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### Social Media Firestorms: How Does Observing Customer-to-Customer Incivility Affect Consumers' Brand Evaluation and Behavioral Intentions?

Tyson Ang

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Ang, Tyson, "Social Media Firestorms: How Does Observing Customer-to-Customer Incivility Affect Consumers' Brand Evaluation and Behavioral Intentions?" (2019). *Faculty Research Day. 2.* [https://mds.marshall.edu/business\\_faculty\\_research\\_day/2019/Fall/2](https://mds.marshall.edu/business_faculty_research_day/2019/Fall/2)

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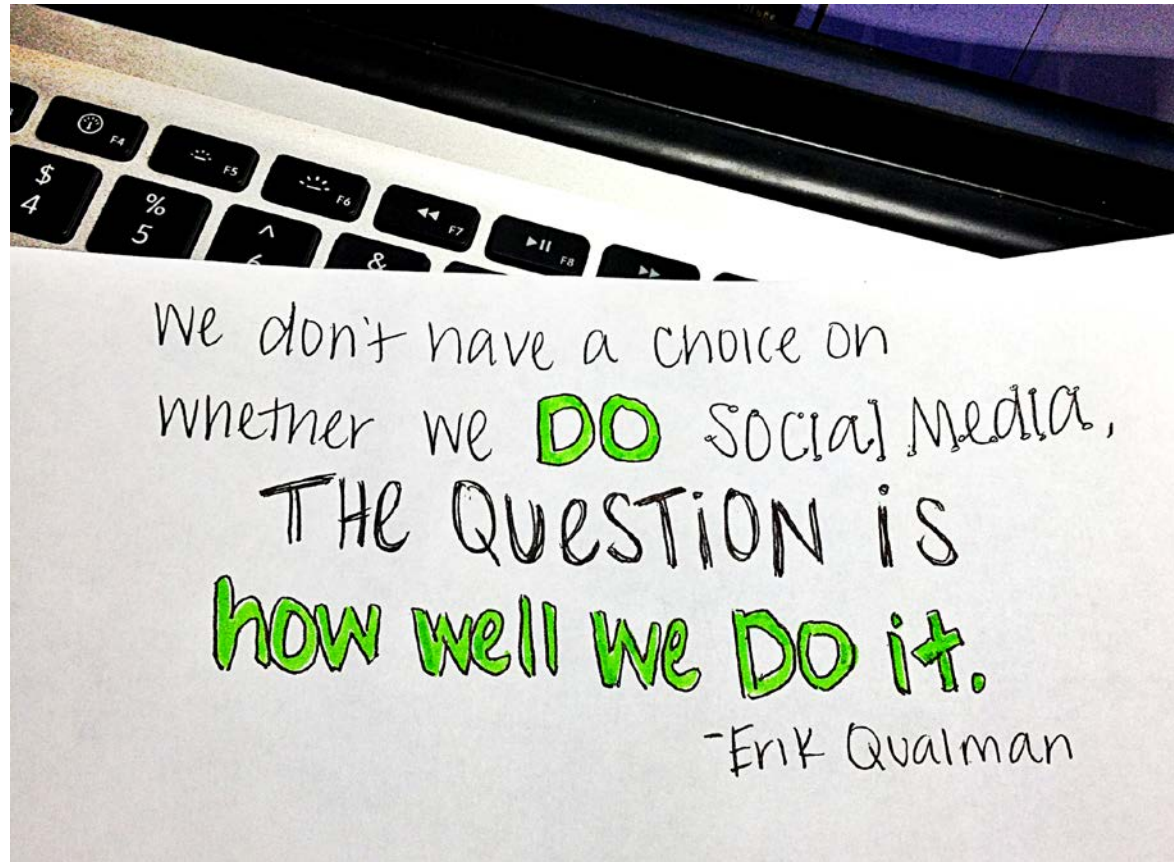
SOCIAL MEDIA FIRESTORMS: HOW DOES OBSERVING  
CUSTOMER-TO-CUSTOMER INCIVILITY AFFECT CONSUMERS'  
BRAND EVALUATION AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS

Tyson Ang, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Marketing

A photograph of a brick wall with a sign that reads "MARSHALL UNIVERSITY". The sign is mounted on a brick wall and is illuminated by two small black spotlights. The background shows a grassy area and a building.

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY



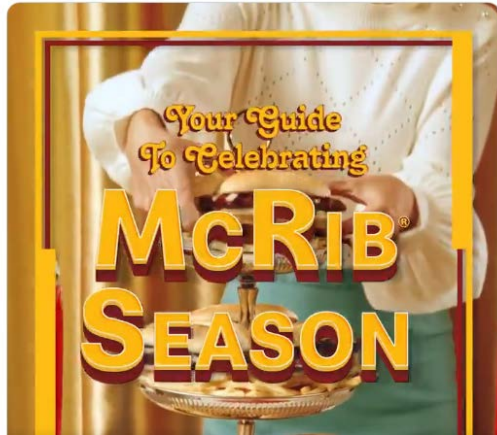
Author. Speaker. Entrepreneur





# Brand and Social Media

**McDonald's** @McDonalds · Oct 28  
 For your next gathering, add 🍔 to your #McRib for a menu upgrade that'll make you the talk of #McRibSZN. 🍔👉 Find one near you in our App.



**McDonald's** @McDonalds 30 Mar  
 Today we've announced that by mid-2018, all Quarter Pounder burgers at the majority of our restaurants will be cooked with fresh beef. [pic.twitter.com/Bdf99ALxw](http://pic.twitter.com/Bdf99ALxw)

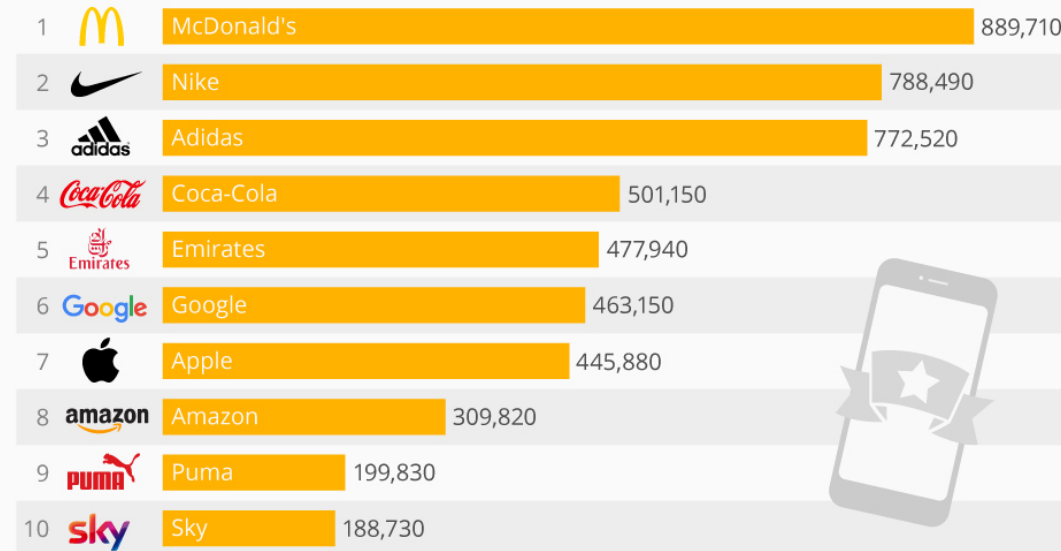
**Wendy's** @Wendys [Follow](#)

@McDonalds So you'll still use frozen beef in MOST of your burgers in ALL of your restaurants? Asking for a friend.

9:00 AM - 30 Mar 2017  
 66,485 Retweets 159,206 Likes

## The Most Visible Brands on Social Media

Average monthly number of Instagram/Twitter photos the following brands appear in



Based on a sample of 100 million photos on Twitter and Instagram, which were analyzed for the appearance of 300 brand logos between August and October 2017  
 Source: Brandwatch



**McDonald's** @McDonalds

Calling all McDonald's restaurant employees! Tell us about the skills you're learning on the job for a chance to spend the day w/ @tyleroakley, who got his start at a McD's restaurant, and other industry pros. Details -> [news.mcdonalds.com/stories/our-pe...](http://news.mcdonalds.com/stories/our-pe...) #SkillsToGetYouThere



**McDonald's** @McDonalds  
 Put your pocket change to work this #GivingTuesday! Today and every day thru 12/9, make a \$1, \$3 or \$5 donation to @RMHC and give the best 🎁 of all: togetherness. Learn more -> [mcd.to/RMHCfundraiser](http://mcd.to/RMHCfundraiser)

**Ronald McDonald House Charities®**

- \$1 could provide coloring books for a child staying at a Ronald McDonald House®
- \$3 could provide art supplies for a Ronald McDonald House® playroom
- \$5 could provide a new game for a Ronald McDonald House® to play

12:35 PM · Nov 27, 2018 · Twitter Web Client

60 Retweets 243 Likes



# Brand and Social Media

- Brand = Human-like

**JENNIFER L. AAKER\***

Although a considerable amount of research in personality psychology has been done to conceptualize human personality, identify the "Big Five" dimensions, and explore the meaning of each dimension, no parallel research has been conducted in consumer behavior on brand personality. Consequently, an understanding of the symbolic use of brands has been limited in the consumer behavior literature. In this research, the author develops a theoretical framework of the brand personality construct by determining the number and nature of dimensions of brand personality (Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness). To measure the five brand personality dimensions, a reliable, valid, and generalizable measurement scale is created. Finally, theoretical and practical implications regarding the symbolic use of brands are discussed.

**Dimensions of Brand Personality**

In consumer behavior research, a considerable amount of attention has been given to the construct *brand personality*, which refers to the set of human characteristics associated with a brand. Researchers have focused on how the personality of a brand enables a consumer to express his or her own self (Bea, 1988; an ideal self (Malhotra, 1988), or specific dimensions of the self (Kleine, Klette, and Korman, 1993) through the use of a brand. Practitioners view it as a key way to differentiate a brand in a product category (Holladay, 1996), as a central driver of consumer preference and usage (Iltis, 1993), and as a common denominator that can be used to market a brand across cultures (Plummer, 1985).

However, despite this interest, research on brand personality and the symbolic use of brands more generally has remained limited due in part to the lack of consensus regarding what brand personality really is. How is it defined and thereby distinguished from related constructs? Does it have a framework or set of dimensions similar to or different from the "Big Five" dimensions of human personality? As a result, an understanding of how and when brand personality relates to a consumer's personality and thereby influences consumer preference has remained elusive (see Sirgy, 1992). Furthermore, no research has been conducted to develop systematically a reliable, valid, and generalizable scale to measure brand personality. Currently, researchers rely on measurement scales that tend to be ad hoc (e.g., checklists, photo-sorts, symbolic analogies) or taken directly from personality psychology but not validated in the context of brands (Kassarjian, 1971). As a result, the theoretical generalizability and implications stemming from the findings in the research on the symbolic use of brands are questionable.

The objective of this research is to address these limitations by drawing on research on the "Big Five" human personality structure to develop a theoretical framework of brand personality dimensions (Norman, 1963; Tupes and Christal, 1955) and a reliable, valid, and generalizable scale that measures these dimensions.

**THE BRAND PERSONALITY CONSTRUCT**

*Brand personality* is defined formally here as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand." To illustrate, Absolut vodka personified tends to be described as a cool, hip, contemporary 25-year-old, whereas Snuggly personified tends to be described as an intellectual, conservative, older man. In contrast to "product-related attributes," which tend to serve a utilitarian function for consumers, brand personality tends to serve a symbolic or self-expressive function (Kotler, 1993).

It is argued that the symbolic use of brands is possible because consumers often imbue brands with human personality traits (termed *anthropomorphism*; e.g., Ginsberg, 1979). Consumers easily can think about brands as if they were celebrities or famous historical figures (Rook, 1985) and as they relate to one's own self (Fournier, 1994), which may be due in part to the strategies used by advertisers to imbue a brand with personality traits such as anthropomorphism (e.g., *Chlorina Bains*), personification (e.g., *Jolly Green Giant*), and the creation of user imagery (e.g., *Charlie Girl*). Through such techniques, the personality traits associated with a brand, such as those associated with an individual, tend to be

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Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. XXXIV (August 1997), 347-356



**Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research**

SUSAN FOURNIER\*

Although the relationship metaphor dominates contemporary marketing thought and practice, surprisingly little empirical work has been conducted on relational phenomena in the consumer products domain, particularly at the level of the brand. In this article, the author (1) argues for the validity of the relationship proposition in the consumer-brand context, including a debate as to the legitimacy of the brand as an active relationship partner and empirical support for the phenomenological significance of consumer-brand brands; (2) provides a framework for characterizing and better understanding the types of relationships consumers form with brands; and (3) reflects from the data the concept of brand relationship quality, a diagnostic tool for conceptualizing and evaluating relationship strength. Three in-depth case studies inform this agenda, their interpretation guided by an integrative review of the literature on person-to-person relationships. Insights offered through application of inductive concepts to two relevant research domains—brand loyalty and brand personality—are advanced in closing. The exercise is intended to urge fellow researchers to refine, test, and augment the working hypotheses suggested herein and to progress toward these goals with confidence in the validity of the relationship premise at the level of consumers' lived experiences with their brands.

Relationship principles have virtually replaced short-term exchange notions in both marketing thought (Webster 1992) and practice (Peppers and Rogers 1993), precipitating what has been considered a paradigm shift for the field as a whole (Deighton 1996). Despite increased acceptance and relevance, it can be argued that the relationship perspective has been vastly underutilized in the marketing literature. The limited work that exists largely informs relationship marketing practice as opposed to the development of relationship marketing theory (Sethi and Parvatiyar 1995). In a sense, the field has kept ahead of application of relationship ideas and the assumption of relationship benefits without proper development of the core construct involved.

Particularly lacking are relationship-inspired studies in consumer as opposed to business markets, especially those concerning the consumer product domain (Sethi and Parvatiyar 1995). Empirical research concerning relationships formed at the level of the brand has been especially scant. Understandably, relationship research has focused on bona fide partnerships formed between persons, with the bulk of published studies concerning manufacturer-supplier and service-provider partnerships as a result (Berry 1983; Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987).

The brand loyalty literature is perhaps most capable of informing theory concerning consumer-brand relationships. This research stream has stagnated of late, however (Lohman 1996), with the majority of insights and contributions generated before the emergence of methods capable of truly informing the phenomenology of consumer-brand brands (Sherry 1987). Although "loyalty" itself is a fertile relationship concept, its nuances have been lost in traditional brand loyalty research. Operationalizations relying on sequence or proportion of purchase perhaps better reflect a notion of inertia than loyalty with its full relational significance. Even well-intentioned attempts to consider loyalty as more than repeat purchase (Jacoby and Chestnut 1978) reduce the process to "narrowly cognitive utilitarian decision-making," thus failing to capture "the relationship consumers form with that which is consumed" (Bell, Walfendorf, and Sherry 1989, p. 31). Conceptualizing loyalty as a long-term, committed, and affect-laden partnership has also constrained relationship-inspired insight by implicitly encouraging sponsorship of the many other potentially valuable relationship forms that may characterize consumer-brand brands.

As a result, the basic questions of whether, why, and in what forms consumers seek and value ongoing relationships with brands remain largely unanswered (Webster

\*Susan Fournier is assistant professor of business administration at Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration, Cambridge, MA 02163. This article evolved from the author's dissertation at the University of Florida. Special thanks are extended to the author's thesis committee (Richard L. Lutz, chair; Greg Neuner, Alan Sawyer, and Burton Waters), to David Mick, to the ACF reviewers and editors who helped shape the manuscript, and, above all, to the three women who shared the stories that inspired this work.

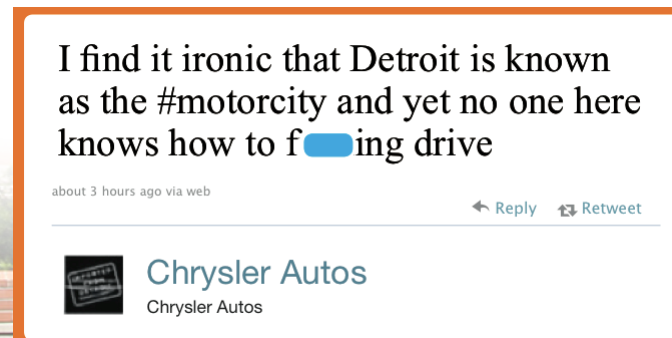
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# Purpose

- Mistake!
- Higher engagement = higher possibility of mistake
- Social Media Firestorm

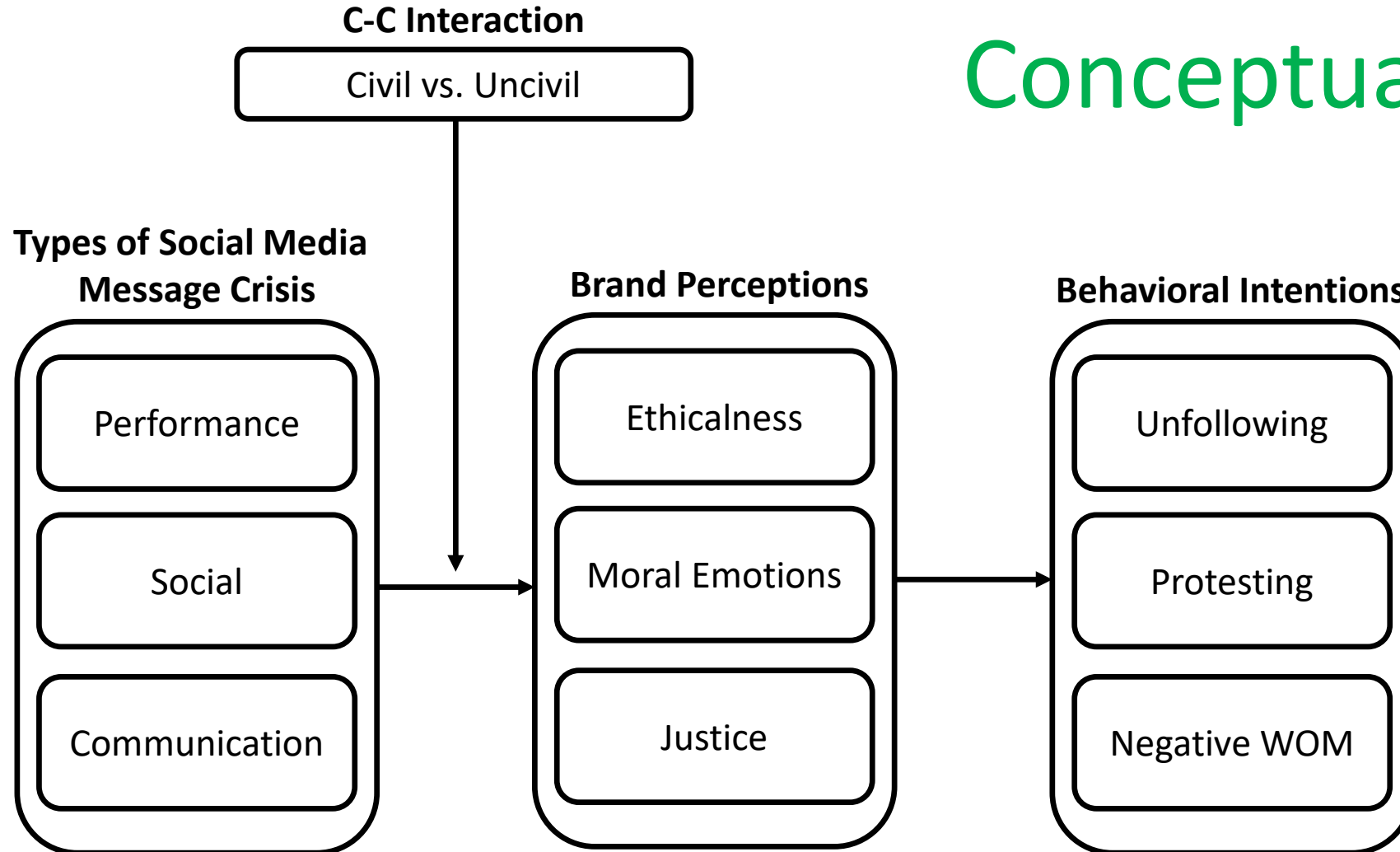


# Social Media Firestorm

- Digital brand crises that consist of numerous, publicly observable consumer responses about a brand on social media that express strong emotions and spread in a highly dynamic way (N. Hansen et. Al. 2018)



# Conceptual Model





# Types of Social Media Message Crisis

- Performance
  - Due to product/service failure
- Social
  - Due to social/ethical issue
- Communication
  - Offensive/insensitive messages from the company

A photograph of a brick wall with a sign that reads "MARSHALL UNIVERSITY". The sign is mounted on the wall and is illuminated by two small black spotlights. The background shows a grassy area and a building in the distance.

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY

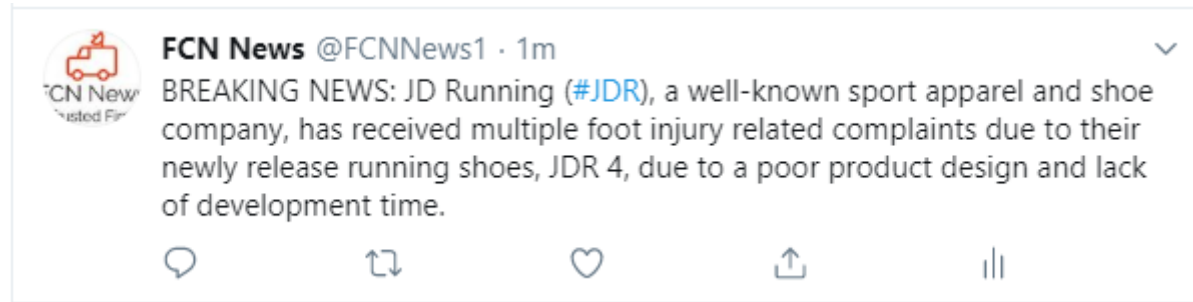
# Methodology

- 3 x 2 Factorial Design
  - Three types of message crisis (performance, social, and communication)
  - Two types of C-C interaction (civil vs. uncivil)
- Analysis
  - ANOVA
  - Process Macro

A photograph of a brick wall with a sign that reads "MARSHALL UNIVERSITY". The sign is mounted on a brick wall and is illuminated by two small black spotlights. In the background, there are green bushes and a building with a red roof.

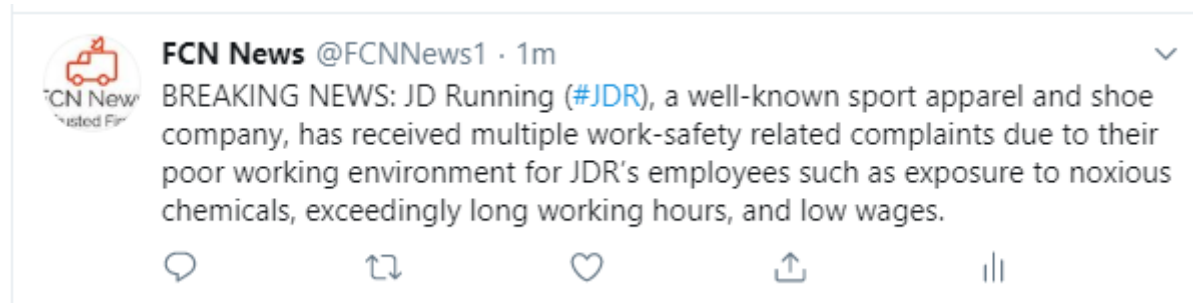
MARSHALL UNIVERSITY

# Performance-Message Crisis





# Social-Message Crisis



# Communication-Message Crisis



# Civil Interaction

## Performance and Social

**Tom** @TomBoy423 · 34m  
 Replying to @FCNNews1  
 @JDR their stock price will go down for sure!

**Susan** @Susanrdy1 · 32m  
 @TomBoy423 STOCK PRICE!?!?! Are you sure that's the focus? They should improve their product quality!

**Tom** @TomBoy423 · 17m  
 @Susanrdy1 this is going to be a PR nightmare for JDR!

**Susan** @Susanrdy1 · 13m  
 @TomBoy423 somebody will get fired!

**Tom** @TomBoy423 · 8m  
 @Susanrdy1 We should boycott JDR shoes!

**Susan** @Susanrdy1 · 3m  
 @TomBoy423 it is like you read my mind!

## Communication

**Tom** @TomBoy423 · 35m  
 Replying to @FCNNews1  
 @JDR their stock price will go down for sure!

**Susan** @Susanrdy1 · 34m  
 @TomBoy423 STOCK PRICE!?!?! Are you sure that's the focus? They should improve their product quality!

**Tom** @TomBoy423 · 19m  
 @Susanrdy1 this is going to be a PR nightmare for JDR!

**Susan** @Susanrdy1 · 15m  
 @TomBoy423 somebody will get fired!

**Tom** @TomBoy423 · 10m  
 @Susanrdy1 We should boycott JDR shoes!

**Susan** @Susanrdy1 · 4m  
 @TomBoy423 it is like you read my mind!





# Uncivil Interaction

## Performance and Social

**Tom** @TomBoy423 · 8m  
Replying to @FCNNews1  
@JDR their stock price will go down for sure!

**Susan** @Susanrdy1 · 8m  
@TomBoy423 STOCK PRICE!?!? Are you an IDIOT! Who cares! Somebody should sue them!

**Tom** @TomBoy423 · 6m  
@Susanrdy1 this is totally uncalled for! You are the IDIOT! I was just expressing my opinion. Chill!

**Susan** @Susanrdy1 · 4m  
@TomBoy423 you are a COLD HEARTLESS IDIOT!

**Tom** @TomBoy423 · 3m  
@Susanrdy1 you are insane and unreasonable!

**Susan** @Susanrdy1 · 2m  
@TomBoy423 right back at YOU!

## Communication

**Tom** @TomBoy423 · 6m  
Replying to @FCNNews1  
@JDR their stock price will go down for sure!

**Susan** @Susanrdy1 · 5m  
@TomBoy423 STOCK PRICE!?!? Are you an IDIOT! Who cares! Millions are in uproar in Hongkong to protest policy brutality and injustice. Somebody should sue them!

**Tom** @TomBoy423 · 3m  
@Susanrdy1 this is totally uncalled for! You are the IDIOT! I was just expressing my opinion. Chill!

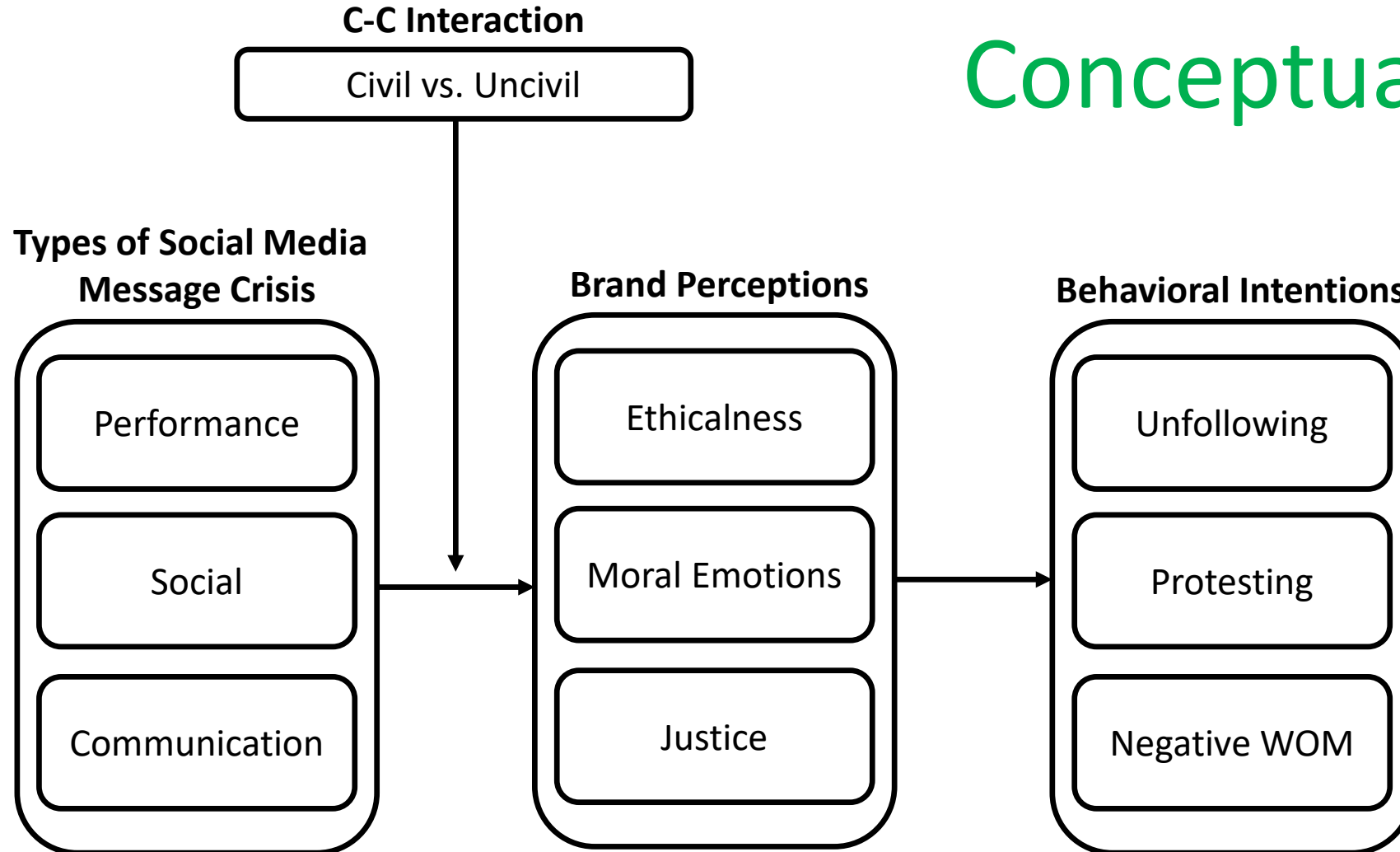
**Susan** @Susanrdy1 · 2m  
@TomBoy423 you are a COLD HEARTLESS IDIOT!

**Tom** @TomBoy423 · 1m  
@Susanrdy1 you are insane and unreasonable!

**Susan** @Susanrdy1 · 11s  
@TomBoy423 right back at YOU!

UNIVERS

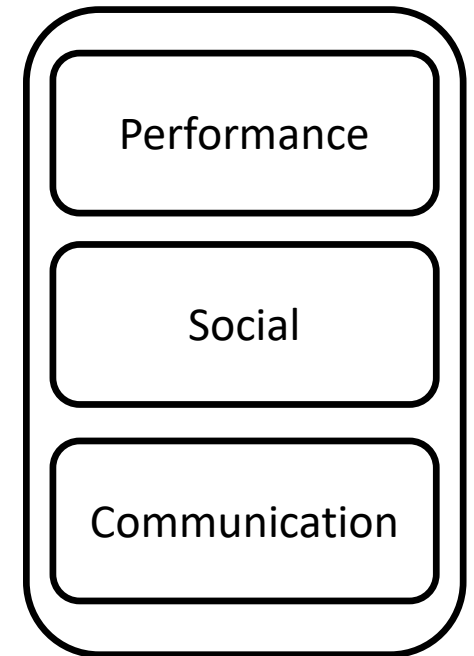
# Conceptual Model



# Study 2

- Case analysis approach
- Communication Strategy (Pang et. al. 2014)
  - Denial
  - Evasion of Responsibility
  - Reducing Offensiveness
  - Corrective action
  - Mortification (Apology)

## Types of Social Media Message Crisis



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# Mizzou Athletics



# Thank you all for listening



**Your Feedback**  
- Please -

