5-2015

Narrative Advertising

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Narrative Advertising

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A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Mass Communication

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Professional Communication

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by

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May 2015

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Keywords: Narrative Advertising, Content Analysis, Leximancer, Brand Meaning

ABSTRACT

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Brand meaning, which is often used in narrative advertising, is an important value that

companies try to build around their loyal consumers. This exploratory research aims to explore

brand meanings from consumers' narratives. This study analyzed 2,382 consumer submitted

narratives for a real brand in the food service marketplace. Brand narratives were analyzed using

a mixed method content analysis approach by applying Leximancer software to generate key

themes and their related concepts. The results indicate brand meaning with some thematic

similarities as well as differences when comparing narratives submitted by females and males.

This exploratory study introduces analyzing narrative as a way to learn brand meaning and

generate future narratives that could be applied to creative message strategy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my committee chair, Dr. Stephen Marshall for the continuous support of my master study and research, for his patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge. He gave me such an interesting and hot topic to work on, and always support and encourage me. I am glad to work with him in the past two years. His ideas always inspired me. Without his guidance and persistent help this thesis would not have been possible.

I also want to thank my committees, Dr. Andrew Dunn, and Dr. Kelly Price. They encouraged me; gave me insightful comments; and help me improve my thesis. I offer my sincere appreciation for the learning opportunity by my committees.

Besides my committee, I would like to thank my bosses, Dr. Wesley Buerkle, and Mrs. Karen Brewster. They always supported me and gave me some suggestions on my study. I am glad and happy to work with them.

Last but not the least, I want to thank my family and friends who supported me spiritually throughout my life.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2012, a report from a Nielsen study found that customers prefer to get information from their peers rather than from advertising. It suggests a brand needs to be more like a friend, telling stories and sharing experiences. Storytelling and narrative advertising are often used in marketing campaign. Creative storytelling can evoke emotion and generate strong personal connections to a brand, its product, and its value (Yu, 2014). It also can help to build the relationship between brand and consumers (Peyton, 2013). Stories should be used as a vehicle to deliver brand value and brand meaning. Consumers also can get the insight and learn the core of a brand.

Crafting stories is necessary for marketers to build effective narrative advertising (Peyton, 2013). Some people think the first step of creating a story is to know what stories a brand should tell. However, instead of telling a story, the brand should make story (Berkowitz 2014). A good example is when Coca-Cola created a campaign about sharing a Coke with someone. Coke put names on their cans and consumers started to "share a Coke" with the person whose name on the can. Coke did not tell people stories about family, love, or friendship. However, when people shared coke with others, consumers were making a number of stories with Coke. Coca-Cola used social media as a platform for consumers to tell their stories, and Coca-Cola can use these stories in their future narrative ads. Creative stories can be great ways to identify consumer value from consumers' perspectives (Clerk, 2014).

There are many ways for brands to do consumer research. This exploratory paper will explore brand meaning through the stories submitted by consumers to identify brand meaning in the large scope of their lives. Findings from this study will help brand managers learn how to

generate brand meaning from the consumers' side and discover valuable brand meaning for

brands use in future narrative advertising.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

<u>Narrative Advertising</u>

Narrative advertising, which includes storytelling, has a powerful on influence on consumers' purchase decision (Peyton, 2013). Today, in order to create meaning for the brand and give it an appealing identity and personality, advertisers are using compelling stories to create an emotional connection between consumers and brands (Randazzo, 2006).

A myth is the root of a traditional story and often reflects the origins of natural phenomenon or aspects of human behaviors. Customers often use products and services as props or anthropomorphic identities to enact story productions that reflect archetypal myths (Woodside, Sood, & Miller, 2008). When consumers talk about their experiences with a brand, they will consciously and unconsciously tell a story. Mythic images that resonate with consumers help a brand to build identity and personality, which is also called brand image (Randazzo, 2006). Brands try to build an emotional connection with consumers as a way to differentiate themselves in the marketplace. In other words, brands deliver their ideal brand image to customers in order to build a connection.

Advertising is a communication form that delivers information about products and services. The ultimate goal of advertising is to persuade consumers to buy a product or service (Randazzo, 2006). Advertisements typically involve two components: lecture and drama (Ching, Tong, Chen, & Chen, 2012). Lecture is always applied in argumentative advertising, which tries to use logical argument to persuade consumers. On the other hand, narrative advertising, which includes drama and storytelling usually, tells a story about the product consumption experience and affects consumers' emotions in order to persuade them (Randazzo, 2006).

Narrative construction consists of many parts. Stories have two main elements: character and plot (Chang, 2008). A story is about actors engaged in actions to achieve goals with character and plot as the foundation for the elements. When considering narrative advertising chronology and causality are two important considerations. Chronology means that the narrative is about a series of events, which occurs over time. Causality means that the cause and effect relationship relative among events can be inferred (Chang, 2009). Narrative advertising often describes the consumption and experiences that consumers have with a brand and a product (Chang, 2008).

A part of any narrative advertisement would be the symbols and imagery used to bring appropriate mental processes (Zaltman & Coulter, 1995). These ads not only entertain and persuade consumers, but also create meaning for a brand (Randazzo, 2006). Consumers often do not have a feeling or impression of a brand when they first see the brand's name, but the characters, situations that are used in advertising are used as a device to create brand meaning. Imagery and metaphor are powerful devices and useful insights into consumers, thoughts, feelings and behaviors about a brand can create effective communication (Zaltman & Coulter, 1995). In summary, narrative advertising uses the strategic storytelling to deliver information and emotion to the audience in order to communicate the brand identity and value to consumers. Marketing communicators are using strategic story advertising to give their brands a unique identity and personality.

<u>Narrative Importance for Brands</u>

Today, consumers are buying brands rather than products because the brand meaning to a consumer can be a differentiator. "A brand is ultimately a perceptual entity, a host of associations, feelings, imagery, symbolism, etc. that exists in the mind and hearts of consumers"

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(Randazzo, 2006, p. 12). Brand image helps a brand to differentiate from other brands (Padgett & Allen, 2013). When customers describe a brand they loved, they would create an image in their mind, which is accompanied by the feelings they have about the brand. Customers have more emotional evoking than verbal evoking (Flanagan, 2014). The brand image or idea is becoming more and more important in the marketplace. Advertisers also put emphasis on building a good brand narrative in order to build a good brand image, which can be loved by loyal consumers.

Brand narratives not only engage consumers but also hook audiences into the viewing process (Chang, 2008). Compared with argument advertising, narrative advertising can persuade potential consumers more effectively by illustrating more about experiences. Furthermore, narrative advertising can encourage consumers to learn more product information, especially for service brands (Chang, 2008). When consumers process narrative advertising, they relate it to their previous stories. Narrative advertising has been widely used today, because advertisers find this is an effective way to persuade consumers and affect their purchasing decisions. A vivid narrative story, which relates to consumer's consumption, can offer better brand details and make the experience more real, ultimately increasing the effectiveness of persuasion (Ching et al., 2012).

As previously mentioned, narrative advertising transmits emotion to audiences. Micu and Plummer (2010) found that emotion affects people's attitude towards ad and the brand. The increasing use of emotion in an ad will cause an increasing attitude toward the brand. In other words, emotion-based advertising enhances the connection between customers and the brand, which further affects brand attitudes and behavior intentions (Micu & Plumer, 2010).

The increasing use of digital and social media gives brands new creative ways of communicating with an audience – especially when it comes to consumer-generated content (Ching et al., 2012). Further, the ability for consumers to make an online transaction makes this digital storytelling even more important.

Aaker and Fournier (1995) found consumers also regard a brand as a character, a partner, and a person, which is called brand personality. This personification of a brand provides consumers the means to communicate their feelings about it. It is hard to ask consumers to describe their thinking of a brand, but they can describe their impression with the brand, which is like describing a person they know. For example, they think Nike is a slim healthy woman or a muscular sweaty man. Nike would use this information to create their future campaigns. Brand personality is an important research tool on learning a brand's meaning for consumers, and the results can be used to be creative and develop better advertisings (Aaker & Fournier, 1995). Brand personality is communicated through brand narratives.

<u>Methods for Analyzing Narrative Advertising</u>

A number of previous studies have analyzed narrative advertising. Although the methods they used are similar, they still have some differences according to their research purposes.

Kozinets, Valck, Wojnicki and Wilner (2010) examined the effectiveness of online world-of-mouth. They studied a mobile phone campaign and collected contents that are relate to the campaign from blogs. They sorted and classified all posts into individual blogger files, and categorized the files as before, during, and after the word-of mouth campaign. They coded the data and analyzed it based on their related themes. They used a qualitative method to code the data, and compared data in terms of before, during, and after word-of-mouth campaign in order to test the effectiveness of online word-of-mouth. They found that online world-of-mouth

communication does not simply increase or spread marketing message; rather, marketing message and meaning are changed when people embedded them.

Jeon, Frank, Hunhmann and Phelps (1999) wanted examine the differences of narrative advertising use between Koreans and Americans. They collected 30 advertisements randomly from magazines in Korea and the U.S. They coded they content of ads as rational, emotional, or both. They coded ads as emotion if the content included storytelling, metaphors, and aesthetics, and coded news/information or product benefits content as rational. After they analyzed the frequency and characteristics of narrative advertising use in both countries, they found that Korean ads tend to be more emotional than U.S. ads, especially in headlines. Conversely, the U.S. emphasized emotion in the illustration, in ads for service.

The ZMET (Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique) is wildly use for "understanding consumers, images of brands, products, and companies, brand equity, product concepts and designs, product usage and purchase experiences, life experiences, consumption context, and attitudes towards business" (Zaltman & Culter, 1995, p. 40). This method focuses on people's non-verbal responses or metaphors about their understanding of a brand. Instead of asking participants to describe their feeling about a brand, this method asks individuals to use images to show their feelings about an ad or brand during an interview. After a one-to-one discussion with the participants, a brand-meaning map is constructed (Zaltman & Culter, 1995). In 2010, Micu and Plummer used the ZMET to generate the symbolic measures of consumers' reactions to two beer ads. They showed the commercials from Heineken and Miller Lite to their participants before the experiment. Afterward, participants were asked to collect about 10 pictures to represent their feelings about the two commercial. Finally, with the assistant of the computer, the researchers constructed the brand-meaning map of the two brands. Compared with traditional

interview, ZMET generated more brand meaning that cannot be reflected by verbal description (Micu & Plummer, 2010).

Methods Using Narrative to Examine the Brand

People's idea towards an object or an event may vary due to their different life experiences. As previously mentioned, narrative is a way of studying peoples' identity and conflicts in their self-presentations (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p.180). Narrative-interview is generated to learn how people's thinking differs from people's perspective. Compared with regular interview method, which asks people to answer several questions, narrative-interviews allow people to tell a stories to express their whole idea or thinking on an objective. Personal narrative is one form of narrative-interview study that emerged in communication (p.180). Personal narrative can reflect "people's life experiences, foregrounding self-definition and backgrounding the world in which they live" (Corey, 1996).

Today, customer-generated content becomes more and more valuable for brands because people are creating their own narratives and sharing those with the world. However, there are not many studies looking at the types of methods for this analysis. In order to know brand meaning from a customer perspective, companies use the examination of customers' comments. This type of research analyzes customer's online comments to learn brand meaning (Edvardsson & Enquist, 2006); understand customers and create brand personality (Aaker & Fournier, 1995); interpret the content of consumer-generate ads and map and interpret brand meaning (Campbell, Pitt, Parent & Berthon, 2011). Brand meaning can often be generated from customers' narrative.

Campbell (2011) and his colleague conducted research to examine consumers' narratives. This was the first time that Leximancer software was applied in the marketing and advertising fields. They interpreted the conversations consumers had around consumer-generated ads by

analyzing consumers' comments that posted to the ads. Leximancer software helped them to explore the main themes and concepts of consumers' comments. Their study found out that consumers did not talk about the brand a lot in their comments but "focus more on the creators of the ads, the music in the ad, and other social themes such as justice, globalization, poverty and corporate social responsibility" (p. 98). Moreover, the initial comments are important and it can direct the following conversations. If the first comments indicated Starbucks is an ethical corporation, and the following conversation continues to discuss the ethics of consumers drinking expensive beverages rather than supporting poverty. This research helps marketers to learn people's laudation, debate and flame feeling on consumer-generated ads. Furthermore, the study also shows that marketers should try to be more involved in consumers' conversation and put effort into controling the conversation. In our study, we also want to learn the brand meaning from consumer-generated narratives. We will apply the same method as Campbell's study to learn brand meanings from consumers' perspectives.

<div align="center">Research Question</div>

The previous studies showed the uses and benefits of understanding the application of narratives in marketing communication. While narrative interviews are a traditional way to explore meaning, user-generated content gives brands a new lens to interpret brand meaning. Therefore, this exploratory research will use the method of Campbell et al. (2011) to explore consumer created narratives. However, this study does not look at user-generated comments (see Campbell) but instead looks at consumer-generated narratives.

RQ: Can brand meaning be derived from consumer-generated narratives?

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The current study applied content analysis using Leximancer software to examine the narratives from customers talking about their experiences with Pal's Sudden Service restaurant. Content analysis of stories that customers generated concept-maps outlining themes and concepts. The data used to create these maps provided the meaning that the customers have with this brand.

Content Analysis

Traditional content analysis focuses on text communication, which includes verbal discourse, written documents, and visual representation communication (Krippendorff, 1989, p. 404). The basic procedures of content analysis are collecting the data, coding the data, and generating themes and categories. The success of content analysis depends on the coding process (p.405). During this process, coders need to use a coding scheme that was created or developed by researchers. However, the results might have some bias and unreliability due to human coders' abilities (Hsieh & Sharron, 2005, p. 1279). Human bias is hard to eliminate, because a person's understanding of the data causes it.

This study used Leximancer, an automatic content-analysis software, as a tool to conduct content analysis. Leximancer software is different from traditional content analysis; it is software that does not have coders (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). The system is designed particularly for written document types of content analysis, and it does not only search keywords, but also identifies and extracts thesaurus-based concepts from the data (Smith & Humphreys, 2006, p. 263). The Leximancer thesaurus is more professional than a code scheme by reducing the bias of humans.

After analysis of all the text, the software can generate a concept-map, which visually portrays the main concepts and their interrelationships (Campbell et al., 2011). Large circles represent key themes from the whole texts. The bigger the circle is, the more frequent the theme was related to the data. The light-colored circles indicate the greater importance of the theme within the text. The lines between each circle portray the relativeness between each theme. Compared with traditional content analysis, Leximancer software provides a visible result of themes and concepts by offering a concept-map (Cretchley, Rooney, & Gallois, 2010).

Leximancer is an efficient and reliable tool for content analysis. It cannot only eliminate the bias caused by humans, but also can do more jobs in a limited time than regular coding procedures. Campbell et al. (2011) state,

"Leximancer's algorithm is based on Bayesian theory. As evidence accumulates, the degree of belief in the relationship or hypothesis changes. When this is applied to text, the words that make up a sentence predict the concepts that emerge and can be discussed. The tool automatically and efficiently learns that words predict which concepts, and this can be done for very large numbers of concepts across very large document collections." (p.92)

This software has been used worldwide in many different fields. Martin and Rice (2007) used Leximancer to identify risk themes, concepts from analyzed business reports and corporate data. Campbell et al. (2011) used this software in analyzing people's reflection on consumer-generated ads on social media, which was the first time that Leximancer was used for marketing or advertising. Leximancer not only helped them generate the concepts of the consumers' responses for two different consumer-generated ads, but also provided an emotional and psychological reflection on diverse consumer-generated ads. The success of this study

encouraged more marketing and advertising researchers to use Leximancer as a tool while doing content analysis studies.

This research is designed this explore brand meaning through the themes and concepts from Pal's Sudden Service brand narratives submitted by brand fans. From the practitioner's point-of-view, the results should confirm or challenge their current brand meaning as well as generate new concepts for brand meaning and brand narratives. In sum, the findings could be applied in the design of future advertising campaigns.

<div align="center">Sample</div>

This study examined the narrative stories from Pal's Sudden Service restaurants' "Come Home to Pal's" campaign in 2014. Pal's Sudden Service is a regional fast-food chain in Tennessee and Virginia with 26 freestanding drive-thru only locations. The campaign asked customers and fans to write why Pal's should fly a friend or family member home to eat at Pal's Sudden Service. Pal Barger, restaurant owner, said the campaign's focus was "to re-connect people with their families and the food they love" (Smith, 2013). The basis for the campaign was to activate loyal consumers who live in the Pal's Sudden Service region but have family or friends who cannot go to Pal's since they moved to other regions. In order to build their brand awareness and consumers' involvement on social media, Pal's asked their consumers to nominate someone by writing a 150-words essay and submitting via its website. During a three-month campaign, Pal's received 2,382 entrants from every state in the U.S. Two winners were chosen and flown "home" to enjoy a meal from Pal's.

Pal's is good brand to use for an analysis because their customers are loyal and the brand commands a "cult" following exhibited by their fans' engagement in social media. As of February 2015, the Pal's Sudden Service Facebook page had 58,128 likes, and according to their

account service team, exhibited engagement rates of 7-10% on most social media posts. The average engagement rate for the fast food product category is typically <1%, so the engagement rate for Pal's fans far exceeds the typical food category fan.

The sample consisted of 2,382 total entrees. Among the entrees, 76% were from females, and 24% were from males. The entry writers nominated 1,459 females to come home, which is 61% of the nominees, and 920 males, which is 39% of the nominees. Table 1 displays entrants and nominees, respectively.

Table 1

Lists of Female and Male Entrants and Nominees' Number and Percentage

Gender	Entrant #	Entrant %	Nominee #	Nominee %
Male	573	24	920	39
Female	1809	76	1459	61

Table 2 shows the state locations of the entries. Most of the entry participants are from Tennessee, which accounts for 78%. The next biggest state participation from entrants was from Virginia with 12%. No other states contributed more than one percent to the count total. Table 2 displays the states and their contribution to entrants while Appendix A shows the entire list.

Table 2

List of States' Entrant's Number and Percentage

State	Entrant #	Entrant %
Tennessee	1858	78
Virginia	277	12
All others	146	<10

Table 3 shows the locations of nominees. Most of the people that are nominated by participants live in Texas and Florida, which account for 11%. California ranks the third with 10%. People from Tennessee and Georgia are also nominated by participants, which account for

7% and 5%. The percent of nominee from the rest states are less than 4%. Participants also nominated people who live out of the U.S., such as Japan, Australia, France, England, Denmark and etc., but the number of international nominees is less than 3%. Table 3 displays the states and their contribution to nominees and Appendix B shows the entire list.

Table 3

List of States' Nominee's Number and Percentage

State	Entrant #	Entrant %
Texas	264	11
Florida	252	11
California	233	10
Tennessee	170	7
Georgia	124	5

Note: 60 additional states and places had <100 entrant numbers each.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The research question asked, "Can brand meaning be derived from consumer-generated narratives?" This analysis on consumers' submitted narratives generated many themes involving the brand, their families and friends, and the interaction of the brand in their lives.

With this simple exploratory question, and to examine consistency, narratives were divided into three groups: overall, female entrants, and male entrants. The goal was to see if concepts and their related themes would change based on the storyteller. Leximancer software was used to create three illustrative concept maps and group concepts. Findings illustrate the three different maps, but the related concepts were quite similar across storytellers. In the following sections, the study will interpret each concept map and take a closer examination into the theme-related concepts.

Overall Entrants Sample Themes and Concepts

Based on the concept map from Leximancer, three major themes were identified from the overall sample: "home," "Pal's," and "moved" (see Figure 1). The software ranked the connectivity of each theme with the percentage of "home" 100%, "Pal's" 56%, and "moved" 41%. The word "home" is the largest theme throughout the data samples, because we used the *Come Home to Pal's* campaign as research data, thus, "home" was mentioned frequently, which was expected. The second largest theme is "Pal's," which means many consumers discussed the brand in their narrative. The third largest theme "moved" exhibits that moving is the biggest reason that loyal consumers missed and cannot have Pal's Sudden Service any more. The word "moved" come up a lot also because the topic of this campaign.
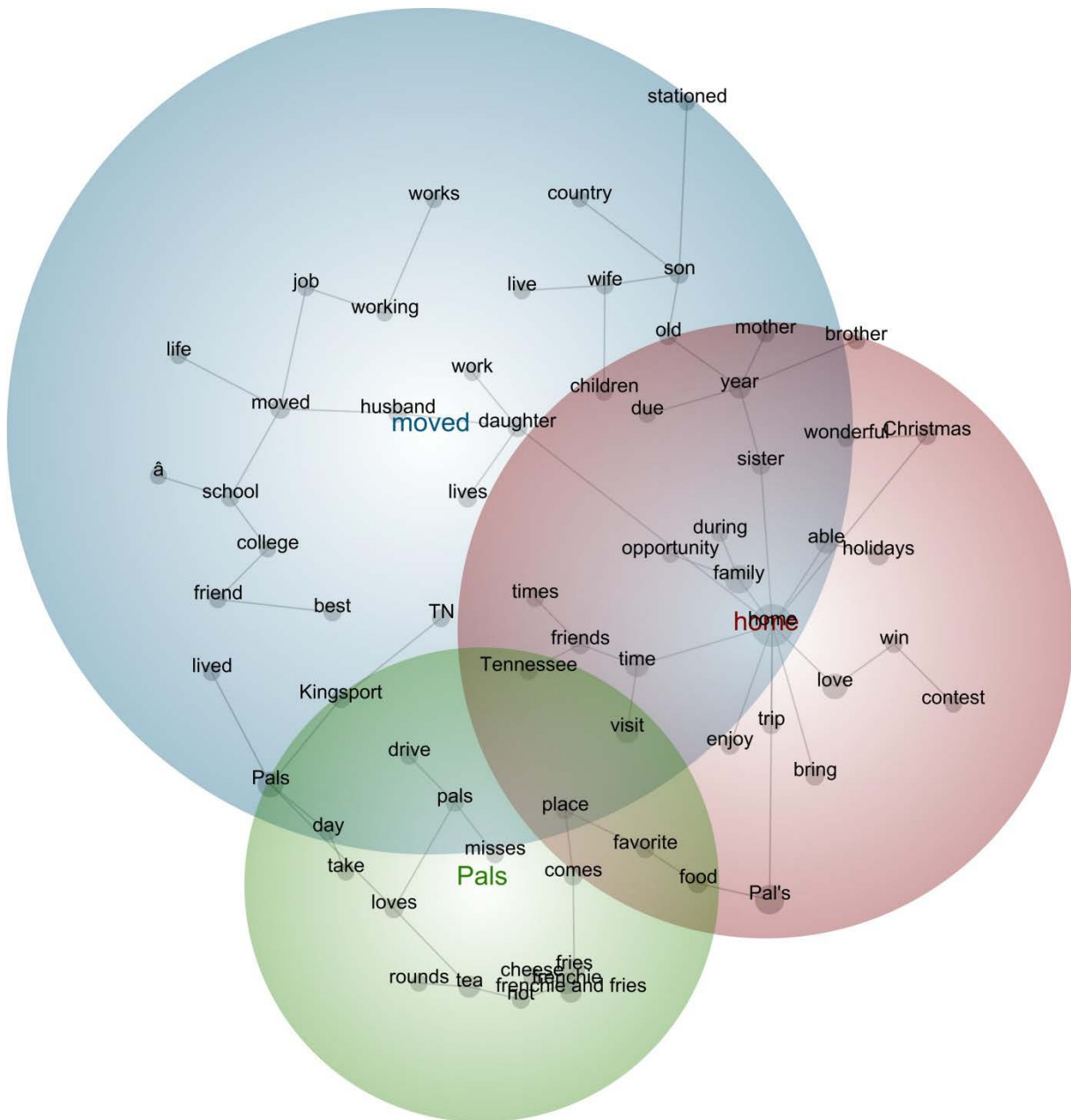
Figure 1: Overall Theme Map. The theme map of brand meaning of consumers'
narratives. This figure illustrates the major themes of consumers' narratives generating
brand meaning of Pal's Sudden Service from Pal's Come Home campaign data
samples.

Themes Development from Overall Entrants Sample

The theme "home" was developed out of more than 20 frequently appearing concepts. These concepts include "home," "family," "love," "time," "visit," "year," "friends," and etc. (see Table 3). These concepts showed a close relationship with the "home" theme, and most of the concepts had a large number of hits with this theme. In terms of "home," the concept is built on the discussion, the reason why Pal's should bring the nominee back to home, and they focus on the relationship between home and Pal's. An illustrative narrative from the data states, "Brandon joined the Army 6 years ago…now they're (his family) back in the states, but still don't get to go home and eat Pals whenever they want…He really deserves this. The men and women in the military deserve to have a piece of home every now and then."

"Family" is the second frequent concept with 1450 hits. The concept "family" was mentioned because consumers want a nominee to have a family reunion and have a Pal's celebration. An example from a mother entrant said, "She (her daughter) misses family, friends… Whenever we make the 9-hour drive for a visit, we take a bit of Bristol with us--a gallon of Pals tea complete with famous Pals cup and straw! Nothing could be sweeter for her than to come home to a Pals family reunion."

"Love" is the third frequent concept, which had 1127 hits. The concept "love" is always mentioned when entrants expressed their love to nominees and talked about their favorite food they had from Pal's Sudden Service. The following is an example, "I am nominating my grandmother…we love our grandma and want her to come home for the holidays…We love Pal's and grandma's favorite Pal's meal is a Big Pal, Frenchie Fries & a Large Sweet Tea."

The next two concepts: "time" and "visit," which have 942 hits and 787 hints. The concept "time" was often mentioned in two situations. One is about how less often the nominees

have not been home, for instance, "I would like for Derrick Hudson to be able to come home for Christmas, since he has only been home 3 times in the last 10 years." The other one is about how often they used to have Pal's in order to show their love of Pal's, here is one example, "…when she gets to come to East Tennessee we have to eat at PAL'S at least 3 or 4 times." The concept "visit" is also mentioned in the same situations as "time," for example, "we have only gotten to visit [home] maybe 4 times in 13 years" and "She (the nominee) loves to visit Pal's as soon as she get home each time."

Five other concepts received more than 400 hits: "year," "holidays," "able," "friends," and "sister,." These mostly related concepts helped explain the relationship with the theme "Pal's," which seemed to show that people were more likely to talk about "Pal's" related to their family and happiness. A truncated list of these concepts and their hits is available in Table 4. A complete list of these theme concepts is available in Appendix C.

Table 4

Theme "home" for Overall Entrants
Theme: home

Concepts	Hits
home	3294
family	1450
love	1127
time	942
visit	787
year	730
able	622
holidays	614
friends	445
Christmas	471
sister	464

Note: 5 additional themes had <400 hits each.

The second theme is "Pal's" developed out of almost 20 of the most frequent concepts, which include "tea," "food," "fries," "love," and etc. (see Table 4). Although this theme does not

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have as many hits as the theme "home," it does show a strong relationship with the restaurant. These concepts showed a close relationship with not only the food of Pal's Sudden Service but also the participants' love of this restaurant. Entrants mentioned many times of Pal's famous products such as tea and fries. The concept of "tea," "food," "fries," and "frenchie" ranked as the top three concepts respectively, which grouped together with over 2000 hits. People mentioned Pal's food when they discuss their previous memories of having Pal's with the nominees; here are two examples from the data, "we've shared so many memories over sauce burgers, frenchie fries, and sweet teas from Pal's over the course of our 15 years of friendship;" "She would drink all of hers and ask for a drink of mine, and she would suck the bottom out of it too." The other situation is discussing their favorite food of Pal's, for instance, "His favorite food was a Big Pal with Cheese and a order of Frenchie Fries."

Following with these four frequent concepts, the concept "loves" ranks fifth, which has more than 400 hits. This concept under the theme "Pal's" exhibits consumers' strong emotion for Pal's. Consumers express their love with Pal's food directly, here are some example from consumers' narratives, "Peter looooooooves pals tea," "She move to Iowa 2 years ago, and she absolutely loves Pals sweet tea," and "I feel she deserves to come home to her favorite fast food, PAL'S!!! She LOVES sweet tea." In addition, three more concepts were generated. A truncated list of these concepts and their hits is available in Table 5. A complete list of these theme concepts is available in Appendix D.

Table 5

Theme "Pal's" for Overall Entrants
Theme: Pal's

Concepts	Hits
Pal's	1296
tea	661

Table 5 (continued)

Concepts	Hits
food	487
fries	477
frenchie	457
loves	423

Note: 11 additional themes had <300 hits each.

The theme "moved" developed more than 20 concepts, which includes "moved," "daughter," "school" and etc. (see Table 5). These concepts related to the reason why participants nominate these people to come home for Pal's. The concept "moved" is the most frequently mentioned and it had 564 hits. Moving to other states is the main reason most people cited as why they cannot have Pal's and they missed this fast food so much. Here are some quote from the consumers' narratives, "I would love for my nephew to come home. He recently graduated from ETSU and moved to Portland, OR," and "we (he and his wife) moved to Statesboro, GA for jobs, but she has been missing Pals ever since we moved."

The other two concepts, "daughter" and "son" have more hits, which have 524 hits and 408 hits. It shows that children have close relationship with the concept "moved." Participants wanted their children, who moved to other places, to come home for a family reunion and for Pal's. For example, qualitative data from parents' entrants, "My youngest daughter moved to California and I miss her so much," and "Nicholas is my son…he finally got a job & had to move to Arlington, VA…I only get to see him once a year."

Two other concepts like "lives" also received almost 400 hits. In terms of "lives," the concept was discussed when consumers were stating the nominees live out of Tennessee in locations where they do not have Pal's. The concept "school" is an interesting finding under "moved" theme. Although it does not have high hits comparatively, it shows a close relationship with Pal's. Data supports the idea that many consumers had Pal's while in school in the east

Tennessee area. Pal's goes along with their school lives. This is the quote from the data about the stories between east Tennessee area students and Pal's. "my daughter, Ashleigh.... In high school, she'd grab it (Pal's) for dinner after band practice. In college, she'd drive through with her dog, Callie, who was happy to snag a few fries. Though she hasn't lived in Tennessee for ten years since, home is the where her heart is, and every trip back begins and ends with a meal from Pal's." In addition, some other concepts are also developed from "moved" theme, and a truncated list of these concepts and their hits is available in Table 6. A complete list of these theme concepts is available in Appendix E.

Table 6

Theme "moved" for Overall Entrants
Theme: moved

Concepts	Hits
moved	564
daughter	524
son	408
lives	395
husband	392
school	306

Note: 17 additional themes had <300 hits each.

Female Entrants Sample Themes and Concepts

The concepts map of female entrants sample also generated the same three major themes similar to the overall sample (see Figure 2). The software ranked the connectivity of each theme with the percentage of "home" 100%, "Pal's" 48%, and "moved" 43%.
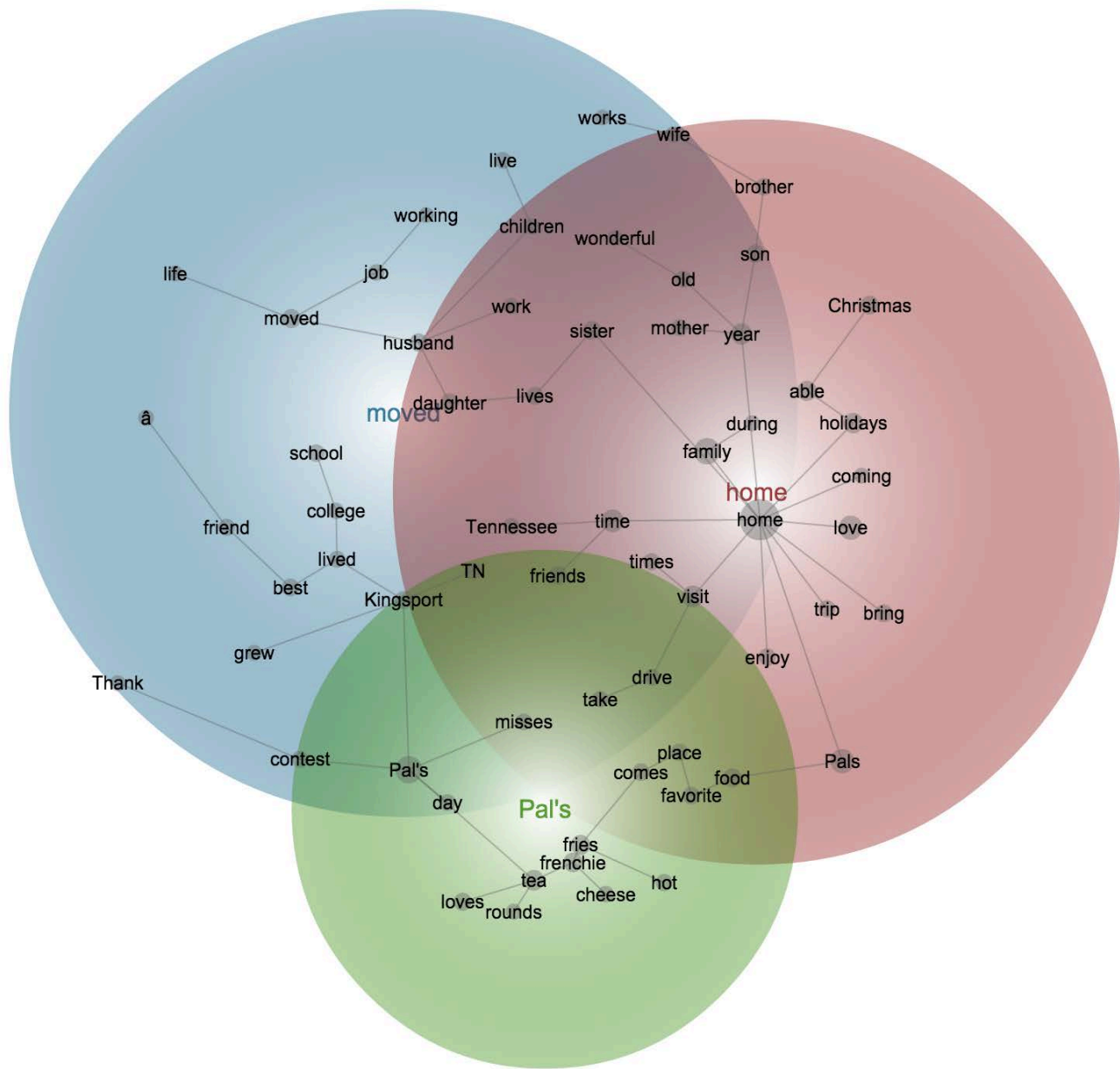
Figure 2: Female Entrants Theme Map. The theme map of brand meaning of female consumers' narratives. This figure illustrates the major themes of female consumers' narratives generating brand meaning of Pal's Sudden Service from Pal's Come Home campaign data samples.

Themes Development from Female Entrants Sample

The "home" theme was developed out 15 most frequently appearing concepts. These concepts include "home," "family," "love," "friend," "enjoy," "brother" and etc. (see Table 6). These concepts showed a close relationship with the "home" theme, and most concepts had a large number of hints with this theme. The study showed that the concept "home" had the most hits. Again, because we used Come Home Pal's campaign as our sample, so this was expected.

The concept "family" received more than a thousand hits and ranked the second. Females evaluated more on family value. They not only wanted people come back home for Pal's, but also they wanted people to come back for a family reunion. This example from our data illustrates this point, "Our family would like to see my dear niece Amanda and her family we had a family reunion in June where we all had not been together in over 30 years." Another concept, "love," also received higher hits. Female mentioned love when they expressed their emotion to the nominees, for instance, "I love my cousin dearly and would love to give her the best present ever, PAL'S" and "I would love to see my niece and nephew who also miss Pal's AND their family here in East TN." "Love" is also mentioned when female entrants talked about their nominees' feelings about Pal's, and most of them used "LOVE," which is upper case and shows that they love Pal's very much. These are the example from the data, "She emails me often and ALWAYS says that she would LOVE to have some Pal's," "she LOVES Pal's! It's one of her favorite places and I know she would be so thrilled to win" and "And Allison and her family would LOVE the Pal's party, too." Other concepts like "time," and "visit" also had a large number of hits above 600. A truncated list of these concepts and their hits is available in Table 7. A complete list of these theme concepts is available in Appendix F.

Table 7

Theme "home" for Female Entrants
Theme: home

Concepts	Hits
home	2771
family	1189
love	965
time	767
visit	618
year	599
holidays	490
able	482

Note: 6 additional themes had <400 hits each.

The "Pal's" theme developed out nine concepts of the most frequently appearing concepts, which include "tea," "food," "fries," "frenchie," "loves" and etc. (see Table 7). These concepts are similar to the "Pal's" theme under the overall entrants' sample. "Tea," "food," "fries" and "frenchies" received the most hits. Females mentioned these concepts often when they expressed their love of Pal's. For example, "In Ohio there is no Pals and they don't have sweet tea anywhere;" "She is a fan of the Big Pal and fries" and "he was an over the road truck driver traveling throughout the Eastern Seaboard for these many years and has sampled all types of food at all types of restaurant, but never has he encountered food as great as Pal's." Besides the concepts that related to food, other concepts like "loves," and "favorite" also developed under this theme. A truncated list of these concepts and their hits is available in Table 8. A complete list of these theme concepts is available in Appendix G.

Table 8

Theme "Pal's" for Female Entrants
Theme: Pal's

Concepts	Hits
tea	520
food	380

Table 8 (continued)

Concepts	Hits
fries	363
frenchie	341
loves	337

Note: 3 additional themes had<300 hits each.

The "moved" concept developed out of eight concepts. The concepts "moved" and "daughter" received the most hits, which is similar to the result of the overall sample. The concept "sister" was developed when analyzing female entrants, and it did not come up under the "moved" theme in the overall entrants' sample. Female entrants nominate their sisters frequently. Pal's appears to give them a strong feeling of "sister friendship," and after their sister moved away, they really wanted Pal's to give their sister the opportunity to have their favorite food again. For instance, the data exhibited that "I would love for Angela to come home because she is my sister and I love and miss her dearly. She has always been a huge fan of pals. She is a wonderful wife and mother and I believe she deserves a trip back home."

Another unique and new concept is "best," which did not showed in the overall sample. The concept "best" mentioned when female entrants nominate their best friend. Data examples show that, "The person I would like to come home to Pal's is my best friend April," and "please bring my best friend home I miss her and love her very much." Other concepts like "husband," "lives" and "school" also developed out. These concepts are as same as them in the overall entrants sample result. A list of these theme concepts is available in Table 9.

Table 9

Theme "moved" for Overall Entrants
Theme: moved

Concepts	Hits
moved	450
daughter	423

Table 9 (continued)	
Concepts	Hits
sister	404
husband	337
lives	306
school	258

Male Entrants Sample Themes and Concepts

The concepts map of male entrants sample also generated the three major themes

previously discussed. However, the software ranked the connectivity of each theme with the

percentage of "home" 100%, "Pal's" 34%, and "moved" 30% (see Figure 3). Different from both

the overall and female entrant sample data results, the percentage of concepts connectivity for

"Pal's" and "moved" are less than either sample.
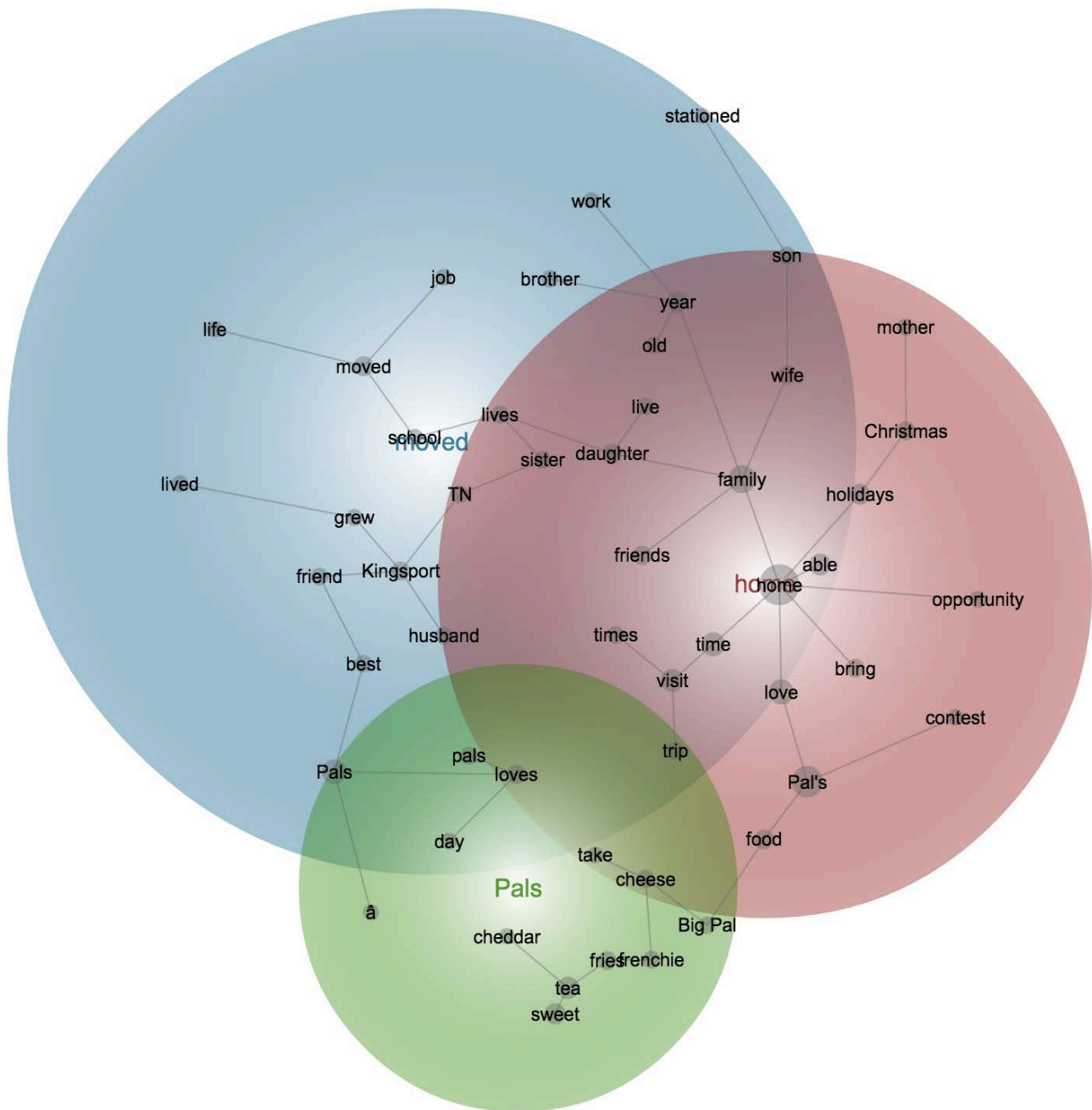
Figure 3: Male Entrants Theme Map. The theme map of brand meaning of male consumers' narratives. This figure illustrates the major themes of male consumers' narratives generating brand meaning of Pal's Sudden Service from Pal's Come Home campaign data samples.

<u>Themes Development from Male Entrants Sample</u>

The "home" theme was developed out more than 20 of the most frequently appearing concepts. These concepts include "home," "family," "love," "friends," "holidays," "daughter" and etc. (see Table 7). These concepts are the same as in the previously reviewed samples.

There is a unique concept that developed out from the "home" theme, which is "mother." Although these two concepts received only 67 hits, it is a special concept that was contributed by male entrees. The concept "mother" was mentioned often when a male nominated their daughter to come home for Pal's. Males expressed how much their mother missed a son or daughter. Therefore, the "daughter" concept also received higher hits. Males expressed their love with their daughters and wives when they participated this campaign. The data from male entrants sample shows, "with the current state of the economy her mother [cannot] afford to go visit her, so to get her up here would be a blessing and excellent surprise." Other concepts like "time," and "visit," which are similar to the female sample, also developed out from the "home" concept. A truncated list of these concepts and their hits is available in Table 10. A complete list of these theme concepts is available in Appendix H.

Table 10

Theme "home" for Male Entrants
Theme: home

<u>Concepts</u>	<u>Hits</u>
home	649
family	305
love	237
time	208
visit	173
able	140
year	155
holidays	139
daughter	123
food	121

Table 10 (continued)	
Concepts	Hit
wife	106
friends	100

Note: 9 additional themes had <100 hits each.

The "Pal's" theme developed out 11 of the most frequently appearing concepts, which include "tea," "fries," "frenchie," "loves" and etc. (see Table 10). Most concepts under this theme are similar to female entrants sample result. One of the unique concepts that only generated from male entrants' data is "Big Pal." This product identity frequency is unique to the male sample. An example from the data states, "bringing my brother home for the holidays would give us the chance to pretend, if only for a while, that he doesn't live 3,000 miles away, and every day is just another opportunity to enjoy a Big Pal with your brother." A truncated list of these concepts and their hits is available in Table 11. A complete list of these theme concepts is available in Appendix I.

Table 11

Theme "Pal's" for Male Entrants
Theme: Pal's

Concepts	Hits
Pal's	274
tea	142
sweet	120
loves	96
fries	80

Note: 5 additional themes had <50 hits each.

The "moved" concept developed out of 16 concepts. The concept "moved" received the most hits, which is similar to the result of the previous sample. The concept "stationed" was only generated from the male entrants' sample. Although "stationed" only received 30 hits, it still shows that male wanted their relatives and friends, who joined the military and do not have many chances to visit their homes, to come back for Pal's. For example, "Brandon Orvis is a Corpsman

in the Navy and is stationed in Oak Harbor Washington…Brandon has been in the Navy now for

2 years and works in a Navy hospital…I couldn't be more proud of them and would love for

them to come home to us and spend the holiday's with us." Other concepts such as "friends,"

"lived" and "husband" also developed out under this theme. A truncated list of these concepts

and their hits is available in Table 12. A complete list of these theme concepts is available in

Appendix J.

Table 12

Theme "moved" for Male Entrants
Theme: moved

Concepts	Hits
moved	130
brother	73
lives	87
friends	70
husband	70
sister	69
lived	60
life	59
school	58
old	57

Note: 6 additional themes had <50 hits each

Product Narratives from Overall Sample

Narratives were full of products and many of the concepts that developed out from

"Pal's" theme were product-specific narratives. Tea, Frenchie fries, and Cheddar Rounds were

the products that consumers mentioned the most in consumers' narratives. People mentioned

these products when they express their love for Pal's. For example, the data shows examples

such as "Isaac's favorite food is Big Pal with Cheese, frenchie fries and tea" and "he loves Pals

burgers, fries, and especially their tea." In addition, people also mentioned products when they

talked about their experiences and stories. For instance a few examples are, "we have Pals for

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breakfast EVERY morning. I know their order by heart. One sausage biscuit, 3 large cheddar rounds, 2 unsweet teas and a tea in a pals cup for their little boy," and "She had enjoyed Pal's cheddar rounds, Frenchie fries and Pal's Tea for the past 4 years."

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The research question of this paper asked, "Can brand meaning be derived from consumer-generated narratives?" Findings from this analysis generated brand meaning from three participant groups: overall, female, and male. Although the main themes are similar across the groups, some different brand meanings were also generated by this study. In summary, based on the consistency of meaning across groups and the meaning derived from analysis, this study confirms that brand meaning can be derived from consumer-generated narratives.

Findings Based on Sample Feature

During this "Come Home to Pal's" campaign, Pal's Sudden Service received more than two thousands entrants. 76% of the participants are female, which is twice as many as male participants. "Home" is one of the brand meanings that Pal's Sudden Service built. The sample feature shows that consumers have strong emotional connection with the brand meaning "home." Even though the campaign was focused on "home," the themes and concepts discovered by this analysis defined the term and the majority of people interested in participating were women.

Brand Meaning from Overall Consumers

From the overall sample result, we know "Pal's," "tea" and "moved" are the main three theme that consumers were talking about in their narratives, and many concepts also developed under these themes.

The theme "Pal's" developed out three main concepts which received higher hits, "home," "family" and "love." For overall consumers, they thought Pal's Sudden Service is a brand that relates to family and make them feel at home. Many participants talked about having Pal's

Sudden Service with their family, and that Pal's Sudden Service is one of the most important locations that people must visit when they are back home (east Tennessee area).

"Love" is an important brand meaning from consumers' narratives analysis. People experience Pal's Sudden Service with their relatives and friends who are the people they loved the most. When they have Pal's Sudden Service with their loved ones, they did not only enjoy the taste of this fast food restaurant, but also share their love with each other.

By applying meaning from this analysis, Pal's Sudden Service should continue to focus emphasis on the brand meanings of family, home and love. Consumers regard a brand as a character, a partner, and a person (Aaker, & Fournier, 1995). Pal's Sudden Service is also considered as family member by its loyal consumers. Pal's Sudden Service is more than a restaurant; the brand makes people feel at home, think of family reunions, and of loved ones and their beloved.

One of the important concepts of "school" under "moved" theme is important for Pal's Sudden Service, and it is also a new brand meaning that generated from consumers' perspective. "School" refers to people that had Pal's Sudden Service when they went to school in east Tennessee area. This concepts showed that one of the segments of Pal's Sudden Service consumers is the student. The concept of school brings important brand meaning that Pal's Sudden Service can use in their future marketing communication. Moreover, Pal's Sudden Service should consider campaigns for student consumers.

Brand Meaning from Female Consumers

The female entrants sample also generate three themes: "home," "Pal's" and "moved." The theme "home" is similar to the theme "Pal's" in the overall sample. As previously mentioned, female consumers have more reflection on the brand meaning of "home."

The second theme "Pal's" developed many food concepts, such as "tea," "fries" and "food." This shows that female consumers have more food-focused narratives. Due to this finding, Pal's Sudden Service should consider a focus on drawing female consumers' attention by promote their food.

<center>Brand Meaning from Male Consumers</center>

"Home," "Pal's" and "moved" are three themes that generated from male entrants sample, which are the same as other samples.

The concept "Big Pal's" was developed from the male theme "Pal's," and it did not show in the other two samples' results. A number of female entrants talked about their experience of having Big Pal's with their brothers, sons, and friends. Therefore, in the food category, the Big Pal is the main product that should be targeted to male consumers.

"Stationed" is a concept under "moved," which only showed in the male entrant's sample. Male entrants wanted their military relatives and friends to come back home for Pal's Sudden Service. This finding exhibits a special military meaning for male consumers. Compared with other samples, male consumers thought that military officials have a more powerful reason to come home. Pal's Sudden Service should use military-related brand meaning on targeting male consumers. Furthermore, Pal's Sudden Service is a symbol of home, and they could include military meaning in future communication.

<center>Practical Application</center>

While this study examined the narratives of Pal's Sudden Service, a brand manager might want know the specific food narratives. These narratives could provide story scenarios for different types of ad concepts and overall strategy application. This study identified a number of narratives that were specific in terms of product. For example, Frenchie Fries are a signature

product for the brand and many responses similar to, "His kids favorite is Pals Frenchie fries and milk shakes," "she hasn't had an opportunity to return home to her mother, her 4 siblings, and Pal's Frenchie Fries in FOUR+ years!!!" and "My friend LOVES Pals food. Cheddar Rounds, Big Pals, Ham and Cheese sandwiches…he loves them all." These show that products are brand symbols for consumers. This study brings recognition to the product-specific nature of branding due to the use of unique product names found within the narratives.

In sum, themes and concepts from this study should be examined for creative strategy. Moreover, consumers' stories and experiences can also inspire the brand on making future narrative advertising. For example, Pal's can talk about a girl who has Cheddar Rounds every morning, which is a story from this study.

<u>Limitations and Future Studies</u>

Several limitations were present in the current study. First, the sample that the study used has the limitation which can caused many biases. This research used consumers' narratives, submitted to win the "Come Home to Pal's" contest campaign. "Home," "Pal's" and "moved" are the main themes that were generated from those narratives. While this study finds overall positive results for the brand, one would expect positive entries to win a brand-specific competition. In future studies, researcher can choose other sample that have diverse topics and would generate more balanced entries.

Second, while Leximancer uses Bayesian statistics to generate themes, interpretation of themes and concepts is still subjective. The software only offered themes and concepts and the relationship between them. The author interpreted the brand meanings based on the concepts. Different authors may have different opinions on understanding the concept and its relationship between brand and consumer. Therefore, the brand meaning that was explored from this study is

more based on the author's subjective opinions. Future studies should have several authors collaborate together on interpreting the concepts and in order to get a more objective conclusion.

Third, there are less advertising related research that apply Leximancer. In the literature review, Campbell (2011) and his colleagues also mentioned "no one has used it (Leximancer) in marketing to understand ad conversation" (p. 92). Leximancer as a research method software is not widely used in marketing and advertising field. Future study should find more previous research that did Leximancer as a research method and make improvement on using this software.

Conclusions

The goal of the current study is to explore the brand meanings from consumers' narratives. More than two thousands narratives from Come Home to Pal's campaign were explored in the study. This study generated many brand meanings from consumer-submitted narratives. In summary, these types of studies can help brand managers discover brand meaning from consumers' perspectives. This research contributes to the literature by suggesting a way to explore personal narratives via user-generated content. Future studies should examine consumers' narrative that covered more diverse topics and improve overall application of usage of products such as Leximancer software in marketing and advertising field.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Full List of States' Entrant's Number and Percentage

State	Entrant #	Entrant %
Tennessee	1858	78.03
Virginia	277	11.63
Florida	32	1.34
Texas	31	1.30
North Carolina	22	0.88
South Carolina	19	0.80
California	17	0.71
Georgia	13	0.55
Kentucky	13	0.55
Ohio	10	0.42
New York	8	0.34
Colorado	6	0.25
Illinois	6	0.25
Pennsylvania	6	0.25
Alabama	5	0.21
Louisiana	5	0.21
Nevada	5	0.21
Arkansas	5	0.21
Maryland	4	0.17
West Virginia	4	0.17
Arizona	3	0.13
Michigan	3	0.13
Montana	3	0.13
Oklahoma	3	0.13
Alaska	2	0.08
Hawaii	2	0.08
Indiana	2	0.08
Kansas	2	0.08
Massachusetts	2	0.08
Minnesota	2	0.08
Missouri	2	0.08
Washington	2	0.08
Iowa	1	0.04
Maine	1	0.04
New Jersey	1	0.04
New Mexico	1	0.04
Oregon	1	0.04

Appendix B

Full List of States' Nominee's Number and Percentage

State	Entrant #	Entrant %
Texas	265	11.09
Florida	252	10.59
California	233	9.79
Tennessee	170	7.14
Georgia	124	5.21
Washington	87	3.66
Virginia	85	3.57
Ohio	80	3.36
Colorado	71	2.98
North Carolina	70	2.94
New York	68	2.86
South Carolina	65	2.73
Illinois	54	2.27
Alabama	49	2.06
Arizona	42	1.76
Indiana	39	1.64
Nevada	39	1.64
Pennsylvania	39	1.64
Louisiana	36	1.64
Kentucky	32	1.34
Maryland	32	1.34
Missouri	32	1.34
Mississippi	31	1.30
Michigan	28	1.18
Hawaii	25	1.05
Oklahoma	25	1.05
New Jersey	22	0.92
Iowa	21	0.88
Kansas	21	0.88
Alaska	20	0.84
Minnesota	20	0.84
Oregon	19	0.80
Connecticut	16	0.67
Idaho	16	0.67
Washington D.C.	15	0.63
Montana	15	0.63
Arkansas	12	0.50
Delaware	11	0.46
New Mexico	11	0.46
Wisconsin	11	0.46
North Dakota	10	0.42

Massachusetts	9	0.38
Maine	8	0.34
Nebraska	6	0.25
Utah	6	0.25
West Virginia	6	0.25
Rhode Island	4	0.17
Wyoming	4	0.17
New Hampshire	3	0.13
Vermont	2	0.08
Minnesota	2	0.08
England	2	0.08
Japan	2	0.08
South Dakota	1	0.04
Australia	1	0.04
Canada	1	0.04
Denmark	1	0.04
France	1	0.04
Geronimo	1	0.04
Guam	1	0.04
Haiti	1	0.04
Italy	1	0.04
Scotland	1	0.04
Spain	1	0.04
Thailand	1	0.04

Appendix C

Theme "Pal's" for Overall Entrants

Concepts	Hits
home	3299
family	1450
love	1127
time	942
visit	787
year	730
able	622
holidays	614
friends	445
sister	464
Christmas	471
bring	359
brother	334
best	323
trip	306
enjoy	267
mother	251
contest	230
win	214
wonderful	194
opportunity	185
during	142

Appendix D

Theme "Pal's" for Overall Entrants

Concepts	Hits
Pal's	1296
tea	661
food	487
fries	477
frenchie and fries	457
frenchie	457
loves	423
favorite	289
comes	283
hot	242
place	244
misses	230
day	228
drive	217
take	197
cheese	193
rounds	159

Appendix E

Theme "moved" for Overall Entrants

Concepts	Hits
moved	564
daughter	524
son	408
lives	395
husband	392
best	323
school	306
friend	285
times	282
wife	265
live	263
old	253
lived	253
job	236
college	194
life	184
children	183
work	179
due	161
stationed	142
country	126
working	122
work	122

Appendix F

Theme "home" for Female Entrants

Concepts	Hits
home	2771
family	1189
love	965
time	767
visit	618
year	599
holidays	490
able	482
friends	356
Christmas	381
son	347
bring	292
brother	272
enjoy	208

Appendix G

Theme "Pal's" for Female Entrants

Concepts	Hits
tea	520
food	380
fries	363
frenchie	341
loves	337
comes	230
favorite	236
place	208

Appendix H

Theme "home" for Male Entrants

Concepts	Hits
home	649
family	305
love	237
time	208
visit	173
able	140
year	155
holidays	139
daughter	123
food	121
wife	106
friends	100
Christmas	97
son	92
bring	83
trip	82
mother	67
times	64
opportunity	61
live	57
contest	54

Appendix I

Theme "Pal's" for Male Entrants

Concepts	Hits
Pal's	274
tea	142
sweet	120
loves	96
fries	80
frenchie	53
Big Pal	52
day	48
take	43
cheddar	34

Appendix J

Theme "moved" for Male Entrants

Concepts	Hits
moved	130
brother	73
lives	87
friends	70
husband	70
sister	69
lived	60
life	59
school	58
old	57
best	50
job	50
grew	47
work	45
stationed	30

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