

ABSTRACT

Traditional and Interactive Documentaries: An Exploration of Audience Response to September 11 Documentaries in Different Formats

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On September 11, 2001, two planes crashed into the two tallest buildings in the New York City skyline, the most horrific act of terrorism on U.S. soil to date. A country devastated, the United States began the long road to recovery, prevention and retaliation. In response, screenwriters have produced several documentaries on the tragedy.

Likewise, scholars have studied extensively the content of documentaries focusing on

Literature lacks articles that analyze audience response to interactive documentaries. This study seeks to add to the literature on this topic by comparing and contrasting focus group responses to two documentaries that utilize different formats. September 11 and the resulting number of documentaries on the topic provided the ideal topic and content for such a study.

Traditional and Interactive Documentaries: An Exploration of Audience Response
to September 11 Documentaries in Different Formats

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

On September 11, 2001, two planes crashed into the World Trade Centers in New York City, one into the United States Pentagon, and a final plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. The tragedy has been noted as the worst terrorist attacks to occur in the United States. The September 11 attacks caused more casualties on United States soil than Pearl Harbor in WWII, dramatically affecting a society that mourned the loss of more than 5,000 people, as well as the loss of a sense of security within the country. This and subsequent events have created economic deficits as well as affected the psychological well being of Americans. Sterritt (2005) explained the following:

Conventional wisdom about the events of September 11 is clear: everything has changed since the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, and nothing will be quite the same again (pg. 4).

The events of September 11 were widely televised. Almost all major news television broadcast stations, including the American Broadcasting Company, National Broadcasting Company, Columbia Broadcasting System, Cable News Network, Public Broadcast System and British Broadcasting Corporation, produced documentary-style broadcasts of the September 11 attacks that aired on television. Cable networks also created numerous documentaries, including the History Channel, the National Geographic Channel and the Discovery Channel. The complete list of documentaries filmed about the terrorist attacks of September 11 is well-beyond one hundred.

Fahrenheit 9/11 is perhaps the most controversial. This film explored the subjective, agenda-oriented motives in its attempt to promote and dictate conspiracy

theories about the September 11 attacks. Other well-known conspiracy theory documentaries include *Loose Change 9/11: An American Coup* (Avery, 2009), and *Zero: An Investigation Into 9/11* (Fracassi and Tre, 2008). In addition, many docudramas were filmed to convey the true events of September 11, including: *World Trade Center* (Stone, 2006), and *United 93* (Greengrass, 2006, p. 93).

Scholarly efforts to study effects of the events from many different angles have included the psychological effects on victims and citizens of the United States, media coverage of the event, and government action and reaction to the events. For example, researchers examined post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression disorders five to eight weeks after the events, finding significant evidence that both PTSD and depression related directly to the events of September 11 (Galea et al., 2002). Within five years, Laugharne, Janca and Widiger found that the general symptoms of PTSD normalized for the public as a whole, but PTSD symptoms remained heightened due to several factors including age, income, education, and proximity to the events (Laugharne, Janca, and Widiger, 2007). These studies provide great context and detail about the tragedy and its effect on people. However, there is little research addressing the nuances of interactive documentaries made about 9/11 in contrast to their traditional counterparts.

Employing the audience reception theory, uses and gratifications theory, and the diffusion of innovations theory, this study analyzes audience response to *Witness to 9/11* and *102 Minutes that Changed America*, two films that utilize varying formats. *102 Minutes that Changed America* was produced in a traditional format that relies on eyewitness footage to craft a story about the 102 minutes that elapsed between the time when the first of two planes hit the World Trade Center and the time when the last

building crumbled to the ground. *102 Minutes that Changed America* is distributed, in this study, through *YouTube*, although it showed on cable television as well. *102 Minutes that Changed America* is a traditional one-way communication medium. It does not require message recipients to participate with the media in order to continue distributing content. *Witness to 9/11*, however, is an interactive Web-based documentary that allows for audiences to become users, exploring different sections of the events of September 11 on their own in pre-formatted sections. *Witness to 9/11* encompasses a two way model of communication, requiring user participation to select and continue viewing or reading content.

Web-based media have significantly changed the way the entire film industry distributes films, including documentaries. Technology such as Web sites, interactive devices and social media allow for the easy and simple distribution of films and multimedia. This transition can be noted in both television and film production. Technological development has allowed documentary filmmakers to work hand in hand with new media specialists to release information in different formats, in some cases taking a traditional documentary format and rearranging it into a two-way platform of communication for audiences to broaden interaction and engagement with the content.

This study is important for several reasons. Most notably, it identifies gaps in the literature in audience reaction to interactive documentaries. Secondly, this study applies landmark principles identified in previous studies to add to literature about audience reception and engagement, and the potential adoption of traditional and interactive documentaries. Specifically, the diffusion of innovations theory connects both quantitative and qualitative principles to aid in the analysis of adoption of the innovations

as well as describing the adopter categories of film students (Rogers and Rogers, 2003). Similarly, the theory of planned behavior, audience reception theory and uses and gratifications theory offer insight into evidence in what might or might not cause viewer and user difference (Ajzen, 2011; Katz, Elihu, Blumer, Jay G., & Gurevitch, Michael, 1973).

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

To explore methods for assessing audience response to traditional and interactive documentaries, this study looks to four streams of knowledge in the literature: (1) audience reception of documentaries through the frameworks of Hall's audience reception theory (Hall, 1974) (2) audience reception to film presentation through the Ajzen's frameworks of the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 2011) (3) uses and gratifications (Katz, Elihu et al., 1973) and (4) audience interpretation of emerging technologies through the frameworks of the Roger's diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers and Rogers, 2003). This chapter explores these four theories and discusses their application to the present study.

Audience Reception Theory

Hall (1974) created a model of encoding and decoding messages to describe the communication process. According to his models, messages are encoded with specific purposes and intentions and then decoded by a receiver. Hall's paradigm allows for the variation of constructed messages in the reception phase, saying that audiences may decode and encode original messages differently (Stone, 2006).

It is this set of de-coded meaning which 'have an effect', influence, entertain, instruct or persuade, with very complex perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological or behavioral consequences (pg. 509).

Documentaries distribute encoded messages for audiences and audience reception can be analyzed based both on the content and execution of the documentary. Scholars utilize

the audience reception theory to analyze data through message construction and reception. It is important to note that viewer reception is internalized differently based on past experiences. For instance, Amaya (2003) notes that in some documentary studies, the decoding of messages significantly changes if the audience already internalizes the content. In this type of analysis, this mode of reception is analyzed by using a questionnaire to get a basic demographic of participants and an analysis of participants' knowledge of documentary formats, as well as actual subject matter.

Audience reception has been studied in several different ways, but most often employs qualitative principles to discover new applications. Film and mass media studies alike have used focus groups, questionnaires and interviews to study audiences' receptions. In Güçlü's examination of women's studies and audience reception to women's issues in film, the audience reception theory was used to construct group discussions for five female participants. Findings revealed that women with similar backgrounds can perceive certain issues differently (Güçlü, 2010). Applicably, though participants may have similar education backgrounds, cultural and religious beliefs, or even national identity, varying opinions can still occur.

Conversely, in Saputro's (2010) study about audience reception to human right documentaries, fourteen audience members from Indonesia were asked to view a human rights documentary. The structured focus group qualitatively found varying opinions in human rights, however, Saputro found that the social setting framed responses negatively (Saputro, 2010). Cultural and physical environments play significant roles in the audience reception and reaction to the study.

Perhaps the most similar study structure for the qualitative component of this study can be found in an analysis of new media art and interactivity. In a collaborative project called *Poetry Beyond Text*, Roberts, Fisher, Modeen and Otty (2011) used perception and reception principles to construct questions for focus groups about user engagement and reaction to interactive poetry. The study used two focus groups. One group listened to poetry; the other group participated interactively with poetry in multimedia formats. Interactive poetry was shown to enhance the physical and sensual engagement of artworks, increasing imaginative interaction as well as interaction with humans and technology. Using this method, this study will construct a similar scenario to examine user interaction, perception and adoption of the two differing documentary styles (Roberts, Andrews, Fisher, Martin, Modeen, Mary, and Otty, Lisa, 2011).

Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior is also helpful in determining the gratification level of audience members. Though the theory of planned behavior is far from simplistic, the overarching principles imply behavior can be predicted through methodological questioning. This provides a solid foundation for assertions of audience reception, predictively represented by user engagement and gratification for the deliverance of information (Ajzen, 2011).

The theory of planned behavior depicts the basic construct for the predicted behavioral response from participants' interpretation of the documentary. The beliefs of each audience member are represented by the cognitive intention of the reader, thus predicting the behavior that will follow (Ajzen, 2011). Possible behavioral responses could be disassociation and disengagement. One of Robert Putnam's (1995) findings was

that television consumption has a negative response to involvement and civic engagement, elements Putnam believes is essential for the end result of formulating social capital. He says that television will destroy capital in three ways:

- *Time displacement*: TV reduces social, recreational and community activities, instead privatizing free time.
- *Effects on the outlooks on viewers*: Viewers will consider information implied fact.
- *Overindulging*: Heavy television watching may well increase pessimism about human nature and the effects on children.

Putnam (1995) suggests that as technology increasingly asks people to become individuals, there will be a greater deficit in the ability to make people participate in groups. About 40% of decline in social engagement was accredited to television watching (Putnam, 1995).

Uses and Gratifications

The uses and gratification theory highlights user engagement and gratification in media sources by both qualitatively and quantitatively analyzing user consumption and participation in media (Katz, Elihu et al., 1973). The uses and gratifications theory is widely used in cutting edge research of today to help understand the engagement practices of both the creation and consumption of media including new media studies (Ruggiero, Thomas E., 2000). The uses and gratifications theory examines the functions of media for users who are actively seeking media use, explaining how mass use helps provide a gratification for individual needs, discovering motives for use, and identifying positive and negative emotions.

Ruggiero (2000) argues that new media has enhanced the uses and gratifications theory by contributing three different components that traditional media (one-way communication media) does not: interactivity, demassification, and asynchronicity. Working under the assumption that audiences are actively seeking media, interactivity is a key focus to strengthening the uses and gratifications theory. Media that resulted in information collection and reciprocal communication created higher levels of interactivity (Ha & James, 1998). Williams et al. (1988) coined the term “demassification”, stating that individuals are able to select from a wide variety of media both in format and content. Asynchronicity allows for this consumption to happen over a period of time that is ultimately up to both senders and receivers of messages. These new components to media in these particular instances (the traditional documentary format and the interactive documentary format) allow for all three of these new components of gratification differences from the traditional uses and gratifications model.

Holbert et al. (2003) examined the relationship between environmental concern and audience reception and engagement, applying the uses and gratifications theory. This study utilized quantitative methods and survey formatting, finding that documentary content was more effective than entertainment content in terms of post-user concern (Holbert, Kwak, & Shah, 2003). This study seeks to find similar information about post-consumption engagement, focusing more extensively on formatting and less extensively on contextual messaging.

Traditional Documentary Principles

Many studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of traditional documentaries and explore audience engagement through qualitative research methods examining audience reception, behavior and attitude. For instance, Elmo Wilson found in 1948 that broadcast documentaries were extremely effective in creating audience attitude shifts, although audience engagement was not easily calculated (Wilson, 1948). In 1948, however, documentary studies were significantly different from documentaries created in the 21st Century, lacking the advanced cinematography, user-generated information, and graphical additions that exist in our present time. Bill Nichols addresses the changing styles of the traditional documentary, noting that four different styles of documentaries have emerged.

The first of its kind was the Griersonian tradition of documentaries. John Grierson influenced filmmakers to treat documentaries as creative realities. Griersonian-style documentaries embody speculation by a narrator. The Griersonian style of documentary was perhaps the most simplistic, suggesting that the real person or event should be used as opposed to a fictional character or portrayal (Grierson and Hardy, 1971). This style of documentary was followed by *cinéma vérité*. The *cinéma vérité* style aesthetically revolutionized the documentary, allowing for documentary films to be perceived as real and true. Portable cameras and sound allowed for a more transparent presentation of the subject at hand.

The next progression of the documentary allowed for a historical aspect to accompany documentary plots. Interviews interlaced with additional footage provide an

educational, yet current, view of the documentary subject. Nichols says that the fourth stage of documentary was emerging:

A fourth phase seems to have begun, with films moving toward more complex forms where epistemological and aesthetic assumptions become more visible. These new self-reflexive documentaries mix observational passages with interviews, the voice-over of the film-maker with intertitles, making patently clear what has been implicit all along: documentaries always were forms of re-presentation, never clear windows onto “reality”; the film-maker was always a participant-witness and an active fabricator of meaning, a producer of cinematic discourse rather than a neutral or all-knowing reporter of the way things truly are (Nichols, 1983).

The traditional documentary embodies a linear communication model, originally called the Shannon-Weaver model (Shannon and Weaver, 1949). In this model, the sender of the message creates encodes and transmits the message through a channel that is then perceived, decoded, and interpreted by the receiver. This model also predicts noise between the transmitter and receiver. Noise plays a factor in the final interpretation and destination of the message.

Interactive Documentary

Interactive documentaries transform the traditional documentary into a cross-platform display of information. Interactive documentaries rely on online delivery to audiences and use new media concepts and objectives to deliver an interactive, non-linear, two-way communication that allows for a viewer to become a participant in unfolding events (Scott-Stevenson, Julie, 2012).

The interactive documentary history is one closely informed by the history of a traditional documentary plus includes the innovation and incorporation of technology to present. The revolution of the digital age provides space for an interactive documentary

to thrive. With the establishment of Internet sources as well as cellular networks that allow for Internet browsing, publics are generally active members and participants on the Internet.

The interactive documentary is a newer format that is not as widely studied as the traditional documentary.

The immersive interaction in which the industry specializes, and the dramatic techniques of engagement employed by the latest documentary films suggests that we may be at the brink of a new cultural form: the interactive documentary (Galloway, McAlpine, and Harris, 2007).

Emerging documentaries provide open-ended exploration for audiences, allowing them to direct (to a certain extent) their exploration of the topic at hand. The concept of the interactive documentary is derived most clearly from digital storytelling, defined by Lambert and Meadows (2002) as the use of low-cost digital cameras, non-linear editing software and notebook computers to create short multimedia stories for publication.

Digital storytelling is similar to broadcast material in terms of quality and output, however, it is not a typical film, most notably because of its interactivity and use of still pictures (Lambert, 2002; Meadows, 2003). Digital storytelling has been thoroughly researched, thought to be highly effective in teaching atmospheres, namely in classroom environments (Robin, 2008).

Galloway, McAlpine, and Harris (2007) argued that the transition to this two-way model of message transmission can be accredited to the dramatically changing content formats of the documentary, most importantly the changing demographic of fact, or the actualit.

Recently, a new breed of dramatic documentary (that of coercion, persuasion, and emotional manipulation) has emerged to critical and commercial success. Contemporaneously, interactive entertainment has evolved to the point at which

near-realism can be portrayed in real time. This, taken alongside the immersive interaction in which the industry specializes, and the dramatic techniques of engagement employed by the latest documentary films suggests that we may be at the brink of a new cultural form: the interactive documentary (Galloway et al., 2007)

This assessment of this emerging technology suggests that the interactive documentary and its production are a relatively fluent substitution for the changing content climate of the documentary, in terms of validating objectivity and truth in a real-time manner.

Guosong Shao's study discusses user-generated messaging and finds that a new freedom is encouraged for and embraced by audiences who engage with media that involves two-way interaction and user control. Shao found that people engage and interact more fluently with interactive messages, and, in turn, are more engaged in communities and conversations. Audiences who engage in interactive media are more likely to produce their own contents of self-expression and self-actualization. This theory insists that the ease of use and audience control allows for a greater satisfaction among users, namely creating an immediate gratification from use.

Clark (n.d.) addressed changing audience habits on behalf of the Center for Social Media, classifying audience media consumption habits as changing in five fundamental ways: by choice, conversation, curation, creation, and collaboration (Clark, 2010).

Choice allows users the direct ability to select what they want to consume. Conversation is now allowed through platforms like social media and other online services to serve as mediums for conversation virtually anywhere, even physical solitude. Curation allows for the transfer of messages via cross-platform venues. Creation involves the actual creation of messaging by the user. Finally, collaboration is the trial-and-error processes of letting the audience become more involved in the product manufacturing. Interactive

documentaries encompass all of what Clark says are essential attributes of changing consumer consumption habits.

Interactive documentaries may be closely linked with interactive online gaming. Online gaming has several motivational components, categorized most accurately by three factors: achievement, social interaction and immersion (Clark, Jessica, 2010). A study on interactive learning in the form of online gaming simulations showed that students were highly interested and focused when learning in an interactive online environment (Hong, Tsai, Ho, Hwang, and Wu, 2013).

Many scholars also argue that the interactive documentary should not be called a documentary. Almeida and Alvelos concluded that the term “documentary” is used too loosely, not taking into consideration the film techniques and production standards to which the film industry adheres (Almeida and Alvelos, 2010).

In summary, Figure 2.1 shows general characteristics and difference in formats of traditional and interactive documentaries and places artifacts in said categories.

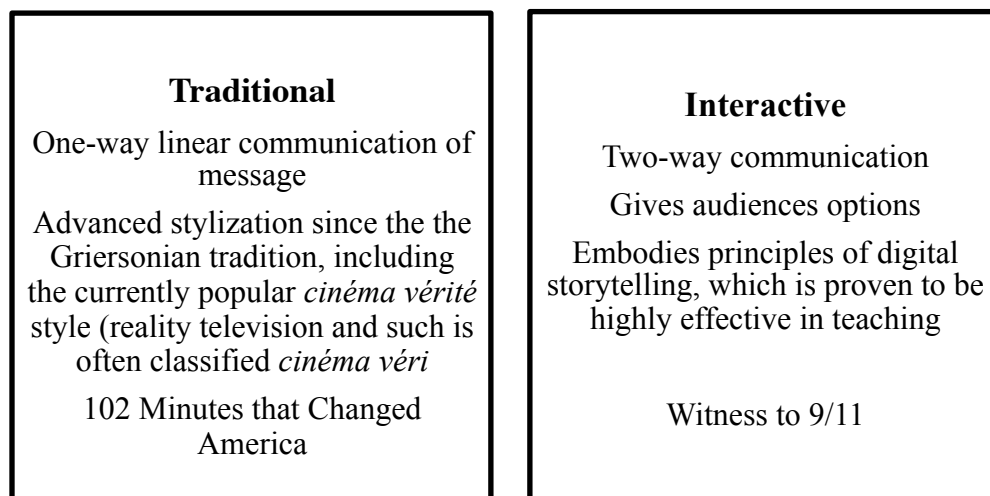


Figure 2.1: This chart shows differences in Traditional and Interactive Documentaries

Audience Reception and Documentary Film

Many studies have found specifically that documentary information and content can have a significant effect on audience perception and interpretation. In steep contrast with television studies, documentary films with specific content have actually affected viewer attitude positively, specifically about the information directly presented in the documentary. One investigation found that students who were asked to watch documentaries about math had less anxiety about the subject in general after. In a study analyzing viewer reception to schizophrenia provided similar results, finding that viewers were more at ease and willing to learn about schizophrenia after viewing (Penn, Chamberlin, and Mueser, 2003).

However, television consumption has been noticeably revolutionized as it has merged to preferences of Internet services as opposed to traditional cable or viewing movies in the theater. The documentary genre can be found more prevalently than before, particularly within outlets like *YouTube*, *Netflix* or *Hulu*. An analysis of content and sub-categorization within the genre has been loosely categorized by topic, not content, like in the traditional film world. For example, *SuperSize Me* and *Food, Inc.* are both categorized as documentaries on food instead of traditional content and delivery-based categorizations. This study chooses not to use genre descriptions within the category of documentary; however, it notes the importance of having similar content.

LaMarre and Landreville used a similar structure to compare a documentary film with a historical reenactment of a fictional film. One section of participants were randomly assigned to watch the film, *Hotel Rawanda* (George, 2005). *Hotel Rawanda* is a “based on a true story” award-winning dramatization of the genocide in Rawanda. The

other portion of participants was asked to watch *The Triumph of Evil*, a traditional documentary that aired on television in 1999 also addressing the Rwandan genocide. Participants watched the films, which were approximately 90 minutes and took at post-test after watching them. The study found that both documentaries created significant engagement in the subject matter. While the degree of engagement did not vary based on the documentary watched, significant differences were noted in viewer knowledge gain and reaction (LaMarre and Landreville, 2009).

Oliver and Bartsch suggest that documentaries hold credibility with audiences, although empirical testing has not been performed. Their study concluded that audiences may not only enjoy and/or be gratified by the consumption of a specific kind of content or presentation, but also have a great appreciation for the media. This appreciation stems from elements such as artistic quality and personal value (Oliver and Bartsch, 2010).

Consequently, one way to broaden the concept of enjoyment may be in terms of the quality and perceived aesthetics value of the media content under consideration. For example, appreciation seems to suggest that work is perceived to reflect talent or insight on the part of the creator- separate from how one may react to the art (cf. the notion of artifact emotions discuss by Tan, 1996). For example, a person may agree that he or she appreciated or found meaningful, but did not enjoy per se, a disturbing or upsetting film (p. 6).

The perception of truth in documentaries is another area widely researched. The documentary, according to Grant (1998), appeals to audience precisely because of expected truth. In *Crafting Truth*, authors insist that directors and producers inevitably have power to examine and persuade political and social issues (Spence and Navarro, 2011). Abuses of this power have occurred in all forms of media, including documentaries. Documentarians have the power to create representations that are both honest and deceiving.

Stella Bruzzi notes in the publication *New Documentary* that while documentaries may arguably be considered deceiving, especially as new genres emerge, clear direction, editing and production are more or less responsible for the ‘final truth’ of a finished work (Bruzzi, 2000). In addition, several studies address audience reception in regards to truth including a study from 2005, where conclusively participants had conflicting attitudes about the documentary’s validity. Several audience members did not consider the film factual because of this setting (Thomas, 2005).

One study asserts that there are three processes of negation on classifying a documentary: audience beliefs, demands of media, and aspirations and motivations of the filmmakers. These elements dictate the end perception of validity, which is more or less decoded by the individuals (Rosenthal and Corner, 2005). It is widely discussed that reality television shows have changed the relationship between documentarians, subjects and audiences (Nisbet and Aufderheide, 2009; Rosenthal and Corner, 2005; Spence and Navarro, 2011; Thomas, 2005).

These findings conclude that audience receptions and behaviors vary depending on content and distribution genre. In this study, exploration of audience receptive differences will be taken into consideration due to the violent nature of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the emotional and devastating aftermath, and reception of truth in the documentary.

Adoption and the Diffusion of Innovations

Interactive documentaries are seemingly in the early adoption phase of consumer response and acceptance from the film community. Rogers describes this particular phase in the diffusion of innovations theory which theorizes the process of acceptance and

adoption of a new technical trend (Rogers and Rogers, 2003). This theory will help construct and interpret questions regarding participant acceptance of both the interactive and traditional documentary (as displayed in this instance through *YouTube*). The diffusion process includes the acceptance over time of a particular item by individuals who are linked to a specific channel of communication to a social structure and to a given system of culture and values (Baumann, 2008; Rogers and Rogers, 2003; Srivastava and Moreland, 2012).

Rogers (2003) asserts that innovation, communication channels, time and social acceptance are four key elements that produce adoption of a new innovation. Innovation implies the creation, re-creation or significant adaptation of a specific technology in an original way. The communication channel is the method by which the message is transmitted. Time implies that it takes a specific amount of time for new innovations to be adopted. Finally, the social system surrounding the innovation greatly affects the adoption of an innovation (Rogers & Rogers, 2003).

Innovations consist of five attributes that characteristically predict their adoption: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability (Rogers & Rogers, 2003). Relative advantage describes the advantage that a new technology has over an existing technology. Relative advantage depends on individual needs and perceptions. Compatibility examines if the technology coherently addresses the needs of potential adopters. Complexity refers to ease of use (i.e. simpler ideas are less complex and therefore easier to adopt). Trialability refers to the ability literally try out an innovation, implying there is ability for an audience member to replicate an innovation. Observability refers to visibility of the innovation.

Rogers (2003) also places adopters in five different categories: Innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Adopter categories are represented by a bell-shaped curve, represented in Figure 2.2.

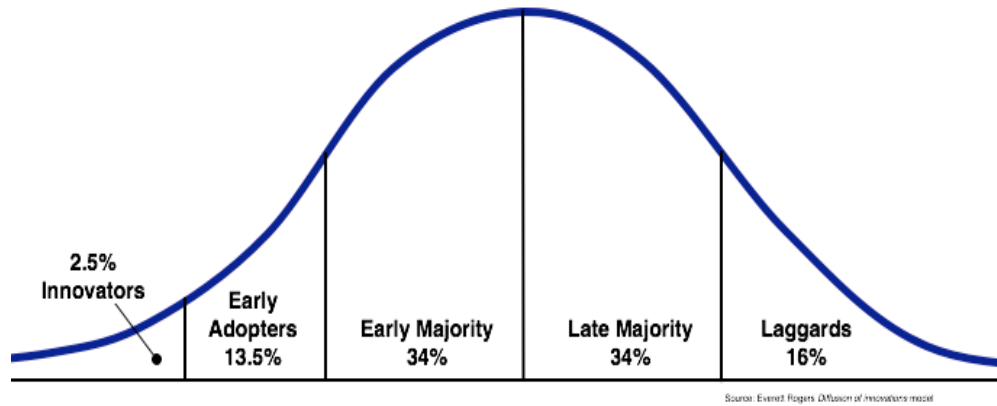


Figure 2.2: Diffusion of Innovations Bell Curve

However, technologies do not consistently become adopted by society; inclusion of early adopters does not always equate to an adopted technology. Moore (2006) illustrates the chasm that is sometimes created before an early majority adopts an innovation, illustrated in Figure 2.3.

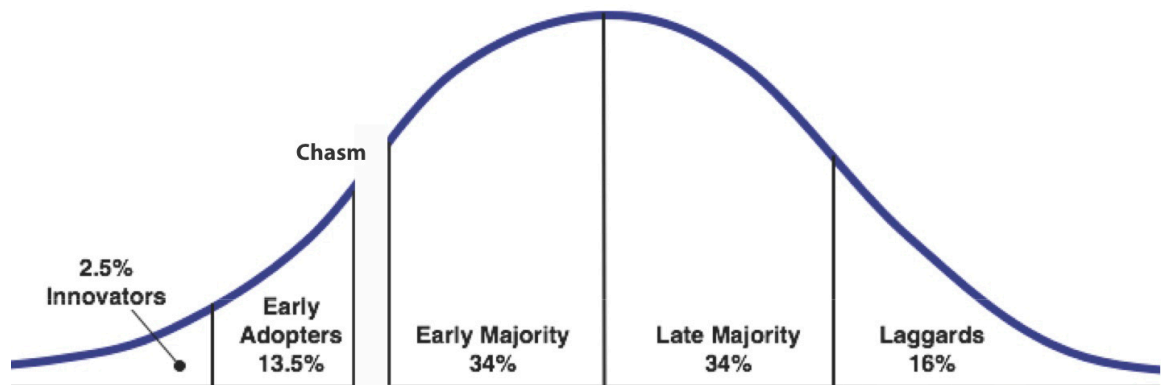


Figure 2.3: Diffusion of Innovations Bell Curve with Chasm

Moore (2006) theorizes that this chasm exists because of differential characteristics of audiences in the early adopters stage and the early majority stage.

Interestingly enough, the Gartner Research releases an annual “Hype Cycle” attempting to predict the success of emerging technologies. This prediction map places emerging technologies on a scale of potential public adoption as well as what they believe their overall influence or effectiveness will be on society. In 2010, Gartner (2010) included a technology labeled interactive TV in the slope of enlightenment (“Gartner’s 2010 Hype Cycle Special Report Evaluates Maturity of 1,800 Technologies,” n.d.). The slope of enlightenment is a specific phase of the *Hype Cycle* that describes the continued use of a technology, although it may not appear in the media. However in 2012, the closest film aspect to qualify on the Hype Cycle was internet TV, featured in the trough of disillusionment (“Gartner’s 2012 Hype Cycle for Emerging Technologies Identifies ‘Tipping Point’ Technologies That Will Unlock Long-Awaited Technology Scenarios,” n.d.). The trough of disillusionment predicts a fast trend that will quickly become unpopular. While neither of these market definitions exactly identifies interactive documentaries, both technologies include aspects of interactive documentaries. Comparably, one might infer that the interactive documentary may be in an early adopter or chasm phase.

Britain (2009) asserted that because of different experiences, interactive documentaries offer a new perspective, including the ability to control the message of consumption. A traditional documentary is criticized for not having this option. Because of this difference, an analysis of audience effect on the two mediums separately is necessary. This effect will be measured both immediately after watching the

documentaries. Future research would benefit from comparing audience interpretation, perception and gratification by using the documentaries in conjunction with one another.

Because these formats are relatively new, documentaries listed below serve as examples of additional interactive documentaries that have this dynamic form. *Witness to 9/11* incorporates elements from all three of these examples.

GOA Hippy Tribe: This award-winning interactive documentary produced by Australian documentary maker Darius Devas, infused social media with streaming content and incorporated user-generated content. By using Facebook as its primary platform for interactive user communication, *Goa Hippy Tribe* has generated thousands of regular, engaged users across the world (Devas, Darius, 2010). Nash (2012) uses this documentary to theorize documentaries that use social networking sites as a platform. Study findings indicate audience members are can actively engage with content and online communities (Nash, 2012).

Big Stories, Small Towns, an interactive documentary produced by Nick Crowther, highlights interesting figures and stories in villages around the world. The site creates online communities where other interesting stories can be uploaded, however, this documentary primarily uses its own content management system to maintain social interaction and user-generated content instead of social media venues such as Facebook (Crowther, Nick, 2008). Plans for development of the documentary include incorporating new technologies as soon as they became available, including the incorporation of new internet mark-up language, HTML5, in a hope to “open up and create advances in collaborative and community storytelling” (Scott-Stevenson, 2012).

In final example, *A Journey to the End of Coal* allows users to actively participate in the delivery of the message in the documentary. Users are able to participate by selecting choices of hyperlinks embedded within the documentary. This documentary does not use a social platform to drive user-generated content within its site (Bollendorff, Samuel and Segretin, Abel, 2008). After receiving over 1.5 million views, *A Journey to the End of Coal*, originally coded with Adobe Flash, was recoded using jQuery and XHTML to aid in user fluency with the technology (Clark, Tracy, 2009). Findings indicate producer and directors' eagerness to smoothly operate Web-based documentaries.

With this constantly changing format, research has also been done on the diffusion of blogs into the field of education, journalism and public relations. Duke found that, specifically in the field of public relations, two-way communication can be more persuasive and effective than traditional media (Duke, 2008). This author also notes the tremendous increase in two-way communication, specifically through blogs, another form of two-way communication. In 1998 there were approximately 30,000 blogs. That number had grown to over 150 million by 2011 ("Internet 2011 in numbers," n.d.). The principle of the diffusion of innovations, specifically in two-way communication, is highlighted by this trend.

This study began with an introduction of the interactive and traditional documentaries about September 11. This chapter explores a synthesis of the literature on diffusions of innovations, uses and gratifications theory, audience reception theory and theory of planned behavior. In the following chapter, I will examine the artifacts in greater depth and use previous documentary studies to introduce a methodology for

analyzing audience reception and, comparatively, the differences in audience reception in technological and personal facets of both *102 Minutes that Changed America* and *Witness to 9/11*.

CHAPTER THREE

The Artifacts

Documentaries have recently flourished in the film world, launching box office hits in theatres across the globe. From the controversial to the educational, documentary films are unlike regular cinematic films, in that they are primarily non-fiction portrayals of a story or event. Documentary film producers and directors seek to archive an event from the past or the present, both scripted and unscripted. Recently, several documentary films have generated conversation worldwide, including films like *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *2016 Obama's America*, *March of the Penguins*, and *An Inconvenient Truth*. With a lifetime gross capping at about \$119 million for *Fahrenheit 9/11* (“Documentary Movies at the Box Office - Box Office Mojo,” n.d.), the business of documentary filmmaking has recently reached a new prime and popularity with general publics.

A traditional film documentary is defined as the one-way transmission of a documented, factual record through cinema, film, and television or by a venue on the Internet that allows for streaming video. An extensive number of traditional documentaries have been made about the events of September 11, released in both theaters and on television. Documentaries of television coverage were made internationally, covering the events that took place during and after the attacks occurred.

On the first, fifth, tenth and eleventh anniversaries of the World Trade Center terrorist attack, documentaries aired extensively. The History Channel’s production of *102 Minutes that Changed America* was just one of several documentary compilations about September 11. Additional films produced by The History Channel covered subjects

including United Flight 93, the 9/11 commission, New York City history, Former Mayor Rudolph “Rudy” Giuliani, Former President George W. Bush, Osama Bin Laden, the Pentagon attacks, coverage of Ground Zero, victim and survival stories and the aftermath of the events.

The Internet documentary has been defined as a database that offers the user various pathways through its collection of information. This database is accepted as a collection of operations for viewing, searching and navigating. (Roberts, Andrews et al., 2011). Interactive documentary makers are forced to think differently about the non-linear format of the interactive documentary.

9/11 Documentary Studies

In *The Documentary Film Maker Handbook*, Jolliffe and Zinnes noted that the September 11 attacks triggered a revolution for documentary makers, as the demand to see documentaries increased (Jolliffe and Zinnes, 2006). Documentaries became a simple approach to information collection instead of reading.

While there are many documentaries produced about September 11, very few are studied in a scholarly fashion, aside from Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Documentaries, originally thought to have an objective purpose of storytelling, have seen less than objective perspectives as their popularity has risen. Films like Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11* did not abide by principles of objectivity, instead pushing persuasive personal agendas in a documentary format. Moore’s strong stances on the events of September 11, as well as the immense popularity of *Fahrenheit 9/11* in the box office, create an interesting situation in terms of documentary validity. In Natalie Jomini Stroud’s article *Media Effects, Selective Exposure, and Fahrenheit 9/11*, she found that

Michael Moore's film successfully transmitted a negative perception of former President George W. Bush to audiences. Stroud found that by viewing the film, audiences were more engaged in political discussions (Jomini Stroud, 2007).

Moore's opinionated look at September 11 generated massive conversation in the documentary world, and many attacks were launched against Moore's approach. *Fifty-nine Deceits in Fahrenheit 9/11* was one of many critical articles written about Moore's use of personal opinion and propaganda, and discussed the responsorial film *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Kopel, Dave, n.d.). The question of validity arose from the conjoining interest in the documentary's success.

Media coverage of the events has also been examined in scholarly works. In *9/11, Spectacles of Terror and Media Manipulation*, Kellner critiques corporate media coverage as coercive propaganda supporting political claims. However, Kellner finds that the Internet is the best source of information concerning complex events as opposed to traditional media outlets (Kellner, 2004).

Hays found that audiences flocked to traditional media sources for coverage immediately after the events of September 11 and then obtained additional information elsewhere when traditional media could not meet inquisitor needs. Hays looked at two online community groups, performing a content analysis on user-conversation. The study found users who actively interacted on these blog-like sites reported a feeling of 'community repair' and healing in the groups (Hays, 2011).

Bondejerg (2009) explored investigative documentary films created after the September 11 attacks but preceding the *War on Terror*. Findings indicate that

investigative documentaries about the September 11 attacks caused future investigative documentaries to receive more political criticism internationally (Bondebjerg, 2009).

Gibson (2009) discusses American audience disengagement with war films after the September 11 attacks. Audience members viewed both a documentary about the September 11 attacks as well as a documentary about torture in the Iraq war. Findings indicated that American audiences were numb to torture and murder (Gibson, 2009).

Content analysis of many documentaries about September 11 have been researched including Sharrett's (2009) analysis of 9/11 attacks and conspiracy theories presented in documentary films. Findings show that ideologies of each conspiracy theory differ, "making use of the democratizing possibilities of the media" (Sharrett, 2008).

A wide range of additional literature is available regarding September 11 documentaries and their effect both on audiences and the film and broadcast industry including documentary gaming analysis (Raessens, 2006), audience memory of real and pictured events (McCabe, 2012), and community stabilization through conspiracy theories (Butter and Retterath, 2010).

102 Minutes that Changed America

102 Minutes that Changed America was viewed through a direct link given to participants. Participants viewed the documentary on *YouTube* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQ4dMRdMK9o>). Chronologically, the film began with the footage immediately after the first plane hit the South Tower of the World Trade Center. The first scene of the film begins with a short description of what viewers were about to see and then fades to a timer (see Illustration 1 and 2). This timer counts down 102 minutes of time that elapsed between the time the first plane hit the first of the two

World Trade Center Towers and when both towers collapsed in their entirety. The counter is revisited throughout the film.

The remainder of the documentary primarily consists of footage from people who turned on their cell phone cameras, camcorders, and other recording devices during the events. In addition, news editorial clips, radio transmissions from medical and professional personnel, and personal cell phone calls were cohesively merged with the audio provided by the original footage. The film shows the chaos and destruction that the two planes caused when they plunged into the two tallest towers in New York City, and ends with the scramble of bystanders to safer grounds as the last of those two towers fell.

There are three major elements to this documentary. The opening credits explain that all footage was filmed the morning of September 11 in New York City. See Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2.

Handheld footage provides the majority of the documentary's context, narrated by audio from the original footage, as well as television, radio, and news broadcast from that morning. See Figure 3.3 and 3.4.

Witness to 9/11

Witness to 9/11 provides similar content in a different format, and must be viewed through a web browser. Also produced by The History Channel, the opening screenshot of the documentary is presented as a map of New York City (Figure 3.5). Viewers are enlisted as active participants, requiring them to take part in navigating the content. This computer-formatted documentary allows users to scroll over ten different sections of



Figure 3.1: This is the first image of *102 Minutes that Changed America*, a narrative description outlining the film.



Figure 3.2: The second image from *102 Minutes that Change America* is a digital clock that counts down the 102-minute runtime of the film. This counter will appear periodically in-between different scenes of varying footage.



Figure 3.3: This handheld footage was taken immediately after the first plane hit the building, displaying chaos in the streets.



Figure 3.4: This footage taken was from the New York University dorms in downtown New York.

New York City. Once a section is selected, users can click to view a video taken from that specific location of the city. The title will glow in red and a preview appears at the bottom right hand corner of the screen. In addition to the original footage provided, users can also see an interview with the filmmaker and observe other parts of the building. Original footage begins playing automatically. In the bottom of the screen, users may skip ahead to watch the filmmaker interview and/or read the filmmaker's story.

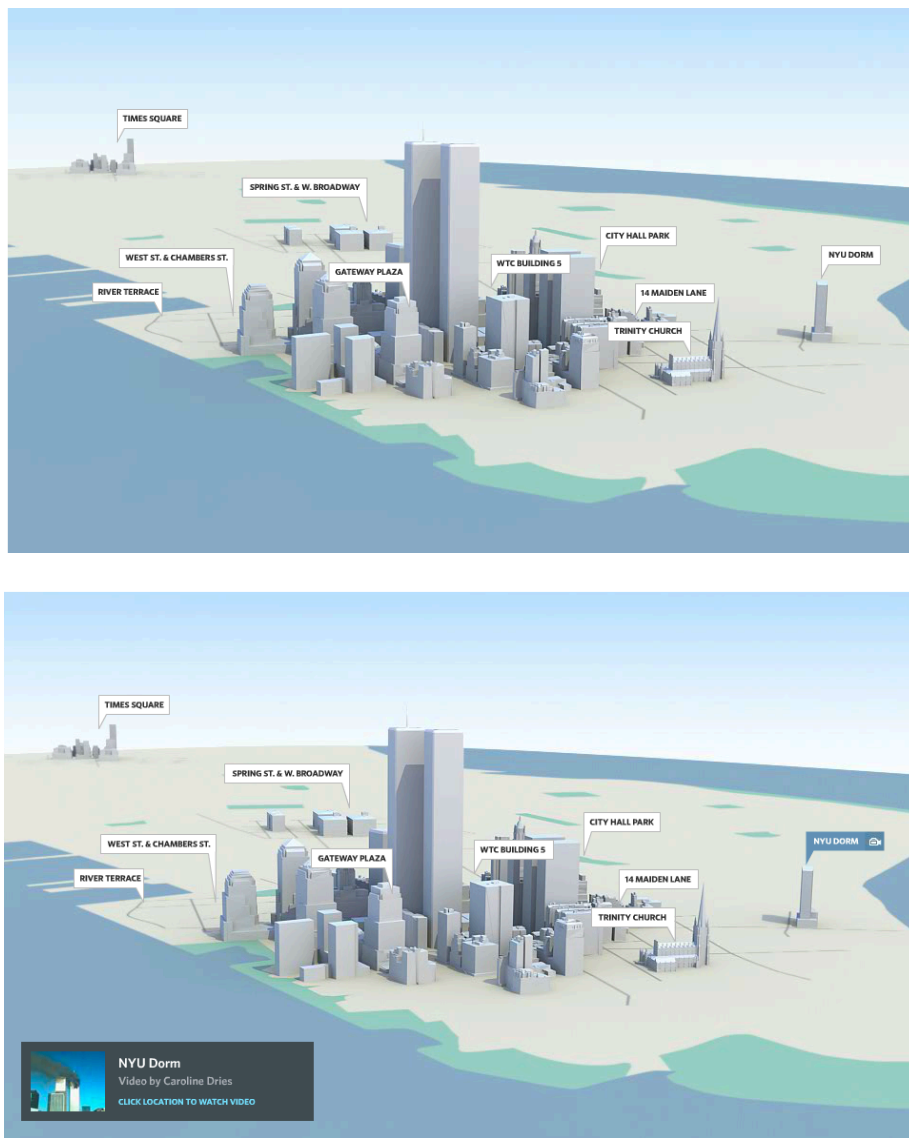


Figure 3.5: Interactive Maps of New York City|

Once the documentary clip is complete, a new series of options becomes available. Users may replay the video, watch the filmmaker interview, continue to the next location or go back to the previous location. Users may also click the back button in their browser to return to the previous screen (Figure 3.6 and 3.7).



Figure 3.6: This footage was taken from the New York University dorms in downtown New York.

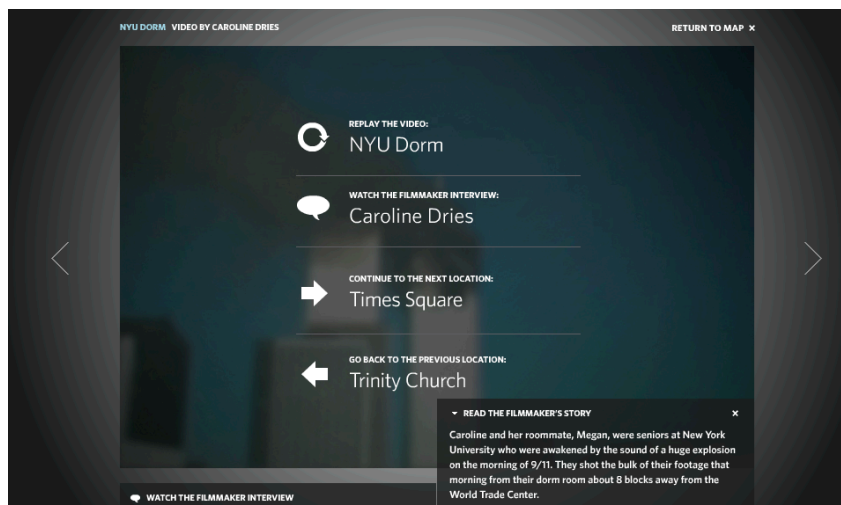


Figure 3.7: Menu options after viewing footage display after clip is complete.

While *102 Minutes that Changed America* and *Witness to 9/11* are complementary dramatic documentaries retelling the story of the 9/11 attacks with very similar content, film experts and audiences may view them completely differently.

The interactive documentary is still considered a borderline approach to the documentary genre. Though it has the same elements and goals of a documentary, it does not allow the user to simply remain a spectator. There must be cognitive participation. In this study, the one-way transmission of information through the film *102 Minutes that Changed America* (distributed in this study via YouTube) is considered traditional.

CHAPTER FOUR

Questions/Hypotheses

Based on this literature review this study addresses the following three research questions:

RQ₁: How do audiences respond to each type of documentary?

RQ₂: How do audiences perceive the formatting of each documentary film?

RQ₃: Are either versions of web documentary adoptable innovations?

RQ₄: Does watching one of the selected documentaries promote engagement in and/or provide gratification for audiences after viewing?

Rationale

To address these questions, both a survey of prior knowledge was constructed and a focus group was assembled to test the theories discussed in Chapter 2. Both groups received similar questions to facilitate the comparison between the different films.

How do audiences respond to each type of documentary? Research question one specifically asks for initial reactions of how the documentary was received by audiences. Because all participants had a film or digital media background, this research question sought to identify what initial audience reaction was to the documentary. Audience response was recorded in both questionnaire format and interview format to achieve a deeper understanding. Case studies that highlight reactions to the audience reception theory helped outline and construct questions in this particular case study.

How do audiences perceive the formatting of each documentary film? The uses and gratifications theory and audience reception theory were helpful in determining audience reception to both the production of this film as a crewmember, as well as possible gratifications and reception as an audience member.

Are either versions of web documentary adoptable innovations? The diffusion of innovations theory guided the construction of responses to help answer research question three. The diffusion of innovations not only helped place participant role on the bell-curve, but also provided a construct for discovering characteristics of participant role in regards to this particular innovation.

Does watching one of the selected documentaries promote engagement in and/or provide gratification for audiences after viewing? Question four combined theoretical frameworks to help compare and contrast audience perception of the traditional and interactive documentaries and determine overall engagement and satisfaction in audience members from the selected focus group.

CHAPTER FIVE

Methods

As mentioned previously, this study utilized both questionnaire and focus-group format to address audience response to different documentaries. Focus group questions and survey questions were constructed based on results from a pretest conducted in February 2013.

A pretest was conducted utilizing two focus groups, both separated for interactive and traditional documentaries with journalism and film students. Participants were given a basic demographic questionnaire before starting their viewing session. They were asked to directly participate in conversation after a thirty-minute viewing session. However, apparently due to the extreme and intense nature of the content of both documentaries, pretest participants were less responsive to questions regarding formatting and more responsive to content engagement questions. In addition, journalism students were less responsive to technical questions about formatting. In general, little formatting discussion evolved during either of the pretest focus group discussion due to an inability to create participant separation from content. Participants were more inclined to discuss content, making it difficult to assess formatting reception.

In light of these pretest results, I chose to create a small hiatus between group discussion and content consumption to help concentrate responses on formatting, while allowing room to analyze content engagement as well. The questionnaire was, thus, distributed after the viewing session and asked, in addition to basic geographic information, their initial reactions to the presentation they had just watched.

Participants in the traditional documentary focus group (n=5) visited the Web site <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQ4dMRdMK9o> to view *102 Minutes that Changed America* individually on a laptop via YouTube. The study was conducted in a classroom setting. Because an analysis of the entirety of the content is not the primary focus of this study, participants viewed the first 30 minutes of the documentary. More specifically, participants watched from 0:00 (Illustration 1) to 30:00 (Illustration 2) Participants used headphones to listen and watch on a personal laptop. After 30 minutes, participants were asked to fill out a written survey (see appendix A). Following survey completion, participants openly conversed in a scripted focus group that evaluated response and reaction to format and content.

Similarly, the participants in the interactive documentary focus group (n=7) interacted on the website <http://www.history.com/interactives/witness-to-911>. Participants explored the interactive documentary for 30 minutes. Participants used headphones to listen and watch the documentary individually in a classroom setting. In those thirty minutes, participants remained continuously active with the documentary. Length of scenes ranged from three minutes to five minutes. After clicking on a location in the map participants had options of viewing footage from that location (Illustrations 5).

After viewing, participants were able to explore additional options including replaying the video, watching the filmmaker's interview or continuing to a different location on the map that is in close proximity to their original starting point on the map. Participants also had the option to press the back button in their browser to return to the original screen. After thirty minutes, participants were asked to complete a written survey individually (see appendix A).

The questionnaire collected descriptive statistics of the sample. In addition, the questionnaire asked open-ended questions about previous knowledge of technologies. It also addressed previous exposure to the documentaries, general film and television consumption patterns, expertise in film, and previous knowledge of the case study documentaries in this research study. The questionnaire also served as a buffer of time allowing for the decompression of the familiar, yet graphic, content of these 9/11 films. The questionnaire can be viewed in Appendix A.

Immediately after, participants partook in conversation in a focus group format. Both groups were encouraged to participate freely in conversation. The focus group sought to address the following subjects: viewer perception of the informative nature of each film, viewer reception of format and technology, viewer engagement with the format and content, and future production interest.

The complete focus group script is available in Appendix B. Focus group questions for each group were identical for comparison purposes. Focus group questions are listed below.

1. Describe the formatting of the documentary you just watched.
2. Is this a way you typically experience documentaries?
3. Would you watch this documentary again in your spare time?
4. Was this easy to use?
5. Would you consider this format profitable?
6. Do you consider this a documentary?
7. Did you find this presentation informative?
8. Did you find this presentation factual?

9. How would you evaluate your experience?
10. Did you feel engaged with the documentary?
11. What aspect did you like most about this documentary? Least?

Each focus group consisted of casual conversation. Each focus group session was recorded for transcription.

After one month has passed, respondents were asked three additional questions via email. The investigator asked respondents if they finished watching the documentary in question, if they attempted to create a similar documentary and if they shared the link to this documentary with acquaintances.

This focus group and questionnaire proposal was submitted to the Baylor University Internal Review Board and approved on April 10, 2013. The IRB project number assigned is #402988-2. All participants were asked to read and sign an informed consent document. Information collected for this research project will be stored for six months and then destroyed.

In the next chapter, key findings from the conversation will be discussed. Prior to conducting this study, the investigator expected to find completely different analysis of the participants in each focus group. From the *102 Minutes that Changed America*, she expected to find themes generated around the use of amateur content as opposed to scripted and directed camera operation, commenting more on the technicality of user-generated content: shaky movements, loss of artistic value, etc. In addition, the investigator predicted that though the interactive documentary may be engaging due to content, the innovation fell in either the early adoption phase or a chasm on the diffusion of innovations model.

Sample

Twelve participants from a university setting participated in one of two focus groups. All students were enrolled in film and digital media classes at a Southern university. Film and digital media students were chosen for this study because of their expertise and concentration on the subject. Focus group participation was assigned by student availability.

Five participants were classified as freshman, two were classified as sophomores, two were juniors, one was a senior and one didn't self identify. 41.7% of participants were female and 58.3% were male.

In the traditional documentary focus group, three males and two females participated in the study (n=5). All participants were 18 to 25 years of age. No participant reported having seen *102 Minutes that Changed America* or *Witness to 9/11* before this study.

In the interactive documentary focus group, four males and three females participated in the study (n=7). All participants were 18 to 25 years of age. Six of the seven reported they had not seen *102 Minutes that Changed America* or *Witness to 9/11* before this study. Only one participant was unsure if he/she had seen *102 Minutes that Changed America*. More relevant descriptive statistics, as well as results, will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Results

This chapter will discuss the results from both the questionnaire and the focus group discussions and follow-up questionnaire distributed via email one month after participation.

Collective Survey Participation Results

Collectively, participants (n=12) reported having seen, on average, 34.9 films in the last six months on a computer. The range for this figure was extremely large, ranging from 3-200. The mode for this figure was 20 hours. Figure 6.1 illustrates the range of film consumption reports per participant. A very small amount of this film consumption was dedicated to documentary films. Participants watched an average of 3.9167 documentaries in the last six months (std. dev.=3.01210). Again, outliers skewed this number with answers ranging from 0 to 25. The mode of this figure was zero documentaries. Most participants do not watch documentaries on a regular basis, as can be seen in Figure 6.2.

Participants reported spending on average 3.5 hours on multimedia outlets daily (std. dev.=3.01210). Of the 12 participants, only 58% reported having seen a web-based documentary. Of those that had seen web-based documentaries, 28% reported never having seen an interactive documentary. Additionally, only 16% of all participants reported never having seen interactive documentary. Additionally, reported having seen an interactive documentary.

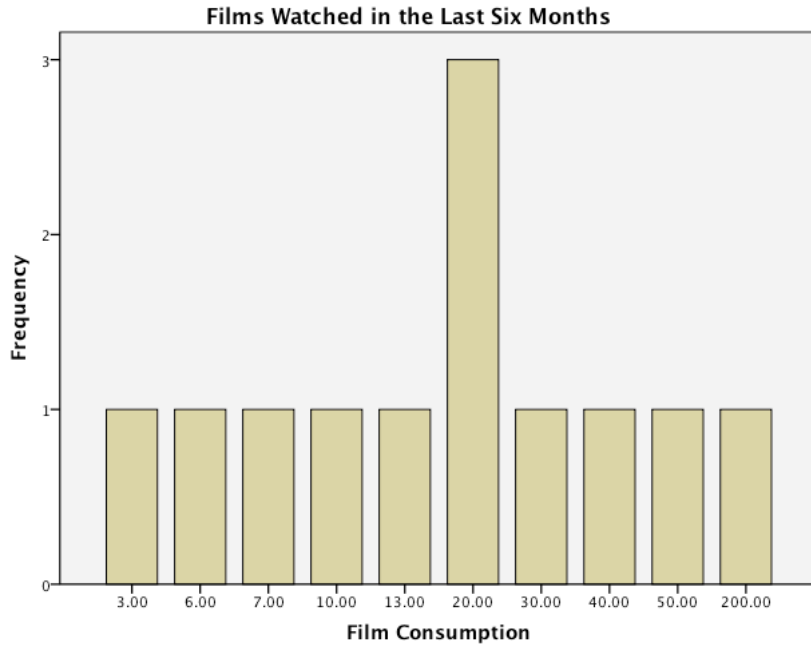


Figure 6.1: Frequency chart of film consumption per participant in the last 6 months

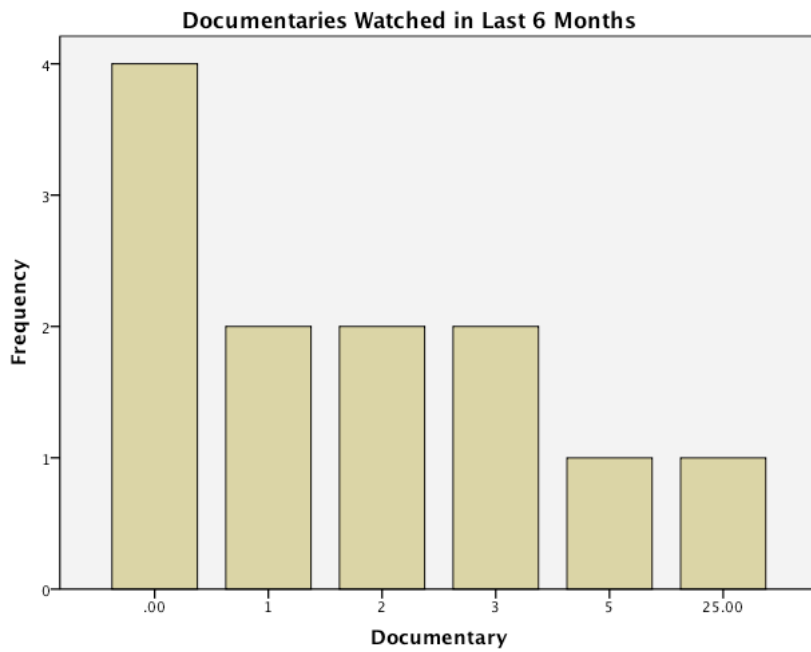


Figure 6.2: Frequency chart of documentary consumption per participant in the last 6 months

Traditional Documentary Focus Group Results

Participants who watched the traditional documentary were asked questions about demographic information, general questions about documentary exposure, and initial reactions to the documentary. The questionnaire was passed out immediately after the viewing period. Participants' initial reactions were all based on the content of the documentary and all participants recalled having personal recollections of the terrorist attacks on September 11.

Additionally, as the focus group discussion progressed, engagement and content recollection probes stirred many emotions. Participants were able to recall scenes they had watched within the documentary and compared them to footage they had seen previously. All participants rated this documentary highly among other films they had seen prior to this study. High ranking was attributed to unique delivery. When asked what films they presumed were not presented as well as *102 Minutes that Changed America*, four of five participants mentioned *United 93* and *World Trade Center* (both theatrical representations of the events, not documentaries).

Although content was engaging, participants reported emotional disturbance because of the dramatic effect of the content. Two respondents reported they would watch the film to pay homage to the event itself and the victims. Collectively, the group agreed that they would watch this video to fill in pieces that they didn't know about the terrorist attacks.

In addition, four of five users found this documentary a factual representation of the event. The major factor that attributed to one participant's perception of truth was the filming style. This documentary used footage collected from victims and eyewitnesses

from spectators and victims of the terrorist attack. Using real footage instead of professional footage (scripted and directed or reenacted film clips) made viewers feel as confused and disoriented as the filmmakers were. All participants reported feeling immersed in the event, as if they were alongside the filmmakers.

All five respondents reported being interested in creating a documentary such as the *102 Minutes that Changed America*. Four of the five respondents felt that this would be a profitable endeavor. One participant mentioned that a similar approach to creating a documentary had been taken in the web-based release of promotional material for a videogame. Figure 6.3 charts categorical findings from each respondent.

Traditional Documentary Respondent Responses

Profitable	X		X	X	X
Factual	X	X	X	X	
Finish					
Watching	X	X	X	X	X
Engaging	X	X	X	X	X
	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5

Figure 6.3: Individual “yes” responses per each respondent in the traditional documentary focus group

In terms of future formatting, participants saw a potential for this format to effectively be used to document events like the Boston Marathon bombing.

In addition, participants discussed a desire to see this format used for past historical events, despite the unlikelihood that eyewitness accounts would be available via video in an historical context. Participants mentioned specific events like the Oklahoma City bombing, the siege of the Alamo, and Pearl Harbor, and the beneficial properties of

having this type of format with film to educate those who did not have direct experience with an event.

Interactive Documentary Focus Group

Participants in the interactive documentary group reported their demographic information as well as their initial reactions to the documentary. As with the traditional documentary group, all responses were related to content and recollections of their personal experiences with September 11.

Because some finished the written survey faster than others, many participants resumed watching clips from the interactive documentary after they finished the questionnaire. In fact, six of the seven participants continued watching clips while the last participant filled out the survey information.

Four of the seven students started in the Time Square portion of the map, where they experienced footage from a New York University dorm room. Many found this to be one of the most engaging clips because of its relevance and continuity with their own lives as college students. Focus group participants felt that because they had personal experiences with September 11, it made the footage that much more powerful.

When asked if they felt this presentation was engaging, all participants said yes. One respondent felt so engaged with the content she recalled a scene where a bystander asked, “Do you smell that? I think it’s burning cable.” This respondent reported a bit of confusion because of the lack of smell in the room. This transitional awareness of everyday life versus their virtual environment was noted in other instances as well. For example, one participant found himself ducking when debris was flying at the camera.

In addition, all participants agreed this format was factual. One respondent said, “You actually realistically watch a person go through the process of denial. It’s not acting, this can’t be interviewed and believed the same way. It’s real life. It’s as factual as you can get.” This spurred debate, and transitioned the conversation from content to formatting. Participants noted that it’s factual to a point; however, there is still awareness that the director was able to edit each cut, add sound effects and music cues. The edit that seemed most intrusive to the degree of factuality was the decision to eliminate cursing. Three respondents reported not liking the voids of space the deletion created in the audio. Two also mentioned that the censorship was unnecessary, and the inclusion of the curse words and audio would make the overall project feel less “edited”.

Other formatting features were noted in addition to editing selections. Participants noted the degradation of quality, finding the quality both frustrating (because of the inability to see with clarity) and impactful (because participants comprehended camera quality advancements since 2001). One respondent mentioned that as a filmmaker, it was inspiring to see that “you don’t need a hundred thousand dollar camera to make a big impact on audiences”. Participants also mentioned liking the brevity of each clip and the ease of navigating between clips. One respondent asserted that even with familiarity of the content, this particular ability to choose added a certain level element of surprise.

Despite the interactive, web-based format of *Witness to 9/11*, respondents defended this presentation as a documentary. One mentioned that audiences might confuse this with a gaming format. In addition six of the seven participants reported having never experienced a documentary in this form before. One respondent had

experienced a similar format that covered the Columbine shooting. In addition, three respondents discussed this as a similar presentation to that of fan-fiction.

The group discussed the possibility of this being a stand-alone presentation in the future. About half of the participants attributed its lack of narrative structure to its inability to stand alone. Participants did not find this format suitable for theatrical presentation. Five of the seven said this format would be a quintessential way to enhance a film, both fiction and non-fiction, as a highlighted and promoted accompaniment.

Participants offered suggestions that they thought would make this more adoptable. Participants reported wishing there were a timeline that was optional to follow so that users could participate in a linear fashion if they chose. In general, the site was easy to use.

All participants planned to revisit the site, and additionally, share the site with acquaintances. Several participants were interested in producing something using with this formatting approach, although they unanimously agreed that this would be difficult to reap a monetary benefit as producers. When asked what might motivate them to create such a production, respondents said that projects of this nature would be created for personal satisfaction, which later translated to humanitarian reasons. “The world needs things like this,” one respondent said.

The group discussed this documentary compared to other documentaries they had seen. Participants agreed that traditional documentaries are less in-depth and serve dual purposes: entertainment and education. The interactive format was received as more an in-depth and functional production, and, therefore, it was concluded this would be most beneficial in an educational setting. Participants mentioned this format could be an

innovative way to portray recent events. Specifically, the group mentioned the Boston Marathon bombing and the war in Iraq. One participant posed the question, “What if this becomes the necessary way to talk about current events because of technological advancements?” Ease of the collection of attendee footage to create a successful documentary was also discussed. The availability of high-quality personal cameras was an intriguing facet to future documentary making in this format. Figure 6.4 charts categorical findings from each respondent.

Interactive Documentary Responses

Profitable	X		X	X		X	X
Factual	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Finish							
Watching	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Engaging	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Res. 1	Res. 2	Res. 3	Res. 4	Res. 5	Res. 6	Res. 7

Figure 6.4: Individual “yes” responses per each respondent in the Interactive documentary focus group

One Month Follow-Up Responses

Six respondents answered the follow-up questionnaire distributed one month after the focus group. Of the six, two reported going back to the site in the study and completed watching or interacting with the documentary. None of the participants attempted to create a similar documentary. In addition, three of the six respondents said they had shared this with friends or acquaintances.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Discussion

In the previous chapter, the results of the questionnaire and key focus group responses were recorded. Following is a discussion of these results as they are applied to the theories presented in Chapter 2 and their implication on mass media reception and diffusion of innovations studies.

Audience Reception

Audience reception of each presentation generally had similar receptive responses, particularly to content. In previous case studies that studied documentary reception of films, researchers found that despite similar backgrounds, audience members had different reactions to information presented in documentary form (Güçlü, 2010). Participants in this study had similar backgrounds and exposure to September 11th. Results of this study find most participants had similar reception to content (i.e., shock, awe, amazement). Because of reported high levels of engagement with the content and familiarity with the subject matter, this study finds that cultural similarity, specifically with the events of September 11th, did not produce varying results in regards to reactions and responses to content.

This differentiation in case studies may be attributed to the prior internalization of content, as found by Amaya (2003). Cultural similarity may be subject to cultural exposure levels especially in traumatic events like September 11, causing differences in reactions to specific content. For example, those who experienced the September 11

attacks on the World Trade Center will have different receptions to this documentary than future generations. The social setting created in this study (those who had experienced and had memories of the September 11 attacks) created a familiar and binding environment that encouraged engagement and positive reaction, as opposed to the negative reactions found in Saputro's (2010) study. This familiarity was a key factor in increasing audience engagement in this study.

Truth was another essential element that was present in both documentaries. Though studies mentioned in chapter two found many documentaries about September 11 were perceived as untrue, both of these documentaries were considered factual. Galloway et al. (2007) defined interactive documentaries as a venue for realistic messaging in real-time. In this case study, that realistic messaging translated to reception of truth in content.

Interactive and Traditional Documentaries

The interactive documentary is not perceived as a substitute for a traditional documentary, although its format and delivery is certainly intriguing with familiar subjects. Both linear and non-linear formats are generally technologies that can be used in society but for varying reasons. In this study, participants from both groups requested elements that existed in the other format to enhance the format they watched. For example, the interactive documentary focus group requested a timeline feature to give options for engaging in a linear form, to supplement the non-linear form. This timeline element was present in the traditional documentary. While these elements could be incorporated into both, it is also valid that these two are successful supplements to each other.

The interactive documentary served as an effective two-way communication model that allowed users to engage and unfold events by continued interaction, as supported by Scott-Stevenson et al (2012). However, as mentioned by Robin (2008), this study found that traditional entertainment may not be the appropriate venue for technologies such as interactive documentaries. Future filmmakers may find that this format is only applicable in educational atmospheres or to aid in the further exploration of a topic that is presented in a traditional entertainment venue (i.e. fan-fiction, transmedia, gaming).

With demonstrated levels of engagement as presented in this study, one might find an educational atmosphere may benefit from using this format to create engaging presentations. Message recall, content description and name recognition of filmmakers were mentioned in the interactive documentary focus group. These three elements are crucial to the learning process and educational curriculum. After initial exposure, the participants in this study quickly saw format adaptations that could potentially enhance the digital storytelling experience.

Films in the forms of documentaries are not currently consumed as much as other film counterparts, as shown in this study. With this in mind, profiting from the creation of an innovative type of film that is rarely watched is an interesting financial investment. This study found that engaged and intrigued filmmakers might still be interested in creating a production such as an interactive documentary despite the unknown monetary compensation. Aesthetics and humanitarian educational services were among the most prominent reasons for creating something in such a format, particularly when filmmakers thought they could be a part of the “history-making” process. Holistic gratification and

appreciation came from educating audiences as opposed to monetary gain in the film industry.

The Diffusion of Newly Formatted Documentaries

The more exposure filmmakers have to engaging types of formats and content such as these, the more likely they are to make them. This, in conjunction with diffusion principles (ease of use, compatibility and relative advantage) seemingly would make participants and, applicably, students who are studying filmmaking, early adopters of this technology (Rogers, 2003). However, it is difficult to precisely place the position of interactive documentaries on the diffusion of innovations bell curve. Findings show that this may fit categorically in an early adopter stage of adoption, as the majority of participants reported not having seen an interactive documentary before and additionally, students seemed excited and interested about the idea of creating a similar project in both the traditional and interactive sectors.

However, the follow-up questionnaire suggests that there may be a slower curve of adoption than predicted by the traditional diffusion model. Only half of respondents had shared this with acquaintances after a one-month period, suggesting that the presentations had a calculable amount of observability. However, none of the participants reported having attempted to create a presentation in a similar format, suggesting limited trialability.

Galloway et al. (2007) suggested that the interactive documentary was at the “brink of a new cultural form” in 2007. However, according to findings, only 16% of respondents in this study had ever seen an interactive documentary in 2013. Though documentaries in either of these formats has been available for an extended amount of

time, this study still finds that the interactive documentary is placed in an early adopters phase (Figure 7.1).

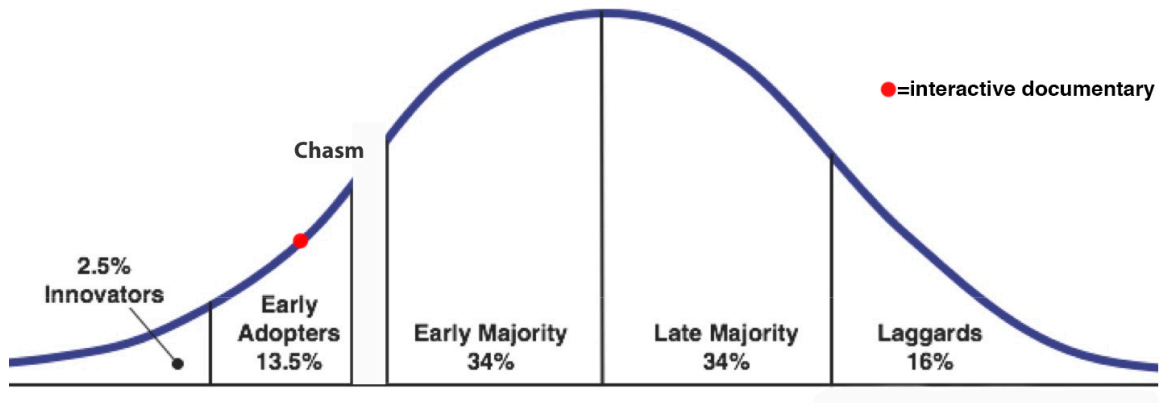


Figure 7.1: This model shows the potential placements of the interactive documentary on the diffusion of innovations model.

It is possible that these pilot interactive documentaries have yet to find their distribution venues, which, again, may lie in the educational field. Participants in this case study discussed the idea of its potential necessity in the future. Future technological demands and availability will continue to make it easier to create interactive documentaries, especially those with unscripted, eyewitness footage. Due to responses from a follow-up study, findings more accurately suggest these are simply characteristics of the early adoption phase for this particular technology and the adoption rate may be on a slower slope than is predicted by the traditional diffusions curve.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Limitations

As a pilot study, there are several limitations. The study used a small and demographically similar sample size. Future studies would benefit greatly from an exploration of a variety of people from different regions and with different backgrounds. The technological approach would also benefit from varying backgrounds, not just college-level students studying film, but also opinions from other entertainment artists and media professionals such as web programmers, multimedia producers, journalists, public relations specialists, videogame engineers and designers, and, perhaps most importantly, educators.

Results of this qualitative study are general and may not be applicable to society as a whole. In addition, this particular methodological design would be difficult to replicate in other settings. Interview questions were adapted to fit focus group participants' responses. Though responses were guided by pre-scripted questions, no one focus group could ever achieve exactly the same responses.

Another limitation to this study is the decision to decipher the analysis and reception of content, as well as the analysis and adoption of formatting. Although the two are hard to separate, specifically in this case study situation, a more in-depth analysis of formatting may be done by showing different sorts of content (if possible, unfamiliar content that has been deemed engaging in a pretest). The separation would aid in a more concentrated effort to explore each theory.

In addition, the use of a focus group is potentially limiting for participants making it difficult to assess pressures that may develop from both the moderator and other participants. Individual interviews may provide different results than this study produced.

CHAPTER NINE

Future Implications and Studies

Technology has advanced dramatically since the terrorist attacks of 2001. Camcorders have become more compact; storage capacities have been dramatically enhanced. Some reports concur that over 100 million people in the United States alone have smart phones with the capability of recording video. The ability to create documentary footage through both pictures and moving images with eyewitness accounts in interactive formats is readily available, and in addition, there are audiences ready to view engaging versions of them. Documentation of the human experience has been successfully adopted in the diffusion of innovations model.

Interactive and web-based documentaries provide the platform for which this type of documentation can be used in innovative and engaging ways. The elements of these documentaries are revolutionary formats to include multimedia aspects effectively in a linear and/or nonlinear fashion. While the technical format of interactive and web-based documentary remains still relatively unfamiliar with publics as a collective piece, individual elements of the interactive documentary are familiar.

This study places interactive and web-based documentaries in a delayed early adoption phase. However, the connection provided with user engagement, retention and interest in production that was found in this case study provides hope and insight that it will, in fact, eventually be adopted.

As mentioned in this study, engagement, retention and the intent to replicate are some key elements to the educational market. The interactive documentary's non-linear

structure has the potential to aid educators by having original, non-biased and perceived factual representations of current events, which twenty years from now will be viable historical platforms that are (and perhaps most importantly) perceived as factual.

The interactive documentary's ability to communicate multiple viewpoints allows for a different kind of scrutiny and analysis of events that typical textbooks and one-way communication venues cannot give: original thought. Interactivity gives users (in an educational setting: students) the ability to think for themselves, interacting with knowledge at their own pace, with their own selectivity and formulating their own opinions. This type of educational presentation allows the ability for people to go beyond the simple regurgitation of information. Students get to see primary resources and create their own opinions. If the engagement levels of the participants in this study could be replicated with other subjects, the educational curricula could be revolutionized, and learning could be a trusted venue that requires research through interactivity to acquire knowledge. Imagine a teacher having a platform where students' initial reaction isn't to the monotony of the instructor's voice, but instead to the content of the subject. This, with creative and concerted efforts to present engaging concepts, could not only be a revolutionary way to present current events, but also revolutionary way to present subjects in all facets.

In addition, this format can be utilized for media news sources, streamlining citizen journalism and reporting. Eyewitness accounts could be uploaded for audience viewing as both a visual aid and an "unfiltered" account and source for news venues. This sort of collection method may also be beneficial for oral history departments as they continue their attempts to collect and archive data for historical recollections. Due to the

availability of eyewitness future in the present, collection would enhance the historical collection of primary source data.

Future studies should explore other existing interactive documentaries to test for public awareness of the technology and find overall effectiveness of formatting, not just in an educational facet. Practical applications for this include the educational facets; however, extend to new innovations that are being utilized like citizen journalism. In addition, future studies could look at interactive documentaries that do not have primary resources or familiar content and analyze variations in audience engagement.

In addition, future studies can included the fusion of engagement and diffusion studies by tracking the actual user patterns of media consumers. For example, quantitative studies tracking click frequency and orders within documentary may help analyze effective documentary creation patterns.

Lastly, if interactive documentaries are found to be widely used in a larger study, the effects of using such technologies areas in attitude change, socialization, and civic engagement can also be studied.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Demographic Information

Are you male or female?

male *female*

What is your age group?

18-25 25-35 35+

What is your current educational classification?

Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Other

What is your major and minor?

What genre of film do you like to watch?

Action *Adventure* *Comedy* *Drama*
Historical *Non-Fiction* *Horror* *Musicals*
Sci-Fi *Romance* *Documentary* *Other*

How many films have you watched on your computer in the last 6 months?

How many of those films would you consider a documentary?

How many hours (on average) do you use websites that include multimedia outlets?

What are your initial reactions to the documentary you watched?

Have you ever watched a web-based documentary? If yes, then why or for what reason?

Have you ever watched an interactive documentary? If yes, then why or for what reason?

Have you seen the documentary *102 Minutes that Changed America* before this study?

Yes

No

Have you seen the interactive documentary *Witness to 9/11* before this study?

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Script

Welcome

Thank you for making your time available to attend my Focus Group. Documentaries are making an interesting impact on society as they become more readily available through a variety of venues and subjects. In addition, new media has created new and technologically advanced ways to display information similar to a documentary in a non-linear format. I am interested in examining viewer reception differences to specific formats regarding a subject area that is familiar to most of us: the September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center Buildings in New York City. I would like to understand user reception and reaction to both the content and the format of the documentary.

I would like your feedback on the selected documentary that you watched. Your expertise as a student in film classes means you have basic knowledge of film practices, and will provide more valued feedback regarding the documentaries selected for this study.

My name is Danielle Brown. I am a Master's Student with the Department of Journalism. I'm extremely interested in New Media technologies and how it is being integrated into the film industry. I hope that this study can help both journalism/new media scholars and film scholars understand the emerging links between interactivity and film as well as audience engagement.

This session will be recorded, however, all recorded information is confidential and anonymous. It is used for research purposes only. You have the right to withdrawal from this session at anytime. I anticipate that this focus group session will take no longer than one hour.

I'm going to ask you a few questions about the documentary presentation that you just watched.

1. Describe the formatting of the documentary you just watched.
2. Is this a way you typically experience documentaries?
3. Would you watch this documentary again in your spare time?
4. Was this easy to use?
5. Would you consider this format profitable?
6. Do you consider this a documentary?
7. Did you find this presentation informative?
8. Did you find this presentation factual?
9. How would you evaluate your experience?
10. Did you feel engaged with the documentary?
11. What aspect did you like most about this documentary? Least?

Thank you for your time. If you would like, I can notify you when my research is complete so that you can view my findings.

APPENDIX C

Glossary of Terms

Cinéma vérité: documentary style that seeks to uncover truth; observational cinema

Digital Storytelling: the use of low-cost digital cameras, non-linear editing software and notebook computers to create short multimedia stories for publication

Fan-Fiction: additional storyline created by media consumers; a storyline produced by fans in response to original work

Griersonian: documentary style that incorporates propaganda and persuasion from narrator

Interactive Documentary: documentary style of digital storytelling that incorporates interactivity from users; interactive documentaries can encompass non-linear communication elements

Linear Communication Model: a communication model that has a beginning and end; communication has a linear agenda

Multimedia: communication that combines media types

Non-Linear Communication Model: a communication model that allows for consumption on individual path; communication that has no set path for consumption

Traditional Documentary: documentary style film that encompasses a linear communication model to transmit content

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