



Bryant University

HONORS THESIS

The Implications of Viral Media & Advocacy: Kony 2012

BY Cassandra Bopp

ADVISOR • Stanley Baran

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation
with honors in the Bryant University Honors Program

APRIL 2012

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ABSTRACT

This research paper analyzes the video “Kony 2012” as an example of advocacy film making and viral media. By analyzing critical sources, I draw conclusions as to why this video became the most viral video of all time and how other advocacy groups can use this phenomenon to learn about viral advocacy media. Using data from LexisNexis Academic, I track the popularity of “Kony 2012” via different forms of media (blogs, news articles, etc.) and compare my data to prior research conducted on social media sites. Ultimately, I will find that several key characteristics can be pinpointed as the primary cause for the film’s viral ability; including a pre-existing network of followers and the film’s ability to spread through social and traditional media. Additionally, I will conclude that the film’s inconsistent facts and the organizations behaviors played a role in the film’s demise.

THE EXPLOSION OF VIRAL MEDIA

As early as the late 1990s, film clips and images began circulating the web via e-mail. But technological advancements in internet capabilities, including faster broadband services and wireless internet, now allow easier viewing and sharing of media among individuals. Today, social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter, allow the public to be the producers of media. Media can range from family photos and home videos to anti-government propaganda ads. The internet allows the ultimate freedom of speech, with few regulations on the words and images that can be legally shared. While much online media may never be seen by anyone besides the creator, other content is viewed by millions. This rapid spread of media among a large population of people gave birth to the concept 'viral media'. This term was coined because media began spreading like a virus, exponentially reaching new viewers like an epidemic. When viral media aims to sell an idea or object to its audience it becomes viral marketing. Viral marketing is, "about getting audiences to pass on your message" and, "uses social media as its distribution mechanism" (Howell, 2010). Essentially, once viral marketing is produced, it relies on consumers to promote and share the media at their own free will.

For many individuals and groups, media is a main component in shaping their culture. Children and teenagers in particular look to media for examples on how to dress, what to listen to and even how to behave. Media ultimately dictates an ideal lifestyle within a particular culture, setting expectations for how one should aim to be. From the media's perspective there is one particular image and lifestyle that we all aspire to obtain. For example, today, media idealizes skinny, attractive women, making those characteristics the universal goal of women in the United States. Popular media typically exploits these ideals. But viral videos don't always play into these stereotypical images. Instead, they display new ideals of beauty or talent.

Viral videos are typically ranked based on the number of days it takes to reach a total of 100 million views on the internet (figure 1). The second most viral video of all time is of Susan Boyle performing on *Britain's Got Talent*, a reality television singing competition. Boyle became famous for her amazing vocal abilities, but also because she didn't represent the ideal physical image of a woman based on western culture's standards. One journalist commented

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on Boyle’s appearance by saying, “her frumpy appearance drew looks of disbelief from the television audience, but her voice silenced the doubters” (Satter, 2009). In September, teen icon Justin Bieber got knocked out of fifth place with his music video ‘Baby’, after the music video ‘Gangnam Style’ by PSY gained massive popularity. PSY’s song, primarily in Korean, is upbeat and features dance moves to go along with the lyrics. It is interesting to see a large American audience respond to a song most don’t understand. ‘Gangnam Style’ has been most successful in Indonesia, followed by the United States, Philippines, Singapore and Brazil (Luo, 2012). Other top viral videos include Rebecca Black’s music video “Friday”, which she filmed with her friends for fun, never thinking it would go viral. The third most viral video is Lady Gaga’s “Bad Romance” music video. Lady Gaga is known for her strange outfits and videos which go against what is considered beautiful and normal in western popular culture.

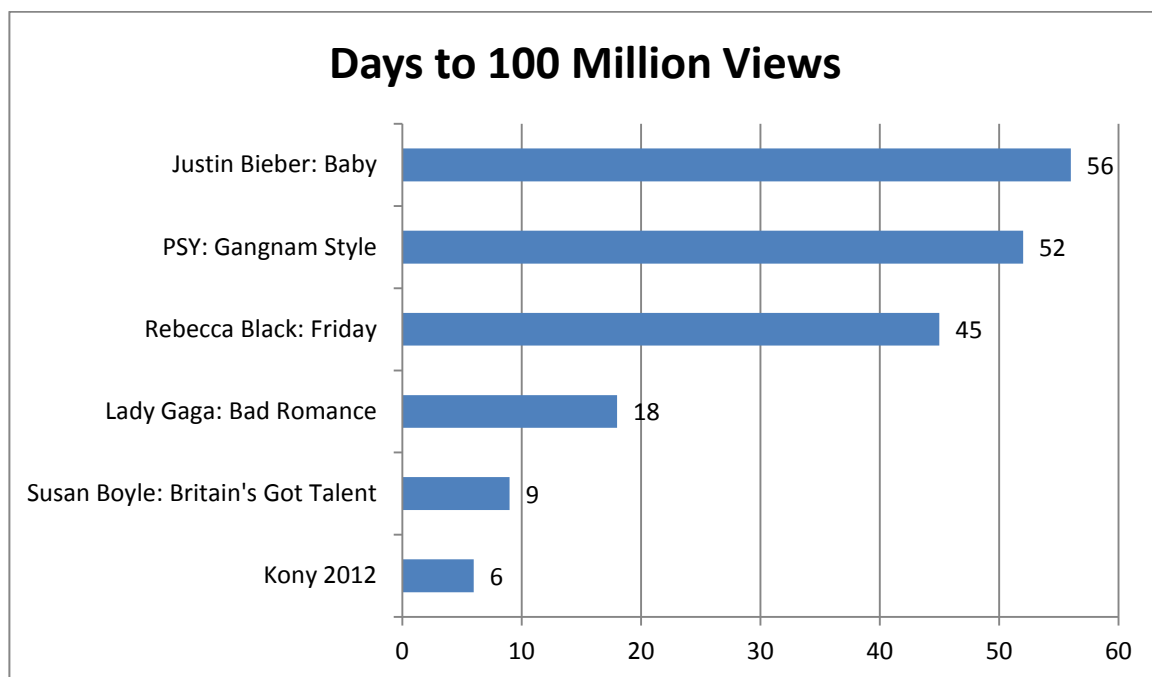


Figure 1 – The Current Top Viral Videos

Coming in at number one is Invisible Children’s video, “Kony 2012”. In just six days Invisible Children’s video was viewed 100 million times. Invisible Children made this film to inspire individuals to take action in stopping the Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony. Unlike other popular media, “Kony 2012” was not a catchy musical masterpiece; it did not idolize celebrities, nor

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did it necessarily emphasize popular culture. “Kony 2012” was a propagandistic advocacy film created to inspire a social movement. It was not only a viral video, but an example of viral marketing that was able to generate popularity through its viewers. It cannot be compared to other advocacy campaigns or propaganda films because its popularity and viral ability has never before been seen in a film of its nature.

JOSEPH KONY AND THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY

Around 1961, Joseph Kony was born in northern Uganda. Growing up, he was part of the Acholi tribe and a prominent member of his church (Anthony, 2011). He would eventually leave school to become a healer.

In 1986 Yoweri Museveni seized power over Uganda, creating stability and economic growth (Rice, 2012). Museveni quickly made plans to abolish political parties, uniting Uganda under one political system. Museveni's plans included systematically removing enemies, particularly individuals of the Acholi ethnic group, of which Kony belonged to. Joseph Kony did not support Museveni's plans and fled to Sudan. Kony wanted to create a government system in Uganda that emphasized the Ten Commandments found in the Bible. Kony has claimed on numerous occasions that the Holy Spirit has talked to him directly, informing him of what he has to do (BBC News, 2012).

Before forming the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), Joseph Kony was part of the Holy Spirit Movement, which gained popularity among the people of Uganda during Museveni's early years in power. This rebel group was started by Alice Lakwena, a relative of Kony's, who was a spirit medium (Anthony, 2012). Kony pronounced himself a prophet for the Acholi people and took control of the Holy Spirit Movement in 1987 (Anthony, 2012). Running out of resources, the Holy Spirit Movement began plundering the local villages for supplies in order to keep its militia alive. In 1992, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) was born, with Kony as its leader. In 1994, the government of Sudan officially backed the LRA because of previous disagreements with Uganda. With Sudan's support, Kony began attacking villages, raping, kidnapping and murdering in the name of God. Kony and his army are responsible for displacing more than two million people from their homes, killing more than 65,000 people and abducting more than 40,000 children in order to indoctrinate them into child soldiers (Johnson, 2009). Kony would abduct young boys to turn into soldiers as well as young girls, of which he has turned more than fifty into his wives (Anthony, 2011). He was able to convince these children that holy water would make them bulletproof (Anthony, 2011). Former members of the LRA have also admitted to cooking and eating their victims (Johnson, 2009).

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Peace negotiations between Kony and Ugandan President Museveni have occurred in several occasions, beginning in 1993, but all have failed. In 1996, children began commuting to safe areas of Uganda to sleep in order to avoid abduction during the night.

The reasoning behind Kony's violence was never made completely clear to the people of Uganda. Kony claims to receive prophecies from God in his dreams, which will ultimately lead to the overthrow of Museveni and the rise of a new Ugandan leader who rules based on his commandments. In recent years, however, Kony has fled Uganda, seeking refuge in neighboring countries (Bulamu, 2012). Despite being outside of Uganda, he continues to invade villages, taking children to populate his army. Sudan withdrew support of the LRA in April of 1995, after the Ugandan and Sudanese governments accused each other of supporting the LRA's attacks on each other's countries.

In 2002, the Ugandan military launched Operation Iron Fist, in which it planned to cross into Sudan and surprise the LRA. The attack was unsuccessful and ultimately produced a brutal backlash in the form of attacks against civilians in both Uganda and Sudan.

In 2005, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued warrants for the arrest of five LRA commanders, including Joseph Kony. These leaders have yet to be arrested and tried by the ICC. In 2006, the United Nations proposed a covert mission to take down Kony. However, the LRA was at a strong point and many of the Guatemalan Special Forces sent in to complete the mission died (Rice, 2012). Later that year, in 2006, the Ugandan government attempted another peace agreement with the LRA. This time it granted amnesty to members of the LRA in exchange for peace. A ceasefire was announced and an agreement on accountability and reconciliation was signed by both sides two years later. However, Kony refused to show up for the permanent truce signing until ICC arrest warrants were removed for all members of the LRA. Due to fear of arrest, the peace agreement fell through and the violence began again. Children continued to be abducted from regions of South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Central African Republic. Since this time Kony and the LRA have predominantly stayed out of Uganda for fear of capture.

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At the end of 2008, affected countries, including Sudan, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo worked together to launch Operation Lightning Thunder. This operation was funded partially by the United States (Rice, 2012). Together their militaries attacked LRA bases in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Less than a year into the operation, Kony called for a ceasefire and began peace talks with the Ugandan government. The peace talks were again unsuccessful, and by March 2010 the LRA had greatly increased the brutality and frequency of attacks on villages.

In October 2011 U.S. President Barack Obama ordered 100 U.S. military advisors to go to central Africa to help search for Kony and take down the LRA leadership. Former President George W. Bush had placed the LRA on a list of terrorist organizations in 2001, allowing the United States more power to intervene (Johnson, 2009). The United States and other countries have been working to put an end to Kony's terrorization of central Africa during the last two decades, to no avail. It is estimated that the United States has spent more than ten million dollars trying to capture Kony (Johnson, 2009). Kony is capable of hiding in extremely remote locations and has the manpower to resist large militant groups, making his capture particularly difficult.

This history of the LRA and Joseph Kony only covers the major events that have transpired since Kony first joined the Holy Spirit Movement. It is likely that other covert operations have occurred or are presently in motion that the rest of the world is not aware of.

Nevertheless, Joseph Kony and the LRA were not dominant topics in the media prior to the March release of "Kony 2012". This film has opened up questions about the history of the conflict, as viewers want to better understand what has been done to help people in LRA-affected areas. This complex history of Uganda's relations with the LRA would ultimately play a large role in the backlash of "Kony 2012".

INVISIBLE CHILDREN TAKE ACTION

Invisible Children, a non-profit organization, was started in 2004, after a group of college students traveled to Uganda and filmed their first documentary. The primary mission of Invisible Children is to “stop LRA violence and support the war-affected communities in East and Central Africa” (“Invisible Children”, 2012). This group uses creative measures, such as film, to inspire social action. They focus specifically on bringing Joseph Kony and the LRA to justice.

Invisible Children’s first documentary, ‘Invisible Children: The Rough Cut’, never became a viral sensation, possibly because of the lack of digital communication used at the time. However, this initial documentary received similar criticism to that met by “Kony 2012”. It was criticized for using generalized information to explain a complex history of violence in central Africa. The language used in their first film made the documentary appear to be more about the people filming it than the people of Uganda, suggesting an American superiority complex (Ekdale, 2009). A prior analysis of their advocacy films warned that the, “immediate danger is that this reframed audiovisual imagery, testimony, and accompanying message can distort priorities, decontextualize complex local situations and perpetuate stereotypes” (Ekdale, 2009). These production ideals remain apparent in “Kony 2012”, even though commentaries on Invisible Children’s films have warned them of doing so. Since Invisible Children’s prior films were not wildly popular, the foundation did not have to handle the world-wide criticism that would later result from “Kony 2012”. The group, however, did respond to their first film with shorter films which addressed criticisms the group had received. Invisible Children addressed the backlash against “Kony 2012” with the short film, “Kony 2012: Part II – Beyond Famous”.

More popular forms of activism by Invisible Children included a 2007 event called “Displace Me”. Sixty-seven thousand people joined in, sleeping in makeshift cardboard homes on the streets of the United States. The goal was to raise awareness of the millions displaced in Uganda because of the LRA. That same year, the rock band Fall Out Boy filmed a music video to the song “I’m Like a Lawyer with the Way I’m Always Trying to Get You Off (Me

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& You)” in Uganda, in order to help raise awareness for Invisible Children’s campaign. Fall Out Boy’s popularity helped spread the cause to an all-new demographic: America’s youth.

Invisible Children was one of the main supporters of Barack Obama’s 2010 bill, “Lord’s Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recover Act”. It was present when President Obama signed the bill to send 100 U.S. military advisors to central Africa to aid LRA-stricken countries. Less than two years after the success of this bill, Invisible Children launched a new campaign urging additional military intervention in central Africa.

Invisible Children’s current programs include 12 films which are geared, “to introduce the audience to the complexities of the LRA conflict, highlight the human resilience that transcends borders, and inspire immediate action” (“Invisible Children”, 2012). Over 150 musicians, which they call “artist ambassadors”, have joined Invisible Children’s cause to stop Joseph Kony. In Uganda, Invisible Children is setting up radio networks to keep communities safe, and creating jobs to help people affected by the LRA.

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KONY 2012

On March 5, 2012 “Kony 2012”, a 30-minute documentary introduced by Invisible Children and narrated by Jason Russell, was released to the online video-sharing site, YouTube. It is designed to educate viewers on who Joseph Kony is in order to make him famous. As the leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army and wanted by the International Criminal Court, Kony has committed numerous crimes against humanity. By making Kony famous the group hopes to raise awareness of the issue and have him arrested by the end of 2012: hence the title, Kony 2012.

The video begins with an introduction to the power of social media and the internet; explaining how quickly we can connect to each other all around the world through Facebook, YouTube and other social networking sites. The rest of the video is explained as an “experiment” and exclaims that the viewer “has to pay attention.” The film then cuts to the birth of a baby boy, which you then learn is the narrator’s son, Gavin. The narrator, Jason Russell, explains how the child does not choose where he is born or what he is born into. All that matters, Russell exclaims, is he is alive and therefore he matters.

We then learn about the life of Russell, and how his experiences brought him to where he is today. Going back to 2003, when Russell and his friends first visited Uganda on a mission to film a documentary about the genocide occurring in Darfur, they met a young boy named Jacob. Jacob had escaped from the LRA rebels, but had seen his brother murdered when he tried to escape. They met Jacob when they came across a safe home for children. Here, the viewer can see how children will walk miles from home each night in order to have a place to stay that is safe from LRA attacks. If they stay in their own homes they risk abduction by LRA soldiers during the night. Once they are abducted they will become child soldiers or be killed. Jacob explains to Russell and his friends that he would “rather die than stay on earth” because he does not want to live in constant fear and hiding. Jacob then breaks down at the thought of meeting his brother again. The viewer also sees Russell promise Jacob that he will stop LRA violence, not completely understanding the scope of work that would require.

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Russell first attempts to explain the history of Joseph Kony and LRA violence by simplifying the issues to his very young son, Gavin. Russell's explanation of the conflict to Gavin is rudimentary, adding no new knowledge for the viewer. Russell then switches to a historical background of the conflict. Russell explains that Kony turns girls into sex slaves and boys into child soldiers. He explains how these children are then forced to mutilate people's faces and kill their own parents. Russell clarifies for the viewer that Kony does this for no specific cause or reason and is not financially or politically supported by anyone. Kony's use of peace talks is explained as a way for Kony to rearm, rest up and prepare for future attacks. Russell speaks with Luis Moreno Ocampo, a prosecutor from the ICC, who explains why Kony is the first person to be indicted by the ICC because of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed against civilians.

Russell claims that before this video 99% of the world did not know about Joseph Kony, and had they known, he would have been stopped many years before. Russell also claims that the U.S. government would never get involved because it does not affect U.S. foreign policy. Therefore, it is up to Invisible Children to spread awareness and inspire action. Russell reiterates the idea that "where you live shouldn't determine how you live". Invisible Children claims to use "time, talent and money" to help repair and protect those being affected, primarily relying on monetary donations from people who want to help the cause.

In October 2011, Invisible Children celebrated Obama's passing of legislature which would deploy soldiers to central Africa to aid the country. This was a major step in U.S. policy because it was accomplished not for monetary or economic gain, but because it was the right thing to do. Russell compares the need to intervene in Africa with Hitler's mass genocide of the Jewish population in the 1940s and the Rwandan genocide in the early 1990s. In these instances the U.S. government did not intervene quickly enough, and Russell claims that we now know what we need to do to stop these instances of genocide.

Russell ends by returning to the film's central goal: spreading awareness of Joseph Kony. He wants to make Kony a famous, household name, in order to bring awareness to his crimes. Russell targets 20 pop-culture icons and 12 policy makers in order to spread the word. Russell reminds us that in this election year, no matter your political party, civil rights is an issue that

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we can all agree on. Invisible Children urges viewers to go on its website (www.InvisibleChildren.com) to write to their congressmen to help spread the word of this cause. Russell refers to this video as a new form of propaganda, which will change the type of media that we pay attention to.

Invisible Children wants to “change the conversation of our culture”. To do this Invisible Children explains the types of merchandise that the viewer can purchase in order to help spread the Kony 2012 campaign, including participating in ‘Cover the Night’. ‘Cover the Night’ was the April 20th, 2012 event in which posters of Kony were to be plastered all over the world in one night to raise further awareness of the issue and show a united front. Russell challenges the viewer to make a difference, showing that any group, not just the wealthy, can make a difference. Russell wants to prove that social media and technology have changed history, that we can now all be writers of history. He ends the film with four things that everyone can do. First, they can sign the pledge in support of the movement; they can buy the action kit that includes merchandise supporting the cause; and third, they can donate a few dollars a month to aid people in Uganda. Lastly, they ask that the viewer share this video online, because it’s free.

Invisible Children managed to pack a lot of information into the 30 minute documentary. The film covers the historical background of the issue, the group’s personal connection with the people of Uganda, and an explanation of how the viewer can help make a difference. In its first six days over 100 million people viewed this film, making it the most viral video of all time. Invisible Children’s experiment tested true; social media was able to change the type of media that the public was willing to listen to. Unfortunately, the “Kony 2012” trend would not last long and a significant portion of the response to the video would be negative.

“KONY 2012” ANALYSIS OF FILM TECHNIQUES

Just as important as the words and information in the film, are the sounds and images that accompany them. From the start of the film, background music sets a melodramatic tone for the narrative. The music shifts to an inspirational tone throughout the film in order to arouse activism and motivate viewers. The tempo of the background music increases as well. This leaves the viewer on a happier note, most likely creating a positive viewing experience despite the graphic images and ideas that were portrayed.

Interspersed throughout the film are images of Russell’s son, Gavin. The viewer is able to see Russell’s son interpret the LRA’s violence through the eyes of a small child, simplifying the issue and showing how hard it is for children, including the child soldiers who are being abducted, to understand. In contrast with the violence that Kony has committed over the past two decades, Gavin is the epitome of innocence. This contrast echoes in Russell’s desire to change the course of history so that his son and every other child are able to grow up in a better world. The impact that a figure like Gavin has on this film could not be easily replicated with an older person in his place because the innocence would be lost. Gavin ultimately becomes a propaganda tool, used to exploit the viewer’s attitude of the video in a positive way. Russell himself calls this film a ‘new’ form of propaganda, which creates a more enlightened image of propaganda, which normally has negative connotations.

Invisible Children uses a multitude of montages in “Kony 2012”. One particular montage, beginning approximately 21 minutes into the film, shows images from other acts of genocide, including Hitler’s genocide of the Jewish population in Germany and the Rwandan genocide. By placing these images in this film, Invisible Children is making a direct comparison between them and the LRA. This inspires patriotism, as many countries went to the aid of the Jews during the holocaust, although it was too late for many who had already been killed. The U.S. President during the time of the Rwandan genocide, Bill Clinton, admitted that his lack of intervention in Rwanda was one of his biggest regrets. No matter what country individuals are from, they played or unfortunately did not play a role in stopping these acts of genocide and likely feel a strong sense of patriotism or sadness as a result.

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Other montages include images of ordinary people in order to show the difference that one person can make if everyone works together. It is not difficult to envision your own image among these photos and see how you fit into the puzzle. Russell brings up on several occasions the “accident of birth”, which is the idea that we do not choose where we are born or what we are born into. His goal is to remind viewers that we are fortunate that we didn’t end up being born into an LRA-affected area. Another montage shows pictures of people who have had their faces mutilated. Having these images quickly flash across a screen creates a more powerful experience than if these images were held on the screen for a prolonged period of time. These graphic images disappear very quickly, but linger in the viewer’s mind much longer.

Throughout the 30 minute documentary is the reoccurring image of Jacob, the child soldier who Invisible Children befriended during its first trip to Uganda. By following Jacob’s story from the age of a small boy, hiding from the LRA, to an adult who came to America to speak about his experience and help empower others, viewers are able to create an emotional connection with Jacob as a character. Much like Gavin, Jacob was an innocent child until he was taken by the LRA. His story inspires hope that we can rescue these children and they can lead happy lives.

BACKLASH AND COMMENTARY

Critical response to the film was immediate. Film critics, communication theorists, historians, and the people of LRA-affected areas were just a few to offer their opinions of the film. Many criticized the film for flaws, while others questioned how this film was capable of becoming the most viral video of all time.

The most powerful criticism comes from people in Uganda who are experiencing first-hand the effects of the LRA. One school teacher in Uganda reported that she feared the film would bring Kony back to Uganda (Bulamu 2012). She explained that Kony left Uganda around 2006, and has not been back since. She says that the people of Uganda no longer live in displacement camps or fear Kony. Instead, the people of Uganda have built new homes and businesses, and are starting fresh, new lives. Time Magazine also featured an African response to “Kony 2012”, in which they claimed the video overstated the threat of the LRA, claiming the LRA was the weakest ever with only 150 to 200 fighters (Perry, 2012). The Ugandan school teacher’s recommendation was to feature the children of Uganda, today, who have survived Kony’s attacks. These children are the symbol of hope, not the misery and torture depicted in the film (Bulamu, 2012). The idea is that by removing the images of Joseph as a young child and other old film footage from “Kony 2012” and replacing it with images of children who were not abducted by Kony, the emotional aspect of the film would diminish, hindering its overall impact.

J. Peter Pham, an African historian and researcher, questioned how the timing of “Kony 2012” may impact the current state of the war. By stirring up the knowledge of the LRA and Joseph Kony, the film jeopardizes any missions already in place that may have relied on laying low. Militias in the Democratic Republic of Congo fear that Kony is over-preparing for what is now an imminent attack on the LRA, making them less likely to take action while the topic is still current in the media (Oren, 2012). Vassanji also questions the need for additional American intervention, arguing that the video makes the African people appear weak and unable to help themselves. One response to the film argued that it promoted a “white savior industrial complex” which humiliates the African community, making it seem as though

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African's are dependent on our help (Vassanji 2012). Vassanji encourages people in LRA-affected areas to view "Kony 2012" as a wake-up call to inspire changes and action within their own communities.

For many journalists, the primary issue concerning "Kony 2012" is that it addresses too many wrongs from the past, and glances over what has been and is being done currently to help solve the situation (DeWayne 2012). A blog article by Mark Drumbl examines the film's impact from a global perspective. Drumbl raises two questions: What does justice mean for child soldiers and what contribution does "Kony 2012" make to the prevention of child soldiering world-wide? Most child soldiers are between the ages of fifteen and seventeen, but "Kony 2012" depicts child soldiers to be much younger, sensationalizing the situation (Drumbl, 2012). "Kony 2012" is depicting a quick-fix to the situation, showing Joseph go from a sad, scared child to a happy adult activist. However, Drumbl argues that actual justice for child soldiers will be much more complex. At a global level, only 40% of all child soldiers in the world are in Africa (Drumbl, 2012). Many of these child soldiers are not abducted, join the military voluntarily, do not carry weapons or commit violent crimes, and a large majority are female (Drumbl 2012).

Time Magazine looked at the history of Invisible Children's documentaries and found a tradition of films that went against 'normal' advocacy principles. Its films typically talked just as much about itself, Invisible Children, as the conflict. Its films disregarded biases and neutrality in order to oversimplify and sensationalize. This created immense support for its cause, particularly among young college students. The students' support was the driving force that led to Obama's 2010 bill which sent support to LRA-stricken areas to help locate Kony and the LRA.

"Kony 2012" also made Invisible Children a 'public' non-profit, as people began looking into their credibility. Charity Navigator (www.charitynavigator.org) gives Invisible Children only two out of four stars for transparency and accountability. This rating would coincide with its films oversimplifications and sensationalism. Charity Navigator also gives the group all four stars for its financials, which conflicts with many of the reviews on Charity Navigator. With 66 reviews on Charity Navigator, Invisible Children has an average rating of 2.5 and most of

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its low ratings list its financials as a primary reason. Of the \$8.6 million raised last year, only 32% went to Uganda (“The Lessons We Can Learn...”, 2012). Part of this criticism is the fact that Jason Russell and two of his colleagues each make close to \$90,000 per year. Invisible Children’s sudden popularity was not able to cover up its business practices. In fact, it brought them to light.

One person expressed their attitudes about “Kony 2012” by starting a Tumblr titled ‘Visible Children’ (visiblechildren.tumblr.com). The goal of ‘Visible Children’ is to understand the inaccuracies of the film of and discuss more effective ways of handling the takedown of the LRA and Joseph Kony. This Tumblr also discusses information that is not publicized elsewhere in the media, including information about the viewing of “Kony 2012” in Uganda. ‘Visible Children’ has blogged on several occasions that the viewing of “Kony 2012” has led to riots and protest in several areas of Uganda. “There was a strong sense from the audience that the video was insensitive to African and Ugandan audiences, and that it did not accurately portray the conflict or the victims” (Quinn, 2012). There was a significant amount of readers who did not understand the Ugandan sentiment toward the film. ‘Visible Children’ responded by saying, “For those who aren’t “getting it”, try this fun experiment: make a bracelet that says “HITLER” on it and see how long it takes until someone punches you” (‘Visible Children, 2012). By relating Hitler and Kony, ‘Visible Children’ de-sensationalizes the issue, making it understandable and relatable to a larger audience.

A blog article by Martin Gurri examines whether the source of the video, the video’s content, or the diffusion network is most responsible for the viral effect of “Kony 2012”. Gurri explains that the source is often the reason behind a video’s popularity when it contains a famous celebrity. While Invisible Children had a significant following prior to the release of “Kony 2012”, its supporters alone could not have created enough hype to reach 100 million views. Its previous film reached only five million total views. The content of the message is what typically goes viral. In films, the content of a film is a mixture of clever production effects and a “fairy-tale” story (Gurri, 2012). The power of the content of “Kony 2012” stems from the film’s ability to persuade viewers to the message that Invisible Children is selling, regardless of oversimplifications and sensational images. This differs from traditional popular

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content, which is typically funny, entertaining and much shorter than this documentary (Gurri, 2012). Gurri ultimately argues that it is the diffusion network that is the primary reason for the film becoming a viral sensation. The internet has created a web of virtual networks that allows us to create channels that we can exploit for the use of information sharing and entertainment. These virtual networks, beginning with Invisible Children's prior supporters, are what ultimately spread the video and helped it reach 100 million views in only six days. Gurri also found that people of Christian faith were a large supporter of the initial cause, as opposed to people of a particular political party. Celebrities mentioning the video also greatly increased the video's popularity.

These articles are just a few of the critical responses immediately following "Kony 2012", but they represent the big ideas that came out of the reaction to the film. From the Ugandan response to the critical analyses of why the film became viral, these critical opinions help shape an understanding of the world during the release of this film. One article from *Marketing Week* sums up the lessons learned from "Kony 2012":

1. An emotional story still holds power in our culture.
2. Positioning is everything; "Kony 2012" would not have been the same success without Russell's film abilities and the money spent in creating the documentary.
3. Be prepared for a backlash if your message includes inconsistent statements or false facts.
4. Social media works best when it connects people; i.e. diffusion networks.
5. Social media is just a small part of digital communication; blogs, websites and online newspapers were also a large part of the "Kony 2012" response.
6. Digital communication is just a piece of all communications; non-digital forms of media also reported on this issue.

It is clear that personal story of Joseph, the child soldier and other images of child soldiers create a powerful story. Any viewer with a heart can understand the desire and need for peace in these war-torn areas. On the other hand, Russell's editing and filming abilities add to the dramatic storyline, increasing the emotion portrayed in the film. It is also apparent from this film that viewers expect only accurate facts when receiving information. The internet allows users to quickly check facts, making it easy for users to find discrepancies in the film, creating a strong backlash. We saw this backlash from journalists, bloggers and the people of Uganda.

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Social media may be the true “winner” from “Kony 2012”, as viewers proved social media to be a primary vessel in connecting people around the world. As newspapers and magazines dwindle in readership, social media sites gain new users every day. It is becoming increasingly important for information to be discussed over social media as well as traditional forms of media.

VIRAL SUSTAINABILITY

Methodology

Knowledge of “Kony 2012” spread primarily through social media outlets, but newspapers, blogs and television stations also picked up on the popularity of the video, further increasing the number of viewers. Research conducted soon after the launch of the film focused on the popularity of the film from the perspective of social media. Using the LexisNexis Academic database, I have examined how other forms of media responded to the Kony phenomenon, in hopes of indicating the length of time “Kony 2012” was capable of remaining viral. I will then compare these results to previous research on social media sites in order to ultimately compare the film’s viral sustainability including both social media and more traditional forms of media.

LexisNexis Academic allows researchers to search key words or phrases on specific dates or date ranges, and in return will give a list of articles, blogs, news transcripts and other types of media referencing specified keywords in the specified date range. Using the advanced search feature I chose to look at results that were in English, because the film was most viewed by predominantly English speaking countries (YouTube). By collecting numerical data for different dates as well as date ranges, I was able to compare the frequency of references to “Kony” between different forms of media over time.

Results

By looking at data from March 2nd to March 31st, 2012, I was able to look specifically at the time period surrounding the release of “Kony 2012” (Appendix A). In the month of March, 2012, Newspapers were the medium with the most references to Kony. The peak in newspaper articles occurred on March 9th (figure 2), four days after the initial release of the film, with 103 articles, compared to two articles on March 5th.

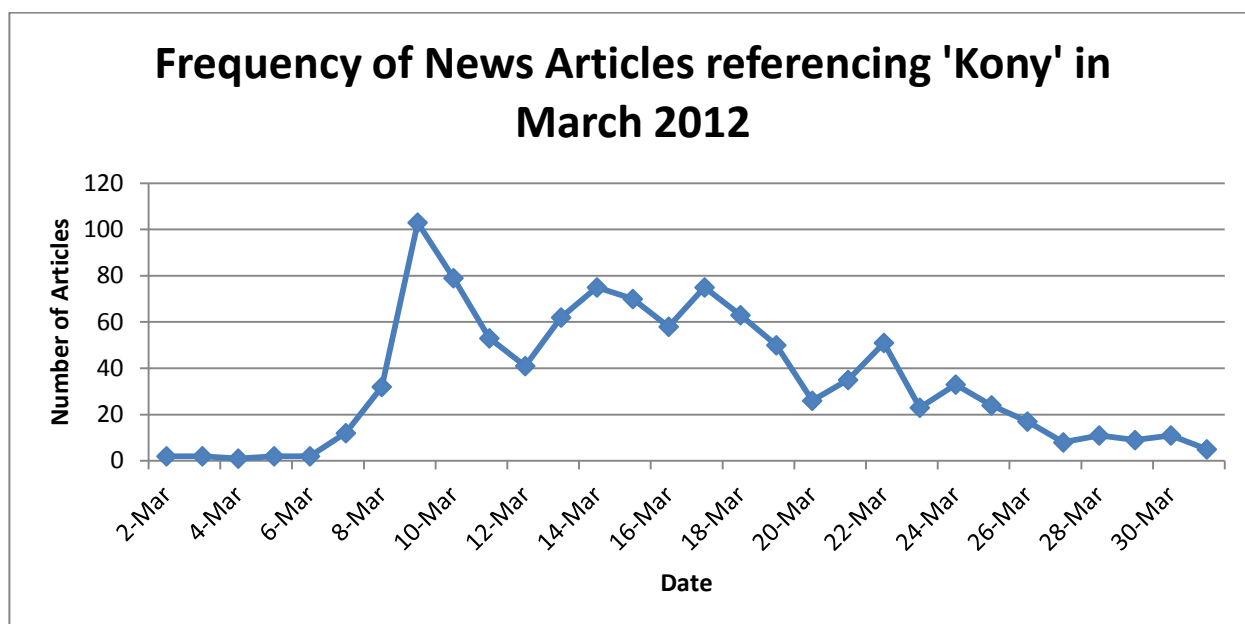


Figure 2 – News Articles Referencing “Kony”

On March 12th Invisible Children released a short film online, ‘Thank You, KONY 2012 Supporters’. This film would address some of the criticisms of the original “Kony 2012” film. From the data it appears that this second film renewed awareness of Invisible Children’s cause. On the night of March 15th Jason Russell, narrator of “Kony 2012”, was taken under arrest and hospitalized for irrational behavior. This event was widely publicized because it questioned how the success and negativity surrounding his film had affected his mental health. On March 21st, two United States senators, Jim Inhofe and Chris Coons, wrote a resolution which stated that the United States would help Uganda and other affected countries stop the LRA. Surprisingly, as it was an issue of U.S. policy, not too many newspapers reported this news. This would be the last major increase in references to ‘Kony’ in March. Soon after this event the Kony phenomenon would lose viral power in newspapers.

Blogs saw a similar pattern (figure 3). A majority of blog posting occurred on March 9th, four days after the March 5th release of the film. However, on March 17th, the most blog posts were created, less than 48 hours after the hospitalization of “Kony 2012” narrator, Jason Russell. There is also a small increase in ‘Kony’ references in blogs following the March 12th release of their second video.

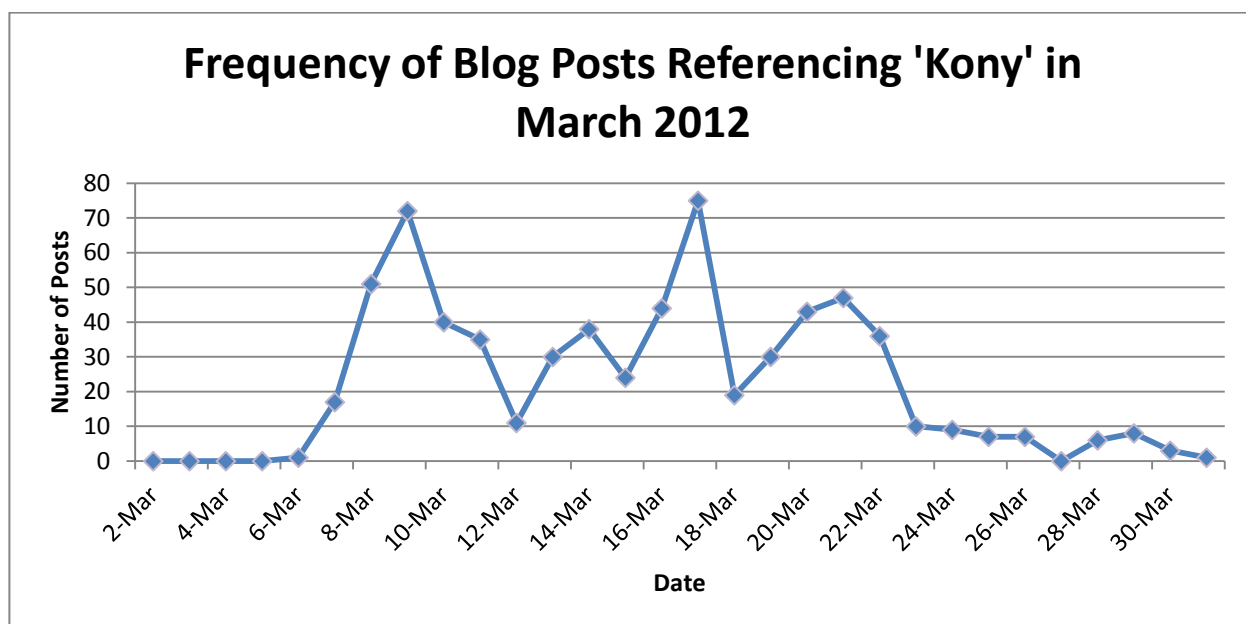


Figure 3 – Blogs Posts Referencing “Kony”

After the March 21st announcement of the Senate’s legislation supporting LRA-affected areas, blogs saw another peak in ‘Kony’ commentary.

Newswires and press releases referencing ‘Kony’ experienced the same pattern of frequency as newspapers, with one exception (figure 4). There is no obvious increase in references as a result of Russell’s hospitalization. Instead, there is a larger, gradual increase in references beginning March 12th, the day of the second film’s release, which begins decreasing before Russell’s hospitalization. March 21st experiences a large boost in ‘Kony’ references; most likely as a result of the legislation, but the spike in references is very short lived.

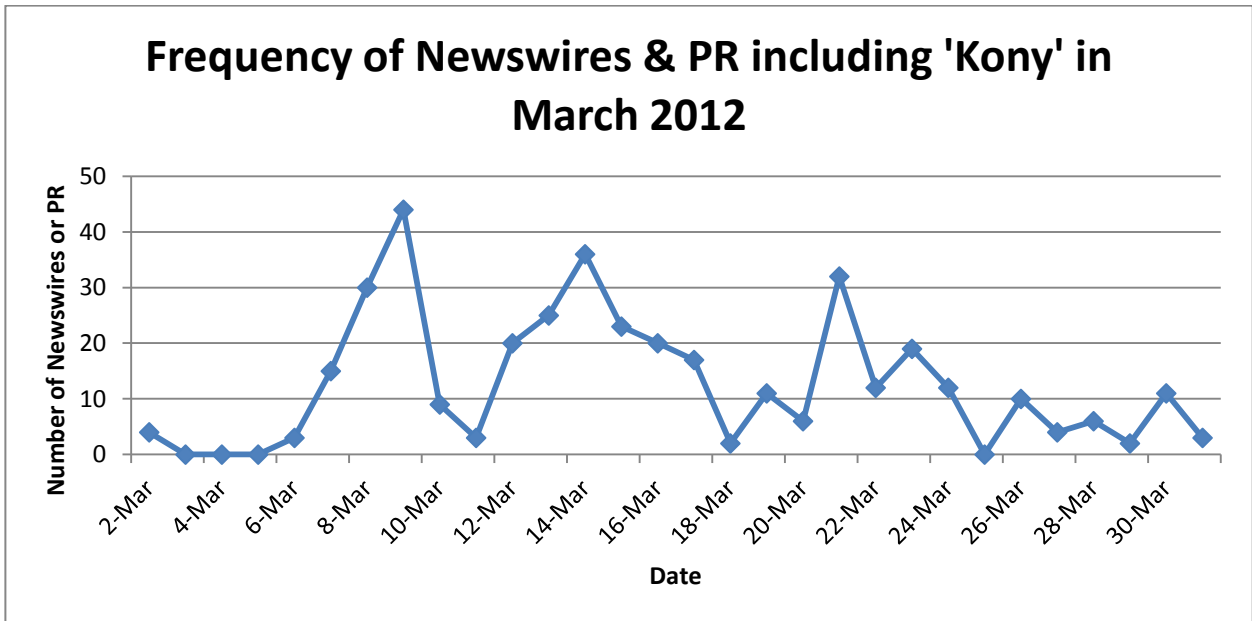


Figure 4 – Newswires & PR Referencing “Kony”

Web-based publications experienced a unique pattern in ‘Kony’ references (figure 5). Similar to other medias, ‘Kony’ references peaked on March 9th, however, dropping very low the following day. There was a rise in references several days later, following the release of the second video. After March 14th, the frequency of references began decreasing, with only a few references in the last few days of March, just three weeks after the initial launch.

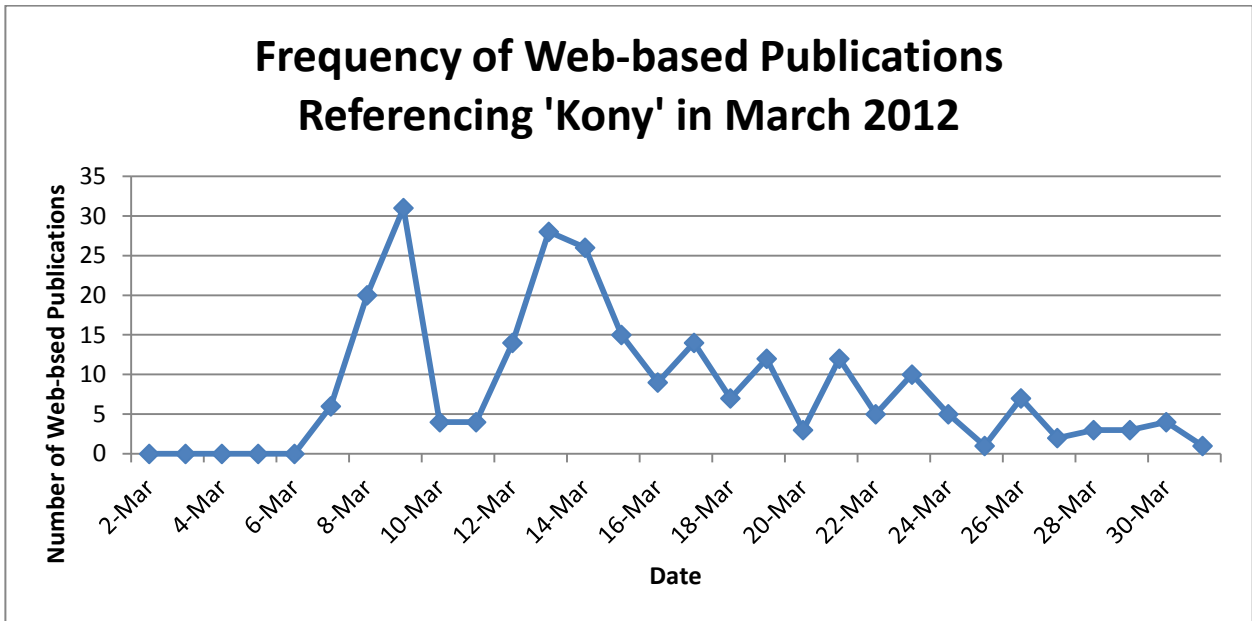


Figure 5 – Web-based Publications Referencing “Kony”

News Transcripts covering the Kony phenomenon peaked on March 9th, followed by smaller peaks in ‘Kony’ references on the 12th and 19th of March (figure 6). By March 23rd, just two weeks after the premiere of the film, almost no news stories were covering Kony.

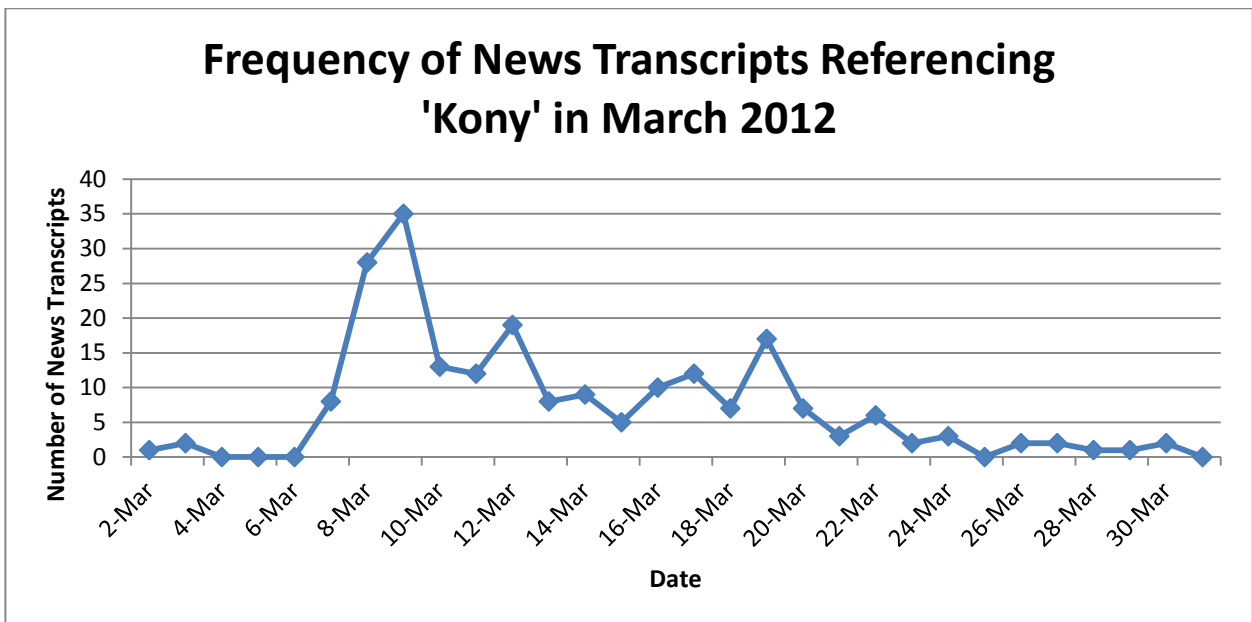


Figure 6 – News Transcripts Referencing “Kony”

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These are just a few of the largest forms of media that referenced ‘Kony’ on the LexisNexis database. Other popular forms of media included newsletters, country and region reports, magazines and journals. However, the data available is relatively small and could not be easily analyzed. An aggregate of all media from LexisNexis over the month of March produces a similar graph as many of the previous categories.

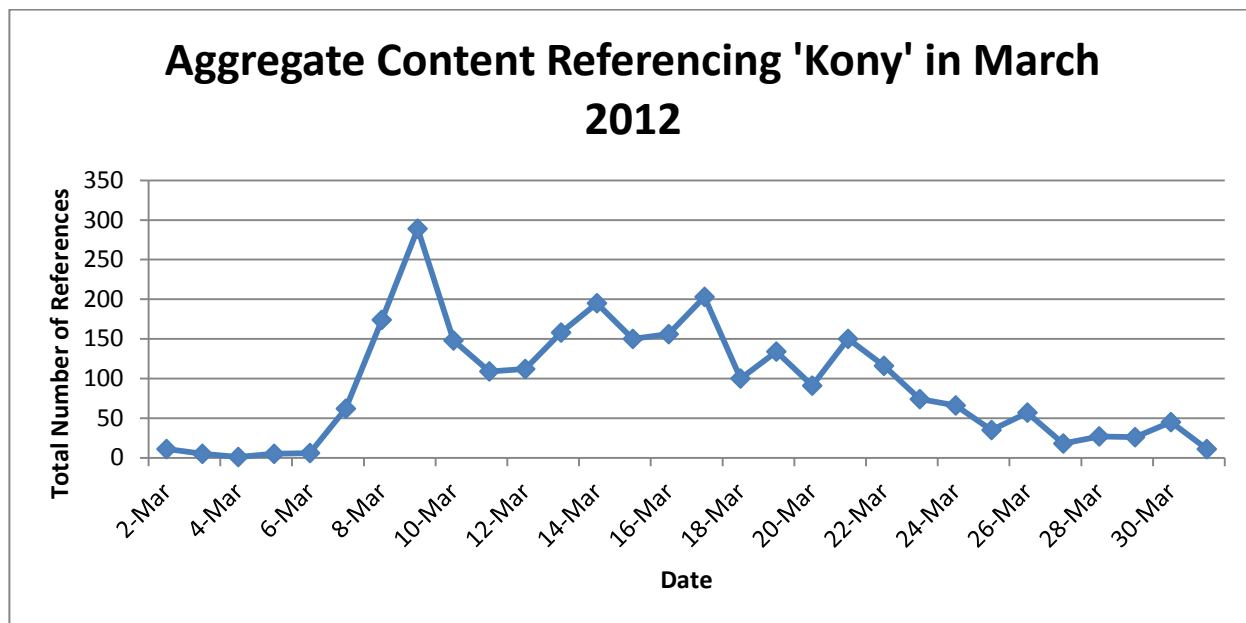


Figure 7 – Aggregate Content Referencing “Kony” in March 2012

References to Kony increase rapidly after the 6th, peaking on March 9th. After a decline in references, they increase again after March 12th, the release date of a second video. March 17th, 19th and 21st also receive spikes in popularity, around the period of Russell’s hospitalization and the announcement of new legislation by U.S. senators. References dwindle after March 27th, but never reach the low prior to the March 5th release of the film.

If we look at the issue of Joseph Kony at monthly intervals over a 12 month period (Appendix B), from November 2011 to the end of October 2012, and including all forms of media on LexisNexis, we get the following graph:

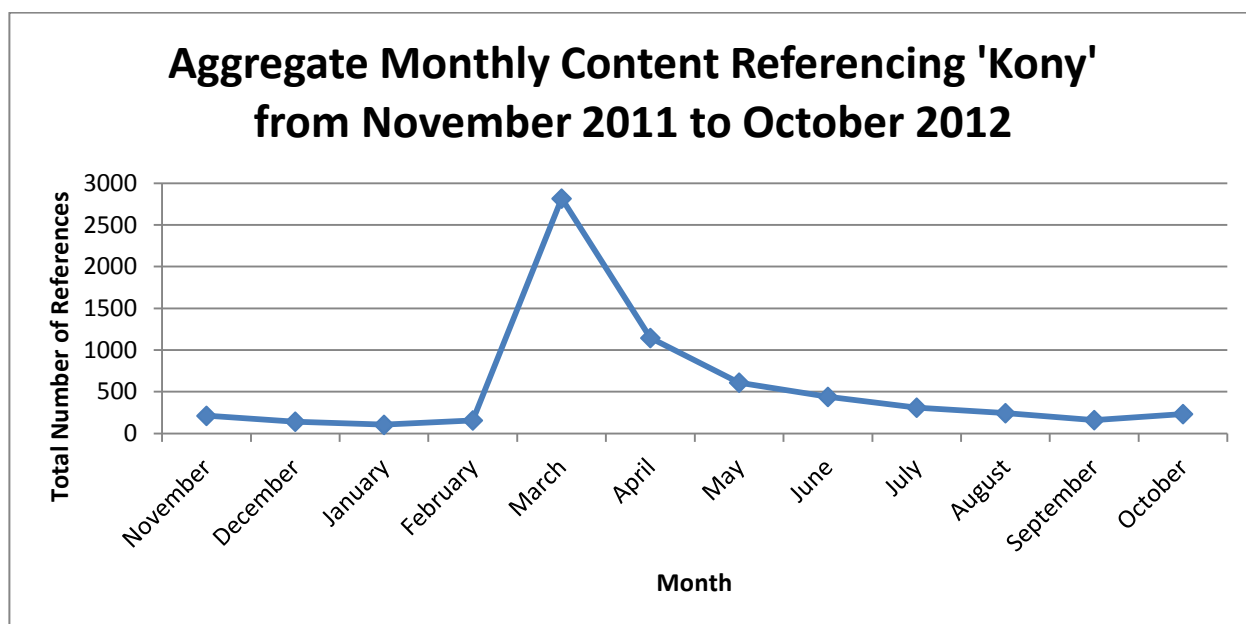


Figure 8 – Aggregate Monthly Content Referencing “Kony”

From this data we can see that media reports surrounding Kony are low prior to the release of “Kony 2012”. After March, media reporting on Kony drops slowly, losing its ability to stay viral and relevant in the media. Around August of 2012 the total number of references to Kony dropped to a level comparable to prior to the release of “Kony 2012”. At this point the video has definitely lost its ability to remain viral and relevant in the media.

Kony’s Effect on Social Media

“Kony 2012” was viewed primarily on the social networking site, YouTube. As of November 10, 2012, the film has been screened over 93 million times (figure 9). YouTube reports some statistics on the viewing of the film. The image below graphs the total views since the initial release date.

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Video statistics

Views and discovery

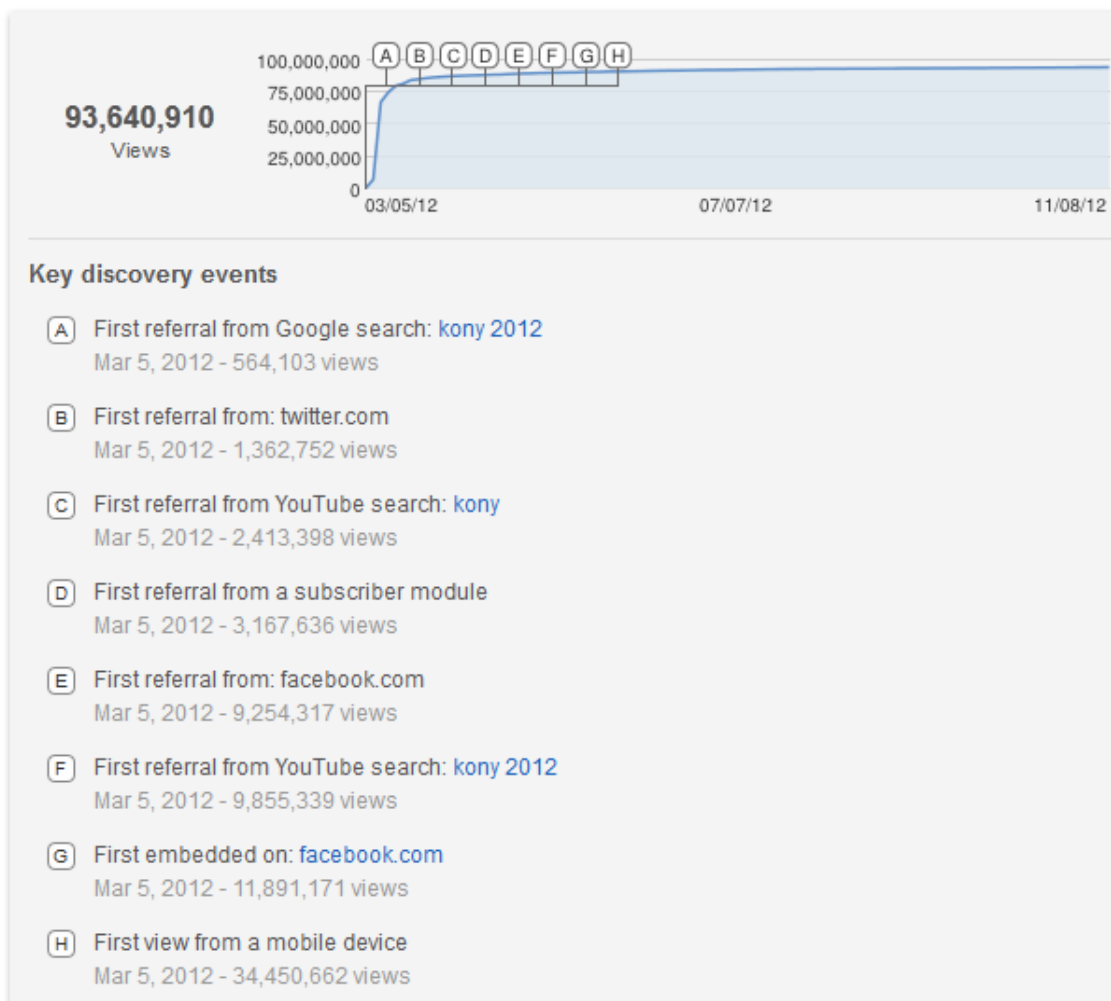


Figure 9 – YouTube Statistics for “Kony 2012”

From this graph we can see that the majority of new views occurred within the first two weeks of the film’s release. Since then there have been relatively few views in comparison. From YouTube we can also see when other social networking sites or forms of media first accessed the video, and how many views have occurred from these other platforms. Interestingly, 34 million views occurred from mobile devices. At 30 minutes long, this documentary does not lend itself to quick viewing. However, this shows the growing interest in mobile media. “Kony 2012” was viewed almost 12 million times as an embedded link on Facebook, and 9

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million YouTube views came from a referral from Facebook. Twitter was responsible for only 1.3 Million referrals to YouTube, more than double Google search's 560,000 referrals. YouTube also notes the searches 'Kony' and "Kony 2012" within YouTube led to over 12 million views.

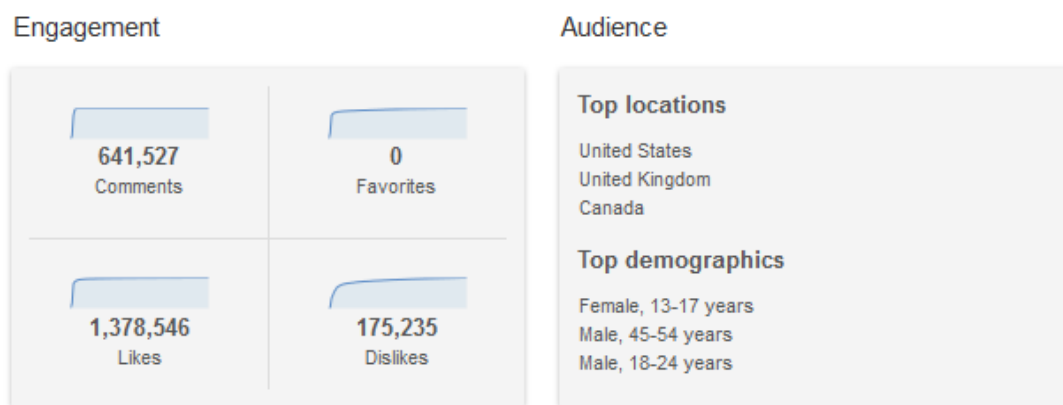


Figure 10 – Additional YouTube Statistics for “Kony 2012”

Looking at the engagement of this video on YouTube (figure 10, above), it is clear that the video has been “liked” more than “disliked”, although only about 1% of viewers chose to like or dislike the film after viewing. Likes make up 88.7% of the viewers who chose to rate the video, thereby making the remaining 11.3% dislikes. Looking at the graphs of likes and comparing it to dislikes, likes appear to have a steeper slope compared to dislikes. Dislikes have a more gradual increase in total dislikes. This may indicate individuals with a more negative sentiment toward the video viewed it at later dates, and may even have seen the negative commentary surrounding the video prior to the video. On the other hand, individuals who liked the video may have viewed the film prior to the media backlash surrounding the film. Currently, comments on this video have been disabled, and the previous 600 thousand comments cannot be read. This video also cannot be “favorited”.

Based on YouTube's data, “Kony 2012” was viewed primarily by individuals in The United States, United Kingdom and Canada. These are all predominantly white, English-speaking countries. The top viewers were females between the ages of 13 and 17 and males 18 to 24, and 45 to 54.

Young Adults More Engaged with Kony Video, Learning about It Through Social Media					
<i>How much have you heard about an online video about an African warlord who kidnaps children into his militant army?</i>					
	Total	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
	%	%	%	%	%
Heard a lot	23	40	20	18	19
Hear a little	29	18	30	30	37
Heard nothing at all	<u>48</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>43</u>
	100	100	100	100	100
<i>How did you first hear about this video...</i>					
From traditional media*	26	10	21	29	47
<i>On television</i>	20	7	17	22	39
On the internet	19	36	22	12	5
<i>Social media**</i>	12	27	15	5	1
Talking with someone	6	9	7	7	2
Other way	1	3	*	0	1
Heard nothing about it	<u>48</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>43</u>
	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Watched video?</i>					
Yes (all or part)	13	23	11	8	13
No/Heard nothing about it	<u>87</u>	<u>77</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>87</u>
	100	100	100	100	100
N	814	134	205	249	194
<small>PEW RESEARCH CENTER March 8-11, 2012. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. * Traditional media includes television, radio and newspapers. **Through social networking like Facebook or Twitter.</small>					

Figure 11 – Pew Research Center Statistics

Pew Research Center conducted a study several days after the release of “Kony 2012” in order to identify the age groups who predominantly viewed the video and through what forms of media they first heard of the video (figure 11). This study found that younger adults, ages 18 to 29, were the most engaged in the Kony video. Thirty-six percent of young adults first heard of the film on the internet, 27% specifically from social media sites. In comparison, only 1% of people over the age of 65 had heard of “Kony 2012” through social media. Traditional forms of media, such as television, radio or newspapers, became a more likely

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source of hearing about the video as the viewer's age increased, with 47% of people over the age of 65 hearing of the video through traditional forms of media. Talking with other people played a small role in spreading first-hand knowledge of this video. This shows the contemporary power of media in spreading information.

Pew Research Center also tabulated 5 million 'tweets', on Twitter, surrounding the campaign in the week following the video's release, averaging 1.4 million tweets in each of the first 3 days. On the second day of the film's release, Oprah Winfrey tweeted about the cause. After Oprah's tweet, the views increased 13,536%. On the first day the views reached only 66,000. Nine million people would view the film the second day.

Pew Research Center was able to use Crimson Hexagon Software to tabulate whether tweets surrounding "Kony 2012" were predominately negative, positive or neutral (figure 12). In the first 7 days of the campaign word spread primarily in support of the campaign (66%), with 17% of the response being negative. Tweets that were neutral or contained no opinion were primarily questions or people asking for more information on what this movement was about. However, looking at just the first 3 days of tweets (which were a large majority of all tweets), Pew Research Center found that the sentiment was 77% positive and only 7% negative. This shows an increasing amount of negativity towards the video over time. Many of the supportive tweets during this week came from retweets of celebrities, such as Oprah.

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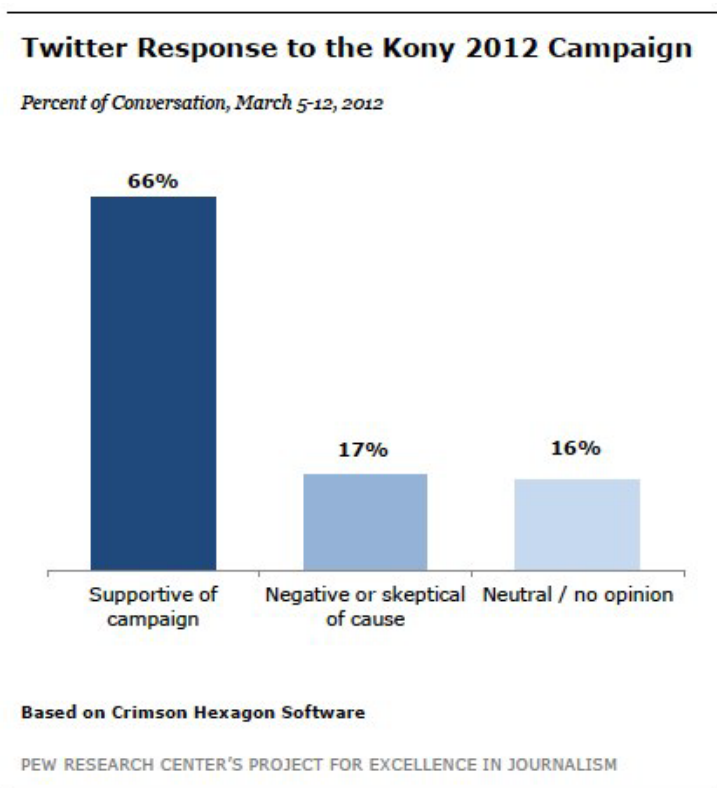


Figure 12 – Pew Research Center Twitter Statistics

Social Flow, a social media marketing company, was able to use their software to track the popularity of twitter hashtags after the film's release (figure 13). They compared the usage #StopKony and #Kony2012 to #SXSW, which was a popular hashtag that week (Lotan, 2012). It is clear that both #StopKony and #Kony2012 were used significantly more than #SXSW, which was used to compare the Kony hashtags to a typical hashtag usage. After March 11th, usage of these hashtags did not significantly exceed the use of #SXSW, losing their ability to remain viral through Twitter.

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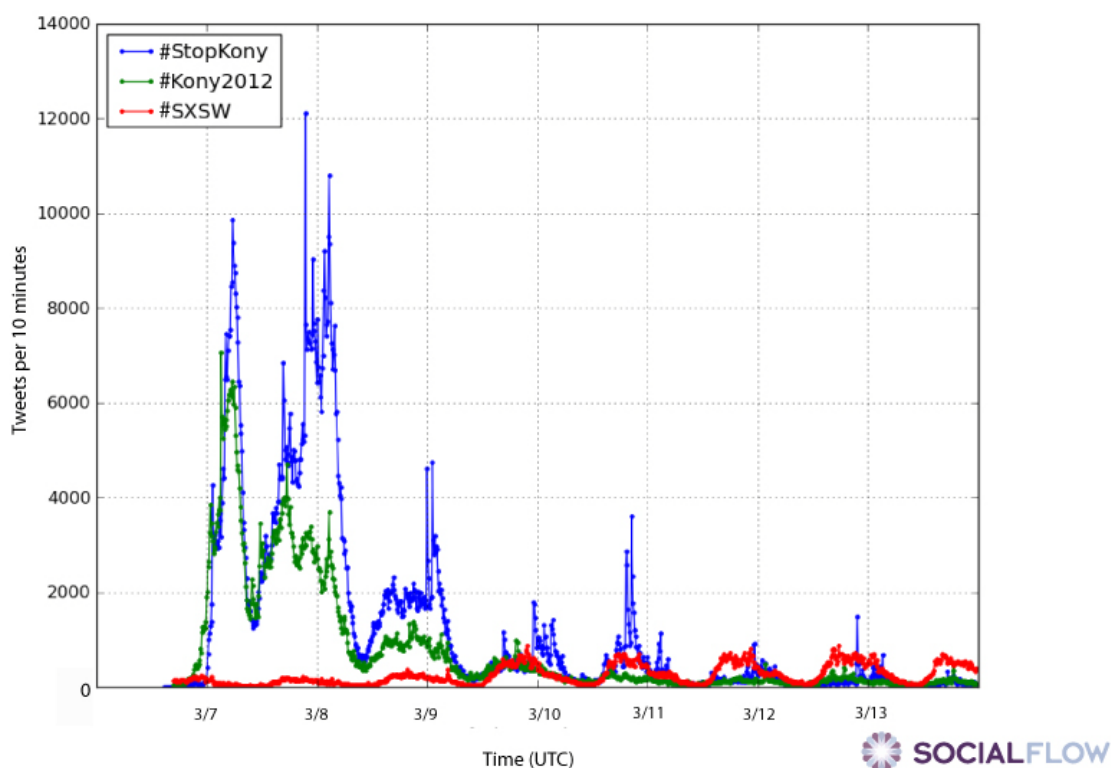


Figure 13 – Twitter Usage of Popular Hashtags

Social Flow was also able to create graphs using the OpenOrd layout algorithm, which enables the graphing of connections between clusters of people who tweeted about the film. Major clusters of people represent connected users and larger red dots represent users who were some of the first to tweet a particular hashtag (Lotan, 2012). Figure 14 shows the first five thousand users who posted the #Kony2012 hashtag. There are several clusters visible from this graph. Social flow has been able to point out the largest ones as being located in Birmingham, Pittsburgh, Oklahoma City, Noblesville and Englewood and Dayton, Ohio. Interestingly, these areas are medium-sized cities which are spread across the country. Other clusters center around specific people, particularly Jason Russell and Kristen Bell (IMKristenBell) who works closely with the Invisible Children group. Bell is an American actress and has more than 800,000 followers on Twitter.

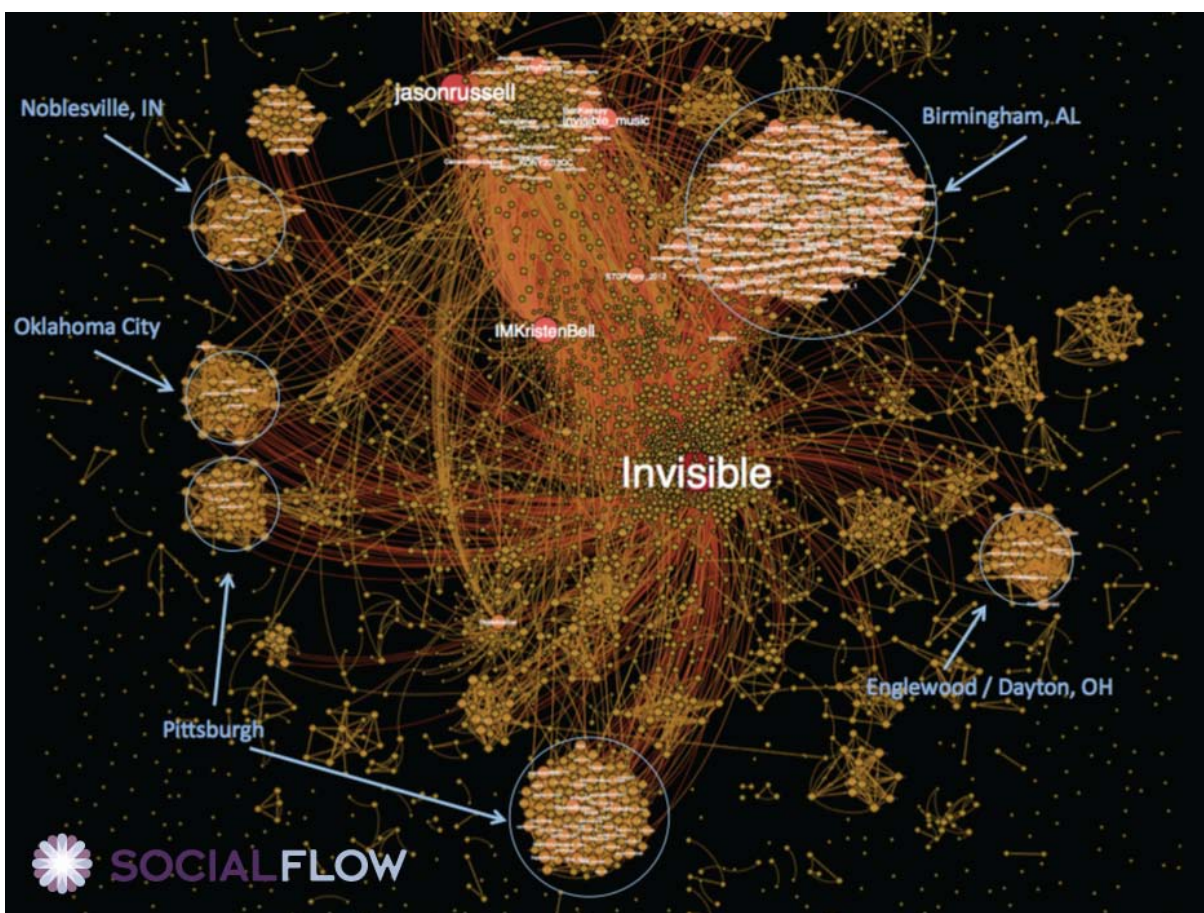


Figure 14 – OpenOrd Layout Algorithm from Social Flow

Analysis

In comparing the popularity of the Kony movement on social network sites and more traditional forms of media such as newspaper articles and news transcripts, there are some clear differences in how the movement was interpreted. Social media sites, such as Facebook or Twitter, took less than 48 hours to pick up on the Kony phenomenon. Traditional forms of media, and their web-based counterparts (online newspapers and blogs), did not peak until the fourth day of the video's lifespan. There is a clear time lag in traditional forms of media that is not existent in social media. Interestingly, even web-based publications and blogs have the same response time as print articles. Much of the response generated from twitter came from celebrity retweets. This would indicate a strong positive attitude toward the reliability of celebrities as a news source.

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Social media saw a primarily positive response in the first few days of the video's release. Studies show that sentiment became more negative. From my research, I've found that articles and other forms of media immediately following the release of the film focus on the negative aspects or criticism of the film, or remain neutral in explaining the issue. Almost no credible news content places the video in a positive light. This would explain why articles containing 'Kony' peaked in almost all forms of media after the hospitalization of Jason Russell.

It is unlikely that the Kony 2012 movement would have stayed viral in the media had other, separate events not occurred surrounding the issue within the few weeks after the video's release. The release of a second video, Russell's hospitalization, and the announcement of proposed legislation all created an increase in references in most forms of media. Prior to these events, media interest in Kony was quickly decreasing, making "Kony 2012" a thing of the past.

While a majority of people came across "Kony 2012" through social media sites, it may be other forms of media that kept the issue alive after the first few days of its release. Google has a trend feature that allows people to search terms. Google can then graph the popularity of those terms over several years. Below is Google's graph for the search term 'Kony' (figure 15).

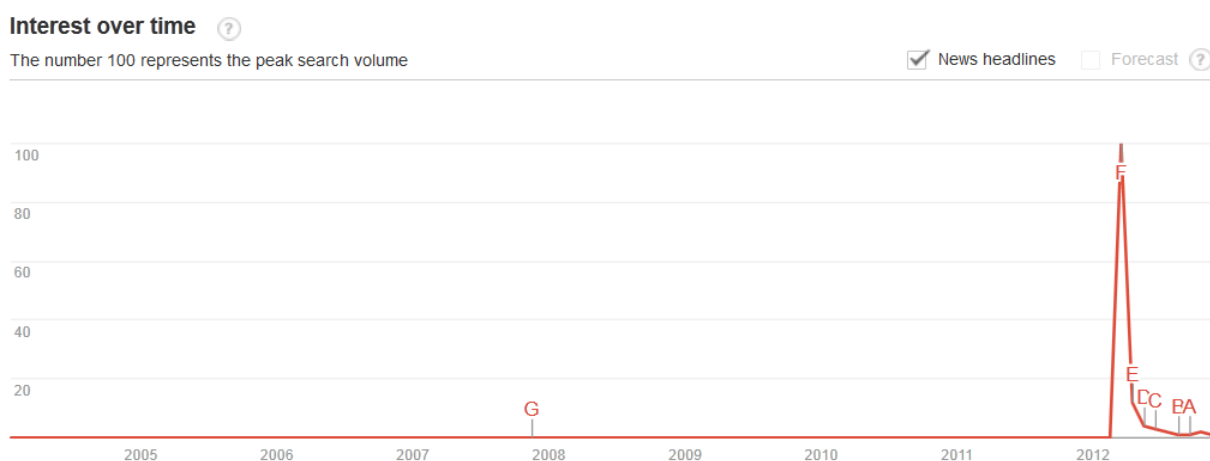


Figure 15 – Google Trend for “Kony”

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Unsurprisingly, the peak search volume occurred in March of 2012, with a value of 100 (a value of 100 represents the largest amount of search volume). In April the search volume was already down to 12 and continued to drop to 4 in May. This graph further demonstrates my results, which show a quickly decreasing frequency of Kony references in the news after March of 2012. It seems as though this viral phenomenon requires constant, new events in order to remain viral. The popularity of one video was not sustainable over an extended period of time.

THE ‘PROBLEM’ WITH ‘GOING VIRAL’

The book, “Beyond Viral”, explains how an individual would go about becoming popular on YouTube. The author claims that YouTube fame brings all of the, “negative aspects of actual stardom, without the money and perks” (Nalty 182). Invisible Children understands this idea, as “Kony 2012” has sky-rocketed their advocacy group into stardom by revealing their oversimplified advocacy campaigns, and financials which do not show the majority of their profits going to help those they are advocating for. The stress of such sudden stardom also affected Russell who was hospitalized soon after the videos’ release. This leads to the question: Would the Kony 2012 campaign be more successful if it were less popular?

Yes, with less popularity Invisible Children would have been able to continue operating using the same practices as their previous films, using oversimplifications and sensationalism to draw viewers. However, millions of people around the world would not be knowledgeable about the existence of Joseph Kony and the LRA. This conclusion draws a complicated paradox. There does not yet seem to be any advocacy media that is capable of simultaneously drawing large audiences and properly informing. The response to “Kony 2012” may be the key in understanding how media functions as a way to inform. One blogger questions, “is the wave of pushback against this campaign from Invisible Children evidence that we’re learning to read and write complex narratives online, and that a college student with doubts about a campaign’s value and validity can find an audience?” (Zuckerman, 2012). Zuckerman is arguing that “Kony 2012” gave the public something to not only watch, but to talk about and engage in meaningful discussion. While I do not find the film successful because it simply raised awareness of an important issue, I do believe it functions as an example of how to spark interest in an otherwise apolitical generation. The greatest successes of “Kony 2012” are the solutions that people have modeled that could end LRA violence in Africa. The internet has become a virtual think tank, where users can discuss critically what can be done next to help bring Kony to justice. From simply letting the current initiatives continue, to removing Museveni from power, there are hundreds of ideas circulating the web as a result of “Kony 2012”.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

At the start of this analysis I posed the following question: Is it possible to produce an advocacy film that properly informs, inspires, and nonetheless goes viral? It is clear that it is possible for an advocacy film to become a viral sensation; however, it seems the viral ability came from an interest in the film's backlash. The sad, sensationalized plot of the film first drew viewers to the film, via the pre-existing diffusion network Invisible Children had in place from prior campaigns. These networks spread the film to other groups, allowing the film to spread to a large number of people in just a few days. Celebrities such as Oprah within these networks were key players in building credibility and spreading interest in the film (Lee, 2012).

While it is apparent that social media played an important role in the film's ability to spread to a large audience, traditional media also played a role. Traditional media not only spread the link to the film, but it also highlighted other information about Invisible Children as a charity and Russell's hospitalization which were essential in keeping the cause current in the media. Traditional media also reached different demographics than social media, catering to an older audience which may not access social media frequently (Lee, 2012). However, traditional media relied heavily on social media to make the video popular before newspapers or news stations were going to report on the film. Traditional media experienced a time lag of several days after the film was placed on YouTube, whereas the response on social media was instant. I have found that traditional and social media, working together, effectively reach a large, diverse audience.

The failure of "Kony 2012" was the film's use of simplification and sensationalism to draw viewers into the its emotional story. The film's inaccuracies were widely discussed throughout all forms of media and caused many viewers to view the film negatively. Other aspects of the film that hindered its viral ability include its length. At 30 minutes it is unlikely that people were viewing this film multiple times.

I believe Invisible Children has the power to produce an advocacy film that properly informs, inspires and becomes a viral sensation. Had "Kony 2012" accurately depicted the history and

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current conflict occurring in central Africa, “Kony 2012” would have been widely accepted and praised by its viewers. However, the film would never have gained popularity without the help of its pre-existing diffusion network which spread word of the film to celebrities, which was a key component in getting the media to recognize the film. Invisible Children created the “perfect storm” by creating a film that gave viewers something to be interested and passionate about.

In summary, an advocacy film (or other form of media) that is able to inform, inspire and become a viral sensation should follow these 5 principles:

1. Be part of a pre-existing diffusion network which will allow for a fast spread to a diverse group of people. Ideally this network will include people who are influential to the culture, such as celebrities or politicians.
2. Stick to the facts. Even small exaggerations can negatively affect the reception of the film.
3. Emotional undertones and imagery are essential to gain a reader’s attention. However, ensure that the images depict the facts and do not inaccurately represent the situation.
4. Promote the film. To keep people talking about a subject for more than a few weeks is tough work. It is rare that the content of a film itself is capable of sustaining itself as viral media.
5. Openly disclose financial information and other business operations. Keeping the organization visible is key in gaining credibility and maintaining support from followers.

APPENDICES

The Implications of Viral Media & Advocacy: Kony 2012
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Appendix A – LexisNexis Academic Data March, 2012

LexisNexis Academic Articles Referencing 'Kony' in March 2012																
Type/Date	2-Mar	3-Mar	4-Mar	5-Mar	6-Mar	7-Mar	8-Mar	9-Mar	10-Mar	11-Mar	12-Mar	13-Mar	14-Mar	15-Mar	16-Mar	17-Mar
Newsletters	0	1	0	2	0	4	11	4	1	2	5	3	15	8	10	9
News Transcripts	1	2	0	0	0	8	28	35	13	12	19	8	9	5	10	12
Newswires & PR	4	0	0	0	3	15	30	44	9	3	20	25	36	23	20	17
Newspapers	2	2	1	2	2	12	32	103	79	53	41	62	75	70	58	75
Web-Based Publications	0	0	0	0	0	6	20	31	4	4	14	28	26	15	9	14
Industry Trade Press				3			1		1		3	1		2		
Aggregate News Sources	2					3	4	1	1		2	4	2	3	3	
Country & Region Reports	2					4	4	1	1		2	5	2	4	3	
Statistics	2					3	4	1	1		2	4	2	3		
Business Opportunities																
Magazines & Journals				1			3	1			2	1	9	4	4	
Blogs	0	0	0	0	1	17	51	72	40	35	11	30	38	24	44	75
Executive Materials																
Legal News																
News							4	7	1		3	1			2	1
Video							3	1	1		1					1
Other												1				
Total	13	5	1	8	6	72	195	301	152	109	125	173	214	161	163	204

LexisNexis Academic Articles Referencing 'Kony' in March 2012														
Type/Date	18-Mar	19-Mar	20-Mar	21-Mar	22-Mar	23-Mar	24-Mar	25-Mar	26-Mar	27-Mar	28-Mar	29-Mar	30-Mar	31-Mar
Newsletters	1	11	7	9	3	5	2	3	10	1	1	1	8	0
News Transcripts	7	17	7	3	6	2	3	0	2	2	1	1	2	0
Newswires & PR	2	11	6	32	12	19	12	0	10	4	6	2	11	3
Newspapers	63	50	26	35	51	23	33	24	17	8	11	9	11	5
Web-Based Publications	7	12	3	12	5	10	5	1	7	2	3	3	4	1
Industry Trade Press	1	1		4		2			5		1		2	
Aggregate News Sources		2		9		3				3			1	1
Country & Region Reports		2		9		3				3			2	1
Statistics		1		9						3			1	1
Business Opportunities														
Magazines & Journals	1	2		3	5	1	1		3				1	6
Blogs	19	30	43	47	36	10	9	7	7	0	6	8	3	1
Executive Materials														
Legal News				1										
News		2				1			2					
Video		1				1			1					
Other							1						1	
Total	101	142	92	173	118	80	66	35	64	26	29	26	51	13

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Appendix B – LexisNexis Academic Data Monthly

Below is a table of LexisNexis Academic data for the one year period November 2011 to October 2012.

Articles Referencing 'Kony'											
	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
44	39	32	26	141	87	69	48	38			
12	9	1	8	217	69	26	15	12			
35	19	24	55	381	266	112	138	80			
65	40	27	28	1036	395	218	98	111			
30	18	19	25	317	136	95	71	43			
3	7	6	6	27	13	13	5	7			
3	6		6	43	35	8	18	6			
3	6		6	48	37	9	18	8			
3	6		6	43	35	8	18	6			
	1	2	2	1	1	1	1				
4	7	3	5	50	22	23	8	5			
22	5		7	667	155	70	49	19			
	1				1						
				1	7	1	6	1			
	1			24	7	3	1				
	1			10	6	1					
				1	4	2	1				
224	166	114	180	3007	1276	659	495	336			

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