Final Project

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Executive Summary

This portfolio was created to serve as a collection of coursework throughout my graduate degree along with professional work that showcases my experience and skillset within both the academic and corporate markets. The portfolio is broken down into three major sections: branding, digital storytelling, and lectures. All integrated marketing communication (IMC) coursework was created over a one-year period, 2021-2022. The highlights of my professional work were pulled from my eleven-year career as a multimedia designer and adjunct instructor. This proposal will give an overview of each piece of work within its assigned section and how it relates to IMC practices. As for the portfolio's format, I decided to go with a website because it is user-friendly, visually appealing, and easily editable. The goal of this portfolio is to give me a professional platform that adequately displays my knowledge in IMC, teaching, and design. It will help me when applying for jobs as a brand consultant, creative director and for other teaching positions within communication and design. A link to my website has been provided at the end (see *Appendix A*).

Introduction

When trying to decide which capstone option I wanted to do, I thought about my career goals and what I want to accomplish. I want to continue my career as an adjunct instructor while working towards an upper-level management position at a design firm or nonprofit. Therefore, it made the most sense to create a final portfolio because they are a requirement when applying for those types of jobs. An article on the website The Balance Careers stated, "Portfolios are must-haves for artists, writers, and other creative professionals, but most others can benefit from having one, as well. No matter what you do, you can find a way to showcase your work in a portfolio" (The Balance Careers, 2020, par. 10). The article went on to note, "If you want to differentiate yourself from the competition, provide evidence of your value, and let possible employers get to know the type of work that you're capable of, then you'll need to create a professional portfolio" (The Balance Careers, 2020, par. 9). The goal of this capstone was to create a professional portfolio that showcases not only my IMC knowledge, but my experience as a college instructor and multimedia designer.

The portfolio was presented in the form of a Wix website. It was important to me that my target audience could move through each page freely. Therefore, I created a user-friendly navigation bar with the following buttons: home, portfolio, about, and contact. Once the portfolio page is clicked, a featured works page loads that allows the viewer to see an image that represents each subcategory (academia, design, IMC, photography, or writing) of the whole portfolio. These images also act as a link to the subcategories main page. Users can also hover over the portfolio button on the navigation bar and a drop-down sub-menu appears that allows the user to navigate to the area of interest that best fits their needs. For the IMC page, a combination of graduate work mixed with professional work was broken down under the following three subcategories: branding, digital storytelling, and lectures. Each subcategory highlights artifacts that were carefully selected and relate to either the academia or corporate market. The intended audience is future employers in both academia and corporate design as well as freelance clients.

Branding

COM 502: The impacts of brand identity on consumers buying habits

The connection to brand identity can come from a variety of different places. Whether it be from experiences, narratives, cultural background, or brand loyalty; every consumer thinks differently when buying a brand. In an article called *Brand Identity* from Investopedia, Evan Tarver stated, "Brand identity is the visible elements of a brand, such as color, design, and logo, that identify and distinguish the brand in consumers' minds" (Tarver, 2020, par. 1). I wanted to explore this topic more and see how it impacts consumers buying habits.

For this research paper, I demonstrated the ability to perform a case study to collect data using a quantitative method, an online survey questionnaire, and then analyze that data correctly in relation to predetermined research questions and hypotheses. The research paper focused on semiotics, "the study of signs and sign systems" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009, p. 875), and dramatism, "an approach taken to understand the uses of symbols in the social world" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009, p. 321), and how that relates to visual representation, buying power, word-of-mouth, and emotional connection to a brand. The intended audience was fellow researchers, IMC faculty, and potential employers. The results of this research paper could be used to further future research on the aspects of brand identity when it comes to consumers buying habits because the previous literature did not address that area of focus. The ethical implications would be addressed due to the fact a disclaimer was placed at the top of every online survey questionnaire. Each participant knew the purpose of the form, how the results would be handled and the option to end the survey before submission. Thus, allowing them the freedom to answer the questions as they saw fit.

COM 532: Brand Analyses: Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) / Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS)

The brand analyses of MCU and BCBS were conducted as a collaborative effort that included Eden Shuffield, Rebeccah McBride, and me. We acted as external IMC consultants who had to research, analyze, and present brand recommendations to improve the overall brand of each organization. We divided the work up and each wrote a section of the brand analyses. I performed the research for and wrote the messaging and communication sections along with helping with the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT), and brand recommendations when needed. I also oversaw making sure the overall tone flowed correctly, the final layout, proof reading, and final submission. The intended audience was MCU, BCBS, IMC faculty, and potential employers. The research collected and brand recommendations would help both organizations strengthen their brand and provide them with opportunities to grow their brand awareness and community.

Within the MCU analysis, I discussed how MCU used the attachment theory to produce deliverables and content to their key audience. The attachment theory explains how people have relationships over their lifespan and how the role of those relationships shape who they are (Communication Theory, 2021, para. 2). For the BCBS analysis, the organization used the social support theory and the corporate social responsibility (CSR) theory of communication within their messaging and communication channels. The social support theory states the assistance and support received from others within their community, defines the relationships in their lives (Communication Theory, 2021, para. 1). CSR states that an organization should consider how its

activities effect the environment and society beyond profit-making (Hurst, Ihlen, Johnston, & Taylor, 2018, pg. 134). As for ethical implications, since this was collaborative work, I need to make sure that Eden Shuffield and Rebeccah McBride's names are listed within my final portfolio description.

COM 533: Pitt Community College (PCC) Communication Audit

A communication audit was performed to interpret the organization's culture and brand, determine the alignment between culture and brand, and assess the consistency, inclusiveness, and effectiveness of the organization's communication efforts for PCC. By combining the sampling methods of homogeneous and typical case selection, I was able to perform a qualitative study to collect data from fifteen participants that had certain aspects in common, PCC college students and employees. The institutional theories of organizational communication, system theory, and social capital theory along with the frameworks: cocreation, relationship partner, and cultural parasite were used to analyze the organization.

Regarding the institutional theories of organizational communication, Lammers stated, "Institutions are socially constructed frameworks composed of conventions that prescribe behavior, cognition, and communication in given contexts. Institutions are maintained or changed by people who act and interact with each other" (Lammers, 2009, p. 521). System theory refers to "a system is an integrated set of interacting variables that together create a larger pattern or whole" (Littlejohn, 2009, p. 951). The social capital theory states "Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Ihlen, 2005, p. 494).

The intended audience was PCC, IMC faculty, and potential employers. The results of this communication audit could be used to fix any areas within PCC's culture and brand that need improvement. When it comes to ethical implications, since this is my current employer, I need to ensure that any private data collected or displayed within this communication audit is blacked out. That will protect the organization, participants, and my job.

COM 534: Make-A-Wish Rebrand

The purpose of this artifact was to research a non-profit organization that had gone through a recent rebrand and explain how the organization adapted from the perspective of communication ethics. There was a focus on the need for the rebrand and how it affected the long-term goals of the organization in relation to the universal-humanitarian communication ethics approach. As Arnett, Fritz, and McManus noted, "A universal-humanitarian approach to communication ethics assumes a built-in guiding ethical principle that is part of human nature, protecting and promoting the good of duty and responsibility to human beings" (Arnett, Fritz, and McManus, 2018, p. 55). The intended audience was Make-A-Wish, IMC faculty, and potential employers. This memo is an example that highlights my ability to connect branding and IMC theory together, which potential employers would want to see. The ethical implications would be that society realizes and connects to what is truly important in life through personal narratives of those impacted by Make-A-Wish.

Digital Storytelling

COM 535: Action Plan: Lack of resources and job opportunities for the special needs community within Pitt County

By creating a multimedia presentation, I was able to address diversity and inclusion within the local community of Greenville, North Carolina. The action plan focused on the lack of resources and opportunities for individuals with special needs and disabilities in Pitt County, North Carolina. The topics of ableism, intersectionality, and cultural competence were addressed along with methods and solutions to bring awareness and cause change. Ableism is "the discrimination of people with disabilities because you think they need to be fixed" (Eisenmenger, 2019, para. 3). Intersectionality is defined as "the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups" (Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2021, para. 1). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stated, "Cultural and linguistic competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021, para. 3).

The intended audience would be the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce, local business owners, local citizens, IMC faculty, and potential employers. This presentation shows that I understand the importance of diversity and inclusion within an organization and community. It also allows the viewer to see that I can relate IMC concepts to small town businesses to better enhance their business practices and brands. The ethical implications would be that local businesses and citizens see how individuals with special needs and disabilities are treated and change their behaviors to improve the local economy and community. There were no edits mentioned on the final feedback, however I will email the instructor to see how I could have improved the overall presentation.

COM 536: North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) Digital Storytelling Campaign

This was a digital storytelling campaign focused on a new subcategory, museum podcasts, at NCMA. Aaker (2020) noted "A game-changing subcategory is defined by a set of "must-haves", represented by an exemplar brand, supported by a core customer base, protected by barriers to competitors and provides a new or markedly superior buying experience, use experience or brand relationship" (pg. 13). The campaign will include a digital press release, a blog post, a micro-podcast, planned social media posts, and a longform video layout.

The podcasts, NCMATalks and SharedArt, will provide a way to reach NCMA's target audience that has not previous been explored through artist narratives, companion stories, and visibility. Aaker (2018) mentioned "An organization's offerings—its products or services—are often the heart of the strategic message" (pg. 105). The intended audience would be millennials, generation Z, and generation alpha within the art and education communities along with IMC faculty, and potential employers. This campaign will provide me with a diverse set of deliverables that future employers can view. The ethical implications are raising awareness for resources to help students and those within the art community grow in their creative passions.

Professional: If I had a magic wand book

During my undergraduate degree at East Carolina University (ECU), I wrote a coffee table book for my capstone project. The book was called *If I had a magic wand.* The book was written from the narrative of a child dealing with social issues in today's society. I wanted to include this within my portfolio because it touches on a lot of the IMC concepts that I have learned about in this degree. For example, diversity and inclusion along with the impact that narratives and signature stories can have on someone.

The intended audience was individuals in the age range of eight to eighteen, but after completion adults had a positive response rate too. Therefore, the message is for anyone who will listen. The artifact will add another layer of skillsets to my portfolio because I wrote, designed, and published the book myself. I think that future employers would like the fact that I have such a diverse background and it will make me more marketable in their eyes. The ethical implications are seeing the world through a child's eyes and understanding how they feel when having to deal with adult issues.

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

COM 533: Organizational Communication Theory Infographic

As a teaching tool to help fellow students understand organizational communication, I created this infographic. The three theories that were compared and contrasted were institutional theories of organizational communication (Lammers, 2009), organizational identity theory (Scott, 2009), and social capital theory (Ihlen, 2005). The intended audience was fellow IMC students, IMC faculty, future communication students, and future employers. It shows that I know how to take concepts and display them in an informative and fun way that students can relate to. The ethical implications are reaching students who previously thought the content was not engaging enough and causing them to learn the concepts presented.

COM 534: Universal/Humanitarian vs. Narrative Communication Ethics Infographic

The following infographic focused on comparing and contrasting the universal/humanitarian and narrative communication ethics approaches (Arnett, Fritz, & McManus, 2018). It was created to help fellow IMC students understand both approaches and how they impact our lives. The intended audience was fellow IMC students, IMC faculty, future communication students, and future employers. The addition of this infographic within my portfolio shows that I can present information in an informative and creative way while teaching my students. The ethical implications are sharing different approaches and causing people to think differently.

Professional: Lesson Plan Projects

I wanted to include a collection of design projects that were created as examples to help my students understand the projects that I assigned to them. The examples will display the principles of design and color theory (The Interaction Design Foundation, 2022). The intended audience would be graphic design students and future employers. These examples are work samples that demonstrate my skillset as a multimedia designer and adjunct instructor. The ethical

implications would be inspiring creativity among my students because they can see the breakdown of how something can be designed and how it functions.

Conclusion

While designing this final portfolio, I had the chance to revisit assignments from my year within the IMC program along with my previous work from my eleven-year career. I found projects that I had forgotten about and saw outdated work in a new light. As a creative professional, I am always my biggest critic. So, it was a humbling experience to see my growth over the course of my whole educational and professional journey. Design trends may change, and theories may evolve, but the impact that they have on the world can last forever.

Mallia wrote "A great creative leader inspires, motivates, guides, mentors, and supports her subordinates" (Mallia, 2019, pg. 28). At the end of the day, that is the legacy that I want to leave behind and I hope that this portfolio website helps me with that. I want to inspire individuals to see the world in a different way by sharing my personal and professional narratives. By having this final portfolio, it provides me with the necessary platform to not only share my narratives, but to further my career goals and display the knowledge and experience that I currently have in IMC and design. The easy-to-use website allows the intended audience, future employers and freelance clients, access to a diverse collection of portfolio items, while not becoming overwhelmed.

My portfolio website is broken down into different pages that best represent who I am and where I want to go within my career goals. When it came to IMC, it seemed that I always come back to branding, digital storytelling, and lectures because those are topics that I connect with and hopefully my intended audience will too. A final portfolio website gives me the ability to continuously add new work as it is created which will show continued growth and improvement for future employment opportunities, clients, and the students that I teach.

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Appendix A

Portfolio Webpage and [Link](#)