

January 2012

An Exploration of the Organization-Public Relationship Through Online Media: The Case of the Tampa Bay Rays

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An Exploration of the Organization-Public Relationship Through Online Media:

The Case of the Tampa Bay Rays

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
School of Mass Communication
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Date of Approval:
November 13, 2012

Keywords: OPR, commitment, satisfaction, trust, control mutuality, face and favor

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ABSTRACT

Organizations are working to establish and maintain relationships with their target publics using a wide variety of communication tools. How they work at developing this organization-public relationship (OPR) is open to the organization, but previous research suggests there are measurement scales that can indicate what factors an organization may be doing right and those they may need to improve on.

This study examines relationship building efforts of the Tampa Bay Rays organization and the representation it has demonstrated through online content. Utilizing a content analysis, sample articles were collected and coded to examine if relationship components could be found through the organization's affiliated website and the target public's local newspaper. The structure and development of this study was created based on the relationship indicators that were established by Hon and Grunig (1999) and Huang (2001).

Based on the analysis of the results, it was discovered that OPR indicators were being used by the Tampa Bay Rays. Examples of commitment, satisfaction, and control mutuality were the most frequent indicators throughout the online content. Trust and face and favor were the two remaining indicators that showed the lowest frequency of representation through the online content.

From the study, the results revealed: (1) that differences in framing exist; (2) a representation of frequent OPR material and topics does occur; (3) there are thematic

patterns on the part of the source; and finally, (4) the organization perspective of what may show up from online content may differ from the outside perspective.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Sports entertainment is a worldwide business that has been redefined due to the expanding number of media outlets and communication channels. Focusing attention on Internet outlets, this single entity has revolutionized not only the way the sports entertainment world provides information to end users but also how end users consume information (The New Media Consortium, 2007). Given the Internet is a multimode, no longer can an individual only hear an opinion, idea or view from the traditional outlets, but organizations, consumers, fans and spectators of all backgrounds can post any material they see fit at any time they want (The New Media Consortium, 2007).

The purpose of this study is to investigate how an organization and its target publics present their relationship through material on selected websites. Through the structure of the framing analysis, this study will utilize a content analysis to examine the current relationship between the Tampa Bay Rays organization and its target publics in the Tampa Bay community utilizing Organization-Publics relationships measures.

The Organization

The Tampa Bay Rays is a Major League Baseball (MLB) franchise that is a part of the American League Eastern division. Originally named the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, the team has been in the major leagues since 1998, and as of late they have been going through some changes that have put them on the map in the eyes of the Tampa Bay area and the sporting world (Tampa Bay Rays, 2012).

Located in the Tampa Bay market, the Rays' closest Major League Baseball competition is the Miami Marlins, who are in Miami, Florida, but they still find themselves averaging the 25th lowest attendance numbers in the league (ESPN, 2012).

It wasn't until 2008 that the organization took on new ownership and management styles, but it was also the year the team achieved its first winning season. Before the 2008 season began, the new owners changed a few aspects of the team that gave them a new look. Starting with the name, which was changed from the Tampa Bay Devil Rays to the Tampa Bay Rays with new colors and a new mascot. In addition to the uniform and marketing perspective, the organization also hired Joe Maddon to manage the ball club. As noted above, the 2008 season was not only a year of new methods and appearances, but it was also the first year that the team finished with a winning record of 97 wins and 65 losses (Tampa Bay Rays, 2012). In that same season, 2008, the organization also clinched its first playoff spot, won the American League East division title, won the American League pennant, and appeared in the World Series against the Philadelphia Phillies (Tampa Bay Rays, 2012).

Following the 2008 season, the team reached the playoffs two more times and won the American League East division once again. Aside from this on-field success, the attendance numbers were still ranking in the lower end of Major League Baseball, and the organization began to express its opinions to the public (Shelton, 2011).

Stuart Sternberg, the owner of the Tampa Bay Rays, has stated that if some issues, especially the attendance does not begin to increase, it (the organization) will not be afraid to up and move the team to a city that would be more suited for a MLB franchise (Shelton, 2011).

The Target Publics

The Tampa Bay community is an area defined by a body of water (Tampa Bay) located in the west central portion of Florida. Made up of Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Sarasota counties, this area is home to more than 4.2 million people and grows at a rate of 6.30% each year (The Communities of Tampa Bay, 2012).

Given the size of the market, the Tampa Bay market is also home to three professional teams (Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Tampa Bay Lightning and Tampa Bay Rays); two minor league franchises; one intercollegiate team; and, during the Spring, four minor league baseball teams (Tampa Bay Times, 2012).

Considered one of the most up and coming markets in the nation, Tampa Bay sports fans had a lot to cheer about from 2002 to 2012, but now find themselves on the verge of possibly losing it all (Tampa Bay Times, 2012). From 2002 to 2012, Tampa Bay sports fans celebrated a Super Bowl Championship in 2003, a Stanley Cup Championship in 2004, an Arena Football League Championship in 2003 and a World Series appearance in 2008. During those years and since, these professional teams in the Tampa Bay market have found themselves averaging the lowest attendance numbers in their respected leagues, and now, their organizations are speculating about the worthiness of professional sports in this market (Tampa Bay Times, 2012).

For the purpose of this study, in order to gain a more accurate perspective and understanding of those considered to be the target publics of the Rays organization, the target publics would be defined based on the primary coverage presented by the Tampa Bay Times newspaper. Covering Pinellas, Hillsborough, Hernando, and Pasco counties,

the Tampa Bay Times newspaper could be viewed as a viable source that best represents the Tampa Bay community, and also Tampa Bay sports fans (Tampa Bay Times, 2012).

New Methods, Challenges and Opportunities

In order to reach out to those Tampa Bay sports fans and Tampa Bay organizations, it is important to understand that the field of public relations and mass communications has been faced with new methods, challenges and opportunities because of the Internet (Wigley & Zhang, 2011).

Defined by Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1985), public relations “is the management function that builds and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends.”

Since it is the job of a public relations practitioner to establish and maintain a relationship between these two parties, it could be stated that a practitioner is now forced to transform the way he/she manages his/her public relations efforts. Typically, a public relations practitioner would rely on news sources or press conferences to extend the message created by the organization. For reaching out to the public, that practitioner would then rely on community gatherings or special events to relay a message. Since the Internet has now expanded the range and availability of these published messages by organizations and individuals, the typical mechanisms utilized by practitioners are now becoming obsolete and the term practitioner could now be renamed “blogger or tweeter” (Wigley & Zhang, 2011).

With these new communication opportunities to publish content and receive messages, it can be stated that it is now harder for those relationships between an OPR to be defined and maintained (Wigley & Zhang, 2011). It is the focus of this study to

analyze the messages that have been expressed in published content over the Internet by the Tampa Bay Rays organization and its target publics to examine the relationship that they had between 2008 and 2011.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

“Building relationships with publics that constrain or enhance the ability of the organization to meet its mission” (Grunig & White, 1992) is the purpose of public relations. According to Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997), a relationship occurs when parties have perceptions and expectations of each other; and when one or both parties need resources from each other (Broom, Casey & Ritchey, 1997).

In the field of public relations, the “relationship” was never the true primary unit of measurement to show the success between an organization and a public. It was the research conducted by Ferguson (1984) that initiated the need and importance for researchers in public relations to focus on the relationship instead of “outputs,” “outcomes,” or even “financial-results” (Ferguson, 1984).

Development of the “Organization-Public Relationship”

Focused on studying the relationship as an entity, Dozier, Grunig and Grunig (1995) found that the relationship can open up new opportunities for studying communication. Based on research from Ferguson (1984) focusing on the relationship rather than the outputs in the field of public relations, Dozier, Grunig and Grunig (1995) began studying two-way communication between organizations and their publics. Dozier, Grunig and Grunig (1995) discovered that being able to manage two-way communication could create a symmetry that would build relationships between two parties, but also allow the organization in question to begin practicing at a higher level of public relations (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995; Ferguson, 1984).

Based on the research by Dozier, Grunig and Grunig (1995), Ledingham (2003), concluded that, although managing and maintaining an OPR should be the main focus of the organization, it is necessary for the organization to realize that over time it must come to terms on common points of interest with its publics. In addition, it must also realize that no matter how much it disapproves, all relationships will change over time (Ledingham, 2003).

Defining an Organization-Public Relationship

Since the development and research of the OPR concept was still limited, it was soon viewed as a central concept in the field of public relations rather than a theory. Broom, Casey and Ritchey (1997) concluded, “The absence of a fully explicated conceptual definition of organization-public relationship limits theory building in public relations” (Broom, Casey & Ritchey, 1997).

Bruning and Ledingham (1999), in response to Broom et al.’s (1997) comment, defined OPR as the “state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political, and/or cultural well-being of the other entity” (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999).

Viewing OPR in a different light, Huang (1997) and Grunig and Huang (2000) approached OPR’s from the perspective of relationship characteristics. Huang (1997) believed OPR’s have “relationships that consist of more than one fundamental feature and four relational features represent the construct of OPR” (Huang, 1997). In 1998, after several other published works demonstrated the conceptual and empirical usefulness of an OPR, Huang (1998) defined OPR as “the degree that the organization and its publics’ trust one another, agree on one has rightful power to influence, experience

satisfaction with each other, and commit oneself to one another” (Huang, 1997; Grunig & Huang, 2000; Huang, 1998).

Measuring Organization-Public Relationships

It could be said that marketing literature shares many common concepts with public relations, and Hutton (1999) noted that: communication, persuasion and relationships are potentially mirrored between the two fields (Hutton, 1999). In a marketing perspective, the relationship quality of an organization is viewed by the strength of that relationship, and according to previous research, what makes a strong relationship are those relationship qualities of satisfaction, trust and commitment (De Wulf et al., 2001).

Since measuring the relationship was untested and uncharted in the field of mass communications, the opportunity to implement new ideas was now available.

In 1997, Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison & Lesko (1997), discovered that the important areas of focus in a relationship are based around the dimensions of “openness, trust, involvement, investment, and commitment” (Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison & Lesko, 1997). Focused around a qualitative approach, Ledingham et al’s (1997) study was soon contrasted by Hon and Grunig (1999) who developed a series of quantitative measurement scales for assessing an OPR. From this study, Hon and Grunig (1999) allowed these measurement scales to answer two questions that would help understand the relationships. The first four elements answered the question, “What are the outcomes of successful relationships?” and the last two elements answered the question, “How are outcomes of public relations relationships different from other public relationships?” Those six elements discovered by Hon and Grunig (1999) are: control mutuality; trust;

satisfaction; commitment; exchange relationships, and communal relationships (Hon & Grunig, 1999, pp. 18-20).

Control mutuality is the exertion of power throughout the relationship. Typically, the organization will take control in the relationship, but in a balanced and positive relationship each party will be allowed to exert some measure of power (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

The second indicator is trust. Trust “involves the publics’ confidence in the organization and the willingness of that public to form a relationship with the organization.” Trust is viewed through three precise concepts, which are integrity, dependability and competence. The first one, integrity, is defined as the perception that each member in the relationship will be fair and just. The second concept, dependability, makes sure that each party will follow through on its promises. Finally, competence is the view that the specific party in the relationship will be able to follow through with the claims it makes because the resources it claims it has (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Third is satisfaction. The satisfaction relationship is the perception that both parties feel confident that the effort they are putting into this relationship is exceeding all expectations and worth the costs. Organizations must ensure customer satisfaction in order to achieve effective OPRs (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

The fourth relationship indicator is commitment. Commitment is the perception that the parties involved feel that the relationship is worth maintaining through action or other forms of energy. The two dimensions of commitment are continuance and affective commitment. Continuance commitment refers to the actions, while affective refers to the emotion that could occur.

Since the first four relationship indicators try to define what the positive outcomes of a relationship are, the next two try to answer how these relationships exist and how they differ. Exchange relationships are the interactions between the two parties with the immediate receipt of something in return or the promise of something at a later date. Communal relationships are different from exchange relationships because communal relationships view each other with higher levels of the other dimensions mentioned earlier and do not expect something in return.

Implementation of Organization-Public Relationships

Taking these four dimensions of measuring an OPR, Huang (2001) implemented these scales and researched a new approach that could potentially “fulfill the standards of reliability and validity in measurement across cross-cultural comparability (Huang, 2001).” Called OPRA (or an Organization-Public Relationship Assessment), this new approach by Huang (2001) was found to be a concise multiple-item scale that proved to show high reliability and validity that an organization can use to better understand its public’s perception of their relationship (Huang, 2001).

From this study, the assessment was found to not only improve the quality of the relationship of the organization and its publics, but also enhanced all public relations practices going forward. It was also noted, that the assessment was able to be applied to a broad spectrum of organizational scales and types (Huang, 2001).

Although it was considered to be a universal model that could be implemented across a range of organizations, this study did reveal that if an organization truly wants to understand its publics it needs to be more frequent with its administration of OPRA, potentially several times a year (Huang, 2001).

In addition to introducing a new assessment tool, Huang (2001) implemented the research of “face-work” in relation to an OPR (Huang, 2001). Described in detail by Hwang’s (1987) model of face and favor, the strategy of face-work is that individuals will make that extra effort to expand or enhance human networks. From Hwang’s (1987) study, it was found that individuals would purposely set up face to face communication to increase the social interaction. They would also take particular care of their own personal appearance and behave in a certain manner that would shape a different perspective for the individual they are meeting with (Huang, 2001).

Implementing the idea of face value into her study, Huang (2001) was interested in assessing how this new scale could be ranked in a cross cultural study that would include western literature and eastern culture. From the study, Huang (2001) found that control mutuality was the most important factor in predicting overall relationship quality and conflict resolutions, but face and favor was second. Scoring higher than relationship commitment, relationship satisfaction, and trust, face and favor could now be viewed as an important factor in determining the success of an OPR (Huang, 2001).

Jo, Hon and Brunner (2004) attempted to replicate Huang’s (2001) study and extend it by adding relational dimensions that could capture specific features that may characterize the OPR. Jo, Hon and Brunner (2004) noted that trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, and commitment are closely related to each other, whereas “personal network is positively associated with other dimensions in the retailer group” (Jo, Hon & Brunner, 2004).

From their study, Jo, Hon and Brunner (2004) perceived that that manager of Samsung Electronics would take a more negative approach about the implementation of a

personal network dimension. Utilizing a survey instrument, Jo, Hon and Brunner (2004) aimed their study at measuring the perceptions of this OPR between the general managers at Samsung Electronics and their engagements with the retailers. Likewise, Jo, Hon and Brunner (2004) also aimed their study at capturing the evaluations of the retailers and their perceptions of Samsung Electronics based on these experiences (Jo, Hon, & Brunner, 2004).

The results of this study showed that trust, satisfaction, commitment, and personal network were found to be the best constructs when evaluating OPRs in South Korea. While Huang (2001) added the fifth dimension of face and favor to capture the cultural setting in Taiwan, Jo, Hon and Brunner (2004) found that in South Korea, this was not as strong as a predictor in explaining relationships as she predicted. Overall, the results of this study show that the “four-factor model is statistically sound and may be a more parsimonious measure of OPRs than previous measures.” It was supported by the retailer group, the employee group and the combined sample. All in all, the study reveals that trust, satisfaction, and commitment are global relational measures, whereas personal network may be a unique aspect depending on cultures (Jo, Hon & Brunner, 2004).

Taking another empirical approach at implementing an OPR, Kim and Chan-Olmsted (2005) wanted to study and explore whether “brand attitude can be explained by organization-public relationships and the comparative impact of organization-public relationships and product-related attribute beliefs.” Utilizing surveys to assess the purchasing intents of Sony customers, Kim and Chan-Olmsted (2005) found that the customer’s perception of his or her own relationship with an organization can influence whether or not he or she actually purchases a product/brand. Kim and Chan-Olmsted

(2005) noted that of the four dimensions of an OPR, “the perception of satisfaction with the company had a significant impact on attitudes towards the brand.” Overall, the study supported the notion that an OPR can function as an important predictor of brand attitude and indirectly influence the purchase intention of a customer (Kim and Chan-Olmsted, 2005).

Framing Theory

Since the focus of this study will be conceptualized around the Organization-Public Relationship, the theoretical structure of this study will be built around the framing theory.

First introduced in 1972 by Gregory Bateson in his book “Steps to an Ecology of Mind,” the idea of frames were defined as being an explanation as to what is going on in a particular social setting and explained as being a bonding of particular messages being delivered between individuals (Bateson, 1972). It wasn’t until 1974, when Erving Goffman developed the idea of frame analysis and explained it in his book, “Frame Analysis: An essay on the organization of experience” (Goffman, 1974).

From his writing, Goffman (1974) explored the idea of framing and used it to make sense of the codes and interactions that occur between individuals. According to Goffman (1974), frames are what individuals use to communicate. Without frames, it would be impossible to understand the world and communication would not exist as it does (Goffman, 1974).

In order to conceptualize this “metaphor,” Goffman used the idea of a picture frame to explain the idea that frames are “inclusionary and exclusionary devices or heuristics.” These frames, since they are made consciously and unconsciously by

individuals, who will choose to focus on specific characteristics or ideas that will stay inside the frame, but at the same time will also choose to leave many details out that are not viewed as being important or necessary (Goffman, 1974).

Understanding the necessity of these frames, Kahneman and Tversky (1984) expanded the subject of framing and framing analysis into the field of mass communication. In their research, the framing perspective was tested with an experimental design and the focus of their study was to test the cognitive effect of framing. It was discovered that framing, or the way a topic or issue is presented through the media could have a direct impact on an individual's thought process (Kahneman and Tversky, 1984).

In 1992, Gamson recommended three new areas of focus in which frames and the framing process could be implemented. The first area of potential study was the process by which the media agents create frames for new media content. The second area of future studies is the intersection where media frames and audience members come together and interact with one another. The third area of focus involves how members of the audience frame themselves (Gamson, 1992).

Aimed at continuing the conceptualization of frames, Entman (1993) viewed frames and the framing process as an area where "frames select and call attention to particular aspects of the reality described, which logically means that frames simultaneously direct attention away from other aspects" (Entman, 1993).

Entman (1993), from his research, discovered that frames have four main functions: the first being that they define problems; the second function is that they diagnose causes or identify what is causing the problem; the third function is that they

make moral judgments about the situation causing the problem; and finally they suggest remedies or justify treatments for problems (Entman, 1993). Scheufele (2000) implemented Entman's (1993) study and proposed different types of processes that these frames could serve. Those processes discovered by Scheufele (2000) included: frame building; frame setting; and, individual/audience framing. Based on these new processes, Scheufele (2000) soon dispelled the idea of making framing a part of agenda-setting (Scheufele, 2000).

Framing Acting Alone?

Contradicting Scheufele's (2000) initial statements that framing and agenda setting should not go together, several authors have proposed that they are actually one and the same. Ghanem (1997), McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, and Rey (1997), and McCombs and Ghanem (2001), found that framing and agenda-setting actually intersect as they try to identify the elements of an object. Additionally, these authors also claim that the frames used in communication will benefit agenda-setting effects and vice versa (Scheufele, 2000; Ghanem, 1997; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey, 1997; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001).

Reese (1997), based on the literature, agrees with Scheufele that framing is different from agenda-setting because the outcome of framing is much more significant than that of agenda-setting, but on the other hand, Reese also agrees with Maher (2001), Durham (2001), and Gamson (2001) who suggest that framing is much more than just measuring correlations of relationships between media and audience frames. Maher (2001), Durham (2001), and Gamson (2001) believe that framing is about highlighting the power structures of society and how dominant forces can and often will impose their

view on the world (Scheufele, 2000; Reese, 1997; Maher, 2001; Durham, 2001; Gamson, 2001).

In the mass media world, framing studies can be used to answer those questions threatening agenda-setting and priming (D'Angelo, 2002). Framing is useful in understanding the way media messages are formed and communicated as well as the way multiple players interact in the communication process. D'Angelo (2002) believes that if you keep framing within a single paradigm focus in studies it will limit its true power and reduce the broad scope it can truly touch upon (D'Angelo, 2002).

Framing and Sports Issues

Based on previous research, it has been demonstrated that framing does have an effect on the sports media and how sports issues are framed. One strong example was found in a study conducted by Messner and Soloman (1993), who researched the story that was released by the Los Angeles Times about "Sugar" Ray Leonard "physically abusing his wife." From the article, the Los Angeles Times reported that Leonard admitted to having a physical altercation with his wife, and to using illegal drugs over a three-year period after retiring from boxing. The research done by Messner and Soloman (1993) focused on how the story was framed in the days that followed. Messner and Soloman (1993) wanted to see if the newspaper would frame it as a "drug story," a "domestic violence story," or both. From their results they found that in the beginning stages of this story in most portrayals the domestic violence was the primary focus, but as the coverage continued, the story about the wife abuse was slowly eliminated from all reports (Messner & Soloman, 1993).

Similar to Messner and Soloman (1993), Mecurio and Filak (2010), conducted a study analyzing the National Football League (NFL) draft and the framing of black and white quarterbacks leading up to the ceremony. From their study, Mecurio and Filak (2010) analyzed the Sports Illustrated website leading up to the draft night and examined the player descriptions as written by analysts and scouts. Out of these player descriptions, Mecurio and Filak (2010) concluded that even though society looks down on racism, data shows that black quarterback prospects are “overwhelmingly portrayed as being very athletic but lacking mental abilities. For example, when describing a black quarterback they were found to use the phrase “an athlete playing quarterback,” whereas white quarterbacks were characterized as “athletic quarterbacks.” Although a subtle difference in the beginning, the persistency of this description could follow a player all through his or her career (Mecurio & Filak, 2010).

With the persistency of a message potentially following a player throughout his entire career, frequency and quality are another two terms that describe media coverage especially when it comes to race and crime in the sports world. In a study to analyze how race and crime is covered in sports news, Mastro, Blecha and Seate (2011) utilized a content analysis to understand the framing of news reports based on race and ethnicity of the athlete. For the study, Mastro, Blecha and Seate (2011) examined characterizations of race/ethnicity in the context of sports news coverage in The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, and USA Today over a 3-year period. The points of focus of their research were the: “rate of criminality; the presentation of athletes; the presentation of criminality; and, finally the presentation of new stories.” In conclusion, Mastro, Blecha, and Seate (2011) found that, the athlete’s race determines how often certain athletes were

portrayed in newspaper crime reporting. In addition, there were “no differences in terms of how Black and White athletes were discussed in crime stories with regard to athletic accomplishment, remorse, or guilt. Not surprising to the researchers was that Black athletes were “overrepresented as criminals, compared to Whites as well as to their proportion of athletes in professional sports” (Mastro, Blecha & Seate, 2011).

Aside from the negative connotation of message framing; the framing of messages can affect ceremonies and award-winning situations. In 2009, Seltzer and Mitrook (2009) focused their attention on the Heisman Trophy and the media coverage leading up to the event. Aimed at trying to “understand the relationship among the agendas of expert opinion, media coverage, and Heisman voters,” Seltzer and Mitrook (2009) conducted a content analysis of several news outlets to ensure complete coverage of this event was maintained. Over a three season span, Seltzer and Mitrook (2009) drew articles from The New York Times, Sports Illustrated, the Sporting News, and USA Today focusing their search engine on the names of players that were up for the award in each of their respected seasons. The results showed that media coverage of expert opinions had a great deal of influence on the voting. It was suggested that “the role of expert opinion can truly have an influence in the agenda-setting and framing process” (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2009).

Summary

Organizations could potentially thrive or perish based on the relationship that they establish with their target publics. Although each organization may approach its communication styles and outreach to its publics through different mediums and with different approaches, one common theme does appear – that is, their relationship will be

discussed. Whether positive or negative, prospering or diminishing, both parties involved in an OPR will talk and document their views on their current situations and it is the focus of this study to analyze what is being said and how it is being said.

Research Objectives

Previous studies have examined the relationship between an organization and its target publics with a focus on brand management, new types of relationships or new methods of measuring the features of an OPR, but very little research has been conducted exploring an OPR through published content reflecting the viewpoints of both parties involved.

For the purpose of this study, the following definition of OPR was developed. The OPR concept focuses on the active participation between an organization and its target publics; and aims to explore how each party involved trusts the other, agrees on the distribution of power, reaches satisfaction on specific situations, and commits itself to the overall goal.

After examining the literature regarding OPRs and the Framing theory, a hybrid content analysis, aimed at examining the qualitative and quantitative aspects of OPRs, will be implemented to answer the following research questions that have been formulated around the measurement scales developed by Hon and Grunig (1999) and Huang (2001).

Research Question 1:

Based on the definition of an OPR, have the Tampa Bay Rays established a positive or negative relationship with its target publics?

Research Question 2:

What representation of control mutuality has the OPR demonstrated through content published online?

Research Question 3:

What representation of trust has the OPR demonstrated through content published online?

Research Question 4:

What demonstration of satisfaction has been demonstrated by the OPR through content published online?

Research Question 5:

What level of commitment has the OPR presented through content published online?

Research Question 6:

What demonstration of face and favor is presented by the OPR through content published online?

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

The objective of this research study is to demonstrate how the Organization-Public Relationship between the Tampa Bay Rays organization and its target publics frame messages using the measurement scales defined by Hon and Grunig (1999) and Huang (2001) as indicators.

This study utilized a content analysis as the research method because it has been found to be a useful tool in classifying and “describing trends in communication content and patterns of communication” (Stroman & Jones, 1998, pp. 272-273). Although Hon and Grunig (1999) suggested using a questionnaire to examine the OPR, researchers “have used the content analysis not only to study the characteristics of communication content, but also to draw inferences about the nature of the communicator” (Wright, 1986). Another benefit of this research method is that it is viewed as an inconspicuous choice where “the researcher does not ‘intrude’ on what is being studied and thus does not affect the outcome on the research” (Berger, 2000).

Specifically for this research study, a hybrid content analysis is used to gain both a quantitative and qualitative perspective on the content that is being published online by each party. The quantitative approach of this content analysis will initially focus on measuring the frequency of articles being published through the selected websites. The second portion of this quantitative approach will offer results on potential trends and the frequencies of certain aspects retrieved from the OPR measurement scales. The qualitative approach of the content analysis will emerge from the coding process, but also

the quantitative data. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), qualitative research can be defined as “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 17).

Selected Websites and Time Frame

To obtain the content that was coded, a sample from two different websites were chosen. The first website chosen was “TampaBayRays.com,” for the purpose of presenting the published materials and ideas of the organization through its own affiliated website. Choosing the organization’s affiliated website offered a number of articles, and statements that have been selected and approved by the organization for publication. This allowed insight into the organization’s view on several topics and issues that can be presented differently than an open publication such as my second website of choice. The second site chosen for the content analysis is “TampaBay.com.” This website is an online publication for the surrounding Tampa Bay communities, and local and national sports stories. With the Tampa Bay Rays as their home Major League Baseball team, this website provided articles and publications from both sides in this OPR. See Table 1 for a breakdown of the selected websites and their web addresses.

Table 1: Selected Websites for Study

Tampa Bay Rays Website	www.tampabayrays.com
Tampa Bay Times, Tampa Bay newspaper	www.tampabay.com

This study has a selected time frame beginning with the 2008 Major League Baseball season to the end of the 2011 Major League Baseball season. This time frame was chosen because 2008 was the season when the organization’s ball club achieved its first winning season, reached the playoffs and appeared in the World Series against the Philadelphia Phillies. This 2008 season could be viewed as the coming of age for this

team, because over the next three seasons, the team reached the playoffs another two times and, during this time frame, the media coverage on the team, organization and public support began to escalate and catch the attention of most involved parties.

Search Terms

Since this content analysis will be investigating two different websites that could offer different perspectives, two defined search terms will be utilized to potentially narrow down the search results (see Table 2). The first defined search term will be the primary one used because of its general word choice, but it could provide the greatest amount of search results. The second defined search term will be utilized if, and only if, the second search term has been found to either provide too many or too few search results.

Table 2: Defined Search Terms

Tampa Bay Rays relationship with Fans
Tampa Bay Rays relationship with Target Publics

Gathering the Data

In order to gather the data, based on the selected websites, two different methods are necessary to properly find all potential relevant data. With regard to Raysbaseball.com, the researcher will not be able to utilize the search engine field at the top of the study. A manual process of selecting the news tab and sorting through the articles posted between 2008 and the end of 2011 would be necessary. Following the initial search process, the coder will sort by potential relevance, with regard to the OPR in question, and keep track of how many articles they found or didn't find. For TampaBay.com, the coder will open up the website and utilize the search engine or archive portion of this website to pull any relevant articles. Depending on the content

that presents itself, since this website is a publication of the Tampa Bay Times newspaper, the coder may utilize an online database to pull any more relevant articles they find.

Based on the search results for both websites, the coder will note the “Headline” and print out all screen shots in case an unexpected situation arises, and the coder loses his or her place.

Following this initial collection of data, the coder will then begin the coding process.

Coding Process

The coding process was conducted by one primary coder with an additional coder being used to conduct a coder reliability check. A sub-sample of 25 articles was coded by the second coder, using Holsti’s (1969) formula, intercoder reliability was 87.1%.

The code sheet that was used can be found in Appendix B. The top portion of this code sheet details the basic descriptions of each article and provides information that was entered into an excel spreadsheet for filtering and grouping. The bottom portion of this code sheet investigates the detailed aspects of each article such as: Article Type, OPR Party Representation, OPR Tone in Article, OPR Presence, OPR Relevance in the content, and finally the tone that has been presented throughout the material.

For categorization at the end of the study, each portion of the code sheet was entered into an excel spreadsheet which was utilized to define the results. The first coding category consists of defining the Article ID (TBR, TBT). The second coding category consists of entering the name of the Coder. The third coding category consists of the Date Coded (10/20/2012). The fourth coding category is entering the entire title of

the headline used to introduce each article. The fifth coding category reflects the word count presented from the content.

The bottom portion of the code sheet helps answer the research questions by gathering both qualitative and quantitative data that can be measured and discussed following the entire coding process. The first coding category of the bottom section is Article Type. This section defines the type of article being analyzed. Because of the different types of outlets being examined, the type of article is important to understand. If an article is an Official Press Release, a News Article from the newspaper, or a combination of one or more of these types that could influence the type of message being delivered and how it is delivered to the public. Following the coding of the Article Type is the introduction of OPR categories and the relationship indicators as defined in the research objectives.

Following Article Type is OPR Party Represented. This category focused on the representation and presentation of information by either member of this OPR. After OPR Party Represented, the next category focuses on the tone of the OPR that was being presented in the content. Titled “OPR Tone in Article,” this section categorizes the tones of the OPR as Positive, Negative or Neutral.

The focus of this next category, OPR Presence, is to investigate the presence of the relationship indicators inside the article being coded. From this section, an article could have demonstrated one level of the relationship indicators, none at all, or several. Being open to accepting all possible options will allow for a better understanding of the relationship when the coding process is finished and results are tallied. The articles can

demonstrate an indication of control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, trust, and face and favor or none at all.

An article that demonstrates Control Mutuality represents the agreement, cooperation, decision making process and equality that are involved in the OPR. An article that demonstrates Commitment represents the potentially long term relationship between the organization and the target publics. An article that demonstrates Trust provides details about the openness and reliability between the two parties. An organization must be trusted by the public in order to succeed and the public must be open to trust the organization for the OPR to flourish. An article that demonstrates Satisfaction represents the positive reinforcement that could be present inside the content. The article will mention potentially beneficial situations and favorable outcomes between the two parties. Finally, an article that demonstrates Face and Favor represents the networking that is being conducted between the organization and the target publics.

The next section is correlated to the previous section and will only be filled out where the article demonstrated one or more of the relationship indicators. This section, titled OPR Relevance, was created to provide qualitative data for the end results of this study. If an article demonstrated one or more of the relationship indicators, then the coder will then code the keywords that instigated this previous coding process. See Table 3 for a list of initial Coding Keywords that could potentially be found in the content that demonstrate each of the relationship indicators. Please note, throughout the results section, updated tables and figures are presented to demonstrate the more frequently used terms and words used in the content.

Table 3: Relationship Indicator Keyword List

Relationship Indicator	Primary Code Keywords	Additional Keywords
Commitment	Future plans	Worthiness
	Organizational goals	Maintain
	New Stadium	Extension
	New Contract	Endurance
	Commitment	
Trust	Trust (ed)(s)(worthiness)	Openness
		Dependable
		Fair
		Honest
		Reliable
Face and Favor	Reputation	Contact
	Outreach	Networking
Satisfaction	Happiness (Happy)	Positive Reinforcement
	Satisfaction	Favorable
		Helpful
		Useful
		Support (ive)
Control Mutuality	Agree (-ment)	Influence
	Cooperate (cooperation)	Decision
		Equal
		Guidance

The focus of this final category is to code the Tone that is present throughout the content. Although this section could be subjective by means of who is coding the actual content, this section offers an indication factor for whether or not this OPR is being framed with a positive, negative or neutral tone. For the purposes of this study, since one individual is conducting the coding process, the subjectivity and bias will not be as high as a study that is using several coders. An example of what a phrase that could be a tone

indication is, “I really appreciate the Rays organization because they have made our community prosper.”

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The Internet provides an outlet of communication for organizations to utilize in reaching out to their target publics and working to establish or maintain new relationships. The main purpose of this study was to investigate how an organization and its target publics express themselves over published content on two websites over the course of three full seasons.

The research findings from this chapter will begin by presenting general descriptive statistics as they relate to the research questions formulated in the Research Objectives. Following the analysis of each research question, additional information will be provided throughout the findings that examine the relationship indicators and how they relate to the study.

Throughout this chapter, a reference can be made the category or coded content of “both.” This will be found in the body of the results, but will also be described in several of the tables, charts, and figures. Please note that this category of “both,” in the following sections, will be referencing a category which is a result based on the combination of OPR Party Representation by the “Tampa Bay Ray Organization” and the “Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Publics” in the coded content.

Research Question 1: Based on the definition of an OPR, have the Tampa Bay Rays established a positive or negative relationship with its target publics?

This research question seeks to understand how active the Tampa Bay Rays are with its target publics, and whether or not it is utilizing the different categories of an OPR to assist the relationship.

Frequencies

From the Tampa Bay Rays website, it was found that over the course of the selected date range (2008-2011), there were 5,433 potential articles posted. Of those 5,433 articles, it was determined that 108 postings (1.9%) had OPR relevance that would add value to this study. From the second website, TampaBay.com (focus Tampa Bay Times newspaper), it was found through the usage of the Access World News database that there were 151 potential articles that pulled information based on the defined search terms. Of those 151 articles, after a preliminary sorting process, 28 articles (18.5%) showed OPR relevance that would add value to this study.

Of those 136 postings that were eventually coded, a frequency graph was developed to show the breakdown of activity by website over the course of a monthly basis and a yearly basis (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

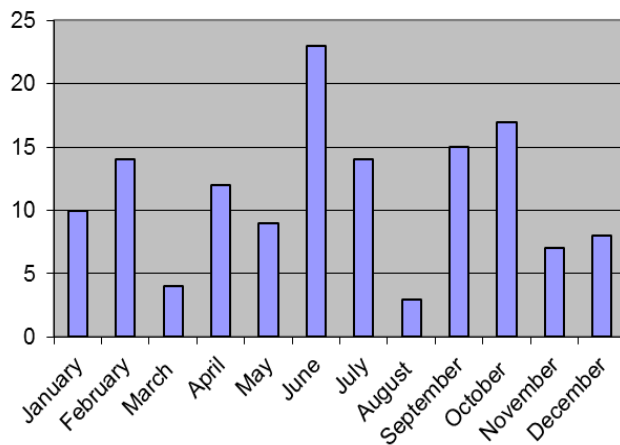


Figure 1: Monthly Frequency Chart

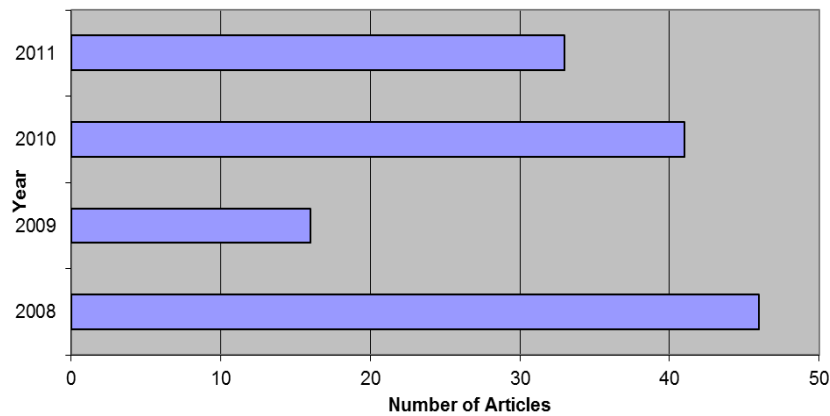


Figure 2 – Yearly Frequency Chart of Articles

On a monthly basis, June had the greatest frequency of articles posted with 23 (17%), followed by October with 17 (13%), September with 15 (11%), February with 10 (10%), and July with 10 postings (10%).

On a yearly basis, 2008 produced the greatest number of total relevant articles with 46 (34%), followed by 2010 with 41 postings (30%), 2011 with 33 postings (24%) and 2009 with 16 postings (12%).

OPR Tone Presence

After analyzing the frequency of articles presented over the course of a monthly and yearly basis, the following section will examine the website postings as they apply to the Organization-Public Relationship tone presented in the data.

The initial analysis will be based on the tones of the OPR Presence and the Overall Tone of the Article based on Article ID type. This will breakdown the two websites utilized for this study and show how often the tones were presented.

It was found, from the results, that those articles coded from TBR (Tampa Bay Rays) produced the greatest frequency of coded articles that had a positive OPR Tone and Overall Tone. At 62% positive OPR Tone Presence, and a 68% positive Overall Tone, this website produced the greatest amount of positive articles and dominated the other website. The TBT (Tampa Bay Times) website didn't produce the greatest frequency of positive articles, but it did produce the most frequent amount of Neutral and Negative articles based on the coded content. Published in the TBT were found to have 64% of the total articles have an OPR Tone that was neutral, and based on the Overall Tone, 50% of its articles had a neutral tone. Looking at the negative tone, the TBR website produced the least amount of articles in both categories, but the TBT website was found to have more than 25% negative tones in both categories. See Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 5 and Figure 6.

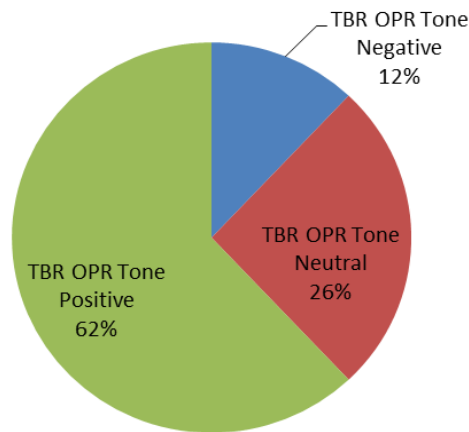


Figure 3: Results of Article ID Based on OPR Tone for Tampa Bay Rays Organization Website

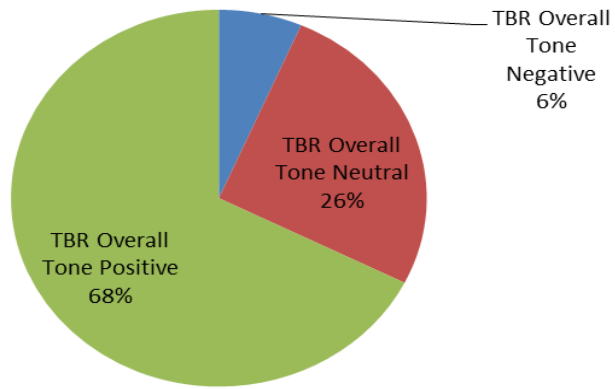


Figure 4: Results of Article ID based on Overall Tone for Tampa Bay Rays Organization Website

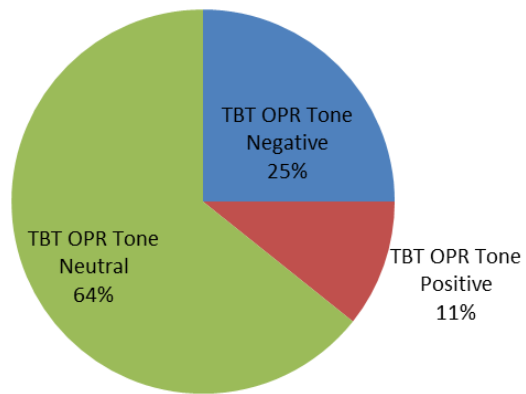


Figure 5: Results of Article ID based on OPR Tone for Tampa Bay Times

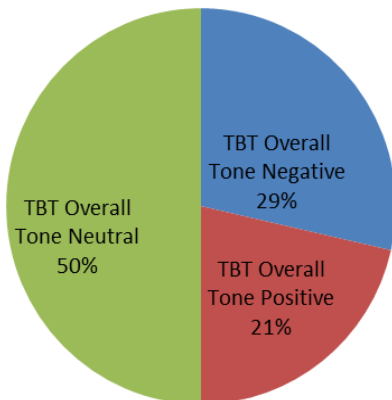


Figure 6: Results of Article ID based on Overall Tone for Tampa Bay Times

Following the breakdown of article type, from all the coded material the next two breakdown will be general statistics for overall OPR Tone and OPR Tone on a yearly basis.

Of the 136 coded articles, it was found that 70 total postings (51.4%) presented a “Positive” OPR tone in the content, followed by 46 total postings (33.8%) with a “Neutral” OPR tone and 20 total postings (14.8%) with a “Negative” OPR tone. To get a better understanding of how the tones were filtered throughout the 3-year span, please see Table 4 for a breakdown of OPR tone in the content by year to year basis.

Table 4: Breakdown of OPR Tone in Content on a yearly basis

OPR Tone in Article	Year								
	2008		2009		2010		2011		
Negative	4	3%	2	1%	6	4%	8	6%	
Neutral	16	12%	5	4%	13	10%	12	9%	
Positive	26	19%	9	7%	22	16%	13	10%	

Following the breakdown of OPR Tone that is present inside the article, an analysis of the OPR Tone Presence in the article will be examined with the Overall Tone of the Article.

From the coded content, the greatest frequency of articles had a “Positive OPR Tone with a Positive Overall Article Tone” (48%). This was followed by articles with a “Positive OPR Tone with a Neutral Overall Article Tone” (22%), then “Neutral OPR Tone with a Positive Overall Article Tone” (9%). The remaining articles were on the lower end of the frequency chart and those results can be found in Figure 7.

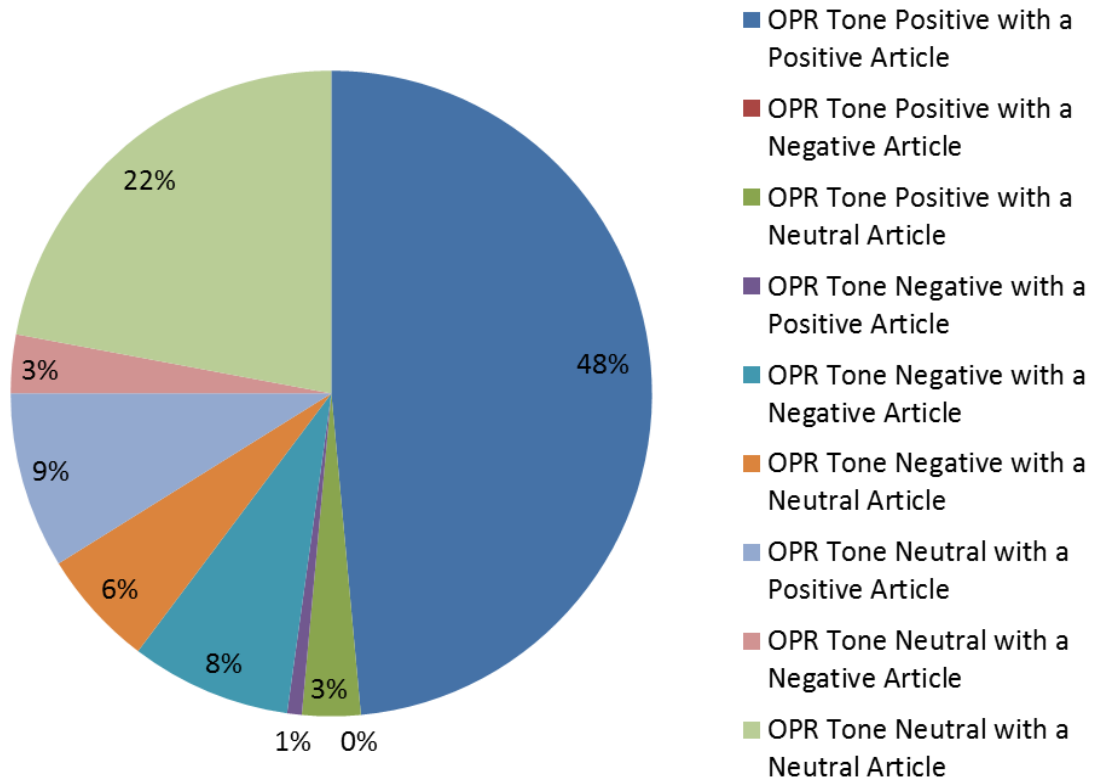


Figure 7: OPR Tone in Article with Overall Tone of Article Comparison

OPR Party Presentation of Material

This portion of the results analyzes the frequency of articles that presents the material based on the perspective of either party involved in the OPR or “both.”

From the sample of coded material, the Tampa Bay Rays organization presented its perspective in 56 articles (41%). On the flip side, the Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Publics presented their perspective only in 9 articles, which was 7% of the entire sample.

Producing the greatest percentage of involvement was the category of “both,” who presented a combination perspective in 71 articles, or 52% of the coded material.

Figure 8 examines the frequency of articles presented in each of the selected websites, which was then broken down by OPR Party representation inside the coded content.

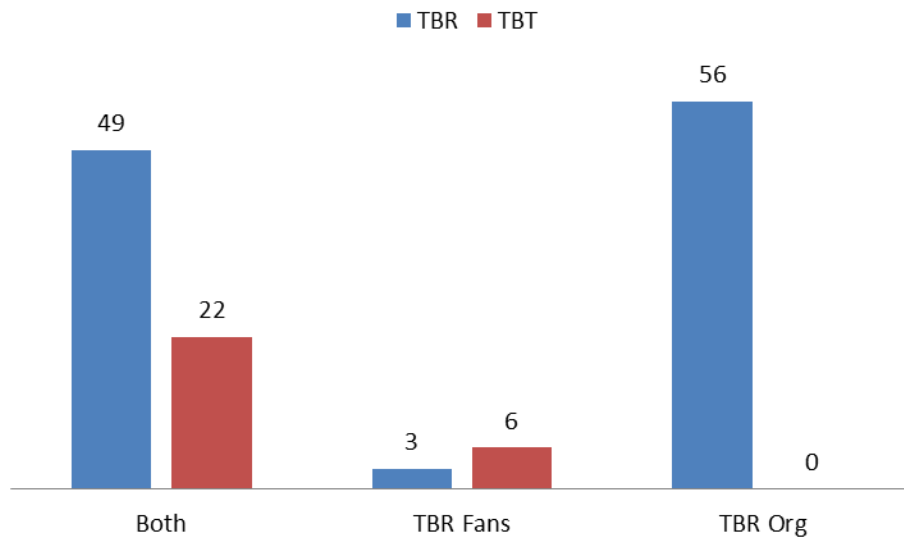


Figure 8: Frequency Chart by OPR Party Represented and Article ID

OPR Parties Representation and OPR Tone Presence

Based on the coding of articles, according to either party or “both,” an examination of the relationship between parties and OPR tone will be presented in Figure 9.

Looking at the percentages presented from this data, the greatest representation came from articles that were found to have “both” OPR parties presenting their perspectives with a Positive OPR Tone Presence at 32% (44 total articles). Following “Both OPR Parties and Positive OPR Tone Presence” were three groupings that fell in the

10%-20% range. Two of those three categories were presented by the Tampa Bay Rays Organization. In order of percentages, it was the “Tampa Bay Rays Organization with a Positive OPR Tone Presence” at 18% (24 total articles), followed by the “Tampa Bay Rays Organization with a Neutral OPR Tone Presence” at 15% (21 total articles), and finally, the category of “Both Parties with a Neutral OPR Tone Presence” at 14% (19 total articles).

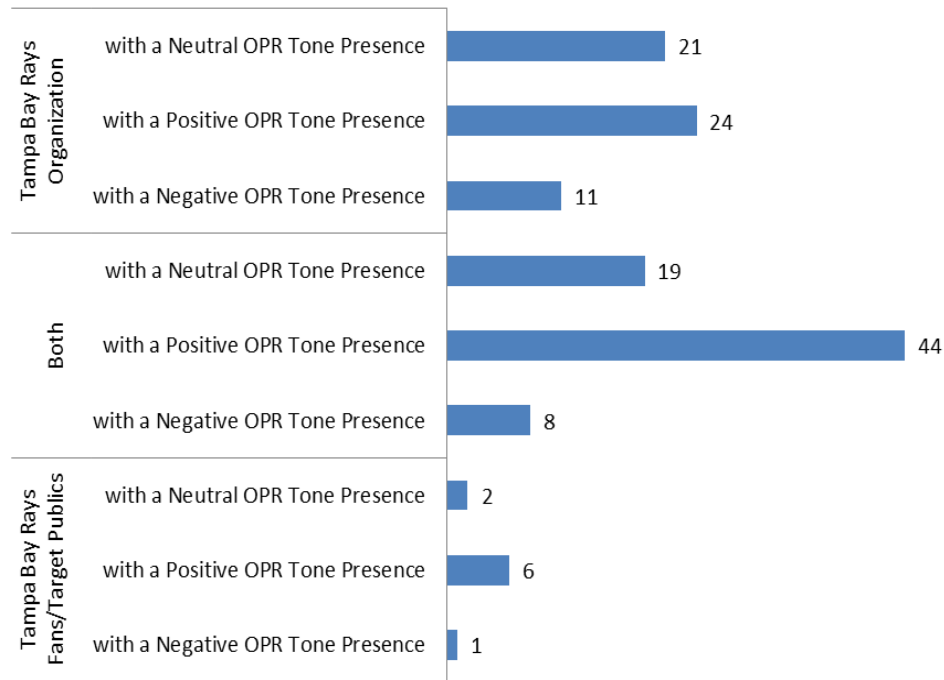


Figure 9: OPR Party Representation with OPR Tone Presence

Research Question 2: What representation of control mutuality has the OPR demonstrated through content published online?

The following results will examine the relationship indicator “Control Mutuality” and the representation it has established in the coded material.

Based on the coded results, not every article has a demonstration/representation of Control Mutuality. From the coded data, out of the 136 articles, there were 78 articles (57%) that did have the relationship indicator present itself.

Of those 78 articles that did have Control Mutuality representation, 60 articles were from the Tampa Bay Rays Organization website, www.raysbaseball.com. The remaining 18 articles came from the Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Public website – www.tampabay.com.

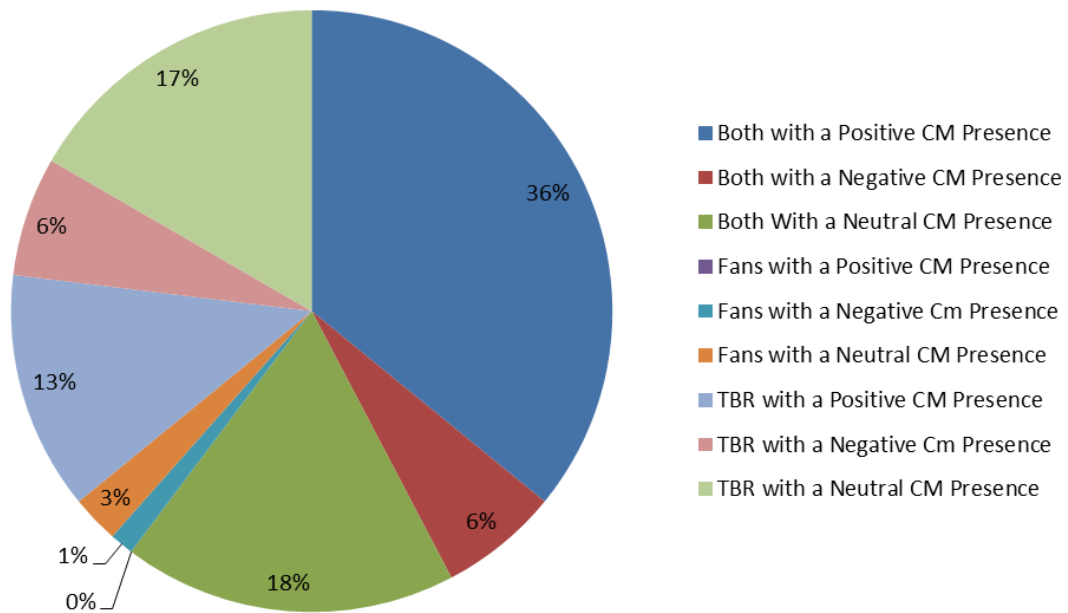
Following the breakdown of Control Mutuality based on the two websites, an analysis of this relationship indicator will be examined through the representation of OPR Parties, and then through the OPR Tone Presence in the content.

From the results, Control Mutuality was found to have the greatest representation in articles that had “both” parties represented in the content. At 60% of the coded material, this category of “both” was then followed by the “Tampa Bay Rays Organization” category with 28 articles (36%) demonstrating Control Mutuality. Showing the least representation of Control Mutuality were those articles that were presented from the perspective of the “Fans/Target Publics.” This final category only produced 3 articles, or 4% of the entire sample size.

Based on the category of OPR Tone Presence, Control Mutuality was found to have the greatest frequency of articles demonstrating a positive OPR tone. At 49% of the coded content, this category of positive OPR tone was then followed by those articles that demonstrated a neutral OPR tone, which was demonstrated in 37% of the articles. Showing the least amount of frequency in the content were those articles that represented a negative OPR tone, which only was found in 14% of the articles.

Following the analysis of these two categories separately is a breakdown of how this relationship indicator is represented by both categories over the entire coding sample. See Figure 10.

From the results, the greatest numbers of articles representing Control Mutuality were presented by “Both” parties that demonstrated a Positive OPR Tone Presence (36%). Following that category combination were those articles that were presented by “Both” parties that demonstrated a Neutral Tone Presence (18%), and those articles that represented the Tampa Bay Rays Organization demonstrating a Neutral OPR Tone Presence (17%). The six remaining categories fell in the lower levels of frequency, but their results can be seen in Figure 10.



Note. “Both” represents a combination of Tampa Bay Rays Organization and Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Publics categories. “Fans” represents the Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Publics category. “TBR” represents the Tampa Bay Rays Organization category.

Figure 10: Demonstration of Control Mutuality Based on a Comparison of OPR Party and OPR Tone Presence

Common Word Usage

In order to get a better understanding of the terms that describe the representation of Control Mutuality inside the published content, an examination of the articles for keywords that relate to the indicator were pulled and coded. Initial keywords were charted prior to the coding process based on synonyms and situations/issues that demonstrate Control Mutuality. See Table 3 for a listing of initial key word choices.

The following figure is a Word Cloud that was created from “tagcrowd.com.” “Tagcrowd.com” is a website that takes a listing of words and creates a cloud to visualize frequencies. Each word cloud is created with similar words being grouped together (example – opportunity, opportunities, opportune all being grouped together based on meaning) (Steinbock, 2012).

This picture was created from the key words pulled from the 78 articles that demonstrated Control Mutuality.



Figure 11: Control Mutuality Word Frequency Cloud

From the chart/graph/word cloud, the idea/term “opportunity” was the most frequent with 19 articles embedding this into the content. Following “opportunity” on the cloud is “support” and “encouraged.” These three terms are the most common among all articles that have Control Mutuality representation.

To examine the type of relationship that is being portrayed in the content through control mutuality, a breakdown of words pulled from the data will be separated by OPR Tone Presence. See Table 5.

Table 5: Word Frequency of Control Mutuality words from content

Positive	Negative	Neutral
"Opportunity" (11)	"Support" (4)	"Opportunity" (6)
"Encouraged" (6)	"Opportunity" (2)	"Support" (5)
"Joined" (5)		"Expect" (2)
"Support" (5)		

Research Question 3: What representation of trust has the OPR demonstrated through content published online?

The following results will examine the relationship indicator “Trust” and the representation that it has been presented with through the published content by the OPR.

Based on the coded results, not every article has a demonstrated “Trust.” From the coded data, out of the 136 articles, there were 31 articles (23%) that did have the relationship indicator present itself.

Of those 31 articles that did have Trust representation, 24 articles were from the Tampa Bay Rays Organization website, www.raysbaseball.com. The remaining 7 articles came from the Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Public website – www.tampabay.com.

The following charts are going to show a breakdown of how the representation of Trust is presented by the different OPR Parties involved and the OPR Tone Presence.

Following the breakdown of Trust based on the two websites, an analysis of this relationship indicator will be examined through the representation of OPR Parties, and then through the OPR Tone Presence in the content.

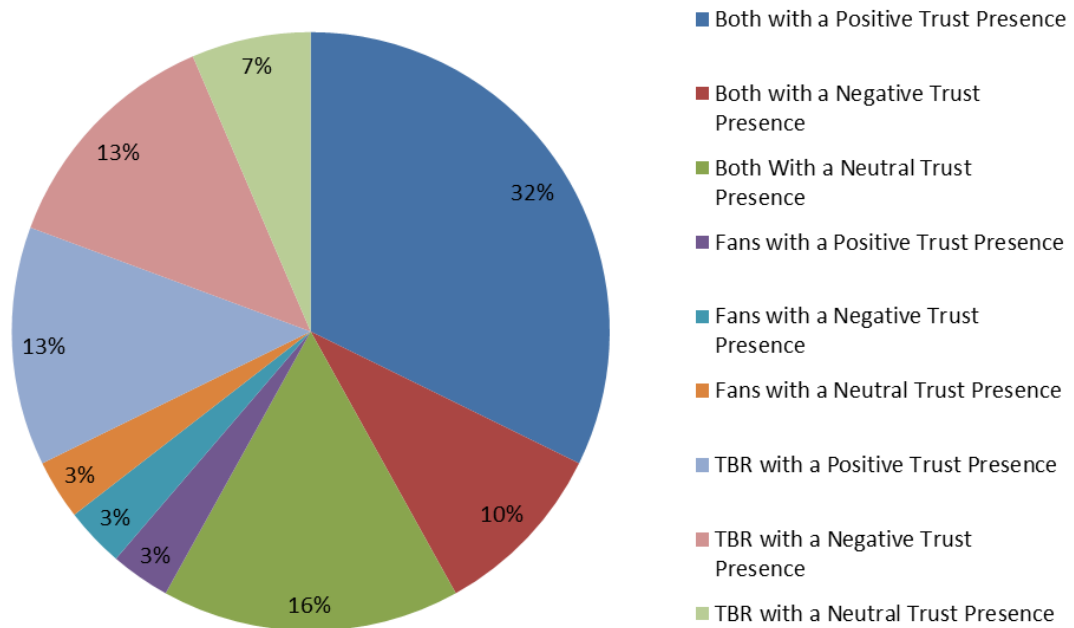
From the results, Trust was found to have the greatest representation in articles that had “both” parties represented in the content. At 58% of the coded material, this category of “both” was then followed by the “Tampa Bay Rays Organization” category with 10 articles (32%) demonstrating Trust. Showing the least representation of Trust were those articles that were presented from the perspective of the “Fans/Target Publics.” This final category only produced 3 articles, or 10% of the entire sample size.

Based on the category of OPR Tone Presence, Trust was found to have the greatest frequency of articles demonstrating a positive OPR tone. At 48% of the coded content, this category of positive OPR tone was then followed by a split between the 16 remaining articles demonstrating a neutral and negative OPR tone. Both categories were present in 8 articles or 26% of the coded content.

Following the analysis of these two categories separately is a breakdown of how this relationship indicator is represented by both categories over the entire coding sample. See Figure 12

From the results, the greatest numbers of articles representing Trust were presented by “Both” parties that demonstrated a Positive OPR Tone Presence (32%). Following that category combination were those articles that were presented by ““Both” parties that demonstrated a Neutral Tone Presence” (16%), and then two combinations

were tied at 13% of the coded content – “Tampa Bay Rays Organization with a Negative OPR Tone Presence” and “Tampa Bay Rays Organization with a Positive OPR Tone Presence.” The five remaining categories fell in the lower levels of frequency, but their results can be seen in Figure 12.



Note. “Both” represents a combination of Tampa Bay Rays Organization and Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Publics categories. “Fans” represents the Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Publics category. “TBR” represents the Tampa Bay Rays Organization category.

Figure 12: Demonstration of Trust Based on a Comparison of OPR Party and OPR Tone Presence

Common Word Usage

Following the same methods of analyzing the common words that were utilized for Control Mutuality, the category of Trust will have all keywords implemented into a “word cloud” to get a better understanding and visualize frequencies.

The following picture is a “word cloud” that was created for the listing of words that represent trust from the published content. Please remember that each “word cloud” is a visualization of frequencies and common words that have similar meanings.



Figure 13: Trust Word Frequency Cloud

From the data, the idea/term “believe” showed the greatest frequency of representation in 10 articles. Following “believe” on the “word cloud” is “chance” being present in 4 articles and “belief” being present in 3 articles.

To examine the type of relationship that is being portrayed in the content through Trust, a breakdown of words pulled from the data will be separated by OPR Tone Presence. See Table 6.

Table 6: Word Frequency of Trust words from content

Positive	Negative	Neutral
"Believe" (4)	"Believe" (3)	"Believes" (3)
"Chance" (3)	"Fair" (1)	"Consideration" (1)
"Belief" (2)	"Problem" (1)	"Honesty" (1)
	"Issue" (1)	"Loyalty" (1)
	"Unsure" (1)	
	"Faith" (1)	

Research Question 4: What demonstration of satisfaction has been demonstrated by the OPR through content published online?

The following results will examine the relationship indicator “Satisfaction” and the representation it has established in the coded material.

Based on the coded results, not every article has a demonstration/representation of Satisfaction. From the coded data, out of the 136 articles, there were 95 articles (70%) that did have the relationship indicator present itself.

Of those 95 articles that did have Satisfaction representation, 74 articles were from the Tampa Bay Rays Organization website, www.raysbaseball.com. The remaining 21 articles came from the Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Public website – www.tampabay.com.

Following the breakdown of Satisfaction based on the two websites, an analysis of this relationship indicator will be examined through the representation of OPR Parties, and then through the OPR Tone Presence in the content.

From the results, Satisfaction was found to have the greatest representation in articles that had “both” parties represented in the content. At 55% of the coded material, this category of “both” was then followed by the “Tampa Bay Rays Organization” category with 36 articles (38%) demonstrating Satisfaction. Showing the least representation of Satisfaction were those articles that were presented from the perspective of the “Fans/Target Publics.” This final category only produced 7 articles, or 7% of the entire sample size.

Based on the category of OPR Tone Presence, Satisfaction was found to have the greatest frequency of articles demonstrating a positive OPR tone. At 49% of the coded

content, this category of positive OPR tone was then followed by those articles that demonstrated a neutral OPR tone, which was demonstrated in 33% of the articles. Showing the least amount of frequency in the content were those articles that represented a negative OPR tone, which only was found in 18% of the articles.

Following the analysis of these two categories separately is a breakdown of how this relationship indicator is represented by both categories over the entire coding sample. See Figure 14.

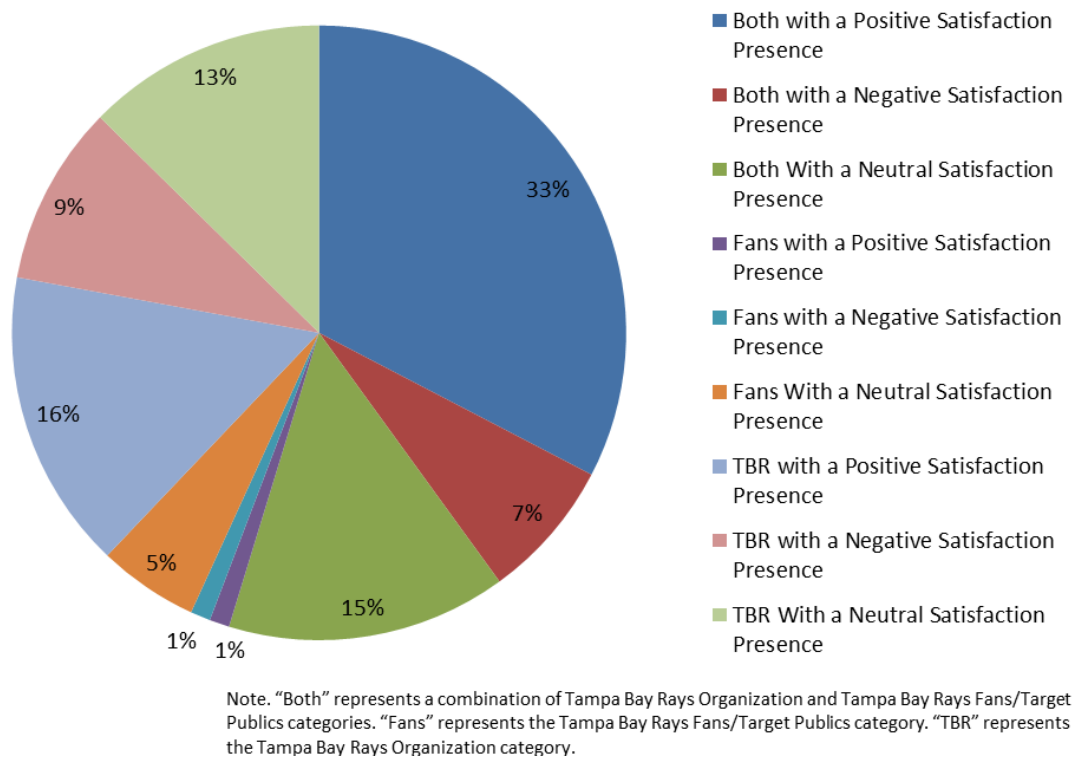


Figure 14: Demonstration of Satisfaction Based on a Comparison of OPR Party and OPR Tone Presence

From the results, the greatest numbers of articles representing Satisfaction were presented by "Both" parties that demonstrated a Positive OPR Tone Presence (33%).

Following that category combination were those articles that were presented by the “Tampa Bay Rays Organization with a Positive OPR Tone Presence” (16%), and those articles representing ““Both” parties demonstrating a Neutral OPR Tone Presence” (15%). The six remaining categories fell in the lower levels of frequency, but their results can be seen in Figure 14.

Common Word Usage

Following the same methods utilized for Control Mutuality with regards to common word usage, the category of Satisfaction will have all coded keywords implemented into a “word cloud” to get a better understanding of thematic patterns and frequencies.

The following picture is a “word cloud” that was created for the listing of words that represent Satisfaction from the published content. Please remember that each “word cloud” is a visualization of frequencies and common words that have similar meanings.



Figure 15: Satisfaction Word Frequency Cloud

From the data, the idea/term “excited” showed the greatest frequency of representation in 8 articles. Following “excited,” on the “word cloud,” is “benefit” and “proud” both being present in 7 articles each and “appreciate” being present in 6 articles.

To examine the type of relationship that is being portrayed in the content through Satisfaction, a breakdown of words pulled from the data will be separated by OPR Tone Presence. See Table 7.

Table 7: Word Frequency of Satisfaction words from content

Positive	Negative	Neutral
"Excited" (6)	"Challenges" (2)	"Benefit" (3)
"Proud" (6)	"Disappointed" (2)	"Appreciate" (2)
"Appreciate" (4)	"Embarrassing" (2)	"Excited" (2)
"Benefit" (4)	"Frustration" (2)	"Disappointed" (2)
"Thanks" (3)	"Unhappy" (2)	"Satisfied" (2)
"Impressed" (3)	"Suffer" (2)	"Opposes" (2)
"Happy" (3)		"Intrigued" (2)
"Successful" (3)		
"Awesome" (3)		

Research Question 5: What level of commitment has the OPR presented through content published online?

The following results will examine the relationship indicator “Commitment” and the representation it has established in the coded material.

Based on the coded results, not every article has a demonstration/representation of Commitment. From the coded data, out of the 136 articles, there were 97 articles (71%) that did have the relationship indicator present itself.

Of those 98 articles that did have Commitment representation, 71 articles were from the Tampa Bay Rays Organization website, www.raysbaseball.com. The remaining

26 articles came from the Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Public website – www.tampabay.com.

Following the breakdown of Commitment based on the two websites, an analysis of this relationship indicator will be examined through the representation of OPR Parties, and then through the OPR Tone Presence in the content.

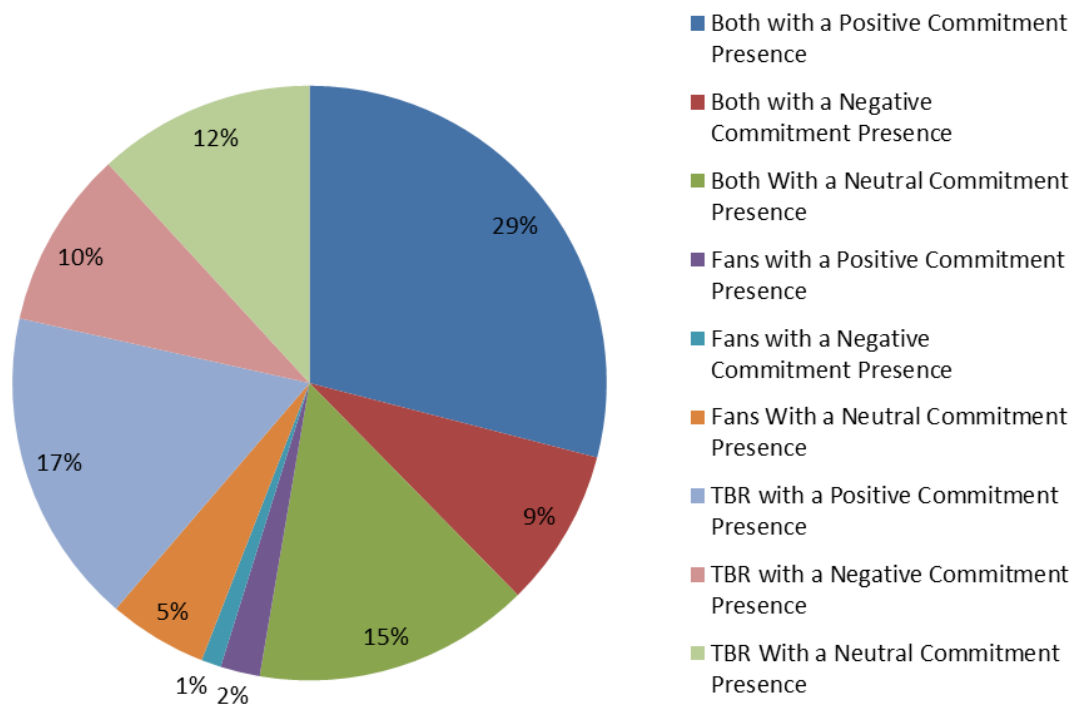
From the results, Commitment was found to have the greatest representation in articles that had “both” parties represented in the content. At 55% of the coded material, this category of “both” was then followed by the “Tampa Bay Rays Organization” category with 36 articles (37%) demonstrating Commitment. Showing the least representation of Commitment were those articles that were presented from the perspective of the “Fans/Target Publics.” This final category only produced 8 articles, or approximately 8% of the entire sample size.

Based on the category of OPR Tone Presence, Control Mutuality was found to have the greatest frequency of articles demonstrating a positive OPR tone. At 46% of the coded content, this category of positive OPR tone was then followed by those articles that demonstrated a neutral OPR tone, which was demonstrated in 35% of the articles. Showing the least amount of frequency in the content were those articles that represented a negative OPR tone, which constituted only 19% of the articles.

Following the analysis of these two categories separately is a breakdown of how this relationship indicator is represented by both categories over the entire coding sample. See Figure 16.

From the results, the greatest numbers of articles representing Control Mutuality were presented by ““Both” parties that demonstrated a Positive OPR Tone Presence”

(29%). Following that category combination were those articles that were presented by the “Tampa Bay Rays Organization demonstrating a Positive OPR Tone Presence” (17%), and those representing ““Both” parties that demonstrated a Neutral OPR Tone Presence” (15%). The six remaining categories fell in the lower levels of frequency, but their results can be seen in Figure 16.



Note. “Both” represents a combination of Tampa Bay Rays Organization and Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Publics categories. “Fans” represents the Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Publics category. “TBR” represents the Tampa Bay Rays Organization category.

Figure 16: Demonstration of Commitment Based on a Comparison of OPR Party and OPR Tone Presence

Common Word Usage

Following the same methods utilized for Control Mutuality with regards to common word usage, the category of Commitment will have all coded keywords

implemented into a “word cloud” to get a better understanding of thematic patterns and frequencies.

The following picture is a “word cloud” that was created for the listing of words that represent Commitment from the published content. Please remember that each “word cloud” is a visualization of frequencies and common words that have similar meanings.

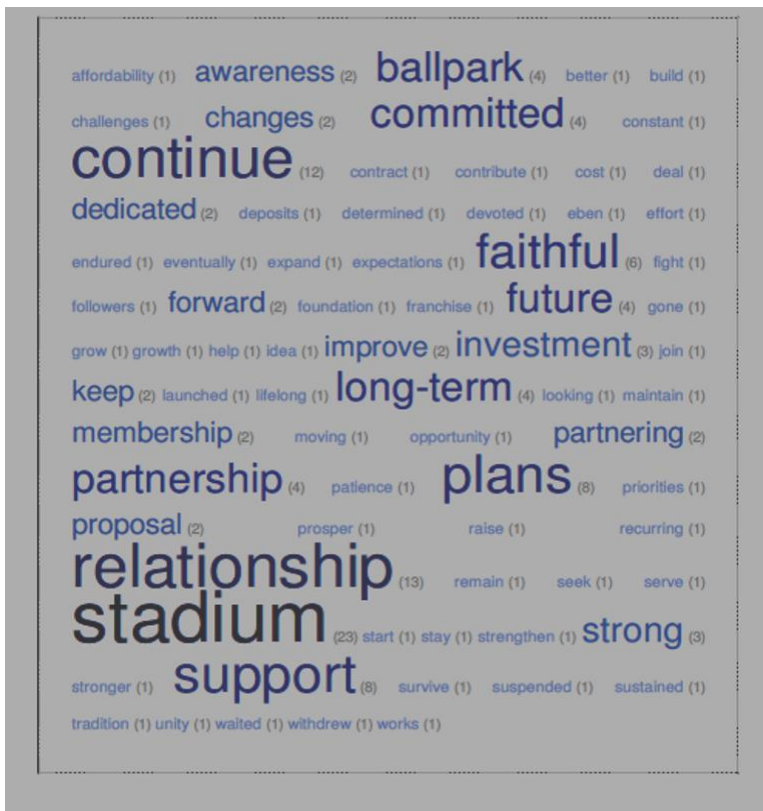


Figure 17: Commitment Word Frequency Cloud

From the data, the idea/term “Stadium” showed the greatest frequency of representation in 23 articles. Following “Stadium” on the “word cloud” is “relationship” being present in 13 articles and “continue” being present in 12 articles.

To examine the type of relationship that is being portrayed in the content through Commitment, a breakdown of words pulled from the data will be separated by OPR Tone Presence. See Table 8.

Table 8: Word Frequency of Commitment words from content

Positive	Negative	Neutral
"Support" (6)	"Stadium" (8)	"Stadium" (15)
"Faithful" (4)	"Relationship" (5)	"Relationship" (7)
"Continue" (4)		"Plans" (5)
"Investment" (3)		
"Strong" (3)		

Research Question 6: What demonstration of face and favor is presented by the OPR through content published online?

The following results will examine the relationship indicator “Face and Favor” and the representation it has established in the coded material.

Based on the coded results, not every article has a demonstration/representation of Face and Favor. From the coded data, out of the 136 articles, there were 57 articles (42%) that did have the relationship indicator present itself.

Of those 57 articles that did have Face and Favor representation, 39 articles were from the Tampa Bay Rays Organization website, www.raysbaseball.com. The remaining 18 articles came from the Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Public website – www.tampabay.com.

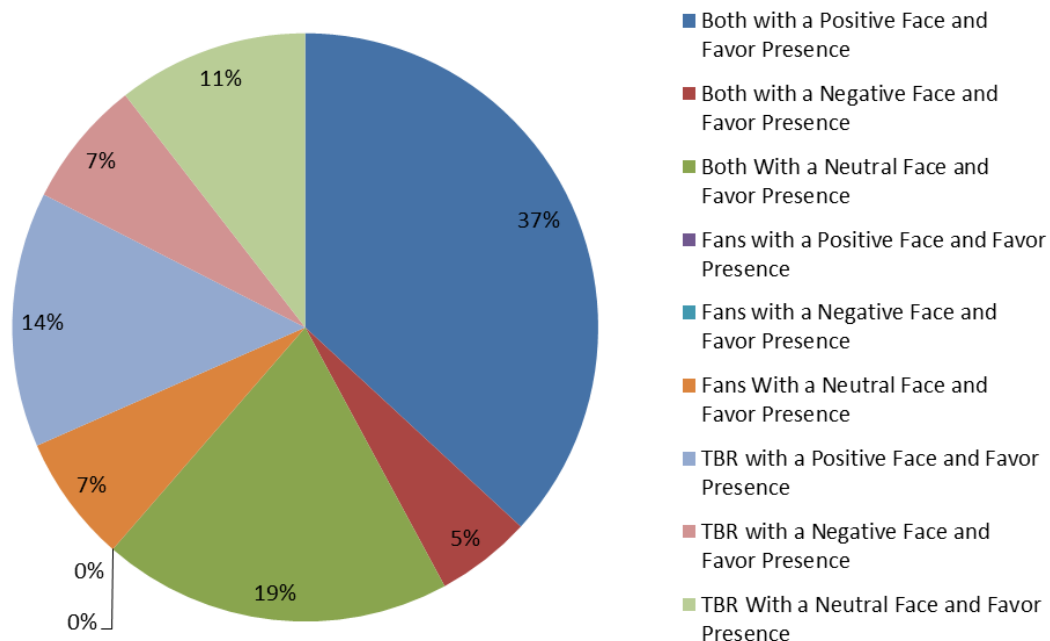
Following the breakdown of Face and Favor based on the two websites, an analysis of this relationship indicator will be examined through the representation of OPR Parties, and then through the OPR Tone Presence in the content.

From the results, Face and Favor was found to have the greatest representation in articles that had “both” parties represented in the content. At 61% of the coded material, this category of “both” was then followed by the “Tampa Bay Rays Organization” category with 18 articles (32%) demonstrating Face and Favor. Showing the least representation of Face and Favor were those articles that were presented from the perspective of the “Fans/Target Publics.” This final category only produced 4 articles, or 7% of the entire sample size.

Based on the category of OPR Tone Presence, Face and Favor was found to have the greatest frequency of articles demonstrating a positive OPR tone. At 51% of the coded content, this category of positive OPR tone was then followed by those articles that demonstrated a neutral OPR tone, which was demonstrated in 37% of the articles. Showing the least amount of frequency in the content were those articles that represented a negative OPR tone, which only was found in 12% of the articles.

Following the analysis of these two categories separately is a breakdown of how this relationship indicator is represented by both categories over the entire coding sample. See Figure 18.

From the results, the greatest numbers of articles representing Face and Favor were presented by “Both” parties that demonstrated a Positive OPR Tone Presence (37%). Following that category combination were those articles that were presented by “Both” parties that demonstrated a Neutral Tone Presence (19%), and those articles that represented the Tampa Bay Rays Organization demonstrating a Positive OPR Tone Presence (14%). The six remaining categories fell in the lower levels of frequency, but their results can be seen in Figure 18.



Note. "Both" represents a combination of Tampa Bay Rays Organization and Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Publics categories. "Fans" represents the Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Publics category. "TBR" represents

Figure 18: Demonstration of Face and Favor Based on a Comparison of OPR Party and OPR Tone Presence

Common Word Usage

Following the same methods utilized for Control Mutuality with regards to common word usage, the category of Face and Favor will have all coded keywords implemented into a "word cloud" to get a better understanding of thematic patterns and frequencies.

The following picture is a "word cloud" that was created for the listing of words that represent Face and Favor from the published content. Please remember that each "word cloud" is a visualization of frequencies and common words that have similar meanings.

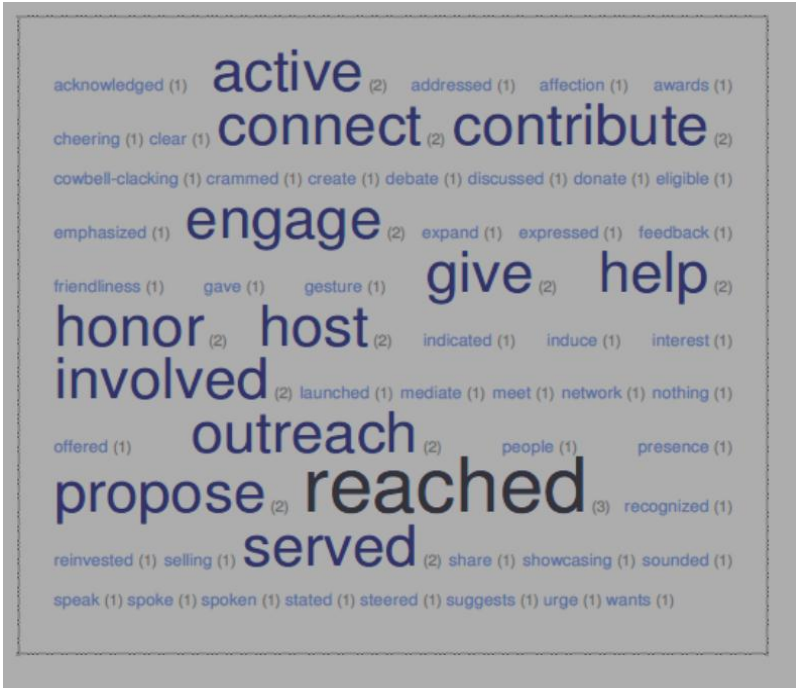


Figure 19: Face and Favor Word Frequency Cloud

From the data, the idea/term “reached” showed the greatest frequency of representation in 3 articles. Following “reached” on the “word cloud” is 12 different words that were presented in at least 2 articles.

To examine the type of relationship that is being portrayed in the content through Face and Favor, a breakdown of words pulled from the data will be separated by OPR Tone Presence. See Table 9.

Table 9: Word Frequency of Face and Favor words from content

Positive	Negative	Neutral
"Reached" (3)	"Addressed" (1)	"Propose" (2)
"Active"(1)	"Affection" (1)	"Engage" (2)
"Contribute" (1)	"Spoke" (1)	"Expressed" (1)
"Connect" (1)	"Served" (1)	"Mediate (1)
"Give" (1)	"Speak" (1)	"Discussed" (1)
"Help" (1)	"Spoken" (1)	"Induce" (1)
"Host" (1)		"Steered" (1)
"Involved" (1)		"Urge" (1)
"Outreach (1)		"Debate" (1)

Analysis of Results

The next chapter will analyze these results and pull all descriptive statistics, and conclude on any frequencies or thematic patterns that were found from the coding process.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Every new opportunity presents itself a number of potential challenges. With regards to the Internet, the progression and expansion of online conversations and communication is no exception, and it is this challenge that is the premise for this study.

This study examined the relationship of the Tampa Bay Rays organization with its target publics as represented in its online content. The results revealed: (1) that differences in framing exist; (2) a representation of frequent material and topics does occur; (3) there are thematic patterns on the part of the source; and finally, (4) the perspective of what may show up from online content may differ from the outside perspective.

Please note, the results of this content analysis are not intended to be generalized for all OPRs, but this study can serve as a guide as to what items might help an organization establish a relationship or maintain a relationship with its target publics.

Throughout this chapter, the researcher will interpret the findings from the content analysis conducted and explore points that were observed from this study. In addition, interpreting the results, an elaboration of potential limitations, that could have hindered this study, and opportunities for future research will be presented.

Discussion on Findings

Based on the results, it can be stated that regular occurrences were reflected throughout the content that provided higher amount of frequent materials in some categories and sources.

From the study, it was found that the Tampa Bay Rays organization, through its own website, posted the most articles with reference to the relationship. It was surprising that they didn't publish more articles over the course of 3 years (4 complete seasons) to enhance the relationship. It appeared that the organization was contempt in their postings, because out of the 5,433 articles that were published from January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2011, there were only 108 articles that had presence of the OPR in question.

The Target Fans/Publics, who were represented and associated with the Tampa Bay Times newspaper, presented the least opportunity to pull content, providing 28 articles in that same 3 year span as the organization did. The only feasible reason this happened is because the search terms were either too general or too specific that they weren't able to pull quality articles. In order to find quality articles and narrow down the search results from published articles in this newspaper, the researcher utilized the Access World News Database.

With reference to the Tampa Bay Rays website (representing the organization), aside from those 56 articles that were only representing the organization in the content, it was surprising that the largest frequency of articles that included both the organization's and target public's perspective came from this website. Based on prior knowledge of this topic, the researcher was expecting this to be the opposite, but after looking at the results, this may have only occurred because there were so few articles posted by the newspaper.

The results also showed that the Tampa Bay Rays posted the greatest frequency of articles that presented a "positive" relationship presence. With reference to the OPR Tone Presence, of the 108 articles coded, the organization presented 62% of its articles

with a positive OPR Tone. From the data, the Tampa Bay Rays website presented articles with overall positive tones 68% of the time. Based on these two statistics, it appears that the organization is constantly trying to portray a positive relationship to the readers even if things may not always be going the way they wish.

After positive tones and articles, were those neutral ones with the next high frequency. Although the organization posted the greatest number of articles with neutral perspectives, the greatest frequency, based on the coded content, goes to the Tampa Bay Times newspaper. From the results, the Tampa Bay Times presented a neutral article 50% of the time, and based on the OPR Tone it was presented 64% of the time. This dominates the organizations presentation of a neutral presence which had 26% of their articles in both categories have this topic.

Reviewing this data, this specific item of OPR Tone and Overall Tone of the Article wasn't a surprise because, as mentioned before, the organization will more frequently present a higher percentage of its articles with a positive tone to maintain a good relationship. The neutrality of the Tampa Bay Times shows that it doesn't want to upset any side of the party by always presenting a positive or negative article, and more importantly, the content of their articles are always presenting both sides of the spectrum allowing both perspectives to voice their opinion on a matter.

Looking at the final category of potential tone, the negative articles were not as frequent as expected. From the data, both parties involved in the relationship did present articles that demonstrated a negative frame, but it was the Tampa Bay Times that had the highest percentage of negative content. Of the 28 coded articles, the Tampa Bay Times

presented a negative OPR Tone 25% of the time and 29% of the time it had an entire article present a negative tone.

Based on the information for the frequencies of tones in the articles, the researcher believed that because the newspaper is a much more “open” communication channel to express thoughts, opinions and feelings, the content was much more neutral or negative than the organizations high frequency of positive content.

Following the frequencies of tones in the articles, there were several thematic patterns that appeared from the coded content.

From the data, June had the greatest number of articles that showed reference to the OPR. Followed closely by October and September, June, based on the researchers perspective, presented the greatest number of articles, over the year span, for two reasons. First off, June is right in the middle of the season which provides a great deal of information and stories for individuals to post on. Secondly, June is an important time for the organization to remind fans and target publics to come out to the stadium, because the buzz and excitement of the beginning of the season has worn off and it’s time to stimulate their thought process again.

It was a surprise that the most content relating to the OPR was found to be in the middle of the baseball season. The researcher was expecting the articles relating to the OPR to be the most frequent during the off-seasons when the organization is trying to intrigue individuals to come back and remind them why it is important to support their organization.

Moving along the results section, the next category to cover is the frequency on a yearly basis. Most articles that made reference to the OPR were published during 2008

and 2010. 2008 had the greatest amount of articles with 46, but 2010 was very close with 41 article postings. This was a surprising statistic, because one could expect the greatest number of articles relating to this OPR to be found the year after they had their breakout season and the season after they went to the playoffs for the second time. On the flip side, one could not be surprised that 2008 had the greatest amount of articles, because it was the first time both the organization and the newspaper could actually post anything about the team that wasn't just factual data or statistics.

In addition to the yearly frequency, the greatest number of articles that had a positive OPR tone was found in 2008, and the greatest number of negative OPR tone articles was found in 2011. As mentioned before, the frequency of positive articles must relate to the fact that both websites were finally able to post articles about their breakout season and all the positive items that occurred, such as: the team's first winning season; the team's first trip to the playoffs; the team winning the American League Pennant; and finally, the team's first appearance in the World Series. With 2011 producing the greatest number of negative articles, it leads me to believe that the negative feelings and emotions from all involved parties were coming to the surface because the team was doing so well on the field, but their support in the attendance numbers and the constant issue of a new stadium were constantly being brought up in interviews or discussions.

In addition to analyzing the frequency of articles over the years and on a month to month basis, from the coded material, there were common topics and issues that were brought to the surface. Although there was no specific category on the code sheet to retrieve this information, many of the common words used throughout the content are topics that have been at the center of this relationship dating all the way back to 2008.

The most common topics and issues can be found present in the commitment relationship indicator. From the data, the most common topics were the “New Stadium/Ballpark,” “the commitment from both parties,” “the future or long-term plans,” and finally, “support or partnership present in the relationship.”

The topic, or common term, of the “new stadium/ballpark” had the greatest frequency of 19 articles bringing it up as a commitment issue in the relationship. Although it was found to be present in the greatest amount of neutral articles, there was a belief that there could be highly negative connotation when presented in the content. Following the “new stadium/ballpark,” was the topic of “commitment from both parties.” This is one of the most common topics/issues because it relates to the lack of people attending the games and lack of commitment from the organization to make necessary strides to improve the OPR. Although there are various number of terms that can be used as a point of reference for this topic, one would suggest that “committed, faithful, patience, followers, and devoted” all relate to this topic. Continuing down the list of common topics, the third most referenced idea is “the future or long-term plans.” Being referenced in a large portion of the commitment articles, this topic suggests that the future of the organization or its relationship with the fans/target publics is on the mind of both involved parties. A lot of the references to long-term plans dealt with the new stadium topic, but it also referenced the issue of whether the long-term plans of the organization would include staying in the Tampa Bay area or potentially moving away. Even though there were so many articles that showed a high percentage of positivity, the actual coded content does paint a different picture. The final common topic, brought up in a number of the commitment articles, is the “support or partnership present in the

relationship.” With reference to the Rays Baseball Foundation and the numerous community involvement programs the organization conducted, the terms “support, relationship, partnership, and investment,” were just a few that made their community involvement a highly coded topic over the course of those 3 years.

Discussion on Organization-Public Relationship

After reviewing the frequencies and thematic patterns that were present across all the coded material, this section will examine the OPR and the relationship indicators defined by Hon and Grunig (1999) and Huang (2001) that were utilized in this study.

From the results, it appears that the Tampa Bay Rays organization and its target publics have a very positive relationship, but as mentioned in the previous section there are common topics that could present a different idea. Since this study analyzed five different relationship indicators, the data will show: which indicators were the most popular; frequencies in presentation from both websites; and finally which words were pulled from the content that portrayed that specific indicator.

The most common relationship indicator demonstrated in the content was commitment. Out of the 136 coded articles, commitment was presented 97 times (71%). From the data, the topic of commitment referenced a great deal of futuristic plans and ideas. Although the articles referenced the new stadium and organizational goals for the future, the commitment topics were also mentioning current commitment situations. The data revealed that 19% of the articles referenced a negative OPR Tone Presence. With reference to published content, when studying commitment, it is important to understand that a desire for commitment is necessary for any organization to flourish. If a company

has to constantly bring the issue up, whether positive, negative or even neutrally, that doesn't show well for the future.

The second most common relationship indicator was satisfaction. Out of the 136 coded articles, 95 different articles (70%) demonstrated satisfaction. Mostly presented in a positive manner, satisfaction was commonly used in the content on behalf of both parties presenting information, but it was mainly the fans expressing their feelings about the organization. The data revealed that the common expressions, on behalf of the fans, entailed: excitement about the upcoming seasons; the happiness with the team and how they were doing on the field; and finally appreciation toward current situations. The satisfaction indicator is very important to the survival of this organization, because if this was found to be at the lower end of the list, that means the organization and fans were not satisfied with anything going on and they are barely hanging on. The fact that this indicator was the second most referenced, and it was more frequently mentioned with positive presence, might indicate that both parties could have been satisfied with current situations and the organization was keeping the fans happy on a regular basis.

Control mutuality was the third most common relationship indicator found from the results. Since control mutuality relies upon the engagement of both parties and an understanding of power placement, the content pulled from the articles make me believe that this is an area of focus the organization shouldn't really focus on to improve their relationship. From the data, the common terms that arose from the content were: "opportunities; encourage; and support." Based on these code words, the organization is giving the target publics/fans every opportunity to take full advantage of all aspects it has to offer, and it is giving them the power to make the most of this opportunity. If the

target publics/fans aren't taking full advantage of these opportunities to encourage and support the organization, or team, then it will be on them if something drastic happens to the relationship in the long run.

From the results, the fourth most common relationship indicator was face and favor. Out of the 136 articles from both websites, face and favor was presented 57 times (42% of the total articles). After reviewing the results and the coded content, it appears that the organization is not putting enough effort into creating a connection with its target publics/fans. The whole point of face and favor is to point out moments of networking and connecting. From the data, most of the articles that referenced any sort of face and favor were dealing with the "Rays Baseball Foundation." The foundation is a program created to become involved with the community and publicly get the organization out there. Yes, this is exactly what face and favor is trying to examine, but the fact that the organization is only getting publicity on those items it is choosing to become a part of makes me feel that it is not willing to go above and beyond typical expectations.

Finally, the data revealed that the relationship indicator that was least present was trust. On top of being the least present indicator in the content, trust was also the indicator that had the greatest frequency of negative OPR Tone presence with 26% of the total trust articles. What can be inferred from this data is that either the organization doesn't believe or trust the target publics/fans to turn the current situation around to enhance the relationship, or vice versa and the target publics/fans don't trust the organization in its endeavors or actions. This is one area that the OPR needs to focus on because without trust, why would anyone want to commit his or her money and time to something that seems hopeless.

Discussion on Framing

Since the previous section analyzed the frequency and importance of the relationship indicators inside the content, the framing of these indicators and the content should be examined next. It should be noted, that when studying Framing, it's a common theme to find that the some things are emphasized more than others, while others are ignored altogether. With regard to the content that was coded and the relationship indicators, there are probably good portions of this relationship that were left out of both websites.

As mentioned before, commitment was the most frequent relationship indicator which means both sides are constantly bringing up the issue of commitment between the parties. Whether it is positive, negative or neutral, the constant presence of commitment issues portrays areas of concern to any reader. The fact that the new stadium/ballpark was the most frequently referenced throughout the content makes me believe that this one topic is the main thing keeping commitment levels so high for this organization. If it wasn't for conversation, postings or articles referencing a new potential stadium, the organization would have no hope for the future. The fact that it is always brought up also makes me believe that the commitment factor of this relationship relies heavily on the conversation centered around the new stadium, when it should be focusing on other agenda items.

With reference to the other relationship indicators, I do believe that both websites would have liked to publish their content in different manners but, because of the expectations that each one has to maintain, any true representation of a relationship between an organization and its target publics will be hindered.

Interpretation of Relationship Indicators

From the results, each of the relationship indicators has provided insight into how the relationship between the Tampa Bay Rays organization and its target publics was presented and viewed by both parties involved. It can be inferred that one of the key factors when dealing with online media content is the importance of getting your perspective out there in a way that will be easy to understand and sufficient enough to get your point across. The following section will present each of the relationship indicators and how they are involved in the content and the interpretation by the researcher.

The first relationship indicator to be analyzed is control mutuality. It was previously mentioned in a prior chapter that this specific indicator is a measurement of the exertion of power throughout the relationship. From the results, it was found that “opportunity” was a term that commonly used, but it also demonstrated the best example for how this relationship exerted power between the two parties involved.

The Tampa Bay Rays organization presented the term “opportunity” with several different contexts. From a sample of those articles, the organization mentioned the word “opportunity” with intent of presenting that there has been a shift of power inside the relationship and the organization should not be held responsible for what has occurred. The consistent topics presented with those “opportunity” articles were: mention of buying season tickets; supporting the team; and generally, just a request to come out to the ballpark. Presented through a variety of tones, these few examples present this level of exhaustion that the organization has reached and from a researchers point of view a successful team shouldn’t have to beg and plead fans to come out and support the team. Some additional examples used in the context are: “the lowering of ticket prices;”

“offering concerts after the game;” “having playgrounds built by the organization;” and “even having a successful product.” Each of these examples could present an idea that the power is no longer in the organizations control, but it has shifted and it is now up to the fans/target publics if they choose not to take advantage of the current situation.

Pulling from the content, an article was posted on the Tampa Bay Rays website on September 12, 2010 that went into detail about the organization’s views on the attendance level and the support they are receiving from the Tampa Bay community. Joe Maddon, the manager of the team, was quoted saying “If you were truly a baseball person, and I believe there are enough of those around the Tampa Bay area, that if you had this opportunity to go and see it in person and you didn’t, that would be very disappointing actually.”

The next relationship indicator to be analyzed is trust. Trust based on previous research is the confidence and willingness of both parties involved in the OPR to show integrity and dependability. It was found that trust was not one of the most commonly used indicators, but when it was referenced and presented, it was focusing on the “belief” factor that could cause a relationship to flourish or diminish. Most examples of how trust was pulled from the content utilizing “belief” or “believing” as the main premise was found to reference the new stadium or future plans of the organization. After seeing the trust indicator presented in this manner, it made the researcher feel that the integrity of the relationship is being held on by a single thread, which is the new stadium. Basically, if that new stadium is not built or future plans aren’t revealed with high intentions, then the fans/target publics have no reason to trust the organization anymore. This presents

the factor that one half of the OPR is not trying to keep this relationship going in a positive manner.

From an article presented on the Rays website on June 21, 2010, Stu Sternberg was referenced saying that, “he believes baseball can succeed in the Tampa Bay area and that he is committed to doing all he can to keep the team in the region.” This statement shows the severity of the issue that the team could potentially up and leave the Tampa Bay region if situations don’t improve and both sides begin trusting each other enough to be committed to the relationship and support them in their future endeavors.

Commitment is the next relationship indicator to be analyzed for its representation in the content. Commitment is the factor that describes the worthiness of the relationship and whether or not both parties feel it is beneficial to follow through with any and every action. From the content, as mentioned before, the term/idea of the “new stadium/ballpark” was referenced with the greatest frequency in a variety of tones and by all potential parties. With the new stadium being present in the greatest number of articles, it presents an aura that it is on the minds of everyone and the future of this relationship will depend solely on the decision made on the new stadium/ballpark. Over a large sample of the articles that referenced the new stadium/ballpark, it was found to be presented with a variety of different tones. Some tones were in complete support of this new stadium, while many were unsupportive or against the idea of moving the team. It’s difficult to get a hold on how this relationship will ever flourish or prosper if parties involved cannot see eye to eye on a situation. Yes, it is a consumer based organization, which means if the consumer doesn’t show up or support the organization it could potentially not exist, but it appears that the new stadium would be beneficial to the

relationship. It would open up new opportunities and give a lot of individuals from both sides exactly what it was looking for.

From an article posted in the Tampa Bay Times on August 23, 2009, Kenny Locke, a founder of Fans for Waterfront Stadium, said, “The key is finding a long-term stadium solution that will ensure the Rays stay in our community for years to come.”

In another article from the Tampa Bay Times on July 31, 2010, Jerry Tidwell, a Rays fan, was quoted saying, “It’s probably too much to hope for, but wouldn’t it be nice if the whole of Tampa Bay could forget the parochial differences of the past and unite for the greater good?”

Both of these examples show that the new stadium is becoming an issue that is driving a stake between the fans/target publics and the organization. If they plan on being successful years from now, they need to become more communicative and supportive of each other so they can both stay committed to the future.

The fourth relationship indicator to be examined is satisfaction. Satisfaction is a measure of the experience based either from the user’s or organization’s perspective and was found to have one of the greatest frequencies throughout the articles. In addition to being presented so frequently, the tones of most articles were positive. As mentioned previously, this is not that much of a surprise because it is online media content and more often than not it will be presented with a positivity to avoid confrontation or criticism. As a researcher, there is reason to be skeptical of how and what is being presented online, it is still relevant information that is being portrayed by both parties. The organization presented its forms of satisfaction through articles that talked about the Rays Baseball Foundation, the turnouts for concert series’ and situations like Fan Fest, where the

atmosphere will more than likely be positive. Only in a few situations did the owner of the organization, and a few players express their dissatisfaction.

From an article posted on the Rays official website on July 16, 2011, Stu Sternberg, the owner of the organization, was quoted talking about the attendance issue and said, "I'm tired of thinking about it, talking about it... We're putting a good product out that's inviting. We've got concerts, the second-most affordable team. There's not much else to be done at this point."

Although a high percentage of the articles present a positive tone on the satisfaction between the two parties, with statements like that from the owner of the team, how can one really believe that the relationship is positive? This outlier from the sample does prove to be a very strong example of how online content may constantly be positive, but when that one negative article or statement is found it does stand out above the rest.

The final relationship indicator to be analyzed is face and favor. Face and favor is a measurement scale that takes into account the amount of personal networking and effort being exerted by the parties to make sure that the interaction factor is present in the relationship. From the content, a large population of the articles referenced the face and favor indicator through outreach, connecting or engaging. Mostly presented by the organization through its personal website, these common topics/ideas were found in articles demonstrating a community relations action by the Rays Baseball Foundation or a player interacting with the community.

For example, from an article presented by the Rays organization from its website on October 25, 2010, the opening line states, "On Monday afternoon, the Rays reached

out into the community to begin a new relationship with the James B. Sanderlin Family Center in South St. Petersburg.”

This introductory line of an article portrays the dedication by the Rays organization and community involvement group to constantly make new connections with the target publics. In the mind of the organization, building that playground and presenting such an “unselfish” act could turn into new fans coming into the stadium, which ultimately means more dollars. Community involvement is a part of all sports entertainment, but when coding this content, it appeared that a great deal of articles were of the Rays presenting its relationship with the community through its Rays Baseball Foundation, which is a community involvement group created for the sole purpose of doing kind acts for the community.

Limitations

This study is the first of its kind. Currently, there are no other published research findings on the relationship between an organization and its target publics examined through a content analysis.

With that being said, there are limitations to every study, and this one is no exception. For this study, the specific limitations include: the availability of content; the content selection process; the fact that content doesn’t always cause a reaction; and finally, the measures that were examined.

The availability of content stems from the idea that when dealing with the Internet and websites, search engines may not pull all relevant content. Depending on the algorithm and the search terms utilized, the most relevant articles may not always be pulled and the quality content can still be undiscovered. In addition, the defined

timetable that was utilized for the study could've been expanded to offer a larger population of articles to be coded, but there is also the chance the percentages could've gone down.

The next limitation focuses on the ability or lack thereof to pull material from websites. This refers to the understanding that there are other forms of published content that can add to this study and there are other potential websites out there that speak on behalf of the organization or the target publics, but being able to filter that out from the rest of the available content is a limitation that if studied could be improved.

The third limitation from this study can serve as a basic reminder about the nature of media content. Just because content exists on a particular topic or subject does not mean it has an effect. While the relationship, in question, appears to be reflected as a causal relationship, we can't assume a causal relationship based on the media content that exists.

The final limitation discusses the measures that were examined. Since the results provided a lot of feedback to the effect that the articles were neutral in their content, it would be beneficial to actually create more specific parameters that keep as many articles as possible from being neutral. In addition to creating more specific parameters, another limitation under this category is the wording of some categories and items to code. Some of the variables studied and the way they were worded could have limited the possible results that followed.

Future Research

There are many opportunities for future research in OPR study along with this method of analysis. The future research on this topic will continue to expand new

theoretical concepts and open up new ideas about the relationships that are being developed through online media content. In addition to the expansion and development of new concepts, future research can also be implemented and developed across all fields of study. The topic of OPR is not restricted just to public relations and the field of Mass Communications. It can be found in any business-consumer organization, and there is a constant need to improve the current relationships already existing. One could suggest further research be conducted on this topic through a content analysis for the basic understanding of what an organization can learn from another's mistakes and successes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of this study, despite the limitations, revealed important details into the understanding of an Organization-Public Relationship through online media content. OPRs, the focus of this study, are likely present a more positive or neutral relationship through published content for the same reasons people don't want to voice their opinion in front of strangers. As an organization or a member of the target public, the chance for backlash or criticism because of the content you decided to publish could lead to worse situations down the road. Ultimately, when it comes to published content, especially on websites, it is likely that both parties are afraid to voice their real opinion and it will continue to be like that going forward.

As previously stated, the results revealed: (1) that differences in framing exist; (2) a representation of frequent material and topics does occur; (3) there are thematic patterns on the part of the source; and finally, (4) the inside perspective of what may show up from online content may differ from the outside perspective.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Code Book for Tampa Bay Rays OPR

- I. Article ID
 - a. Official Rays Website (TBR/#month/#day/#year)
 - b. Tampa Bay Newspaper (TBT/#month/#day/#year)
- II. Coder – Name of person doing coding
- III. Date Coded – Date the article was coded article/blog was posted/released
- IV. Headline – Title of article, news story or blog listed
- V. Word Count
 - a. Number of words in each article is coded as either
 - i. Short (0-300 words)
 - ii. Medium (301-600 words)
 - iii. Long (601 words +)
- VI. Article Type
 - a. Official Press Release
 - i. This identifies a posting by the Tampa Bay Rays organization published on their Major League Baseball affiliated website.
 - b. News Article
 - i. This identifies a posting presented in the St. Petersburg Times newspaper that was published by an author who represents the Tampa Bay community or by an author who focuses his attention on the Tampa Bay Rays organization.
 - c. Combination of Quoted Material in an Official Press Release, News Article or Blog post

- i. This identifies a posting that includes information pulled from the affiliated website of the Tampa Bay Rays that was published either on the fan established website or inside the St. Petersburg Times newspaper.

VII. OPR Party Represented

a. Tampa Bay Rays Organization

- i. Articles that present or represent information on behalf of the organization, ownership or players only.

- 1. Ex: The Tampa Bay Rays organization was successful in their community involvement program.

b. Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Publics

- i. Articles that present or represent information on behalf of the fans, target publics, target market, and individuals living in the Tampa Bay area only.

- 1. Ex: The fans were anxiously waiting for the season to begin.

c. Both

- i. Articles that present or represent information on behalf of both parties involved.

VIII. OPR Tone in Article

a. Positive

- i. Articles that demonstrate a positive OPR Tone in the article will show characteristics that are positive in nature or expectation, based on the coder's perspective of the situation.
- b. Negative
 - i. Articles that demonstrate a negative OPR Tone in the article will show characteristics that are negative in nature or expectation, based on the coder's perspective of the situation.
- c. Neutral
 - i. Articles that demonstrate a neutral OPR Tone in the article will show characteristics that are neutral in nature or expectation, based on the coder's perspective of the situation.
 - 1. A neutral tone can be a combination of both a positive and negative tone, and since there isn't one that is considered the majority, a neutral tone will be categorized.

IX. OPR Presence

- a. Demonstrates Control Mutuality – Yes or No
 - i. Articles that demonstrate control mutuality will detail agreement, control, influence, cooperation, decision making and equality that could exist in the OPR.
 - 1. Ex: The Tampa Bay Rays organization and fans cooperated in coming to a decision on the future jersey colors.
- b. Demonstrates Trust – Yes or No

- i. Articles that demonstrate trust will detail openness, dependability, fairness and reliability that could exist in the OPR.
 - 1. Ex: The Tampa Bay Rays have opened up its future plans to the public.
- c. Demonstrates Commitment – Yes or No
 - i. Articles that demonstrate commitment will detail a potentially long term relationship between the organization and the public. Articles will include ideas and topics such as maintenance, continuance, endurance and the future.
 - 1. Ex: The Tampa Bay Rays have created new plans to create a new stadium in the Tampa Bay area.
- d. Demonstrates Satisfaction – Yes or No
 - i. Articles that demonstrate satisfaction will detail a positive reinforcement between the two parties and mention beneficial situations that include favorable outcomes.
 - 1. Ex: The Tampa Bay area is happy that the Rays have extended its contract with the city of St. Petersburg.
- e. Demonstrates Face and Favor – Yes or No
 - i. Articles that demonstrate face and favor will detail a networking system between the two parties that seek to get along with each other.
 - 1. Ex: The organization has reached out to the community for help with its current attendance problem.

X. OPR Relevance

a. Commitment

i. This article presents/reveals a code word in the content that demonstrates the idea of commitment inside an OPR. Articles will include these code words either in the headline or in the content.

1. Ex: Words or phrases such as: “future plans,” “organizational goals,” “new stadium,” and “commitment” will be keywords that classify this article as demonstrating Commitment.

b. Trust

i. This article presents/reveals a code word in the content that demonstrates the idea of trust inside an OPR. Articles will include these code words either in the headline or in the content.

1. Ex: Words or phrases such as: “trust,” “openness,” “dependable,” “fair,” and “honest” will be keywords that classify this article as demonstrating Trust.

c. Face and Favor

i. This article presents/reveals a code word in the content that demonstrates the idea of face and favor inside an OPR. Articles will include these code words either in the headline or in the content.

1. Ex: Words or phrases such as: “reputation,” “outreach,” “contact,” and “networking” will be keywords that classify this article as demonstrating Face and Favor.

d. Satisfaction

- i. This article presents/reveals a code word in the content that demonstrates the idea of satisfaction inside an OPR. Articles will include these code words either in the headline or in the content.

1. Ex: Words or phrases such as: “happiness,” “satisfaction,” “positive reinforcement,” “favorable,” and “useful” will be keywords that classify this article as demonstrating Satisfaction.

e. Control Mutuality

- i. This article presents/reveals a code word in the content that demonstrates the idea of control mutuality inside an OPR. Articles will include these code words either in the headline or in the content.

1. Ex: Words or phrases such as: “agreement,” “cooperate,” “influence,” “decision,” and “equal” will be keywords that classify this article as demonstrating Control Mutuality.

XI. Tone – Although potentially subjective because of the cognitive thought processes of the coder, an article could potentially be viewed as having a different tone in the perspectives of different individuals. For purposes of this study, since one

individual will be doing the coding the subjectivity will be not as biased as having several coders.

a. Positive

i. This article demonstrates a positive tone throughout the published content. This tone will not be determined based on the headline, because that could be misleading. In order to determine the tone, the entire content will be analyzed.

1. An example of an article that indicates a positive tone could include a phrase or sentence such as, "I really appreciate the Rays organization."

b. Negative

i. This article demonstrates a negative tone throughout the published content. This tone will not be determined based on the headline, because that could be misleading. In order to determine the tone, the entire content will be analyzed.

1. An example of an article that indicates a negative tone could include a phrase or sentence such as, "I went to a recent game and the staff was very rude and unwilling to answer my questions."

c. Neutral

i. This article that demonstrates a neutral tone will be one that either includes both positive and negative tones, or the tone cannot be determined because of the content being analyzed. This tone will

not be determined based on the headline, because that could be misleading. In order to determine the tone, the entire content will be analyzed.

1. An example of an article that indicates a neutral tone could include a phrase or sentence such as, "I really do love the Rays organization, but I will be very upset if they move to a new location."

Appendix B: Code Sheet for Tampa Bay Rays OPR

Article ID	
Coder	
Date Coded	

Headline	
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Word Count	Short	Medium	Long
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Article Type	Official Press Release	News Article	Combination
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OPR Party Represented	Tampa Bay Rays Organization	Tampa Bay Rays Fans/Target Publics	Both
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OPR Tone in Article	Positive	Negative	Neutral
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OPR Presence	Yes	No
Demonstrates Control Mutuality	Yes	No
Demonstrates Trust	Yes	No
Demonstrates Commitment	Yes	No
Demonstrates Satisfaction	Yes	No
Demonstrates Face and Favor	Yes	No

OPR Relevance	Code Word from Content
Control Mutuality	
Trust	
Commitment	
Satisfaction	
Face and Favor	

Tone of Article	Positive	Negative	Neutral
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