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## **Friend-Zone With Benefits: The Parasocial Advertising of Kim Kardashian**

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The University of Southern Mississippi

FRIEND-ZONE WITH BENEFITS

THE PARASOCIAL ADVERTISING OF KIM KARDASHIAN

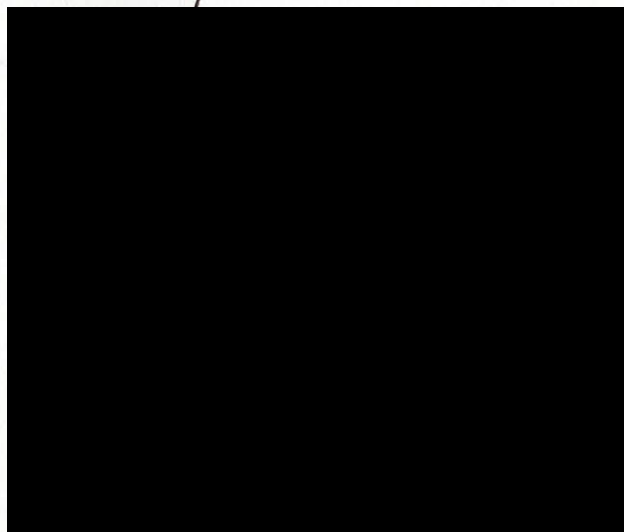
by

Jennifer Anette Lueck

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate School  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts

Approved:



Dean of the Graduate School

May 2012

## ABSTRACT

### FRIEND-ZONE WITH BENEFITS

#### THE PARASOCIAL ADVERTISING OF KIM KARDASHIAN

by Jennifer Anette Lueck

May 2012

This research focuses on the social media-driven convention of advertising, and seeks to analyze the type of communication that occurs between celebrity endorsers and audiences within social media. Kim Kardashian is used as the most current and successful celebrity endorser. A content analysis, including posts and responses from April and May 2011, is used to analyze the type of advertising messages and celebrity/audience interaction. The goal of the study is to establish whether Parasocial Interaction could improve the effectiveness of advertising.

Due to findings that yielded a high amount of endorsements embedded into personal stories, as well as female approval for those posts, it can be stated that Parasocial Interaction takes place between Kim Kardashian and audiences. It can also be considered as an advertising vehicle in terms of positive audience feedback. The results imply that advertisers should utilize Parasocial Interaction in order to conduct successful advertising.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The study is conducted in order to investigate possible new interactions between celebrity-fan behavior and advertising. Relevance is based on the emerging trends of social communication, high popularity of celebrity-fan interaction via social networks and the rise of celebrity endorsements. The study seeks to find potential new advertising techniques that allow deeper, personal connections with consumers in favorable easy-to-access social environments. Its exploratory nature is a consequence of the meager number of search results in online databases (Ebscohost and Mass Media Complete) and search engines (Google Scholar) of studies that connect the (advertising-based) successes of celebrity endorsers and the social implications of these successes. Therefore, this research provides the opportunity to re-establish the dynamics of celebrity endorsement in newly developed and highly mediated social environments.

For this research, the previous successes of a celebrity endorser as reality television star have been found to be crucial elements in the attachments of a fan to the celebrity – even during the off-season of the celebrity's show. Additionally, social media's tweets and posts together with the shrinking level of time and patience have reduced the audience's capacity to read and infer to a minimum level, which adds to the high popularity of short and direct messages from favorable celebrities through mass media. A fan of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* is no longer restricted to the airing dates and therefore no longer has to free up valuable time and seek a TV. What was introduced with the VCR player in a bygone era has now become the shift to 24/7, infinitely updated tweets and posts from limitless sources, easily accessible with a mobile

phone at hand. However, the question arises as to why former fans of reality television literally follow their favorite celebrities and how they engage with them online. This study seeks to analyze what underlying patterns keep the one-sided communication between celebrity and fan alive and create possible market value. In order to make inferences in the field of advertising, the current communication environment of Kim Kardashian to fans on Facebook is analyzed. The theory of Parasocial Interaction offers a valuable basis for the study of this phenomenon, because it classifies communication between celebrities and fans as imitation of closeness and friendship, which makes faithful fanship with a high market value possible. Since Kim Kardashian is a female celebrity endorser, this study further examines the special relationship between female endorsers and female audiences in regards to Parasocial Interaction.



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Celebrity/Audience Interaction and Social Media

Social media has become an interesting field of research in recent years due to its interactive nature, which comprises different dynamics than the traditional stimulus response model. Instead of influencing a target audience with a one-dimensional message from the sender, social media allow for each participant to create and re-create messages. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as follows: “[Social media are] a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (p. 61).

The many forms of social media platforms include online information sharing and social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace, and Friendster, websites that are based on the sharing of creativity and other projects like YouTube and Flickr, collaborative reference websites like Wikipedia, as well as microblogging platforms like Twitter (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Forrester Research reports that 55.6 million U.S. adults have visited social networking sites at least monthly in 2009, which shows an increase of 18% from the previous year. Additionally, Nielsen Research has found that Americans spend nearly 25% of their time on social networking sites. While Twitter has at least 100 million user accounts, Facebook has more than 500 million active users worldwide (Campbell, 2010).

Due to those special interactive characteristics, social media have become a popular tool for marketers and celebrity endorsers. The Nielsen Online Report (2009) showed that in 2009, social networking sites had already outpaced e-mail as the most

popular online activity, which motivated marketers to rethink the transferal of traditional advertising into Web 2.0 environments and plan new approaches for effective online advertising on social networking sites. Since social networking platforms allow the building of strong relationships with consumers, they are now considered a hybrid component of integrated marketing communications (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The Interactive Advertising Bureau noticed this trend in 2009 and categorized the advertising on social networking sites as effective due to the taking place of engagement, commenting, liking of posts and other social connections. The United States online social network ad spending is projected to reach 2.6 billion in 2012 (Williamson, 2008).

The basis of the success of fan pages on Twitter and Facebook is the ability to connect with like-minded people who share the interest in the same celebrity (Moran & Gossieaux, 2010), which leads to the transfer of celebrity/audience relationships to a more closely connected and fast-paced platform online. With new technologies like smartphones, audiences can now add their favorite reality television stars on social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook and follow them constantly. Instead of returning at a specific time in order to consume a reality television show, audiences now follow the lives of their favorite stars by reading their tweets or posts throughout the day and taking part in conversations on social networking sites. CEO of Adly, Inc., Arnie Gullov-Singh correctly states: "If people are the new publishers, then people are also the future of advertising, and celebrities are the new 'prime time'" (Thomas, 2011, paragraph 5). Reality television stars-turned-entrepreneur like Christian Siriano, Jillian Michaels, and Lauren Conrad have recognized the promising dynamics of social media and benefit from new possibilities. With the successful recognition from the reality television show,

Lauren Conrad states:

A good number of companies first approached me to sponsor their brands while I was on [the MTV reality television show] Laguna Beach [...] Most deals today require Twitter, Facebook and other forms of digital outreach [...] because larger followings and stronger connections with your market translate to a greater scope of influence, adding immeasurable value to your brand. (Forbes Online, 2011, paragraphs 1 & 3).

Mixing aspects of mass communication and interpersonal communication, celebrities naturally turn into opinion leaders when tweeting or posting about lifestyle brands and entertainment locations that they are surrounded with (McClelland, 2011).

Brand Affinity Technologies conducted a study and found that endorsed messages on Facebook and Twitter are 50% more effective in cost-per-action than Facebook and Twitter ads which did not feature celebrities. Additionally, click-through rates are 21 times higher for endorsed Facebook messages over non-endorsed counterparts (TechJournal South, 2011). Another study by Nielsen Research concludes that 64% of adult internet users in the U.S. who follow a celebrity on Twitter also follow a brand, “[...] which means the celebrity follower is four times more likely to follow a brand than the average U.S. adult online” (Kramer, 2011, paragraph 3).

For this reason, it is not surprising that “[...] an active social-media profile has become one of the most important deal-points for brands, talent agents and even PR agencies to consider when negotiating contracts [with celebrity endorsers]” (Hampp, 2011, p. 76).

## Reality Television and Branding

Reality television is considered “big business” (Goudreau, 2010, paragraph 24) and a profitable tool, as Bill Rancic, entrepreneur and winner of the first season of NBC’s *The Apprentice*, states. Rancic is one of many reality television stars that have used their popularity to their advantage. The unique mixture of having personality, talent, credibility, and business sense has also led Christian Siriano, the winner of *Project Runway*’s season four, to success. After only two years, Siriano was sponsored by companies like LG and Sprint to take part in the New York Fashion week, he sold his Fall 2009 collection to Saks Fifth Avenue, created a shoe line and handbags for Payless, a make up line for Victoria’s Secret, and a clothing collection for Puma. Commenting on Siriano’s successes, Adam Kluger, former E! News producer, states: “You have to have something that people want” (Goudreau, 2010, paragraph 15).

Jillian Michaels, who starred in NBC’s weight-loss reality series *The Biggest Loser*, also came to the realization that successful celebrity entrepreneurs need to recognize their market. With workout DVDs, fitness-based videogames and books, exercise equipment, diet pills, and protein powders, Michaels increased her retail sales from \$20 million to over \$100 million in just two years (Goudreau, 2010).

However, Kim Kardashian stands out amongst the examples of reality television stars-turned-entrepreneurs due to her high amount of followers on social networking sites, currently six million likes on Facebook, and high amount of endorsements. Additionally, it is unproblematic to extract the phenomenon of the successes of Kim Kardashian from other possible success areas like those of acting or musical achievements, for example.

After *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* first aired in 2007, Kim Kardashian quickly transformed her notoriety into a strong business brand, stating: “The show is the reason we have the brands. The show started it all [...] It’s our best commercial” (Goudreau, 2010, paragraph 2). Since the show mostly attracts women from 18 to 34 years (Ng, 2011), Kim Kardashian responded to her audience’s demands with workout DVDs, fragrance lines, a shoe website and also expanded her endorsements for clothing lines like Bebe, diet products like Quick Trim and skincare like PerfectSkin (Goudreau, 2010). Quicktrim, a weight loss product endorsed by Kim Kardashian, earned approximately 45 million dollars in 2010 (Pathak, 2011).

Brand Keys, a New York research company that monitors consumer perception of brands, ranked Kim Kardashian at the top of its celebrity loyalty index. Acknowledging the phenomenon surrounding herself, Kim Kardashian states: “I really do believe I am a brand for my fans [...] Twitter is the most amazing focus group out there” (Wilson, 2010, p. 1). A branding empire under the direction of mother Kris Jenner, who married athlete and former Olympic champion Bruce Jenner after divorcing lawyer Robert Kardashian in 1990, helps give Kim Kardashian a positive image amongst consumers. The 56-year-old Kris Jenner, who is both manager of Kim Kardashian and executive producer of the Kardashian reality television shows, acts as CMO of the Kardashian brand. Kris Kardashian states in regards to her children: “They’re a lifestyle brand [...] People love looking at the growth of a brand. I gave birth to six kids, now I’m giving birth to this” (Pathak, 2011, p. 32). An indicator for the business power behind the Kardashian name, Kris Jenner publicly advised Kim Kardashian not to change her name after receiving her proposal from basketball star Kris Humphries, stating: “She needs to be Kim Kardashian

because she's worked so hard to get where she is" (Goudreau, 2011, paragraph 2). Since the Kardashians have what every brand should have, a target audience that has a need and an image that satisfies this need best, marketers believe that the Kardashian brand will stay alive: "Better that half of them love you and half of them hate you than everyone think you are nice" (Kalb, 2011, paragraph 6). Kris Jenner has created a brand together with her daughters Kim, Khloé, and Kourtney that brought in 65 million dollars in the year 2010 (Kalb, 2011, paragraph 1).

In order to analyze the strong relationships between celebrity endorser Kim Kardashian and audiences on Facebook, it is necessary to provide an outlook on the starting point of her career: reality television.

Hill (2005) suggests that one major success factor of reality television might be based on the human instinct of voyeurism. Baruh (2009) adds that the psychological appeal including voyeurism and exhibitionism is positively connected to the audience's approach and consumption of reality television. Since voyeurism is a term that is easily confused with sexual connotations, Metzler (2004) clarifies that in the context of reality television, voyeurism can be defined as the pleasure of accessing private details of the lives of others. Deery (2004) further explains that reality television promises and delivers a "thrill of seeing something intimate and [doing] so remotely and without accountability" (Baruh, 2009, p. 192).

Researchers state that the success of reality television shows leads to a cultural obsession with reality television celebrities. Within this context, Schickel (1985) argues that "[f]rom sports figures to actors/actresses, musical artists and entertainers, audiences feel that they personally know these famous personalities and often develop an 'illusion

of intimacy' with them" (as cited in Choi & Rifon, 2007, p. 304). Since Kim Kardashian's Twitter income of approximately \$10,000 per tweet is based on a credible image presented to her 5.6 million followers, social networking celebrity endorsers admit that they are selective about choosing endorsements that constantly create and maintain image (Grover, 2011). While Facebook guidelines allow the promotion of brands only on fan pages of celebrities and not on user pages, celebrity endorsers often imitate the regular uses of Facebook in order to post about their activities, emotions, and other events. Once a high amount of followers leads to a strong image and market value, celebrities conduct endorsements similar to the well-known and traditional celebrity endorsement; however, Facebook allows for a more subtle, micro-level endorsement that creates more reach for advertisers. Based on social and intimate contexts sought out by fans, the celebrity posts about their favorite make-up or restaurant without limitations of intimate framing strategies that heighten the level of credibility (Heine, 2010).

#### Parasocial Interaction and Female Audiences

The theory of Parasocial Interaction was introduced by Horton and Wohl (1956) and was defined by both researchers as "simulacrum of conversational give and take" between senders and receivers of mass media messages.

Horton and Strauss (1957) subsequently clarified that Parasocial Interaction is "immediate, personal, and reciprocal, but these qualities are illusory and presumably not shared by the speaker" (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2010, p. 1104).

The Parasocial Interaction theory focuses on the way audiences interact, relate to and develop relationships with a celebrity. Audiences create a strong bond and intimacy with a celebrity while, for example, viewing a reality television show. This type of social

interaction is one-sided and mediated, hence the term Parasocial Interaction (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2010). Another attribute of Parasocial Interaction is that one side knows a great deal about the other while the other does not (Gourdreau, 2010). While studying audience-celebrity interaction, it has been found that social attraction to a celebrity is a more important attribute within Parasocial Interaction than physical attraction (Rubin & McHugh, 1987) and that audiences often seek a celebrity that resembles similar attitudes, appearances and backgrounds (Turner, 1993).

Even though Parasocial Interaction is one-sided, it can create the illusory effect of actual social behavior and relationships. Gleich (1997) has found that Parasocial Interaction can be active to some degree and has behavioral dimensions. This finding is supported by affective responses of audiences to a celebrity in negative situations. Some audience members even have strong feelings like embarrassment when their idol makes a mistake. These emotional and behavioral dimensions are similar to those regarding actual social relationships (Kassing & Sanderson, 2009).

Kassing and Sanderson (2009) found that Parasocial Interaction seems to be evolving with the rise of social interactive media. Parasocial Relationships take place on social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook, where audiences feel closer to the celebrity. It has yet to be analyzed whether Parasocial Interaction can be considered as an advertising vehicle. Cues that help determine which target-audience gender is likely to respond to Parasocial Interaction can be found in current studies of the brain.

A basic principle states, "boys like things and girls like people." This fascination with other human beings begins in the infant stages; female infants sustain eye contact with adults approximately twice as long as male infants. At four months, female infants



can distinguish facial features and distinguish between photos of people they know versus photos of strangers. Male infants are not able to do so at this infant stage (“FemmeDen,” 2008).

Even though women and men have the same amount of brain cells, a male brain is about 9% bigger than a female brain, suggesting that the female brain is more tightly packed due to a different brain structure (“FemmeDen,” 2008). Women seem to use both hemispheres of the brain together, leading them to seeing the whole picture, including logical and emotional connotations. The fact that it is more difficult for females to give a quick answer to a logical question shows that they are unlikely to use only one hemisphere at the time to process stimuli, as opposed to males. Since women are more interested in the whole picture of an issue, including details from varied sources, and often form their opinion on a product based on the entire service and points of contact they have experienced with a brand, Parasocial Interaction with female audiences could be a successful advertising vehicle due to its holistic approach to a specific product or individual and appeal to the female brain structure. These facts can help determine the dynamics between celebrity endorsers who target specific audiences.

Instead of conducting surveys among audiences, this research examines direct behavior reflected in the online interaction between celebrity endorsers and audiences on Facebook. Since Parasocial Interaction is often subconscious and intangible, survey results might be flawed due to sensitive questions. With the analysis of Facebook posts by Kim Kardashian and responses by audiences, this research seeks to detect Parasocial relations where it is most visible – social networking environments.

## Research Questions

Based on the reality television star-turned-entrepreneur characteristics of Kim Kardashian's career, the use of Facebook to communicate with audiences translates into the advertising of brands to a specific market, which is mainly attractive to females. For this research, the actual sales of products created or endorsed by Kim Kardashian are not the focus; rather, it is the valuable image and social status that can be considered as advertising vehicle. The research captures the self-endorsement of Kim Kardashian, since she is considered a brand herself, third-party endorsements by Kim Kardashian, as well as third-party advertisement placed in her communication environment by others.

Since Kim Kardashian's income per tweet can reach up to \$10,000, this research is intended to highlight the dynamics that take place during celebrity-audience interaction as the basis for the high popularity and success of Kim Kardashian. In this context, the Parasocial Interaction Theory, suggesting that audiences create a strong social and intimate bond with their favorite celebrities even though communication is one-sided and mediated, can be helpful to determine the dynamics between Kim Kardashian and, especially, female audiences. For this specific research, the online social platform Facebook was chosen due to its high popularity (500 million active users worldwide versus 100 million user accounts on Twitter) and its structure of posts and responses, which simplifies the process of analyzing interaction online. On the basis of the discussion provided above, the following research questions were proposed:

RQ1: In what ways does Kim Kardashian communicate with audiences through posts on Facebook?

This research question focuses on the frame of the Facebook post created by Kim Kardashian and analyzes the main theme and reason of the post, as well as the post format (i.e. benefit/promise, information, question, command, other) and also distinguishes the use of additional media within the post.

RQ2: How are advertising messages such as celebrity endorsements and product placements embedded in the Facebook posts of Kim Kardashian?

In order to determine whether celebrity endorsers like Kim Kardashian embed the advertising of endorsed products into socially significant frames and personal stories, this research question is intended to analyze the types of products and brands advertised within the post, as well as identifying the advertising strategy (i.e. product is embedded into personal story, call for action, etc.).

Furthermore, this research question includes the analysis of the ways in which Kim Kardashian addresses her audiences on Facebook (personal versus non-personal).

RQ3: In what ways do audiences respond to Kim Kardashian's posts on Facebook?

By analyzing the ways in which audiences respond to Kim Kardashian's Facebook posts, one can distinguish positive responses from negative responses, as well as female from male responses. The goal of this research question is to establish whether Parasocial Interaction takes place. Do audiences express admiration and approval? Do audiences interact with Kim Kardashian as if she was an actual real-life friend and give advice and personal anecdotes in accordance to her posts? Or can Parasocial Interaction also turn into a negative interaction, just as in real life, and result in the expression of disapproval towards Kim Kardashian? After all, analyzing the type of audience

responses is highly important because Kim Kardashian does not once again interact with her audiences after the initial post. Therefore, the dynamics that motivate audiences to express the above-mentioned type of responses, even though the audience should know that it is highly unlikely for Kim Kardashian to respond or even read their commentary, need to be examined.

RQ4: Does Parasocial Interaction take place on Kim Kardashian's Facebook wall? (Qualitative)

RQ5: Can Parasocial Interaction be considered as an advertising vehicle on Facebook? (Qualitative)

Both qualitative research questions are based on the author's overall impression of Facebook discourse of Kim Kardashian and audiences, as well as the number of likes and the number of responses to specific posts. Since this initial research is rather new and unexplored with research variables that are created and adapted throughout the study, it is important to include qualitative research questions that allow for the examination of nuances that might not be captured with solely quantitative research questions.

Additionally, qualitative research questions could possibly enable the discovery of further complexities of this research, which could shed light on new possible ways of conducting research in this particular field of study.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Sample

The population of the study includes all fan pages of celebrity endorsers with a reality television background on Facebook. For this study, Kim Kardashian's Facebook fan page is chosen due to her current status as reality television star and celebrity endorser. Forbes.com included Kim Kardashian in their article called "Reality TV Stars Turned Entrepreneurs" in 2010 and acknowledged that she has turned her notoriety into a strong business brand (Goudreau, 2010). Of paramount importance to the study, Kim Kardashian is an appropriate target of analysis because other success factors that could stem from fields other than reality television can be eliminated. For this study, the unit of analysis is one Facebook post by or in Kim Kardashian's name, including its responses. The technique of convenience sampling yields a sample within the time frame of April 1, 2011 until May 31, 2011.

During this time period, no reality television series starring Kim Kardashian aired. *Kourtney and Kim Take New York* aired its last season on April 3, 2011 and *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* started airing its sixth season on June 12, 2011. The time period, which was randomly chosen, proved to be convenient due to the fact that celebrity/audience interaction still took place even without current airing of the reality television shows revolving around Kim Kardashian. Kim Kardashian therefore had to engage her audience in subject matter other than her reality television shows to keep her fans interested in her personae and Facebook page. On May 25, 2011, Kim Kardashian announced her engagement to Kris Humphries via Facebook post. On June 2, 2011, Kim

Kardashian posted that season six of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, starting on June 12, 2011, will feature the proposal as well as her wedding ceremony. Kim Kardashian and Kris Humphries were married on August 20, 2011.

The sample includes a total of 175 posts (87 posts in April 2011 and 88 posts in May 2011) with response rates ranging from 76 to 3,311 responses per post. In order to produce a random and systematic sampling of the responses, as well as creating a representative and practical sampling frame, each post's responses are mathematically partitioned to produce at least 25 responses to be analyzed. Therefore, a total of 4,375 responses were coded (175 posts x 25 responses).

In order to collect the sample, each post of Kim Kardashian within the sampling time frame was saved as post overview. The blog post, which can be accessed through a link within the post, was saved as post source and all responses of each post were saved as entire post. For this coding, the data was accessed through a personal computer on which the entire sample is saved on. Since 25 sample responses were analyzed for each post, the primary coder divided the number of responses by 25 and marked every 25th response with a number in the Macintosh OS X Preview function, and saved it. Each coder therefore accessed the folder, with screenshots of each post and the 25 responses, on the desktop of the computer and utilized the codebook and coding sheet in order to code the data.

#### Procedure

Two coders took part in the study and participated in coder training before the coding was conducted. The female researcher took part in the coding and chose a male coding partner in order to test if agreement can be reached for the rather female-oriented

research project. During a training session, the primary coder trained the secondary coder in terms of categories, coding sheet and unit of analysis. More specifically, the coders studied content outside of the sample and compared it with the codebook. If uncertainties arose, the primary coder and researcher adjusted the categories and definitions appropriately. Additionally, it was important that both coders understood how the content was organized and accessed through desktop folders.

#### Reliability Measures

The intercoder reliability test reflects a sample frame from June 1 2011 to June 10 2011 including 26 posts and 650 responses, which represents 15% of the sample. The intercoder reliability test was conducted through SPSS 19 and yielded a comparison of variables between two coders. An intercoder reliability result of 100% was reached for eleven variables while percentages 90.4, 90.6, 90, 86.6, 94.3, 93.2 and 90.3 were reached for the remaining variables. The variables v6 name of product advertised, v9 number of likes of post and v10 number of responses to post were excluded from the intercoder reliability testing due to their circumstantial nature (see Table 1).

Table 1

#### *Intercoder Reliability*

| Variables         | Cohen's Kappa |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. Facebook Posts |               |
| Post Type         | 1.00          |

Table 1 (continued).

---

| Variables                 | Cohen's Kappa |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Media                     | 1.00          |
| Message Format            | 1.00          |
| Product Type              | 1.00          |
| Advertising Strategy      | 1.00          |
| Address                   | 1.00          |
| 2. Post Responses         |               |
| Male Appreciation         | .904          |
| Female Appreciation       | .906          |
| Male Disapproval          | 1.00          |
| Female Disapproval        | 1.00          |
| Male Advice               | 1.00          |
| Female Advice             | 1.00          |
| Third-Party Advertisement | 1.00          |
| Male Information          | .900          |
| Female Information        | .866          |
| Male Request              | .943          |
| Female Request            | .932          |
| Other                     | .903          |

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## Coding Categories

Categories for the study were created during the analysis of Kim Kardashian's Facebook fanpage rather than *a priori* and were adjusted during data analysis due to the exploratory nature of the study.

### *Theme of Post*

The theme most apparent and/or relevant in the post was coded. The posts by Kim Kardashian were coded and analyzed in regards to v1 type of post: 1) Public appearance of Kim Kardashian; 2) Family and friends; 3) Endorsement; 4) Current event; and 5) Other. A public appearance of Kim Kardashian is an event in which Kim Kardashian appears before the public eye at a gala, fashion show or other media-saturated occasion. It is usually characterized by the publishing of pictures of Kim Kardashian on a red carpet. The family and friends category includes posts that reflect stories that are associated with Kim Kardashian's family or friends, whether it is in regards to the Kardashian reality television shows or giving information about family or friends. An endorsement is a testimonial for a product or brand that speaks for its positive features. A current event is what was currently the agenda around April and May of 2011.

### *Media*

The media aspect of each post was divided into the categories of photo only, video only, link only, multiple media and no media. If a link to Kim Kardashian's personal blog is included in the Facebook post, it was counted as a link.

### *Message Format*

The message format of posts was divided into categories of benefit/promise, information, question, command, and other.

This coding category was developed based on the observation and analysis of Kim Kardashian's Facebook Fanpage and was tested through the pre-test of the study.

A benefit or promise is enlisted in cases where Kim Kardashian expresses an assurance to her audience of a product's specific advantage. This category usually includes posts about promotional benefits or sales of Kim Kardashian's endorsed products. The information category includes posts that are of a purely communicative nature, which include personal opinions given by Kim Kardashian. The question category consists of posts that are driven by inquiry that represents the subject matter. Excluded are rhetorical questions. This type of post most often investigates the audience's opinions on specific issues. The command category is comprised by direct commands to audiences, originating from Kim Kardashian. Typical command categories include posts that demand audiences to watch a specific reality television show, visit an endorsed website, or try certain products.

#### *Product Categories*

The type of products advertised includes the categories of beauty, body and nutrition, entertainment/leisure, fashion, the Kardashian reality television show, magazine/webpages/media, none, and other. Kim Karashian's fragrances are considered beauty, while alcoholic beverages are considered to be entertainment/leisure. The author finds it significant to distinguish product categories in a way that allows for the analysis of an either female – or male driven target audience, as well as the distinction between product/brand and self-advertising (Kardashian reality television shows and public appearances).

This coding category was developed based on the author's analysis of Kim Kardashian's Facebook page and endorsed products, and was tested through the pre-test of the study.

### *Advertising Strategy*

The Advertising Strategy category is based on Lee, Taylor, & Chung (2011), who revised Taylor's Six-Segment Message Strategy Wheel and applied it to current practices. The main factor is that advertising message strategies fall into one of two types: transformational and informational strategies (Lee, Taylor, & Chung, 2011, p. 77). On this basis, the advertising strategy category was created and adapted. A call for action was added to the notion of transformational and informational advertising to highlight the interactive role of social networking. This method is connected to the media category, which determines whether additional media is used (links to other websites, for example). The advertising strategy helps to analyze whether a product is embedded into a personal story (emotional/transformational), whether the post about a product is purely informational, whether the post calls for action/interactive advertising, whether there is no advertising strategy or other advertising strategies. Advertising strategies embedded into personal stories create an emotional appeal amongst audiences through personal anecdotes or stories connected to the brand. Informational advertising strategies only give away unembellished information about the product without an emotional or personal context of the celebrity endorser. Interactive advertising usually aims at engaging the audiences with the brand through activities like games and contests.

### *Address of the Post*

The address of the post contains the categories of personal and non-personal. Personal addresses include Kim Kardashian's famous reality television catchphrases like "hey dolls!" and other forms of personally addressing audiences in a friendship-like (socially informal) manner. Posts do not have personal addresses if they have no address at all or contain only a *hey!* or other forms of non-personal address.

### *Audience Response*

Themes for audience response are based on Kassing and Sanderson's categories (Kassing & Sanderson, 2009). Since the research conducted by Kassing and Sanderson is based on the Parasocial Interaction between athletes and fans, the categories were adapted in terms of social interaction based on one personae (Kim Kardashian), whose success is based on reality television shows rather than other areas (sports, arts, etc.).

Since the classification of responses to one post is interpretive, overlapping between categories occurs, as several themes could be apparent in a single response. Therefore, responses were counted in terms of a theme, which allows multiple counting for the same response (Kassing & Sanderson, 2009, p. 188).

The categories for post responses include expressing approval (*I love you Kim*, heart-shaped symbols, compliments and support) female, expressing approval male, expressing disapproval (*I hate you Kim*, criticism, other forms of disapproval) female, expressing disapproval male, advice (suggesting improvements to appearance or behavior, life advice, etc.) female, advice male, third-party related response (advertising posts by entities other than Kim Kardashian, contains link of third-party and can possibly be third-party advertisement or advertisement for an individual), informational response (includes

pure interaction in response to Kim Kardashian's requests or questions) female, informational response male, request (include the requests for friend requests or the request for a visit of Kim Kardashian to a specific city) female and request male. An other category is included in order to disregard responses in a language different than English, graphic responses and responses that take up more than one comment box for one comment. Heart-shaped symbols are counted as approval, whereas smiley faces are captured in the other category, due to their non-specific nature.

*Others*

V6, name of the product advertised, V9, number of likes of post and V10, number of responses of post, all require the coder to manually type into the coding sheet without given numerical categories.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Research Questions

##### *Kim Kardashian's Communication through Facebook Posts (RQ1)*

The data from this study was obtained through frequency testing with the statistical program SPSS and was analyzed descriptively.

The first research question (RQ1), inquiring about the ways in which Kim Kardashian communicates with audiences through posts on Facebook, is effectively answered by statistically obtaining the descriptive results of v2 (type of post), v3 (media) and v4 (message format of post).

Out of the total posts by Kim Kardashian on Facebook, the post type most often used was endorsement (44.6%, n=78), followed by family and friends (29.7%, n=52) and current events (12.6%, n=22). Public appearances (8.0%, n=14) and other post types (5.1%, n=9) were not used frequently.

The media used within Kim Kardashian's posts are mostly multiple media (84.0%, n=147). Posts without media (9.1%, n=16) and link only posts (6.9%, n=12) are not used as frequently.

Table 2

*Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Post Type*

|       |  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative<br>Percent |
|-------|--|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | public appearance<br>of Kim Kardashian | 14        | 8.0     | 8.0           | 8.0                   |
|       | family and friends                     | 52        | 29.7    | 29.7          | 37.7                  |
|       | endorsement                            | 78        | 44.6    | 44.6          | 82.3                  |
|       | current event                          | 22        | 12.6    | 12.6          | 94.9                  |
|       | other                                  | 9         | 5.1     | 5.1           | 100.0                 |
|       | Total                                  | 175       | 100.0   | 100.0         |                       |

Table 3

*Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Media*

|       |                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative<br>Percent |
|-------|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | link only      | 12        | 6.9     | 6.9           | 6.9                   |
|       | multiple media | 147       | 84.0    | 84.0          | 90.9                  |
|       | no media       | 16        | 9.1     | 9.1           | 100.0                 |

Table 3 (continued).

|       | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative<br>Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Total | 175       | 100.0   | 100.0         |                       |

The message format represented by Kim Kardashian's posts is mostly informational in nature (55.4%, n=97), followed by questions (18.3%, n=32), commands (13.1%, n=23) and benefits and promises (12.6%, n=22).

Table 4

*Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Message Format*

|                       | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative<br>Percent |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Valid benefit/promise | 22        | 12.6    | 12.6          | 12.6                  |
| information           | 97        | 55.4    | 55.4          | 68.0                  |
| question              | 32        | 18.3    | 18.3          | 86.3                  |
| command               | 23        | 13.1    | 13.1          | 99.4                  |
| other                 | 1         | .6      | .6            | 100.0                 |
| Total                 | 175       | 100.0   | 100.0         |                       |



*Kim Kardashian's Advertising Strategy on Facebook (RQ2)*

The second research question (RQ2) asked about how advertising messages such as celebrity endorsements and product placements are embedded into the Facebook posts of Kim Kardashian. In order to statistically gather results, v7 (advertising strategy) yields an answer. The advertising strategy most often employed in Kim Kardashian's posts, if present, is the embedding of the product into personal stories (emotional and transformational advertising), (60.6%, n=106).

Table 5

*Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Advertising Strategy*

|  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative<br>Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Valid product is embedded into personal story (emotional/transformational) | 106       | 60.6    | 60.6          | 60.6                  |
| pure information   | 8         | 4.6     | 4.6           | 65.1                  |
| call for action/interactive adv.   | 27        | 15.4    | 15.4          | 80.6                  |
| none   | 34        | 19.4    | 19.4          | 100.0                 |
| Total  | 175       | 100.0   | 100.0         |                       |

### *Audience Response (RQ3)*

The third research question (RQ3) analyzes the ways in which audiences respond to Kim Kardashian's posts on Facebook. By obtaining the statistical frequencies of the response posts (n=4,375), it can be stated that the highest type of response was female approval (n=1,413), followed by female information and interaction (n=1,159), male information (n=805), male approval (n=765), other (n=525), request male (n=186), female disapproval (n=159), male disapproval (n=148), request female (n=146), third-party advertising (n=115), advice female (n=90) and advice male (n=35). The "other" category stands out due to a high amount of posts in cryptic or foreign languages and explicit nature of the responses.

The analysis of the response posts showed that there were not enough significant instances in which respondents changed the topic of a post or created a secondary community discussion among other respondents.

Thus, the rare cases in which a respondent changed a topic were counted as information when the other topic was clearly identified and were counted as other if the response post contained off-topic aspects that were unclear if analyzed out of context.

### *Parasocial Interaction on Facebook (RQ4)*

The fourth research question (RQ4), relating Parasocial Interaction to Kim Kardashian's Facebook wall, can be supported. Since v4 (message format of post) yielded that Kim Kardashian provides personal information to her Facebook audiences (55.4%, n=97) and the qualitatively obtained information that Kim Kardashian in no cases re-interacts with her audience after her initial posting and therefore has little knowledge about the individual, evidences that Parasocial Interaction has been found to

take place on Kim Kardashian's Facebook wall. The post with the highest amount of responses (3,311) was posted on May 31: "Is my hair too dark? Should I go lighter for the summer?" followed by "Kris and I are engaged!" (Posted on May 25; 2,651 responses and 15,062 likes) and "I'm confused why does everyone think the world is gonna end today? Only God can determine that! But what started all of this talk?" (Posted on May 21; 2,244 responses and 11,261 likes).

It can be qualitatively inferred that Parasocial Interaction plays a major role in Kim Kardashian's Facebook communication. The main indicator for this phenomenon is based on the fact that Kim Kardashian does not engage in any further communication after the initial post. Even though Kim Kardashian's posts can reach up to 3,000 audience comments, the dynamics of Parasocial Interaction make possible an illusion of actual social interaction and intimacy with the celebrity. Parasocial Interaction can also be found where audiences respond to Kim Kardashian's posts with sincere advice based on their own life experiences and the sharing of highly personal and sensitive information in order to increase the already existing illusion of intimacy between fan and celebrity. The Facebook posts by Kim Kardashian that seem to create the highest amount of responses are the type of posts that imitate questions asked by real-life friends. Questions like "is my hair too dark?" lure audiences into thinking that the desire of and respect for opinions resemble an actual friend-like connection with the celebrity. While Kim Kardashian posts information exclusively concerning her own personae, she does not know details about the audience, while the audience knows a great deal of information about Kim Kardashian, which is another indicator for Parasocial Interaction.

*Parasocial Interaction as Advertising Vehicle (RQ5)*

The fifth research question (RQ5) asked whether Parasocial Interaction could be considered as advertising vehicle on Facebook. Through v2 (type of post), v4 (message format of post), v5 (type of product/brand advertised), and v7 (advertising strategy), it is supported that Parasocial Interaction could be considered as advertising vehicle on Facebook. Since Kim Kardashian mainly uses her Facebook interaction to conduct endorsements (44.6%, n=78) while using the strategy of attaching endorsements to personal information (55.4%, n=97) and embedding it into personal stories (60.6%, n=106), it can also be inferred that she knows her previously established female audience through her reality television show well. Kim Kardashian mostly advertises magazines with her on the cover, webpages and other media outlets (21.1%, n=37), followed by fashion (14.3%, n=25) and the Kardashian reality television show (10.9%, n=19), beauty products (8.6%, n=15), and entertainment and leisure products (6.3%, n=11).

Table 6

*Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Product Type*

|                           | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative<br>Percent |
|---------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Valid beauty              | 15        | 8.6     | 8.6           | 8.6                   |
| body/nutrition            | 5         | 2.9     | 2.9           | 11.4                  |
| entertainment/<br>leisure | 11        | 6.3     | 6.3           | 17.7                  |

Table 6 (continued).

|                                       | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative<br>Percent |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| fashion                               | 25        | 14.3    | 14.3          | 32.0                  |
| Kardashian reality<br>television show | 19        | 10.9    | 10.9          | 42.9                  |
| magazine/webpage<br>/media            | 37        | 21.1    | 21.1          | 64.0                  |
| none                                  | 60        | 34.3    | 34.3          | 98.3                  |
| other                                 | 3         | 1.7     | 1.7           | 100.0                 |
| Total                                 | 175       | 100.0   | 100.0         |                       |

One statistical result that stood out from the study was the postings of Kim Kardashian that address the audience mostly in a non-personal way (72.0%, n=126) as opposed to personal addresses (28.0%, n=49). The initial qualitative analysis of this phenomenon indicated that it disproves the taking place of Parasocial Interaction. However, after taking a closer look at the framing of the posts by Kim Kardashian in terms of audience address, it can be stated that posts without a personal address take the audience directly into the matter of the post. This created a dynamic of constant, ongoing communication and without the marking of the beginning and the ending of a discussion; the audience is even more engaged in the process of Parasocial Interaction.

Most of the Facebook endorsements by Kim Kardashian are embedded into the discussion of the reality television show (“did you see what happened last season on *Keeping Up with the Kardashians?*”) and the references to magazines that featured Kim Kardashian (“What do you think about my *Cosmopolitan* cover shoot?”). Audiences usually react to the initial post by sharing their personal opinions about the reality television show, appearances and cover shoots, and by asking further questions about Kim Kardashian. If a specific tangible product is embedded into Kim Kardashian’s Facebook posts, for example her endorsements for *Sketchers Shape-Ups*, audiences share their mostly positive experiences with the product and oftentimes request additional colors or other variations of the product. Referring this to Kim Kardashian’s interview quote, stating that social media resembles the best focus group for products, it can be inferred that the illusion of intimacy in terms of Parasocial Interaction motivates the consumer to share information about the use of a product, which can be highly valuable for the marketing of a product. Additionally, the sharing of positive product experiences on Kim Kardashian’s Facebook wall creates not only a focus group, but also a product community that will motivate other consumers to purchase the product. Thusly, it can be stated that Parasocial Interaction serves as promising advertising vehicle on Kim Kardashian’s Facebook wall.

Table 7

*Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Address*

|       |              | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative<br>Percent |
|-------|--------------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | personal     | 48        | 28.0    | 28.0          | 28.0                  |
|       | non-personal | 126       | 72.0    | 72.0          | 100.0                 |
|       | Total        | 175       | 100.0   | 100.0         |                       |

*Impact of Facebook Messages on Audience Responses*

In order to gain further insight into the correlation between the type of posts and audience response in terms of number of likes and responses, the researcher also conducted a Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Facebook posts. The correlation testing was based on the independent variables post type and media and the dependent variables number of likes and number of responses.

It can be concluded that the results of the MANOVA testing showed a high correlation between media and responses ( $F = 11.366$ ;  $p = .000$ ). These results indicate that the number of likes and responses for posts that contain little or no media are high. Comparing those results with the fact that posts that do not contain an address also create a high amount of likes and responses, it can be inferred that, in terms of Parasocial Interaction, less is more.

Just like actual social behavior, messages that seem more spontaneous with raw and direct information give the audience the feeling that the message is even more personal and directed towards the individual. Furthermore, the results indicate that the type of posts and the format of the posts are correlated with the number of responses ( $F = 2.177$ ;  $p = .04$ ).

Table 8

*Impact of Facebook Messages on Audience Responses*

| Source    | Dependent Variable | df | Mean Square  | F      | P      |
|-----------|--------------------|----|--------------|--------|--------|
| PostType  | Likes              | 4  | 6731415.773  | 2.052  | .090   |
|           | Responses          | 4  | 280015.182   | 2.074  | .087   |
| Media     | Likes              | 2  | 20229385.986 | 6.168  | .003** |
|           | Responses          | 2  | 1534465.924  | 11.366 | .000** |
| MsgFormat | Likes              | 4  | 3123338.211  | .952   | .436   |
|           | Responses          | 4  | 272600.667   | 2.019  | .095   |
| P x M     | Likes              | 5  | 3378902.715  | 1.030  | .402   |
|           | Responses          | 5  | 235323.279   | 1.743  | .129   |
| P x F     | Likes              | 7  | 1791635.298  | .546   | .798   |
|           | Responses          | 7  | 293853.542   | 2.177  | .040*  |
| M x F     | Likes              | 5  | 4276196.384  | 1.304  | .266   |
|           | Responses          | 5  | 191142.549   | 1.416  | .222   |
| P x M x F | Likes              | 2  | 23221187.858 | 7.080  | .001** |
|           | Responses          | 2  | 623561.495   | 4.619  | .011** |



Table 8 (continued).

| Source | Dependent | df  | Mean Square | F | P |
|--------|-----------|-----|-------------|---|---|
|        | Variable  |     |             |   |   |
| Error  | Likes     | 143 | 3279955.239 |   |   |
|        | Responses | 143 | 135008.665  |   |   |

Note. \*p < 0.5; \*\*p < .01.

#### *Post type and message format.*

The analysis of the correlation means also gave insight into the factors that created high audience responses and likeability of the post.

In terms of audience responses, the benefit and promise message format created most audience responses for public appearances of Kim Kardashian (M=367.500), while the information format was most useful in terms of family and friends related posts (M=659.559). Posts that contained questions as message format were most successful when incorporated into endorsements (M=501.603), current events (M=1220.000) and others (M=1312.000).

#### *Post type, media and message format.*

The absence of media was most successful for endorsements with information (M=825.500) and question (M=850.500) in terms of audience responses, and was equally successful in relation to the number of likes. While the absence of media created a high amount of likes for current events and question (M=11261.000), it also created a high amount of responses for public appearances and benefit and promise (M=555.00). The

usage of multiple media was most effective in terms of family and friends related posts for both likeability ( $M=2908.286$ ) and number of responses ( $M=378.714$ ). The utilization of media was also successful in terms of current events and information in terms of audience responses ( $M=675.700$ ).

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### Findings and Implications

This research was the first attempt to explore whether Kim Kardashian, as an example of reality television star-turned-entrepreneur, makes use of Parasocial Interaction on her Facebook fan page and to analyze how her audience reacts to it. A number of studies have analyzed advertising message strategies and celebrity endorsements, as well as product placement in reality television shows and the key success factors, but to the researcher's knowledge, no study has looked at the concept of Parasocial Interaction as possible advertising vehicle in today's Web 2.0 environment.

The results of this study clearly show that Kim Kardashian's post interaction with audiences creates Parasocial Interaction and gives the illusion of intimacy with the primary underlying intent to endorse, sell products and conduct public relations for her own personae. Therefore, this fact speaks for the nature of reality television stars turning their fame into entrepreneurial dynamics on social networking sites like Facebook.

While embedding endorsements into personal stories (emotional and transformational advertising), Kim Kardashian is strategically using the benefits of emotional involvement created in the realms of Parasocial Interaction to her advantage. The audience is constantly being rewarded with additional information about the celebrity and is involved with multiple media and interactive posts, so that the dynamic of a well-informed and active audience is created. The audience therefore stays constantly alert and informed, while being consumed with Kim Kardashian as an idol, wanting to imitate her lifestyle and purchase the brands and products that make her

lifestyle admirable. An additional success factor for the merging of Parasocial Interaction and advertising is created when the endorsements are catered to an already existing audience from previous reality television show successes including the demographics thereof. All of the product types employed in the posts of Kim Kardashian are oriented towards a female audience, which speaks for the assumption that Kim Kardashian transferred her already existing fan base from her reality television show to a new social media platform. Kim Kardashian knows her target audiences well and therefore exclusively markets products that cater to a female audience, which increases her credibility and consistency. This strategy is well employed and perceived, hence the result that most of the response types were female approval.

Due to high response rates and high likeability of posts by female audiences, it can be qualitatively inferred that an emotional attachment to a celebrity through Parasocial Interaction can translate to an emotional connection with a product or brand, that ultimately leads to positive purchasing behavior.

This study supports the idea that it is of high advertising value to adopt a celebrity endorser strategy on social networking sites that is based on Parasocial Interaction and catered to a well-known audience, especially if the celebrity endorser already is highly credible in a certain field of brands and products.

#### Limitations and Future Research

First, the sample for this study might be considered a limitation. Since this research study is of exploratory nature, it does not seek representativeness for other social networking sites or media outlets. Future research could investigate whether the trends found in this study are applicable to other media outlets or societal communication in

general. It has been found, however, that Kim Kardashian's posts on Facebook and Twitter are all of the same nature and stem from the same source post from her personal blog. Further research should establish whether this is a common strategy amongst other celebrity endorsers within the social media age.

Second, audience behavior is only analyzed in a limited way in this study. No distinctions have been made in terms of audience-to-audience interaction due to a limited amount of instances. Situations in which certain individuals criticize Kim Kardashian and others defending her could be counted as an extended form of fan-community Parasocial Interaction, because the fan becomes emotionally involved with the celebrity and comes to the celebrity's defense. Future research should analyze this type of fan-community interaction.

Third, the statistical procedures should have included the option of counting the audience's actual usage of the brand names in their responses. This information could have evaluated the role of Parasocial Interaction in advertising even further.

Limitations also apply to the analysis of Kim Kardashian's Facebook posts. The message format category of information should have been more clearly specified into types of information, for example, personal opinions or experiences of Kim Kardashian. The term endorsement could have been more specified. Even if there was no direct endorsement found in Kim Kardashian's post, she still promotes her own personae through her Facebook posts. Due to the strict exclusion of self-promotion of Kim Kardashian into the endorsement category, the results for this section were skewed with a high none result. The researcher attempted to capture self-endorsement through the connection of red carpet events or modeling references; however, even if Kim

Kardashian does not mention an event or a brand, every aspect of communication on her Facebook fan page can be considered self-endorsement. Future research needs to take this aspect into consideration when developing coding categories.

Interestingly, Kim Kardashian does not use personal addresses often. Including personal addresses to audiences in posts could possibly increase the amount of Parasocial Interaction that takes place. Further research could examine this proposition.

Since socially mediated advertising is a multifaceted and multidimensional phenomenon, future studies should go beyond a descriptive analysis of current trends in this area and provide a more detailed and specific explanations as to whether Parasocial Interaction in advertising leads to a higher market value of products and brands, as well as an improved brand and product image among audiences.



## CODING SHEET SAMPLE CONTINUED

## Post Responses v11

|   | male<br>approval | female<br>approval | male<br>disapproval | female<br>disapproval | male<br>advice | female<br>advice |
|---|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1 |                  |                    |                     |                       |                |                  |
| 2 |                  |                    |                     |                       |                |                  |
| 3 |                  |                    |                     |                       |                |                  |
| 4 |                  |                    |                     |                       |                |                  |
| 5 |                  |                    |                     |                       |                |                  |
| 6 |                  |                    |                     |                       |                |                  |
| 7 |                  |                    |                     |                       |                |                  |
| 8 |                  |                    |                     |                       |                |                  |



## CODING SHEET SAMPLE CONTINUED

## Post Responses v11

|   | third<br>party ad. | male<br>information | female<br>information | male<br>request | female<br>request | other |
|---|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 |                    |                     |                       |                 |                   |       |
| 2 |                    |                     |                       |                 |                   |       |
| 3 |                    |                     |                       |                 |                   |       |
| 4 |                    |                     |                       |                 |                   |       |
| 5 |                    |                     |                       |                 |                   |       |
| 6 |                    |                     |                       |                 |                   |       |
| 7 |                    |                     |                       |                 |                   |       |
| 8 |                    |                     |                       |                 |                   |       |

## APPENDIX B

### CODEBOOK AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

#### Introduction

This Facebook post protocol was designed to help determine the ways in which celebrity Kim Kardashian communicates with target audiences. It examines the types and strategies of postings as well as advertising messages and responses on Facebook. The following definitions and references are important in selecting and analyzing the content under study.

#### Post

A post, or posting, is any message at the top of a message thread posted by the celebrity Kim Kardashian (and associates). A majority of Facebook posts by Kim Kardashian contain a source link to her personal blog. It is evident that messages are automatically published on multiple networking sites through Kim Kardashian's associates. A post may also contain pictures and videos. If the copy of a post is cut off or shortened, the coder will include the source post from Kim Kardashian's blog as reference and it will be treated as if the copy on Facebook was complete.

#### Likes

Every post has so-called likes. Every Facebook user can press the like button in order to express likeability of a posting; however, in order to be able to like a post, the user has to like Kim Kardashian's entire Facebook profile first. Once a user likes Kim Kardashian's profile, it will appear in the user's newsfeed for others to see, unless he or she disables visibility.

## Reality Television

Kimberly (Kim) Kardashian garnered a great deal of success from her reality television show *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, which captures the daily lives of her mother Kris Kardashian, stepfather Bruce Jenner, sisters Khloé and Kourtney Kardashian and Kendall and Kylie Jenner (stepsisters), as well as brother Robert Kardashian Jr. Further stepsisters and stepbrothers are not included in the television series and public events. Sister Khloé Kardashian is married to Lamar Odom and currently has her own reality television show *Khloé and Lamar*. Sister Kourtney has a son, Mason, with Scott Disick.

## Parasocial Interaction

Parasocial Interaction is a term that usually defines one-sided relationships, especially between celebrities and their fans, where the fan seeks a lot of information about the celebrity and therefore knows a lot about him or her; however, the celebrity does not know details about the fan. This study seeks to analyze whether Parasocial Interaction takes place on Facebook between Kim Kardashian and a targeted audience. Furthermore, the study investigates whether Parasocial Interaction can be used as advertising vehicle, especially for a female audience.

v1. ID

v2. Type of post

Code these types of posts with the associated numbers:

- 1 Public appearance of Kim Kardashian
- 2 Family and friends
- 3 Endorsement

4 Current event

5 Other

*Public appearance*

A public appearance is the event in which Kim Kardashian appears before the public eye at a gala, fashion show, nightclub, or other event. A public appearance is usually characterized by the publishing of pictures of Kim Kardashian on a red carpet.

*Family and friends*

Any story that is associated with Kim Kardashian's family or friends, whether it is in regards to reality television shows or giving personal information and photographs, belongs in this category.

*Endorsement*

An endorsement is a testimonial for a product or brand that speaks for its positive features.

*Current event*

A current event is what was currently the agenda in the media around April and May 2011.

v3. Media

What media does the post contain?

1 Photo only

2 Video only

3 Link only

4 Multiple media

5 No media

#### v4. Message format of post

- 1 Benefit/promise
- 2 Information
- 3 Question
- 4 Command
- 5 Other

Please choose how the post justifies interaction and catches the users' interests and creates responses.

#### v5. Type of product/brand advertised

If no product or brand is advertised, select none; if a product is advertised but does not fit into any of the listed categories, choose other.

- 1 Beauty
- 2 Body and nutrition
- 3 Entertainment/leisure
- 4 Fashion
- 5 Kardashian reality television show
- 6 Magazine/webpages/media
- 7 None
- 8 Other

#### v6. Name of product/brand advertised

Identify the product or brand that is mentioned and advertised in the post.

### v7. Advertising strategy

Please select the option that is most evident in the post.

- 1 Product is embedded into personal story (emotional/transformational)
- 2 Pure information (informational)
- 3 Call for action/interactive advertising
- 4 None
- 5 Other

#### *Personal story*

An advertisement can be embedded into a personal story and will create an emotional appeal by doing so. In creating a personal frame for an advertisement, the audience finds the brand or product appealing because the trusted source Kim Kardashian uses this product herself or shares it with her family and friends.

#### *Informational*

An advertising strategy can be purely informational by giving bare information about the product, its release date, benefits and costs to the audience.

#### *Interactive*

An interactive advertisement usually tries to engage the audience with the product in various ways through games, videos, links, discussions and other forms of interactivity. Interactive advertising always asks the audience to take some kind of action that ultimately leads to a purchase of the product.

## v8. How is the audience being addressed?

Please select personal if Kim Kardashian specifically addresses her audience in a way that creates closeness. Select non-personal if the post does not contain a specific form of addressing an audience.

- 1 Personal
- 2 Non-personal

This case includes the ways in which Kim Kardashian addresses her audience (e.g. "Hey dolls!"), in order to establish whether Kim Kardashian addresses target audiences in a manner that can be classified as personal and similar to ways she would possibly address her real-life friends (Parasocial Interaction between celebrity and fans).

## V9. Number of likes of post

## V10. Number of responses to post

## v11. Type of response

Identify the gender of the respondent to your best ability by analyzing the user name and picture used in the comment field. If the name and picture does not give any clues or gives conflicting information about the gender, please choose other.

- 1 Expressing approval male
- 2 Expressing approval female
- 3 Expressing disapproval male
- 4 Expressing disapproval female
- 5 Advice male
- 6 Advice female
- 7 Third-party related

- 8 Informational response male
- 9 Informational response female
- 10 Request male
- 11 Request female
- 12 Other

#### *Expressing admiration*

A respondent can express admiration by directly posting “I love you Kim,” or giving compliments “you look amazing” and support, as well as embedding the heart symbol into a post.

#### *Expressing disapproval*

A respondent can express disapproval by directly posting “I hate you Kim”, or criticizing the celebrity “you look terrible”; as well as other forms of disapproval.

#### *Advice*

A respondent can give advice by giving his or her opinion to one of Kim Kardashian’s questions in a manner of advice, or referring to ways in which Kim Kardashian can improve her appearances.

#### *Third-party advertisement*

A respondent can employ third-party advertisements by responding to Kim Kardashian’s post with a link to his or her own business website; or through advertising other causes, products and brands unrelated to Kim Kardashian on her Facebook page.

#### *Informational response*



Please select informational response when the user engages in interaction with the celebrity by answering Kim Kardashian's question or providing opinions related to Kim Kardashian's post headline.

v12. Did PSI take place? If yes, why and how? (Qualitative)

V13. Could PSI be categorized as advertising vehicle for Kim Kardashian on Facebook?

(Qualitative)

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