A Case Study on Invisible Children Inc. and their Usage of Social Media

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze social media strategies used by the non-profit organization Invisible Children Inc. In particular, the focus of this study was to analyze how the organization utilizes social media platforms, as well as provide suggestions on how the organization can be more effective in using online social media. By examining major social media platforms the researchers have seen the way in which social media creates a bridge between connecting an organization to its supporters.

The researchers posed three research questions to investigate. In order to perform the investigation, the researchers conducted content analysis, an in-depth interview, and a focus group. As a result of the investigation, the researchers were able to conclude as to how Invisible Children can improve their methods of utilizing social media platforms.

In conclusion, the researchers present major findings on Invisible Children's social media usage, as well as provide recommendations on how the organize can improve their skills towards effectively using social media platforms.

Presentation of Group Members

Navneet Randhawa is a third year Sociology and Communication Studies major at McMaster University. Among her team members, she is enrolled in the first social media class, taught by Dr. Alexandre Sévigny at McMaster University. With her team members, Navneet participated in conducting a case study focusing on the non-profit organization Invisible Children Inc. The team case study shows focus on the organization's success in effectively using social media to raise awareness towards their Kony 2012 campaign. Her contributions towards the case study consisted of moderating a focus group, creating infographics, compiling and gathering relevant data, organizing the project, as well as providing guidance as team leader.

Laura Stervoski is a third year Communication Studies major at McMaster University. In taking the first social media class at McMaster University, Laura suggested that her team should bring attention towards an organization that does not receive enough media attention. As a result of this suggestion, the team decided to focus their case study on Invisible Children Inc. During the origin of this case study, Invisible Children Inc. received very little media attention, which proved them to be a likely candidate in making suggestion for how to effectively use social media in order to raise awareness for the organizations missions. Laura's contributions towards the case study consisted of recording information during the focus group, seeking information, and creating infographics as a means to visualize the content of information collected.

Katie Watters is a third year Communication Studies and English major at McMaster University. During the initial creation of the case study on Invisible Children Inc., Katie suggested that the team should focus on making recommendations for the organization as to how they can successfully and effectively utilize social media. Katie's contributions towards the case study consisted of recording information during the in-depth interview, and contributing to the visualization representations of the data through making infographics. In addition, she formed a grounding knowledge through gathering secondary sources and conducting a content analysis on the organizations various social media channels.

Alla Pak is a fourth year Communication Studies and Political Science major at McMaster University. Her connection to the McMaster Invisible Children Inc. student club, through being an associated member, allowed the team to delve deeper into constructing a suitable methodology. By having a connection to the student club, the team decided that an in-depth interview was necessary for gathering research. Alla's contribution towards the case study consisted of conducting an in-depth interview with a member of the McMaster Invisible Children Inc. student club, as well as researching secondary literature, and helping with the development of the case study.

Division of case study contribution

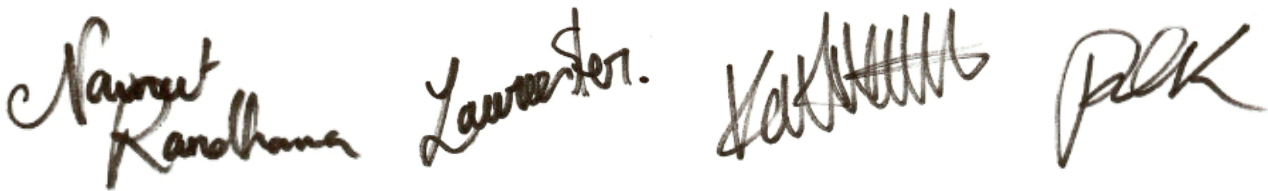|	**Navneet Randhawa** 0948877	**Laura Stervoski** 0951671	**Katie Watters** 0943914	**Alla Pak** 0870281
Role	Team leader, information seeker/contributor	Information seeker/contributor visualizer, secretary	Information seeker/contributor	Information seeker/contributor
Percentage/ Portioning of work	**28%** Editing, compiling the data, moderating and organizing focus group, finding sources for literature review, organizing data, constructing methodology	**25%** Recording information during focus group, finding sources for literature review, creating visualizations (infographics), writing methodology	**25%** Recording information during in-depth interview, finding sources for literature review, writing literature review, contributing to visualizations	**22%** Conducting in-depth interview, finding sources for literature review, writing methodology

<u>Acknowledgement</u>

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Introduction

In the digital era of today, having an online social presence has come to be a requirement. The effect of each person in how they utilize social media will result in bringing awareness towards ones persona, organization, and even their cause. To understand how one constructs an online presence, the researchers decided to apply our learning by assessing how an organization creates an online presence by utilizing social media platforms.

The researchers decided to focus attention of the case study on the non-profit organization Invisible Children Inc. Through performing a content analysis on Invisible Children's social media websites, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Tumblr, the researchers were able to see how the organization utilizes social media. In reviewing their content, the researchers were able to create three recommendations for the organization in how they can utilize social media websites to their fullest potential. The first research question pertained to analyzing how effective the organization is in using social media platforms to communicate with their audience. The second research question inquired how social media platforms would result in raising awareness to the organization's Kony 2012 campaign. Lastly, the third research question asked how the verification of social media accounts would result in giving the organization a professional image. In measuring Invisible Children's affectivity in using social media platforms, as well as providing recommendations on how to improve the organization, the researchers hoped to help the organization create a prominent online social presence.

To understand the case study, the researchers reviewed preexisting literature pertaining to the entity of non-profit groups, the Invisible Children organization, as well as gathered and analyzed data from social media platforms. In order to gather our research, the researchers conducted a methodology, in which they performed a focus group, in-depth interview, as well as a content analysis. Afterwards, the information collected from these research sessions was displayed in the visual format of infographics.

In addition to the content of this case study, recommendations on how to further improve this study, or approach it from a different angle are also enclosed.

Initially, this case study will provide knowledge on how the Invisible Children organization can effectively use their social media platforms in order to create a prominent social media presence.

Description of Organization Studied

Over the course of twenty years, the people of Uganda have suffered through the harshness and brutality of a war that continues to persist today. Between the Ugandan government and the rebel group, more commonly known as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), the conflict of the war is what many children have only known. This war has not only displaced thousands of people in Uganda, but it has also led to the forced abduction and enlistment of millions of innocent children by the LRA. Children are easily brainwashed, and once enlisted, they are trained to kill. Abducted, abused, and neglected by this 'rebel' movement, describes this moral outrage, in which these children are nothing but invisible to Uganda, and the whole international community. Previous research and footage has been provided to support, and demonstrate this travesty that persists in Uganda.

This case study will be conducted on the non-partisan, non-profit organization, Invisible Children, Inc, which strives to bring awareness to the crimes being committed by the LRA. Solely based in the United States, Invisible Children uses film, creativity, and social action to bring awareness in ending the use of child soldiers in the rebel war.

Description of Problem Under Study

The significance in conducting this case study is to bring attention towards an organization that does not receive enough media attention. Many non-profit organizations have exceptional mandates, but are seldom in the mainstream spotlight. Despite not having corporate support, Invisible Children has used creativity through making films, and used social action to convey their missions and goals to the public. By conducting this case study, the researchers hope to bring positive attention towards the Invisible Children Organization.

Partway through this case study, the Invisible Children organization and their Kony 2012 campaign became viral. The campaign raised awareness towards this mission of Kony 2012, as well as raised awareness towards the organization. Although the name of the organization became prominent, awareness was not brought to their previous successful missions, and future goals. As a result, the researchers decided that the organization should make better usage of all social media platforms in order to raise awareness for the organization as a whole.

During the initial construction of this case study, there were no previous studies conducted on the Invisible Children organization. The researchers decided it would be best to be among the first groups to analyze Invisible Children and their social media usage; as well as make recommendations for the organization in order to help them reach wider audiences on the Internet.

Review of Literature

In order to gain insight into how Invisible Children currently utilizes social media, the researchers decided to review preexisting literature on the organization. Through channels such as Twitter, YouTube, as well as preexisting literature on non-profit organizations, the researchers were able to provide a thoughtful analysis based on these texts. In addition, the three research questions were addressed to help prove or disprove of the relevance in posing each question.

Social Media Platforms: Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook

The Invisible Children's Twitter page is one of the organization's most active pages. Since the outbreak and popularity of the Kony 2012, a lot of celebrities have begun integrating themselves with the organization through their personal Twitter accounts. Sophia Bush, a prominent celebrity known to her fans for using her Twitter account to raise awareness towards social issues, recently spread word about Invisible Children. Her tweet consisted of mentioning Invisible Children's LRA tracker application, and as a result of tweet popularity, she was later mentioned in MTV's official blog for this posting (Iniguez, 2011). Furthermore, the MTV blog further discusses the importance of the LRA crisis tracker, and how the organization hopes this tracker will help bring insight towards the crimes that are happening every day in Uganda (Iniguez, 2011). This blog relates to the first research question in terms of demonstrating how people, such as celebrities, use Twitter and Facebook accounts to raise awareness for non-profit organizations. Sophia Bush was able to spread this message of the LRA tracker to over 400, 000 of her followers, as well as many others, if her followers decided to 'retweet' her feed (Iniguez, 2011). Furthermore, on the Invisible Children website, there is a section entitle "Our Network", which showcases the different, businesses, philanthropists, and musicians who support/work with the organization. Each network is responsible for taking care of a specific task in order to help Invisible Children project their mission and goals to bigger publics. This website relates to the last research question because, it showcases which corporations and celebrities support Invisible Children in hopes of publicizing the organization.

In conducting a content analysis on the Invisible Children organization's Twitter, various tweets and comments were noted as vital to examining the organizations usage of social media. The official Twitter page for Invisible Children is updated on a daily basis with approximately 3-5 unique tweets per day (Invisible, 2012). In conducting the content analysis of Invisible Children's Twitter page, the researchers came across the most important tweet regarding the ability to follow the happenings in Uganda. The tweet read, "Introduction new weekly blog post: On The Radar - @CrisisTracker updates from the ground. Check it: bit.ly/xvfZQ0" (Invisible, 2012). Similar to Sophia Bush's mention about the LRA tracker on her Twitter page, this tweet raised awareness for changes in the Crisis Tracker website through Invisible Children's Twitter page. This tweet specifically relates to the first research question because, it shows how the communication team at Invisible Children uses Twitter to convey messages. Through using this social media platform, information is shared amongst Twitter followers of this organization, and the audience is informed about recent updates, as well as future goals and missions.

Moreover, two other social media outlet that were analyzed during the case study process were the Invisible Children's YouTube channel; and the McMaster run Invisible Children group on Facebook. The Invisible Children organization is known for creating videos to spread their message to the world. By posting videos, Invisible Children has been able to demonstrate their organization's progress by showcasing their events and fundraisers that have taken place, as well as events that continue to take place today (Invisible Children Inc., 2006). Invisible Children uses YouTube as a pathway to inspire people to join the organization in their mission to end the war in Uganda. Invisible Children's utilization of a YouTube channel relates to the first research question. Their usage of the channel shows how Invisible Children effectively uses social media platforms to communicate with their audience.

Moreover, the Invisible Children organization has reached out to many institutions, including McMaster University. At McMaster University, students run the Invisible Children club. The club has its own Facebook page to raise awareness of the organization at McMaster, as well as inform the student body about the organization. Recently, the McMaster University Invisible Children Facebook page linked the LRA tracker that Sophia Bush tweeted about. In addition, the McMaster University Invisible Children Facebook page relates back to the first research question. By using a primary source to link to external sources, one is able to integrate themselves more personally with causes, certain people, and organizations.

Course Textbooks

The textbooks assigned to this course were extremely helpful in creating and completing the case study. The information from *Case Study Research* by Robert Yin, *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* by Christopher Alexander, and *The Art of Community* by Jono Bacon all contributed to informing the researchers on how to conduct a case study. In addition, the *Social Research Methods* textbook by Alan Bryman, James Teevan and Edward Bell was also useful in helping the researchers choose which research methods would be suitable for conducting research. Through using all four of these textbooks, the researchers were able to fully grasp the basic knowledge needed to complete a successful case study on Invisible Children.

The *Case Study Research* textbook by Yin was the most useful book because; it mapped out a step-by-step approach to conducting a case study. Yin provides methodological approaches to conducting research, and how social sciences methods can be used to carry out a study (Yin, 2009, p. 2). By utilizing the knowledge presented in the Yin book, the group will be able to carry out and complete a case study.

Also, another course textbook that proved to be helpful in constructing the case study was the *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* by Christopher Alexander. This book outlines an approach to architectural design, connections between groupings as well as connections between pre-existing data and newly discovered data (Alexander, 1964, p. 5). By reviewing the information covered by Alexander, the group was able to approach the design of the case study more logically. Moreover, the group was able to connect data that was previously gathered on the organization and successfully connect it with the group's data that was collected through the focus group and the in-depth interview. The ability to make these connections gave the group an idea of where to start collecting new data.

Additionally, *The Art of Community* by Jono Bacon outlines how a community should be built, as well as how to successfully maintain one. By applying the notions Bacon outlined in his textbook, the researchers were able to see how the Invisible Children organization bases itself upon bringing awareness to the community that follows them on their social media platforms. By having a basic knowledge on how to successfully build a community around a certain organization or event, the researchers were able to critic Invisible Children's ability to keep their community running, interested and aware of the current events the organization is running.

Lastly, Bryman, Teevan, and Bell's book *Social Research Methods* was useful in helping the group decide on which methodology would be best suited for conducting research. The group chose the methods of a focus group, in-depth-interview, and content analysis. The book provided knowledge on how to conduct each research method, and outlined whether a qualitative or quantitative approach would be best suited for conducting research. The group utilized the knowledge presented in this book to successfully conduct focus groups, and interviews to ensure the success of the research.

Analysis on non-profit organizations affectivity in using social media platforms

   In the initial planning of the research, the researchers were able to acquire preexisting literature pertaining to non-profit organizations and how they use social media. In "building credibility for non-profit organizations through webpage interface design", Linda Kensicki discussed the important of organizations having visually appealing, and properly constructed websites. Kensicki established the impact of visual communication, and which online designs (colour, images, font) determine more credibility towards non-profit organization websites (Kensicki, 2003, p. 140). She also states that visual representations allow organizations to gain more credibility. In relation to the case study, this article reflected the criteria of the third research question. The researchers proposed that Invisible Children should lean towards creating a professional image, rather than maintaining the alternative indie image they currently project. Changing the organization's image could result in drawing larger audiences, as well as corporations, which could provide the organization with sponsorship. In making this change, Invisible Children could be successful in bringing more awareness towards current crisis' happening in Africa.

   Moreover, Dan Pallotta's take on non-profit organizations' ability to mobilize people to join their community couples well with Kensicki's visual approach. Non-profit organizations are usually volunteer-oriented, and the question that arises from this is, "why do people volunteer to work for non-profit organizations?" Pallotta answers this question by stating that human suffering is a reason for mobilizing people to their cause (Pallotta, 2012, p. 1). In relation to Invisible Children, it is noticeable that the kidnapping and enlistment of children in Uganda is in violation of human rights. The children in Uganda are not given an equal opportunity to prosper, have a career, raise a family, or live their life as they please. Instead, they live in fear of being abducted, and enlisted in the Lord's Resistance Army. In doing a content analysis, the researchers were able to analyze how Invisible Children is able to mobilize people to their cause. With the recent campaigning of Kony 2012, Invisible Children has begun showing content to the public, and as a result, people have begun joining their movement. Through social media, the organization has been able to raise awareness towards their missions and goals.

   Furthermore, the book, *Social Media Bible* by Lon Safko, the article "how nonprofits can use social media to spark change" by Maureen West, and the blog "why nonprofits are so good at social media" by Alexandra Samuel all exemplify how and why non-profit organizations excel at producing successful social media channels. Firstly, Samuel states that there are five reasons why non-profit organizations are successful in using social media. She states them as: the ability to engage one's audience, putting the audience in the drivers seat, offering tangible and social benefits, embracing value propositions, and being innovative within the boundaries of their mission. In relation to the case study, the researchers looked for these factors to see how Invisible Children utilizes these methods to raise awareness for their goals and missions. This relates to the first research question, because it shows how the organization is effective in using social media networking sites. Moreover, West and Safko's compliment Samuel's article by providing a step-by-step process for non-profit organizations to follow for constructing a model in how to use social media platforms. West discusses which media outlets Invisible Children have and are still using today, such as, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Based on these social networking sites, West distinguishes that these platforms are beneficial for the organization because by using them, Invisible Children can build an online community, and gain a sense of momentum. In addition, Safko furthers this idea by touching upon the steps, and social networking sites that business' can use in order to create an online social media presence. Everything from blogging, posting videos, writing Wikipedia entries, and how to use search engines are covered in Safko's book. However, the most important chapter in the book is entitled Strategy. This chapter outlines five steps to social media success, much like the West article. Furthermore, both West and Safko relates to the

Invisible Children's YouTube channel because they both determine how to use social media platforms as an effective way to communicate, as well as how to properly, and professionally organize events. West and Safko's writings relate to the third research question, which discusses the importance of changing Invisible Children's image. Invisible Children has done a successful job in branding itself as a 'hip, cool, indie and alternative' organization; however, suggestions from Safko's book could help Invisible Children shift towards a professional image.

Analysis on Invisible Children's annual report and early media attention

The annual report of Invisible Children's financials, which is open to the public, is published yearly to show donors how donations are spent within the organization. In the report, statistics show where the organization spent money, and from the information, one can see that the majority of the money is spent into creating content for their social media platforms. Making creative content, such as videos, has resulted in creating awareness, and helping the organization reach global audiences. It is not feasible for the organization to step into Uganda and make decisions for the people. Instead, the organization chooses to create videos to bring the crisis in Uganda to the awareness of the public. Brian Ekdale's article emphasizes Invisible Children's success in contributing to the awareness of the violation of human rights in Africa through the organization's various campaigns and social media outlets. Ekdale's arguments are based on historical analysis of Ugandan conflict, as well as on his analysis of the Invisible Children documentary, and how the media covered it. This article greatly contributed to the case study, as it provided an in-depth analysis of the organization's success. Moreover, Shayne Pepper's article, "Invisible Children and the cyberactivist spectator" provides a discussion on the Invisible Children documentary that sparked an online social movement. The documentary raised awareness towards the child soldiers in Northern Uganda, and the article focuses on the documentary as being the source of the movement. Pepper argues that utilization of social network technology created the whole movement from the beginning. In reviewing the article by Pepper, the researchers obtained a better sense on how to view the effectiveness of Invisible Children's social networking platforms.

Research Questions

Research Question 1 – How effective is Invisible Children in using their Twitter, Facebook, and other social media platforms to communicate with their audience/public to inform them about their missions and goals?

Research Question 2 – How did the utilization of social media outlets raise awareness towards the March 2012 Kony campaign? How was the Kony Campaign successful in raising awareness towards the organization's missions?

Research Question 3 – How would the verification of Invisible Children's social media accounts help guide them towards a professional image? Although the company has branded itself as 'indie and alternative', how would they go about appealing and garnering attention from corporations in order to obtain donations and sponsors?

Methodology

        Qualitative methodological approaches were considered most appropriate in terms of answering the research questions for the Invisible Children organization case study. The main goal for qualitative research is to "try to view the social world through the eyes of the people they study" (Bryman & Teevan, 2005, p.134). Therefore, the methodological approaches that were used to collect the data for this case study consisted of conducting focus groups, in-depth-interviews, as well as consistently participating in direct observation. Each methodological approach was established as the most convenient way to collect the necessary data in order to determine how the Invisible Children organization was able to effectively utilize social media as a means to communicate with their audience during the Kony 2012 campaign.

        A focus group is a "group interview in which the interviewees can speak and interact with one another" (Bryman & Teevan, 2005, p.168). The participants are able listen to one another's responses and help motivate others to loosen up, and join in on the discussion with others (p.168). The use of this methodology was beneficial to the researchers in terms of receiving an assortment of responses due to the number of participants that were interacting with one another, and sharing their thoughts on the given topic of the Invisible Children organization. The focus group allowed the participants to give the researchers a variety of answers. However, whilst conducting the focus group, a limitation became evident. While some participants gave rich and detailed answers, others gave a no response answer. Those who gave a no response answer did not answer the researchers questions, but rather agreed to what previous participants stated. Furthermore, another problem associated with focus groups is data analysis. In some cases, it can be too difficult to combine between the themes found in the discussion and the patterns of interaction (Bryman & Teevan, 2005, p.173). Also, some participants might be too intimidated to answer questions, because they might feel that they have nothing constructive to say. This shyness can be solved through a moderator encouraging those that are quiet to speak up (p.173). Aside from these limitations, facilitating a focus group presented itself as the top choice for conducting research. The focus group allowed for various insights from the participants, as well as allowed them to elaborate, and expand on their points of view in how they feel about the Invisible Children organization.

        The research questions for the Invisible Children case study focused on the role of social media in aiding the non-profit organization. Therefore, a social media interaction exercise was implemented into the focus group. Participants in the focus group were asked to watch two clips from the Kony 2012 video, and express any emotions that they had felt based on what they had previewed. The viewing of these clips proved to be helpful in terms of generating emotions from the participants, as well as allowing the participants to establish a connection between the Invisible Children organization and the Kony 2012 campaign. It was identified that the majority of the participants in the focus group follow the Invisible Children's twitter, and therefore were able to present the researchers with knowledge on the relationship between the organization and the Kony 2012 campaign.

        The questions that were asked in the focus groups were divided into separate sections to create a better sense of flow for the discussion. To begin the focus group and to allow everyone to be introduced, a few background questions were asked. The researchers asked the participants if they were familiar with the Invisible Children organization, as well as if they were aware of the organization prior to the Kony 2012 campaign. Out of the five participants, three were aware of the organization since 2008. Following, the participants introduced themselves, and then questions pertaining to how effective Invisible Children is in using their social media platforms were asked. A question the researchers posed to the participants was "how did the utilization of social media outlets raise awareness towards the Kony 2012 campaign?" (Appendix A). All of the participants were in agreeance, as they all stated that the organization was very effective in using social media because they all heard of the campaign, and watched it become viral through their own social media accounts.

        In order to receive similar feedback that was obtained in the focus group, a semi-structured in-

depth interview was conducted. Semi-structured interviews allow for various new topics, and new questions to arise during the conversation, without interrupting the flow (Bryman and Teevan, 2005, p. 160). The flexibility of the semi-structured interview allowed the participant to express her personal feelings about the Invisible Children organization in a way that opened up a conversation-type interview with unlimited topic directions. As a result, this allowed the interviewer to achieve a broader sense of analysis on the organization.

Moreover, the interview was conducted in order to identify more detailed perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes of an individual towards the Invisible Children organization. (To see a list of questions asked during the interview, please refer to Appendix B). The in-depth interview provided an insightful perspective from a person who is involved with the McMaster University Invisible Children organization. The participant, Maria Alekseeva, has been involved with the Invisible Children McMaster club as a facilitator and event organizer since September 2007. She provided the researchers with insightful information on how Invisible Children utilizes social media platforms. In respect to the Kony 2012 campaign, Alekseeva stated that the organization was successful in making their message viral. She stated, "through creating a very emotional video, audiences were drawn in and felt that they had to share the message of this campaign with everyone." Being a user of social media, Alekseeva, much like the participants from the focus group, watched the campaign go viral from her own social media account.

Results: Analysis and Visualizations

      With the completion of the focus group, it was determined through a consensus of the participants that the Invisible Children organization is effective in using social media to create an online presence. This was established within the introductions of the focus group, as four of the five participants were aware of the Invisible Children organization because of the Kony 2012 video. It was clarified that a majority of the participants heard of the organization from friends, as well as through online media. The participants collectively agreed that the Kony 2012 video was informative in demonstrating how the war in Uganda continues to persist today, as well as how the organization plans to find Joseph Kony. However, while the information relayed brought attention to the cause, majority of the participants were not satisfied in terms of how the Kony 2012 video lacked information in regards to their spending funds (production of film, renting cameras, editing, post production, etc.). This question proved to be a major concern for the participants throughout the focus group because, all of the participants were curious to know how donated money is spent. Therefore, in accordance to the visualizations, two infographics were created to depict these questions of concern.

      The first infographic (see Appendix C) was created to show the spending habits of the Invisible Children organization. To depict the act of spending money, the infographic was represented as a piggy bank. Participants often asked, "Exactly how much money is used towards the groups cause, and where is the rest of the money spent?" The participants questioned the validity of the organization due to word of mouth amongst the public on the organization's brash spending. The participants asked if the money is in fact helping the organization's cause, or just being used to fund video production. This infographic displays how the Invisible Children organization divides the donated money, and in which sectors the money is spent. The second infographic was also created based on the information collected from the focus group. The participants were interested in knowing how the organization is effectively using social media platforms to communicate with their audience. The information displayed in this infographic shows that the organization is able to garner widespread audiences due to the visible number of subscribers on their social media platforms such as, Facebook and Twitter (see Appendix D).

      Furthermore, towards the end of the focus group, the participants were asked if the Invisible Children organization could make any improvements towards the Kony 2012 campaign. While some of the participants felt that the campaign itself was effective in causing awareness, there were some participants that were skeptical. Due to the recent controversy associated with the campaign; as well as with founding members, Jason Russell, the participants felt that the campaign was receiving a lot of negative attention. In this instance, the research group decided to create three more infographics that are loosely based on this correlation between the Invisible Children organization, the Kony 2012 campaign, and the co-founder, Jason Russell.

      The infographic titled *Kony 2012* (see Appendix E) was created to demonstrate the amount of attention the Kony 2012 video and campaign garnered since its release. The research displayed the popularity of the video amongst male and females of all ages, its popularity on many social networking websites, and its prevalence amongst culture and policy makers (which Invisible Children specifically targeted to raise awareness towards this campaign). The graph portrayed in this infographic includes statistics that are representational from Yahoo Clues, which simply show a representational percentage of females versus males, in terms of how much each gender has searched online for Joseph Kony. In association with the attention received for the Kony campaign, the researchers determined that it would be best to showcase the amount of attention the Invisible Children organization has received on Twitter. Therefore, two more infographics, Life of a Hashtag and Twitter Account Showdown were created.

      The "Life of a Hashtag" infographic (see Appendix F) was created in order to showcase a snapshot in time, detailing the most influential Twitter users mentioning this hashtag on its first, peak, and last appearance in the past month. The researchers felt that this infographic was necessary because due to the Kony 2012 video, which recently went viral, many Twitter users were showing their support, and

spreading awareness through using this hashtag. Therefore, it was important to show an analysis on how this particular topic trended, and how it became widespread. The Twitter Account Showdown infographic (see Appendix G) was created to compare and contrast both Twitter accounts of the Invisible Children organization and Jason Russell. This infographic shows a compares and contrasts model of the number of people the Invisible Children organization and Russell are following, how many followers they each have by region, and their tweet timing (which indicates a specific time of day that each account tweets the most). This infographic was important to document in terms of evaluating if the recent controversy surrounding the Invisible Children organization has affected peoples perceptions of the organization and Jason Russell. However, based on the number of people who still follow both of these accounts on Twitter, one can make the assumption that the recent controversy has not affected either substantially.

Interview Critique

In correlation with the results obtained from the focus group, the semi-structured interview proved to be beneficial in gaining an inside perspective towards the McMaster University's Invisible Children club. Maria Alekseeva determined that almost all of Invisible Children's sources are coming out to the public through social media usage, given the fact that the majority of participants are young people who are actively involved in social media websites such as, Facebook and Twitter. Alekseeva indicated that in 2007, she initially used to notify people about the group's updates through a basic emailing procedure, because at this time, social media was not as prominent. Alekseeva further elaborated that during this time she was involved with the organization, the main tool for communication was through email. However, nowadays, people prefer using Facebook, to spread news of groups, clubs, and organizations. Users of Facebook can create groups, send invitations, and organize events. Furthermore throughout the interview, the Kony 2012 video was discussed. Alekseeva stated that the effect created by this (relatively short) video went 'viral' quickly and created a 'massive awareness' with the help of Facebook. She suggested that the Kony 2012 video was much larger than that of the original *Invisible Children* movie/documentary broadcasted in 2006, which was not as highly distributed on the Internet.

Similar to the focus group participants, the financial issue that the Invisible Children organization is facing were also mentioned in the interview. Alekseeva indicated that because of the 'ignorance of the world' towards this issue, the government, particularly the United States government, are not interested in acting out against the internal conflicts in Uganda, because the conflict does not affects the United States. As such, the United States, were not interested in sending their troops to Uganda for the longest time because, the conflict in the country was seen as a problem for the Ugandan government to deal with. However, recently this notion changed. President Barack Obama sent American troops to Uganda to help fight against the Lord's Resistance Army, through maintaining peace and setting disputes. Alekseeva further elaborated on this recent change, in signifying that the American troops that were sent to Uganda are one of the Invisible Children's organizations main accomplishments thus far; which has further proven that the use of social media is effective in raising awareness to global issues.

Despite the success that this organization has received due to social media, the Invisible Children organization has also faces complications. English-speaking individuals can only access the organizations social media accounts, which creates a limited scope for its action, due to language barriers. It was determined that although some transformations have been made to improve these barriers, the organization still lacks a global reach. Alekseeva expressed her feelings about Jason Russell, the co-founder and director of Invisible Children, who was reportedly arrested for irrational behaviour. However, unlike the participants in the focus group, Maria indicated that Jason Russell is no different from other people, and that "we are all humans with human fears," in which case we all make

mistakes. Furthermore, in order to present the information collected from the interview in a visually appealing manner, three infographics were created.

The infographic, The Developmental Process of the Kony 2012 Campaign (See Appendix H) describes the process of the Kony 2012 campaign; that was spearheaded by the central Invisible Children organization, and carried out by the McMaster University Invisible Children club in order to involve students with the movement. The process is based off of what the interviewee, Maria Alekseeva, described while she was working with the McMaster University Invisible Children club. She described it as "starting with an idea and ending with a result." Alekseeva mostly focused on the assumption of the inherent good nature in people who genuinely want to help those in need, which then mobilizes them to activism. This coupled with volunteers, donators, and government support, allows for the Kony 2012 campaign to gain awareness.

The second infographic that was created based on the information collected from the interview was the Invisible Children Group at McMaster University Wordmap (see Appendix I), which draws upon the importance of the cause. The most interesting points the interviewee discussed were about unity, awareness, and politics, which are involved in the process of running campus events for the Invisible Children organization at McMaster University. The words portrayed in this infographic were brought up frequently throughout the interview. Once the researchers collected the necessary vocabulary, it was decided to organize these words in the representation of a gun, in order to signify the Lord's Resistance Army. The gun showcases how children are forced into war, and to use weapons. Furthermore, the infographic titled Facebook's Connections to Invisible Children Organization at McMaster University (see Appendix J) is a representation of all the recent events that the McMaster Invisible Children Facebook page has promoted. Among the most recent events are: The Peace of Chic Fashion Show, the Front Line screening, the LRA Crisis Tracker App, and the Kony 2012 video. Each event is promoted through the McMaster Invisible Children Facebook page by linking to an outside source, posting pictures, updates, and creating a separate event section to invite followers to attend events. This infographic depicts how each event is directly related, and mostly promoted through the McMaster Invisible Children Facebook page.

To further expand on the research of the Invisible Children organization, another interview with a participant not associated with the McMaster University Invisible Children organization would have further benefited the research group and their case study. In this interview, the participant would not have any association with the organization, and therefore would be able to share their ideas, and beliefs about the organization from an outside perspective. This would be beneficial to the overall research results, in terms of being able to compare and contrast the various viewpoints towards the Invisible Children organization from a participant who is associated with the organization, and one who is not. However, since this interview was not conducted, the research group found it appropriate to make another infographic (see Appendix K), in which others perceptions of the Invisible Children organization would be taken into account for. This infographic was created to display the followers feedback on the top daily comment posted by the Invisible Children organization through their Twitter and Facebook account. The results were calculated in terms of establishing which social media platform received the most feedback over the span of 5 hours since its initial posting. As a result, it was determined that Twitter received an estimated 72% in terms of feedback, whereas the comment they posted on Facebook only received an overall feedback of 28%. One could further analyze this information and establish that the Invisible Children organization is most effective when using their Twitter account to communicate with their audience based on the amount of feedback they received off of on one, daily comment.

Conclusion & Future Directions

Through the review of literature, the creation of infographics, and the facilitation of a focus group, as well as an in-depth interview, the researchers were highly successful in answering their research questions for this case study. It relation to the first research question, it was evident by means of the focus group, interview, and infographics that the Invisible Children organization is effective in terms of using their social media platforms such as, Facebook and Twitter, to communicate to their audience in regards to their missions, and goals. This was further established by the results accumulated based on participant comments, perceptions; and viewing statistics from previewing the Kony 2012 video that has recently gone viral due to media awareness. By posting the Kony 2012 video on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, users and followers were able to spread this video even further, which enabled those who are strangers to the issues that continue to persist in Uganda today, to become aware. Due to the recent awareness of the Kony 2012 campaign, as by means of the Kony 2012 video, the research group felt it was appropriate to change the focus on the Kony 2012 campaign from the Timmy campaign.

For further research, it would prove to be useful to conduct more focus groups and interviews in order for the research group to collect a larger sample of data. The researchers were unable to facilitate more focus groups and interviews because of the limited time frame. Moreover, the researchers could have approached the research process differently if the group was able to anticipate the organization's spike in popularity after the Kony 2012 video, thus changing the research questions to fit the increasingly growing popularity of the organization. Furthermore, the research group would have chosen to analyze a predominant campaign that has run its course, so that it would be easier to collect all the necessary data, as opposed to analyzing a current campaign, in which every day the group was receiving new information that was valuable to their case study.

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Appendecies

Appendix A

Focus group Introduction and questions

Introduction:

Hello everyone. Welcome to our focus group. We are here today to discuss the non-profit organization entitled Invisible Children Inc., but more specifically their Kony 2012 campaign. My name is Navneet, and I will be moderating the focus group today, alongside Laura. Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves, and it would be helpful if everyone would write down his/her first name on the tent cards. [Introductions around the room]. I will be asking a series of general questions, and Laura will be taking notes. Please be advised that all comments will remain anonymous and confidential, and will not leave this room. Feel free to speak up at any time, but one at a time please in order to record all comments, and/or opinions. Please also be advised that both positive and negative comments are welcomed.

The session will go on no longer than one hour. If at any time you need to use the rest room, they are located [where?]. Please help yourself to the fruit and beverages provided for you during the session as well. Let's begin.

Focus group questions:

1. First ask -> is everyone here familiar with Invisible Children?
2. Were you aware of the Invisible Children organization prior to the Kony 2012?
3. Where did you first hear about it, or from whom?
4. Did you hear about the Timmy campaign back in December 2011? Why do you think this is?
5. Did you hear about the Kony campaign in March 2012? Why do you think this is?
6. Now we are going to watch a clip from the Kony 2012 video.
7. Please tell us your thoughts on the video, (sad, happy feelings)?
8. How effective would you say Invisible Children is in using their Twitter, Facebook, and other social media platforms to communicate with their audience/public to inform them about their missions and goals?
9. How did the utilization of social media outlets raise awareness towards the Kony 2012 campaign?
10. How was the Kony Campaign successful in raising awareness to the organization?
11. The Invisible Children twitter page is not verified. Do you feel that verifying their twitter page will give them a more professional appeal? Do you usually look for verification before following a celebrity or big organization?
12. Please write down a word to describe Invisible children and explain why you choose that word.
13. Lastly, is there anything else you would like to say about Invisible Children or Kony 2012?
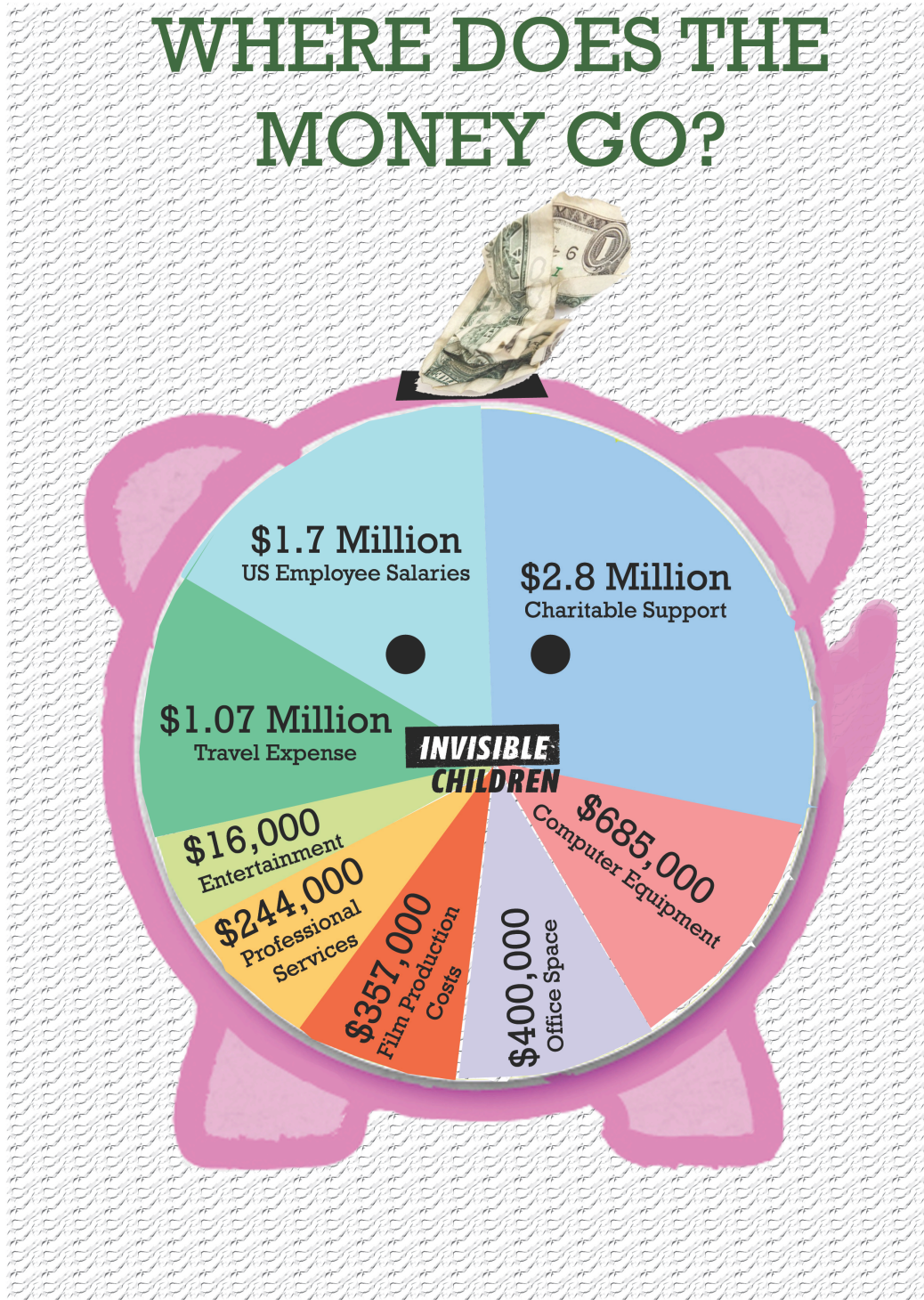
Appendix B

Interview questions

Conducted by: Alla
Note Taker: Katie

Semi-Structured Interview Questions:

1. What was your role in the social media aspect?
2. What social media outlet was the most successful?
3. You didn't use twitter at all?
4. What do you think of Kony 2012?
      a. If you were still involved how would you handle this?
5. Do you think explaining where the money comes from is part of the controversy?
6. You have to educate the public, but what about international countries?
      b. What about in Russia? Do you translate the video?
7. When you say global it has to be global. Do you think that the social media outlets can reach the less developed countries?
8. Did you hear about the situation that happened with Jason? Do you think his actions hindered the reputation of the Kony 2012 video as well as the Invisible Children?
9. Have you heard of the anti-Kony campaign that basically argues that the Invisible Children organization is not sincere in its actions?
10. It seems like the media created Kony just like Bin Laden. Do you think that the media/internet/world news created Kony as a sort of devil?
11. Do you think that the social media run at the McMaster Invisible Children has improved since you've left the club?
      c. What do you think they could do better?
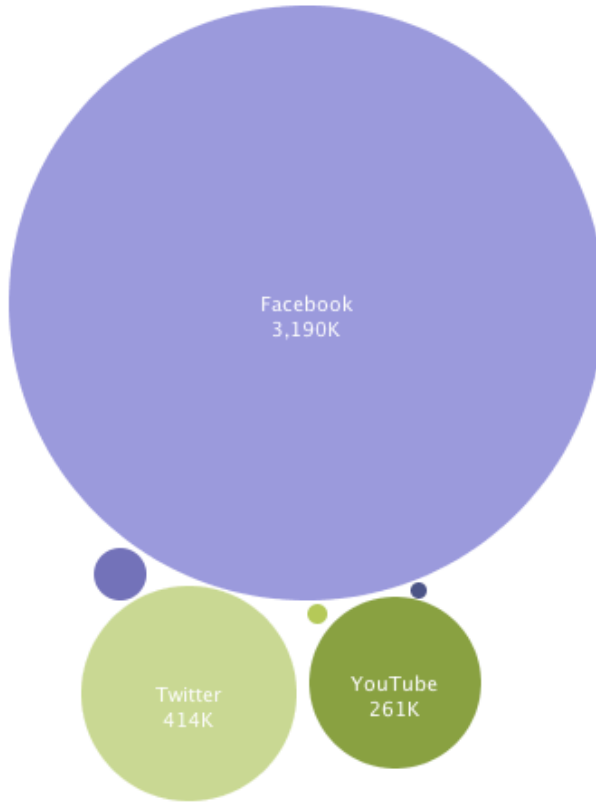
Appendix C

To see full image visit:
http://issuu.com/navneet_casestudy/docs/info-money_pig?mode=window&backgroundColor=%23222222

Appendix D

Top Social Networking Websites used by Invisible Children Inc.
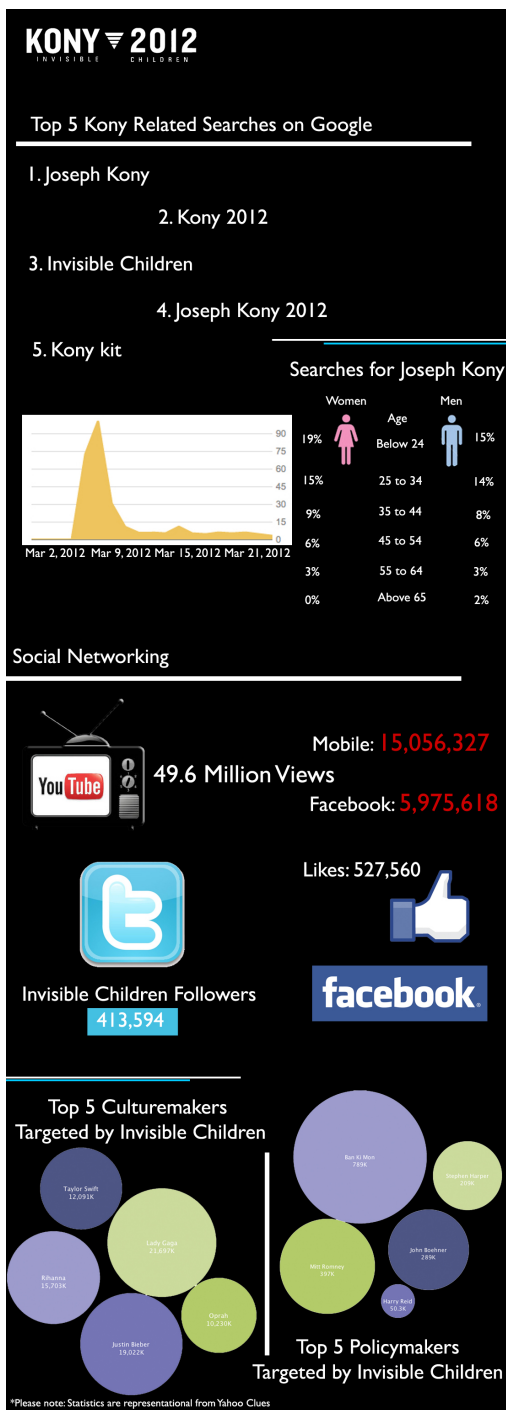
Number of Subscribers
Disks colored by Social Networking Platform

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Pintrest
- Twitter
- Vimeo
- YouTube

Facebook
3,190K

Twitter
414K

YouTube
261K

To see full image visit:
http://issuu.com/navneet_casestudy/docs/top_social_networking_sites?mode=window&backgroundColor=%23222222
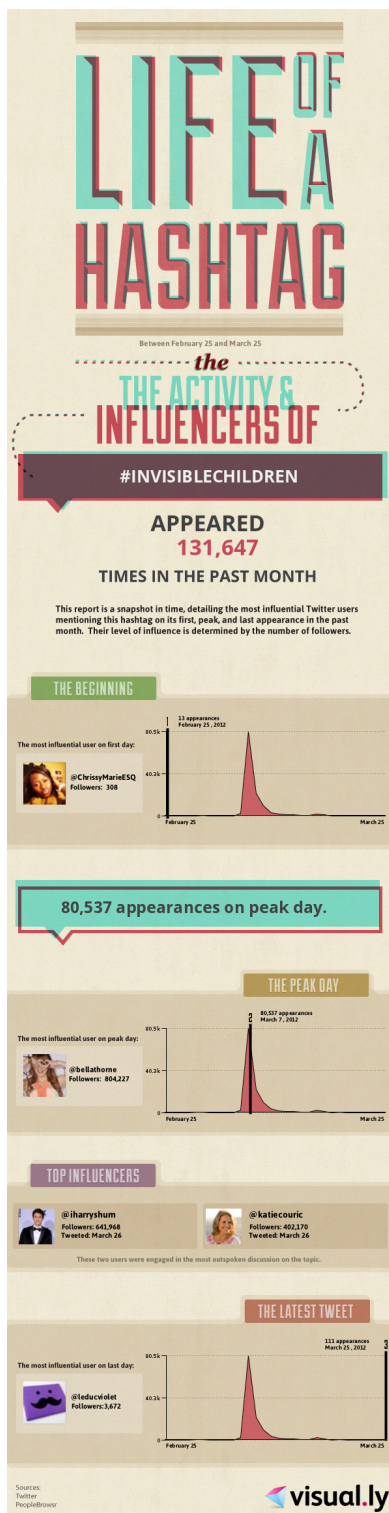
Appendix E

To see full image visit:
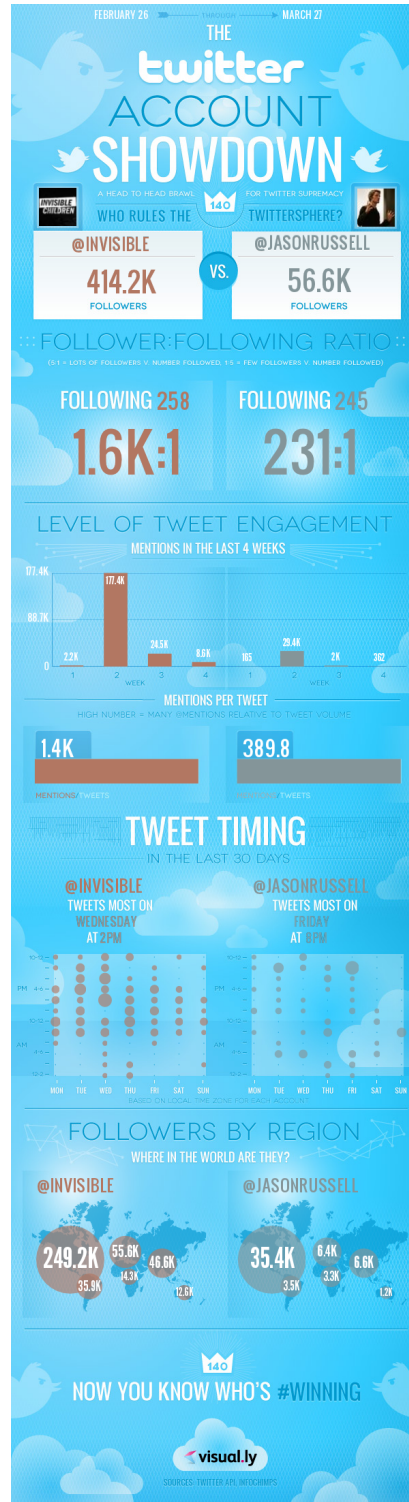http://issuu.com/navneet_casestudy/docs/kony_2012-11?mode=window&backgroundColor=%23222222

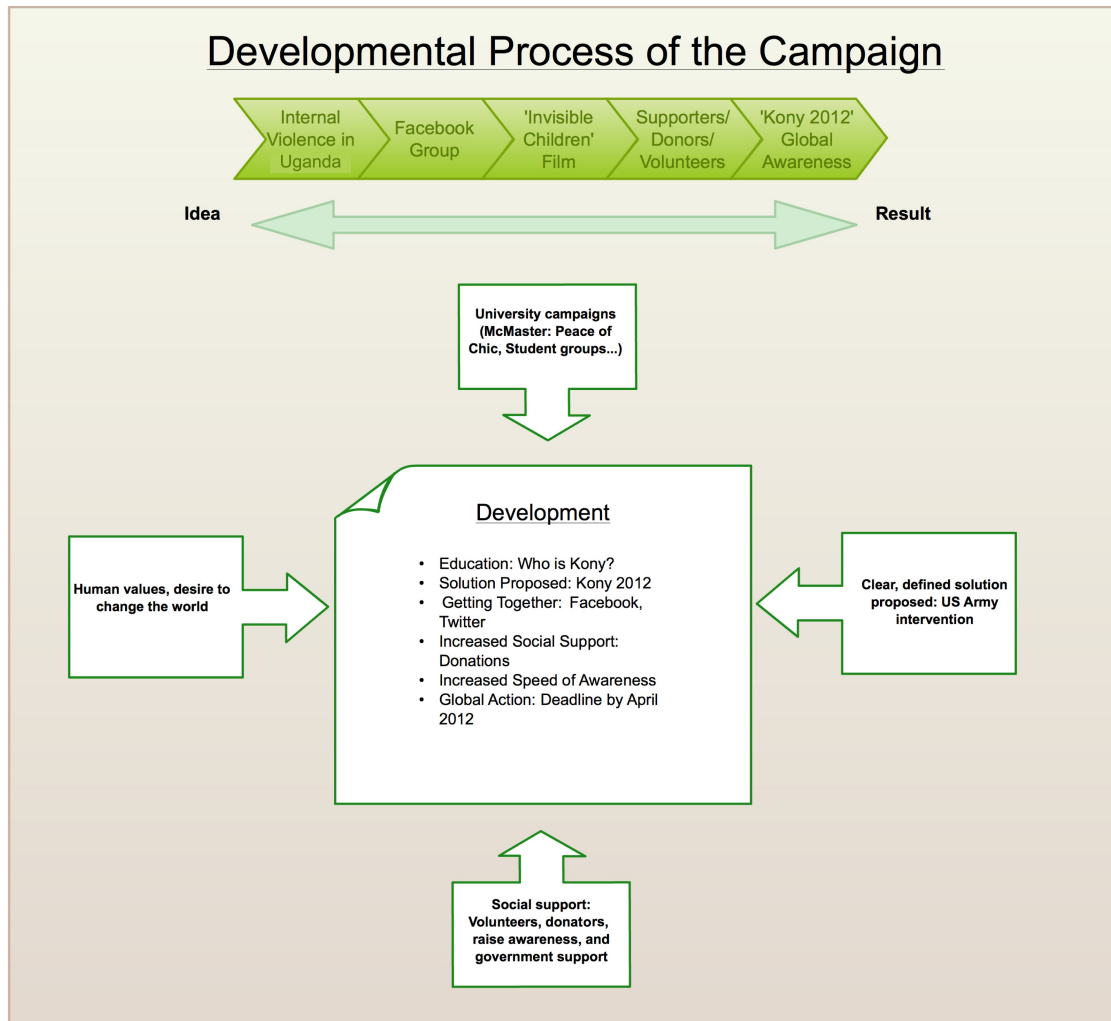Appendix F

To see full image visit:

Appendix G

To see full image visit:
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Appendix H

Developmental Process of the Campaign

Internal Violence in Uganda → Facebook Group → 'Invisible Children' Film → Supporters/ Donors/ Volunteers → 'Kony 2012' Global Awareness

Idea ←——————————→ **Result**

University campaigns (McMaster: Peace of Chic, Student groups...)

Development

- Education: Who is Kony?
- Solution Proposed: Kony 2012
- Getting Together: Facebook, Twitter
- Increased Social Support: Donations
- Increased Speed of Awareness
- Global Action: Deadline by April 2012

Human values, desire to change the world

Clear, defined solution proposed: US Army intervention

Social support: Volunteers, donators, raise awareness, and government support

To see full image visit:
http://issuu.com/navneet_casestudy/docs/developmental_process_of_the_campaign?mode=window&backgroundColor=%23222222

Appendix I

To see full image visit:
http://issuu.com/navneet_casestudy/docs/kony-2012--mcmaster-infographic_20120411_014736?mode=window&backgroundColor=%23222222

Appendix J

To see full image visit:
http://issuu.com/navneet_casestudy/docs/ic-facebook-infographic?mode=window&backgroundColor=%23222222

Appendix K