surprising and unsurprising deployment of news stories influences sharing behaviors for newsjacking advertisements. In contrast we focus on content effectiveness in terms of salient mindset metrics established predominantly in the advertising literature (Yeshin, 2006). In addressing the first research question, we show that newsjacking ads create more positively received attitudes than a non-topical equivalent, as well as driving a superior brand attitude and purchase intentions.

Having established these favorable outcomes of newsjacking, the second research question relates to motivation sources and how newsjacking may work depending on the involvement, or interests of, the audience. Here we find that message type moderates the effect of both news and product involvement on AtC. Specifically, the effect of news involvement on AtC was stronger for the newsjacking, compared to the non-topical message type, while product involvement positively affects AtC but only within the non-topical sample. These findings are in keeping with selective attention theory, which informs the ELM (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). In particular, for a given level of motivation and ability, encoding efficiency

improves when involvement is higher (Srivastava, 2013). Seemingly, in the newsjacking case, this relates *more* to news involvement and in the non-topical case, *more* to product involvement, although there is a strong rationale for concluding that the former ostensibly crowds out the latter in the newsjacking condition which is consistent with our theorizing. In essence, the selective element of this acknowledges that consumers possess limited processing capacities, so that attention given to one type of cue, for a given level of motivation, comes at the expense of other cues (Lee and Faber, 2007). An important implication for content managers is thus that the application of newsjacking should therefore depend on the frame of reference sought by managers – if content is targeting a segment highly involved with the product, newsjacking may be an unwanted distraction. However, for "news mavens" positive effects are heightened. This finding is of particular importance considering that news consumption is a key gratification sought by users of social media (Lee and Ma, 2012). Thus, in the fight for favor with algorithms that are increasingly aimed at providing 'meaningful content' (Wong, 2018), newsjacking appears to be a method which affords commercial content to be made more meaningful.

The third research question investigates whether the effectiveness of newsjacking hinges on comprehension of the related news story. This is an important practical question to explore since an individual with high news involvement may not recognize news embedded in content, whilst the opposite might also be true. As expected, those able to correctly recognize the news story exhibit more favorable responses towards the product being marketed. This is consistent with notions of the importance of interpretability and satisfaction from correctly decoding complex messages (McQuarrie and Mick, 1999, McQuarrie and Phillips, 2005). Thus, like internet memes, newsjacking will only by successful if there is implicit meaning that resonates with the consumer (Nissenbaum and Shifman, 2017). Hence practitioners should be mindful to consider only widely reported and discussed news stories *or* ones highly germane

to the target market - as failure to comprehend may simply confuse the consumer about the brand's true positioning and point of differentiation.

Future Research and Limitations of the Current Study

Although the current study's results provide useful insights into the effectiveness of newsjacking based content through social media and how it works, as an emergent field there are several important issues for future research to address, overcoming the limitations of our present enquiry. We identify four critical areas, namely: (i) the lifespan of newsjacking messages, (ii) engagement with newsjacking through social media (iii) exclusivity and (iv) the point at which a topical news story becomes controversial and inappropriate for newsjacking. We present each issue in turn.

Does newsjacking have a shorter shelf life than traditional social media content?

In this study, cross-sectional data were collected at a single point in time so variations in the temporal effectiveness of either campaign could not be studied. Previous research generally identifies a non-monotonic relationship between message repetition and message effectiveness with the effect of repetition depending on the context in which the ad is presented (Malaviya, 2007). The timing of any newsjacking message is thus likely to be critical, with its effectiveness rising as a story spreads and becomes widely known and then falling, as it becomes old news. Given the importance of news story recognition by consumers, there would appear to be an optimum time window for newsjacking a particular story. In an era of rolling news programs and globalized coverage this window maybe very close to when a story first breaks. For instance, within two hours of Uruguayan soccer star Luis Suárez biting an Italian player in a 2014 FIFA World Cup match, Bud Light bought promoted tweets linked to the #Suarez hashtag, displaying a picture of a Suarez like figure biting into a beer bottle with the tagline

"Relax, they're twist off". If delaying such campaigns for even a few days substantially curtails their effectiveness in traditional broadcast media, then presumably the rate of decay and wear-out would be greatly magnified in high velocity, constantly evolving, social media contexts. Further research is needed to shed light on the optimum window for newsjacking appeals following an event. Social network analysis, potentially through the lens of epidemiological models, could be used to understand the time taken for sharing and interactions of content to peak and fall.

Does newsjacking increase engagement?

The study provides support for newsjacking having a positive effect on AtC, leading to enhanced brand attitude and increased purchase intent. This would suggest that newsjacking content is likely to garner more interactions (e.g. likes, comments) and importantly shares, than non-newsjacking content, however empirical support is needed. This knowledge is crucial for content managers who wish to leverage as far as possible organic over paid reach, given such engagement is commonly known to boost reach within social media. Specifically, greater insight into the use of newsjacking to initiate viral processes is required to support the efficacy of newsjacking within social media platforms compared to that in more traditional advertising arenas (e.g. print). It is proposed that future research considers existing knowledge on the motivation for electronic-word-of-mouth and how content creators can best leverage this understanding when designing and launching newsjacking campaigns (Berger, 2014, Lee et al., 2017).

Does exclusivity matter?

Many stories attract multiple "newsjacks". For example, Prince Harry and Megan Markle's wedding sparked a wealth of content creation. To what extent the lack of exclusivity

undermines the ability to cut-through in a cluttered media environment warrants further investigation (Scott, 2011). Analogous research on celebrity endorsements demonstrates that increases in the number of concurrent sponsorships a brand engages in negatively affects evaluations for each individual advertisement (Choi et al., 2005, Tripp et al., 1994). While exclusivity may be controlled in celebrity endorsements through contractual measures, exclusivity clauses are not an option with the use of news stories. More recent research on celebrity endorsements, however, identifies that in a high involvement context, strong perceived fit between the celebrity and product(s) endorsed overrides the negative effect of multiple brands (Rice et al., 2012). In the context of newsjacking it would be fruitful to investigate the tradeoff between exclusivity and perceived fit as determinants of effectiveness.

Is all news right for jacking?

The instance of newsjacking investigated in this study was not regarded as controversial or offensive. However, some newsjacking campaigns provoked widespread criticism for appearing to exploit the misfortune of others or trivialize events (Stewart and Wilson, 2016). For instance, during the Arab Spring, menswear label Kenneth Cole tweeted "millions are in uproar in #Cairo. Rumor is they heard that our new spring collection is now available at: http://bit/ly/KCairo". Similarly, after a Malaysian airlines flight disappeared, an online coaching company referenced the story in a promoted tweet that read "do you feel that employers cannot find you? Let's get your "black box" engaged…Here are some tips on how to get noticed in a very crowded job market". Although there is a lack of systematic academic research on offensive content, evidence to date suggests it can have an adverse effect on PI (Chan and Yeung, 2016). Where newsjacking is perceived as opportunistic or trivializing grave matters, it could prove counterproductive, in terms of the effect on Ba and PI but also concerning potential shareability through social media. Marder et al. (2017) found that

controversial content, though appealing to the target market, was less likely to be shared on Facebook due to the existence of diverse audiences. Potential trade-offs between newsjacking gaining attention by being controversial and protecting long-term brand image warrants further research.

Conclusion

Overall, the research provides evidence that newsjacking is a useful weapon in content marketers' armory. At a point of time in which managers are confronted with an increasingly cluttered social media environment where savvy yet fatigued consumers disregard conventional message types, cut-through requires novelty. Newsjacking can achieve this. For content creators, news is something they really can use, but further research is required to fully comprehend the power and limitations of newsjacking.

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APPENDIX 1

Newsjacking and Non-topical Content

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TABLE 1

Sample Characteristics

Variable	Sample 1	Sample 2
	Newsjacking content	*Non-topical content*
Gender		
Male	51.6%	49.2%
Female	48.4%	50.8%
Age (years)		
<19	13.5%	11.1%
20-29	70.6%	73.8%
30-39	15.1%	12.7%
40-49	0.8%	2.4%
News Exposure*		
More than twice a day	37.3%	42.1%
Twice a day	22.2%	26.5%
Daily	23.0%	21.4%
Once every 2-3 days	11.9%	7.1%
Weekly	3.2%	2.4%
Less than weekly	2.4%	0.5%

* How often do you watch news or current affairs TV programs or look online at news websites?

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TABLE 2:

Multi-item Scale Descriptive Statistics

Construct / Items	*Newsjacking content*	*Non-topical content*
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
News Involvement (5-point Likert Scale)	3.21	3.22
Adapted from O'Cass and Choy (2008)		
I pay a lot of attention to news and current affairs (News1)	3.35 (1.12)	3.58 (1.04)
I think about news stories a lot (News2)	3.24 (1.17)	3.36 (1.14)
Keeping up with news and current affairs is important to me (News3)	3.14 (1.26)	3.03 (1.22)
Being knowledgeable about news and current affairs is central to my identity as a person (News4)	3.11 (1.27)	2.98 (1.23)
Product Involvement (5-point Likert Scale)	2.78	2.88
Adapted from O'Cass and Choy (2008)		
I like to engage in conversation about cars (Prod1)	2.93 (1.10)	3.04 (1.13)
I enjoy reading about cars (Prod2)	2.62 (1.20)	2.83 (1.20)
I think about cars a lot (Prod3)	2.75 (1.25)	2.84 (1.32)
I pay a lot of attention to cars (Prod4)	2.81 (1.23)	2.79 (1.36)
*Attitude to the content (AtC) (7-point Semantic Differential)**	.80	.12
Holbrook and Batra (1987)		
Dislike (-3) to Like (+3) (Ad1)	.88 (1.39)	.21 (1.45)
Unfavorable (-3) to Favorable (+3) (Ad2)	.74 (1.35)	.10 (1.38)
Negative (-3) to Positive (+3) (Ad3)	.74 (1.35)	.04 (1.38)
Bad (-3) to Good (+3) (Ad4)	.82 (1.44)	.11 (1.34)
*Brand Attitude (Ba) (7-point Semantic Differential)**	.84	.22
Leclerc et al. (1994)		
Bad (-3) to Good (+3) (Ba1)	.95 (1.27)	.52 (1.37)
Dislike (-3) to Like (+3) (Ba2)	.89 (1.27)	.20 (1.42)
Negative (-3) to Positive (+3) (Ba3)	.77 (1.27)	.17 (1.21)
Awful (-3) to Nice (+3) (Ba4)	1.02 (1.26)	.39 (1.40)
Unpleasant (-3) to Pleasant (+3) (Ba5)	.81 (1.37)	.17 (1.29)
Unattractive (-3) to Attractive (+3) (Ba6)	.90 (1.50)	.00 (1.52)
Disapprove (-3) to Approve (+3) (Ba7)	.56 (1.36)	.11 (1.44)
*Purchase Intention (PI) (7-point Semantic Differential)**	0.05	-0.47
Bruner (2009)		
Not Eager (-3) to Eager (+3) to check out the product because of this advertisement (PI1)	.46 (1.47)	-.08 (1.60)
Not intending (-3) to Intending (+3) to buy this product (PI2)	-.02 (1.60)	-.52 (1.62)
Not planning (-3) to Planning (+3) on buying this car (PI3)	-.29 (1.57)	-.82 (1.62)

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TABLE 3
Multi-group Confirmatory Factor Analysis with Factor Mean Differences

Variables	Sample 1 (Newsjacking, n = 126)		Sample 2[+] (Non-topical, n = 126)		Factor Mean Difference	
	Standardized Loadings (β)	S.E	Standardized Loadings (β)	S.E	$\bar{x}_{Sample1} - \bar{x}_{Sample2}$	Sig.
News Involvement (AVE; CR)	**(.74 ; .86)**		**(.74 ; .86)**		**-.04**	N.S
News1	0.88	.03	0.89	.02		
News2	0.92	.02	0.88	.03.		
News3	0.84	.04	0.93	.02		
News4	0.80	.04	0.91	.02		
Product Involvement (AVE; CR)	**(.78 ; .88)**		**(.78 ; .89)**		**-.06**	N.S
Prod1	0.86	.03	0.84	.03		
Prod2	0.86	.03	0.85	.03		
Prod3	0.88	.02	0.91	.02		
Prod4	0.93	.02	0.94	.02		
Attitude to the Content (AVE; CR)	**(.82 ; .90)**		**(.77 ; .87)**		**.54**	**
Aad1	0.92	.02	0.93	.02		
Aad2	0.94	.02	0.94	.02		
Aad3	0.86	.03	0.78	.04		
Aad4	0.89	.02	0.84	.03		
Brand Attitude (AVE; CR)	**(.70 ; .84)**		**(.69 ; .83)**		**.57**	**
Ba1	0.82	.03	0.83	.03		
Ba2	0.87	.03	0.91	.02		

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Ba3	0.81	.03	0.82	.03		
Ba4	0.83	.03	0.81	.03		
Ba5	0.83	.03	0.72	.05		
Ba6	0.87	.03	0.84	.03		
Ba7	0.82	.03	0.86	.03		
Purchase Intention (AVE; CR)	**(.81 ; .90)**		**(.84 ; .92)**		**.32**	**
PI1	0.84	.03	0.88	.02		
PI2	0.96	.03	0.96	.02		
PI3	0.90	.03	0.91	.02		

Key: *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$
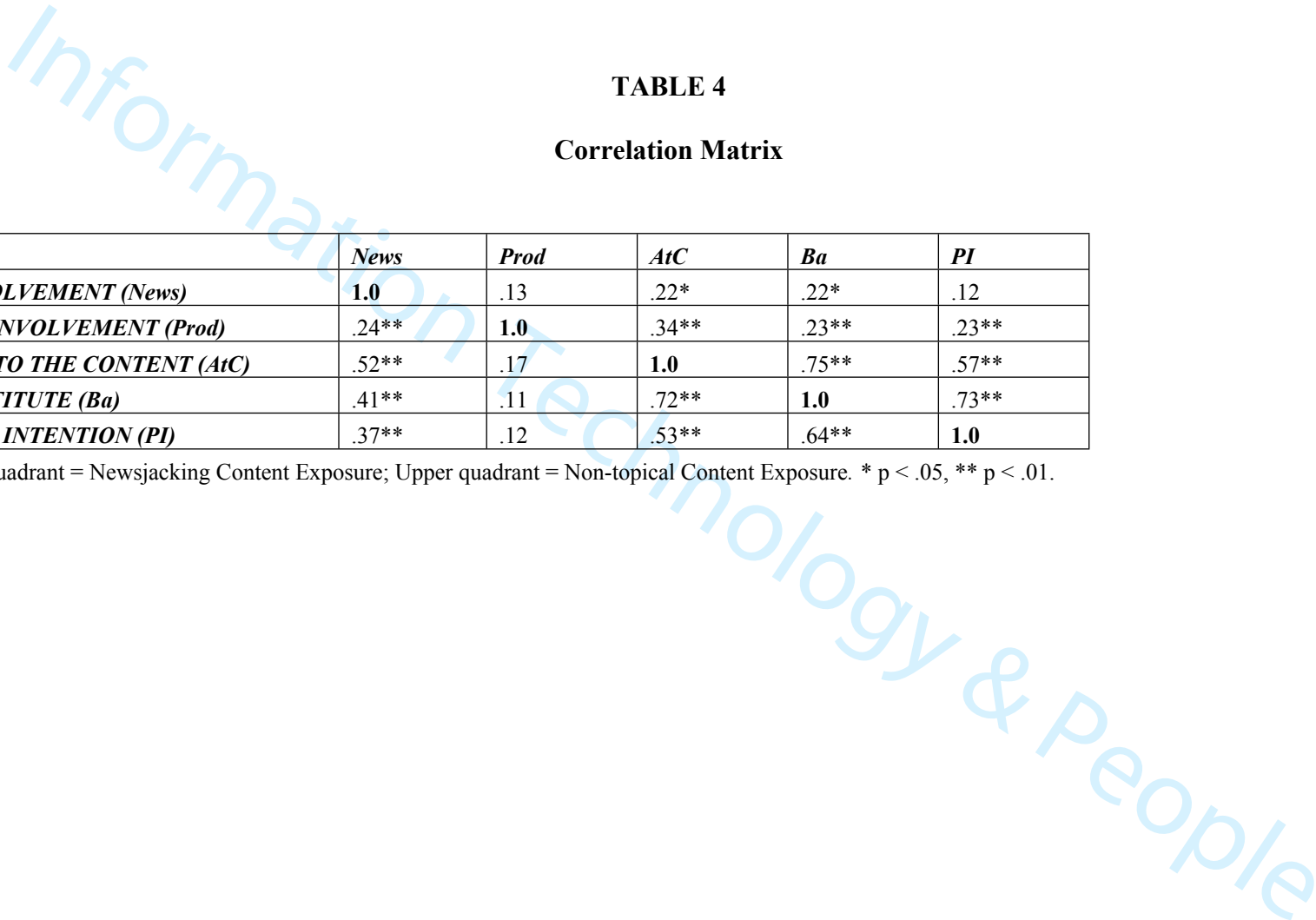
TABLE 4

Correlation Matrix

	News	*Prod*	*AtC*	*Ba*	*PI*
NEWS INVOLVEMENT (News)	**1.0**	.13	.22*	.22*	.12
PRODUCT INVOLVEMENT (Prod)	.24**	**1.0**	.34**	.23**	.23**
ATTITUTE TO THE CONTENT (AtC)	.52**	.17	**1.0**	.75**	.57**
BRAND ATTITUTE (Ba)	.41**	.11	.72**	**1.0**	.73**
PURCHASE INTENTION (PI)	.37**	.12	.53**	.64**	**1.0**

Note: Lower quadrant = Newsjacking Content Exposure; Upper quadrant = Non-topical Content Exposure. * p < .05, ** p < .01.

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TABLE 5

Multi-group SEM Results

Path	Newsjacking Ad Sample (n = 126) Coefficient (β)	Non-topical Ad Sample (n = 126) Coefficient (β)	Δ χ² (1 df)	Hypothesis (Accepted/Rejected)
News → AtC	.51 (.07)**	.20 (.09)*	4.84*	H2a (Accepted) H2b (Accepted)
Prod → AtC	.08 (.09)	.39 (.09)**	3.85*	H2c (Partially Accepted) H2d (Accepted)
AtC → Ba	.73 (.05)**	.76 (.05)**	0.38	
Ba → PI	.57 (.11)**	.70 (.10)**	0.83	
CONTROLS				
GENDER → AtC	.09 (.09)	.04 (.09)	-	-
GENDER → Ba	.02 (.07)	-.04 (.07)	-	-
GENDER → PI	-.22 (.07)**	-.05 (.07)	-	-
AGE → AtC	.02 (.08)	-.09 (.09)	-	-
AGE → Ba	.11 (.07)	.02 (.07)	-	-
AGE → PI	-.12 (.07)	-.06 (.06)	-	-
MODEL FIT STATISTICS χ² = 783.35, df = 482; CFI = .94; TLI = .94; RMSEA = .07				

Standardized coefficients **(β)** with standard errors in parentheses (S.E); ** Significant at the p<.01 level; * Significant at the p<.05 level.

6

News You Can Use! Evaluating the Effectiveness of Newsjacking Based Content on Social Media

Information Technology & People (ITP)

Comments to the Review Team

General

The research team would like to extend their gratitude to the editor and both reviewers. In particular we are thankful for the time taken by the review team to help us improve the manuscript. We found the comments challenging but extremely thought provoking and because of the nurturing and developmental way they were delivered, extremely motivating. We are of the opinion that the manuscript is far stronger as a direct consequence of your suggestions.

Below, we outline how we have addressed each comment made by the review team. Responses are made in RED font.

Reviewer: 1

- Thank you for the opportunity to read your interesting work. I think once the paper is improved, it will be a great piece for publication.

  Thank you for the time and effort you have put into our paper, as well as your supportive comments. We have worked to implement the suggestions you made, and feel that, as a result, the paper is now much improved in line with your expectations for publication.

- I reckon the research has been done a while ago. Therefore, the literature should be not only updated but also used in the paper.

  We have updated the literature review to ensure that it has a more contemporary flavour and, most importantly, is in keeping with the introduction. In particular we performed a systematic literature review and were able to identify one very important piece from 2018 as well as several other useful articles. In short, the literature review is now updated.

- The results are not engaged with Figure 1. Perhaps to create Figure 2 and show the results in it and later and explain the Figure 2 in the text can help with such clarity.

  This point is gratefully received. We fully agree with you. Having given this some thought we have decided to rely on the research tables as these provide a clearer view of what we have actually done. We have also bolstered the analytical strategy section so there should be no doubt in this regard. In this sense, we believe that the disconnect

you mention is no longer a problem and this is a simpler and more streamlined way of presenting the results.

- Conclusion should be edited. At the moment it is written for the sake of it.

  Thank you for this point and we revised the conclusion to provide a more concise and illustrative summary of the paper. It now reads:

  Overall, the research provides evidence that newsjacking is a useful weapon in content marketers' armory. At a point of time in which managers are confronted with an increasingly cluttered social media environment where savvy yet fatigued consumers disregard conventional message types, cut-through requires novelty. Newsjacking can achieve this. For content creators, news is something they really can use, but further research is required to fully comprehend the power and limitations of newsjacking.

Additional Questions:

Originality: Does the paper contain new and significant information adequate to justify publication?:

- Interesting read, original work, exciting introduction.
  Thank you for the kind and supportive words.

- Page 4 last paragraph, if 'Though newsjacking is not a new phenomenon', then the statement 'this study represents the first academic assessment of newsjacking' should be explained in a clearer way.

  Thank you for highlighting this issue. The writing was not clear. That section now reads as follows:

  Whilst newsjacking can be leveraged using a wide range of media, its application is ubiquitous with enhancements in technology and, in particular, the use of social media.

  Practical applications of newsjacking are becoming more common, with proponents arguing that by interlinking content with topical news stories in real time scenarios, content marketers have the potential to create more interesting and rewarding messages for recipients to decode (Hunter and Burkhart, 2013; Scott, 2011). However, newsjacking and, in particular, the effectiveness of its application has received scant academic attention.

  To demonstrate this the authors undertook a systematic literature review to check for prior research in the area (as discussed above).

Relationship to Literature: Does the paper demonstrate an adequate understanding of the relevant literature in the field and cite an appropriate range of literature sources? Is any significant work ignored?:

- It is unclear how the research questions have been created. They should be clearly stated in the introduction too.

Thank you for this point. The revised version makes it much clearer that we have taken an *audience-based* perspective. That is, using the Elaboration Likelihood Model to establish how motivation and ability in the audience itself may explain the differential success in newsjacking. This takes a divergent route as compared to Willemsen *et al.* (2018), who looked at the phenomenon from a sharing behavior perspective. As recommended, we have also included and outline the research questions in the introduction.

- Although the paper has some updated literature references there and here in the beginning of the paper, it is clear the updated literature was not really used in the paper, e.g. they are not even mentioned when hypotheses were created, let alone actually using them. The literature review should be expanded not only by the sources for the hypotheses creation but also with broader understanding of the topic.

We have done this in the revision. Although we draw predominantly on the ELM in the theorizing portion, updated literature is used in terms of background information and positioning of the research. For example, this extract represents a rewritten section of the literature review:

One widely applied theory which has great potential for explaining why some forms of communication are more persuasive and, thus effective, compared to others is the ELM, which is a dual-process theory of attitude development and adjustment (Petty et al., 1983; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Angst and Agarwal, 2009). Akin to other dual process theories of persuasion (Xu, 2017), the ELM stresses that attitudinal change depends on the audience and context in which a message is delivered, a feature we argue is also central to the success of newsjacking. The ELM has been used to understand the effectiveness (i.e. attitude change) of, for instance, the deployment of more (versus less) attractive models in advertising (Trampe et al., 2010), crowdfunding appeals (Allison et al., 2017), electronic word of mouth in determining hotel bookings (Leong et al., 2019) and environmental cues in green advertising (Fernando et al., 2016), and remains the most cited model of persuasion in advertising (Kerr et al., 2015).

- Page 6, line 31: what paper? unclear. If it is your paper, this paragraph should be explained in more detail and expanded.

We have edited this sentence to more clearly express our point. It now reads:

Since the highly influential work of Hovland et al. (1953), researchers have sought to explain variations in the ability of different message appeals to persuade people to respond more favorably (cognitively, affectively and behaviorally) to advertising (Kim et al., 2014) and, more recently, social media content (Colliander and Marder, 2018).

Methodology: Is the paper's argument built on an appropriate base of theory, concepts or other ideas? Has the research or equivalent intellectual work on which the paper is based been well designed? Are the methods employed appropriate?:

- Solid section.
  Thank you for the kind words – we appreciate them.

- 'Consumer responses to newsjacking messages were investigated using a quasi-experimental between-subjects research design'. Justification is needed.
  We agree with this point and refer to the experiment as follows:

  "Consumer responses to newsjacking messages were investigated using a between-subjects 2 (newsjacking vs non-topical content) X 1 experiment."

  The design of the experiment links specifically to the hypotheses tested and this is explained and justified in the remaining paragraphs of this section.

Results: Are results presented clearly and analysed appropriately? Do the conclusions adequately tie together the other elements of the paper?:

- Interesting results, however, the discussion should be based on more updated literature.
  Thanks for this comment: we have addressed this with the discussion relating to more contemporary literature included in earlier section of the manuscript.
- The results should be linked to Figure 1. Perhaps Figure 1 should be developed to Figure 2 where the results could be demonstrated.
  As mentioned earlier, we opted to display results in tables rather than figures to avoid this issue. We think it works better now (as do several people asked to provide a soft review), so thank you for pointing out the issue.

Practicality and/or Research implications: Does the paper identify clearly any implications for practice and/or further research? Are these implications consistent with the findings and conclusions of the paper?:

- Good section.
  Thank you.
- Conclusion section should be edited and explained more.
  Thank you – as before, this has been edited.

Quality of Communication: Does the paper clearly express its case, measured against the technical language of the fields and the expected knowledge of the journal's readership? Is the length of the paper appropriate? Has attention been paid to the clarity of expression and readability, such as sentence structure, jargon use, acronyms, etc:

- The paper is clearly communicated.
  Thank you once again for all your efforts in helping us improve the manuscript. We are extremely grateful and found your method of reviewing extremely helpful and motivating.

Reviewer: 2

Comments:
The paper looks at effectiveness of news-jacking on consumer responses. The study test hypotheses related to the effectiveness of newsjacking for product and news involvement using a quasi-experimental study.

- The paper tackles an interesting social media phenomena, that is increasingly being used by marketers for advertisement. The paper is written well and logically progresses. However the papers needs much improvement in three areas: motivation of research, literature review and implications.

   Thank you for your thoughtful and supportive comments. We really appreciate the suggestions you have made and are glad that you are positive about the manuscript. As you will see, we have taken care to improve the paper in line with your propositions and, in particular, the three areas that you outline so clearly for us.

- The motivation of the research is presented, however without identifying any gap clearly. Which links to literature review. There is no section on newsjacking, other than what's included in introduction. The author needs to a section on newsjacking research, before going straight into ELM discussion.

   We took this point fully on board. In the revision we motivate the research (via the the introduction) by providing a systematic literature review and using the (only) related paper identified as a springboard for our research. We also include an entire section on newsjacking from a background / conceptual vantage point.

- The claim that is in an understudied area and no-one has looked at the effectiveness of newsjacking is ill founded as no justification of that claim is not presented. I recommend that the authors provide a summary literature table, highlighting what's already known and identifying the gap areas clearly.

   You are, of course, correct. Your suggestion (in keeping with suggestions made by R1) to revisit the literature and demonstrate these claims in a more thorough manner was very useful as we now have validated fully the lack of prior research and also identified an additional study to build upon (i.e. Willemsen et al. 2018). We also believe that the introduction is now much stronger for your suggestions, so thank you.

- The paper uses ELM theory to test their hypotheses. Further justification is required in terms of the choice of the theory, what could be other candidates and why choose this one. They should also cite some references to support their choice based on similar other studies.

   Thank you for this suggestion – the revised version makes a much clearer case for the choice of ELM. This has necessitated grounding the study as an *audience* perspective where the focus is on motivation and ability to process the content (in this case differentially between the newsjacking and non-topical stimuli). The revised version explains that ELM is pertinent in terms of its ability to explain changes in attitudes

(Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), which forms the basis of the metrics used to measure effectiveness in our study. This makes the ELM the most suitable psychological theory to explain the effects we observe in our study.

- The quasi experimental method is appropriate, though the convenience sample used were students. The guidance to use students in experiments need to be followed through justification as to why they are appropriate. More needs to be included on how they were recruited.

We apologise this was not well articulated in the original manuscript. A general sample (all social media users selected from a street level intercept data collection) was collected for the main study, but we used students for the pre-study when generating the materials. More information has now been supplied in this regard so that the reader can clearly follow the processes:

"In choosing an appropriate stimulus for the second variant of the questionnaire, we conducted a workshop with postgraduate students. Students are commonly used to examine social media phenomenon due to their high levels of technology adoption and usage (Fogel and Nehmad, 2009; Kim et al., 2014). Students were electronically provided with the newsjacking content ("Beef: with lots of horses hidden in it") as well as seven non-topical versions, identical in all regards apart from different taglines that were used in the Mini Roadster campaign."

- The paper identifies further research. However they claim this to be a research agenda and a contribution in itself. Usually contribution of an empirical study is to theory, rather than a research agenda (which is usually for a literature review paper). I would welcome the authors to connect their findings to research gap and identify their theoretical contribution. This is probably better labelled as future research.

Thank you for welcoming us to improve our theoretical contribution discussion and better present our future research section. We have revised this accordingly and dropped any discussion of the agenda being a contribution in itself. The revised version specifically links our findings to research gaps and theory building. As suggested, this is labelled future research.

- Practice contributions are included in discussion. Perhaps re-arranging these into implications for research and practice might be a safer option. This also means that their need to re-visit their contributions section.

We appreciate this point as this improves the readability of the paper; we have made the change as you request.

- Overall, the paper will benefit from an edit. Avoid using double adjectives (or emotive words). Avoid repetition.

The paper has been proof read prior to submission.

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Additional Questions:

1. Originality: Does the paper contain new and significant information adequate to justify publication?: The paper is in an area that is understudied in IS, though more popular in marketing literature.

The paper does seem to make new contribution, adequate enough to justify publication.

Once again, thank you.

2. Relationship to Literature: Does the paper demonstrate an adequate understanding of the relevant literature in the field and cite an appropriate range of literature sources? Is any significant work ignored?:

- The references included shows an engagement with relevant literature. However the presentation of that knowledge needs much improved. Claims have been made that is understudied, but the justification of that claim is not presented. I recommend that the authors provide a summary literature table, highlighting what's already known and identifying the gap areas clearly.

  As previously mentioned, we found that an appropriate strategy, given the lack of research in this domain (not enough to justify a bespoke table), was to perform a systematic review of the literature and present the results.

3. Methodology: Is the paper's argument built on an appropriate base of theory, concepts or other ideas? Has the research or equivalent intellectual work on which the paper is based been well designed? Are the methods employed appropriate?:

- The paper uses ELM theory to test their hypotheses. Further justification is required in terms of the choice of the theory, what could be other candidates and why choose this one. They should also cite some references to support their choice based on similar other studies.

  Please refer to the earlier response that deals with this comment.

4. Results: Are results presented clearly and analysed appropriately? Do the conclusions adequately tie together the other elements of the paper?:

- Yes, the data analysis leads to test the hypotheses were found to be supported. The analysis is presented well.

  Thank you for your kind words.

5. Practicality and/or Research implications: Does the paper identify clearly any implications for practice and/or further research? Are these implications consistent with the findings and conclusions of the paper?:

- The paper identifies further research. However they claim this to be a research agenda and a contribution in itself. Usually contribution of an empirical study is to theory, rather than a research agenda (which is usually for a literature review paper). I would

welcome the authors to connect their findings to research gap and identify their theoretical contribution. This is probably better labelled as future research.

- Practice contributions are included in discussion.

Please refer to the earlier response that deals with both these comments.

6. Quality of Communication: Does the paper clearly express its case, measured against the technical language of the fields and the expected knowledge of the journal's readership? Is the length of the paper appropriate? Has attention been paid to the clarity of expression and readability, such as sentence structure, jargon use, acronyms, etc:

- The paper is structured well.

Thank you

The research team would sincerely like to thank reviewer two for their insightful comments. We found these helped to improve the manuscript and were structured in a way that motivated us to respond to the fullest. Thank you.

Additional references

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