



The Influence of Written Composition on Audience Perceptions of Social Media Posts Surrounding the Wild Horse and Burro Controversy Jamie DeConcini

A content analysis was performed on 136 Facebook posts from six organizations communicating about the wild horse and burro controversy and 8,295 accompanying audience comments. The posts and comments were inductively coded by the researcher using framing as the framework (Scheufele, 1999) to reveal the influence of organization's compositional differences on the audience's perception of and communication about the Facebook post.

Key Findings:

1. Organization's Posts

The six organization's posts varied in frequency, length, topic, and opinion of management practices. Organization's posts which provided all necessary detail in the post, instead of relying on external links, resulted in more focused and emotionally positive response from the audience.

2. Audience Discussion of the Issue

Audience comments were categorized in four subthemes: action-oriented responses, emotional responses, government responses, and management-related responses. These subthemes provide a broad summary of the audience's discussion of and reaction to the Facebook posts.

3. Organization-Audience Interaction

Each organization examined interacted with its audience in the comment section. This opportunity, which did not exist in more traditional forms of media, surfaces a new dimension of framing where the media has

the opportunity to discuss and clarify their frame with the audience between posts.

4. Commenter Demographics

Of the comments examined, 88.89% were posted by females, while only 44% of all Facebook users are female (Clement, 2020). The animal rights topic, in which women consistently play a central role (Kruse, 1999), may explain this finding.

5. Misinformation Concerns

The presence of misinformation concerns support findings (Pratley, 2018; Roberts et al., 2016) that misinformation is not limited to purely political discussions, but can also extend to a variety of industries, including agriculture

Recommendations for Practice:

- Organizations should supply as much information as is necessary directly on the social media platform instead of relying on the audience to follow external links.
- Organizational requests for audience action should communicate a low perceived-cost of participation to the audience to help to transition audience members away from slacktivism and into activism.
- Organizations should consider the frequency of posts, especially those requesting audience action. Posts should be frequent enough to keep the audience interested and engaged, but not so frequently that the audience becomes overwhelmed and withdraws interest.

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