9-1 Final Project Submission: Digital Storytelling and Branding Proposal

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The TRUTH about Motherhood began as a way for Deborah Cruz to keep a timeline of her journey into motherhood and track what was going on with her children as they grew from newborns to young adults. Writing it all down seemed the best way to remember and process all of those miserable and blissful moments of motherhood. While doing this, she realized that she was not alone and The TRUTH about Motherhood became much more than just a place for her to share her stories and anecdotes of life perspective through mom goggles but a way to build a community of and for moms to connect, commiserate and share the good, bad and ugly of motherhood. Even when surrounded by small children day in and day out, motherhood can be a lonely and humbling experience and in a world of Instagram curated existences, The TRUTH about Motherhood dared to be the place moms could come and be themselves without judgement or pushback.

What differentiates The TRUTH about Motherhood from its competitors like Scary Mommy and Café Mom is the voice and authenticity with which stories are delivered. The irreverent, sometimes brutally honest and funny way in which these true stories are told and shared make them more relatable to the average parent than some would care to admit. In the end, The TRUTH about Motherhood has taken some of the mystery out of perfect parenting and instead replaced it with the acceptance of perfectly imperfect parenting. No parent gets it right all the time because parenting is a moving target. The TRUTH reminds readers that parents are human too and in order for any of this to work we need to extend the patience, forgiveness and love to ourselves that we so unconditionally bestow upon our children. What sets The TRUTH about Motherhood apart from its competitors is the fact that the brand dares to be real in a world of curated perfection and I think that’s more appealing than most of us have the courage to say out loud. There is also a difference in delivery as The TRUTH is written from a single writer so the

voice and tone with which the posts are written is consistent whereas, Scary Mommy and Café Mom have a stable of different writers from all different stages and walks of life. While the TRUTH may feel very niched in comparison, it is also very relatable and the regular readers are high invested in the journey of Deborah and her family, watching them grow and evolve over the past 12 years.

The mission of The TRUTH about Motherhood is to meet the emotional and practical needs of moms with honest, sometimes irreverent or sad, often funny, always real and authentic stories that mimic the true journey of motherhood. The TRUTH strives to connect moms through whatever phase of motherhood they are in, connecting through laughter, sometimes tears and always understanding. This is done by offering wisdom, advice, recommendations and commiseration through authentic stories of motherhood. This has been the simple mission since 2009 and will always be the mission. The goal is to raise mothers up whether that be through kudos for exemplary moments of motherhood, commiseration when mom fails feel like too much or offering a hand up when motherhood has her feeling overwhelmed and alone. The TRUTH about Motherhood is a judgement free zone meant to empower moms through the shared experience of motherhood. The TRUTH's dedication to the mission is evident in its continued sharing of real stories of motherhood, even when its uncomfortable and sometimes embarrassing to do so. If a story can help another mother feel more confident and reassured on her own mom journey, it is worth hitting publish on uncomfortable topics and talking about the hard things in motherhood.

These efforts go well beyond the blog. The TRUTH about Motherhood has channels on all relevant platforms i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat.

There is a Facebook The TRUTH about Motherhood community page with 5.4K followers, Twitter account with 8781 followers and 3019 Instagram followers being the largest platforms. The format of my blog post is usually personal, fun or culture and why is nature. The entire brand is about authentically sharing real stories that happen to real mothers. That relatability and openness can be felt by the audience and they feel safe to engage with someone in the mom trenches with them. Once they trust you, they become loyal fans and supporters and then they share the post with other's who they feel close to.



Facebook:

My daughter thinks I'm ugly.
I know her words were not intentional but they plunged like a dagger into my mommy heart, a side effect of her brutal honesty. You all know, she got it from her mama.
When I found out that I was having a little girl, I envisioned mommy and me outfits, endless tea parties, ballet buns and spending all day, every day with my tiny best friend. For the most part, tha's what its been. However, you can imagine how it broke my heart to hear my daughter, the person I adore most in this world, tell me that I was prettier on the inside.
What's the worst thing our child has ever said to you? How did you handle it? With grace and rational or did you quietly go off to the bathroom and cry during your shower, like I may or may not have done?
https://www.motherhoodthetruth.com/my-daughter-thinks-im-ugly-body-image/

Twitter:

My daughter thinks I'm ugly.I know her words were not intentional but they plunged like a dagger into my mommy heart, a side effect of her brutal honesty. She got it from her mama. What would you do? https://www.motherhoodthetruth.com/my-daughter-thinks-im-ugly-body-image/



Subject: What to do if your kid tells you that your ugly and other ways kids destroy your life

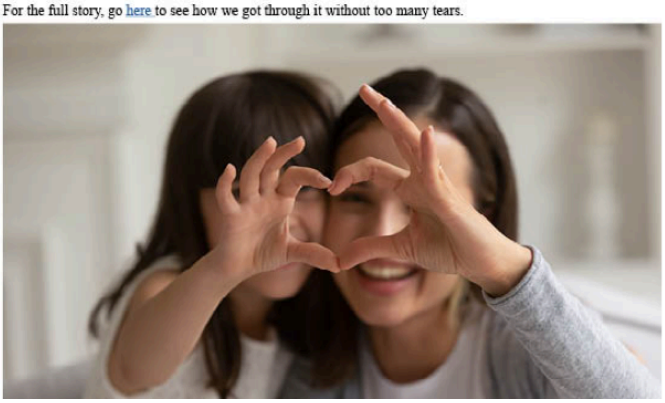
Recently, I was taught a harsh but much needed lesson by my 7-year-old...words hurt, especially when they are taken out of context and even when they are said by an adorable small child. Has your child ever said something so cute that you wish they'd stay little forever? Then again, has your child ever said something so brutally honest (and maybe not so nice) that you had to hide in the bathroom and cry alone in the shower, just to survive it? Well, you are not alone, mama.

My daughter, who I absolutely adore and, in fact, adores me too told me that I was ugly. She actually told me that I was prettier on the inside than on the outside. Ouch. Same difference, right? Wrong.

Not exactly the same thing but tomato potato. The point is that in my house, I'm not the only one without a filter. My mini-me thought she was paying me a compliment since I've taught her from birth that what's on the inside is what matters. Be careful what you wish for ladies, these little sponges remember everything. In the end, my feelings got hurt but in other news, I am actually raising good humans.

What's the "worst" thing your child's ever said to you and how did you get through it?

For the full story, go here to see how we got through it without too many tears.



Subject: How to survive your child's brutal honesty without letting them see you cry

Has your child ever said something so cute that you wish they'd stay little forever? Then again, has your child ever said something so brutally honest (and maybe not so nice) that you had to hide in the bathroom and cry alone while eating all the hidden commandeered Reese's peanut butter cups from Halloween, just to survive it? Well, you are not alone.

My daughter, who I absolutely adore and, in fact, adores me too told me that I was ugly. She actually told me that I was prettier on the inside than on the outside. Ouch.

Not exactly the same thing but tomato potato. The point is that in my house, I'm not the only one without a filter. My mini-me thought she was paying me a compliment since I've taught her ad nauseum that what's on the inside is what matters. Yep, be careful what you wish for these little sponges remember everything. In the end, my feelings got hurt but in other news, I am actually raising good humans.

What's the "meanest" thing your child's ever said to you and how did you get through it?

For the full story, go here to see how we got through it without too many tears.



The blog is written in an authentic and personable voice and tone that will resonate with The TRUTH about Motherhood's target demographic (middle-class, professional, educated women who are moms or moms-to-be ages 18-45).

The mission of the TRUTH is to build a community for and by mothers where they can come for reliable information, product suggestions, laughter and commiseration without judgement. The tone is relaxed and informal and reflects the relationship between the author and the reader. Photos of a young child and a mother are also very relatable to the audience. These themes, writing style and voice are consistent throughout the entire campaign; blog, social shares and emails only slightly tweaked on each platform for the different ways each platform is used and taking into account the way the different audiences communicate across each platform.

The TRUTH about Motherhood's target demographic audience belongs to TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube. The content is not misaligned with the intended consumers but there needs to be more variety of types of posts. The brand is missing the mark and at times the postings are going live at too close intervals causing them to appear spammy and to the detriment of The TRUTH posts are not changing across platforms. This is not engaging because the postings are not taking into consideration how each audience interacts on each different platform. All platforms are not created equal.

More often than not, the brand needs to engage more, post more consistently, share more personal content and respond quicker on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The brand should be posting twice a day on Facebook, 3 times a day on Twitter and once a day on Instagram but there appears to be no consistent posting schedule.

After following the target audience through all social media channels, communities and the blog the digital conversation revolving around The TRUTH about Motherhood's related topics is engaging on other similar site's platforms when it's a closed or anonymous group dynamic but when it is an open platform, where everyone can see what's being posted, the target demographic seems to be less likely to interact as openly.

Compared to closed forums like Scary Mommy confessionals and the Café Mom forum where the demographic is more comfortable speaking honestly about the challenges of parenthood, they are not as comfortable engaging on controversial topics in public forums. In my experience in the space, this has a lot to do with the topic and fear of being judged by other moms as a failure. However, when honesty in struggles and failures that are relatable are shared, this group can be

very supportive. The feeling is that parenting space is highly divisive and an absolute high risk, high reward space.

Given my analysis of The Truth's target audience's online behavior, I do not think the company's social media marketing initiatives are effective. Some things that they could change to help its social media presence be more effective are:

- Engage directly with community members.
- Post consistently.
- Respond to comments in a timely manner.
- Nurture a deeper more meaningful relationship beyond just content distributor and audience.
- Humanize posts so they are relatable.
- Provide more niched content for more diversified group; all moms are not created equal.
- Speak to the community not at them. A social media community is not a soapbox.
- Invite some key, active and involved community members to be moderators.
- Acknowledge and reward members of the community who are active in promoting lively conversations.
- Be an asset to moms, provide informative and entertaining posts that answer questions that moms need answered.

The company can use the digital conversations in developing new marketing initiatives by:

- Polling the audience to ask what content they want to see.
- Encouraging members to invite their mom friends to be part of the community.

- Focus attention on platforms that might be more engaging to the key demographic like TikTok for millennial moms.
- Using the buyer persona to create the brand's social media brand voice so that it aligns.
- Seeing what content works with target demographic and what doesn't.

The client can maximize these opportunities by:

- Giving the audience what resonates with them, in a way that engages them.
- Posting more of what works and less of what doesn't.
- Creating a content calendar and post frequently.
- Automating social posts to go live.
- Repurposing content across different platforms.

A big problem is lack of consistent posting and no editorial calendar. As a one-person business, there is definitely a lack of time and people to effectively provide consistent quality of content and follow up amplification, resulting in fatigue. In order for the company to grow and maintain the quality of the content it is known for, time management and stricter adherence to a schedule needs to be in place.

The TRUTH about Motherhood dared to be the place moms could come and be themselves without judgement or pushback. The dialogue takes place in the comments section of the website, as well as, on relevant social media posts but it is not consistent because the posting from The TRUTH is not consistent which makes it not a dependable resource. However, engaging comments are sometimes used to create new content that gives the audience what they

want and need and contests and giveaways are tools for UGC by way of social shares and use of a predetermined hashtag.

What differentiates The TRUTH about Motherhood from its competitors like Scary Mommy and Café Mom is the voice and authenticity with which stories are delivered. Scary Mommy and Café Mom are similar in tone and delivery, however, the feel is different coming from a stable of writers compared to the personal tone and the investment of the readers in the writer's story of a one writer website. On the TRUTH about Motherhood many of the readers have been following Deborah since 2009 and have watched her life change, her children grow and her relationship and career evolve.

The focus of the website is life perspective through mom goggles which is reflected by posts that are about more than just being a mom but qualify that motherhood tinges every choice a woman makes throughout her life. The main topics focused on are Motherhood/Raising teen girls, travel with teens, Lifestyle (fashion/beauty/entertainment), Home (recipes and decor) and tech presented in a way that is very personal and relatable. The keywords should reflect that.

A SEMrush keyword gap analysis with competitors Scary Mommy and Café Mom (much bigger websites doing the same type of posts) reveal that The TRUTH should focus on keywords that not only reflect the niche of the website, appeal to the target audience and are shared by their competitors but have under a 10000 monthly search volume and are more specific long tail keywords. This is effective for evergreen or seasonal postings.

It’s also a good idea to try to move up in SERPs for keywords they already rank for or go for keyword difficulty (KD) rankings of 50 or lower; essentially you want a long tailed keyword with a lower KD score but a decent search volume. This way the TRUTH can capture some of that traffic while giving the audience specifically what they want. Some of the keywords to consider incorporating into the marketing strategy are raising teenage girls, raising teenagers, travel for teens, Latina teens, Mexican culture, the truth about motherhood, family travel tips, mom of girls, fashion tips for mom, mom fashion, makeup tips for beginners, style trends, family travel on a budget and family friendly recipes. The TRUTH is already ranking on the first page of SERPS for Disney Content Creator days, Walt Disney World influencer and How to become a Walt Disney World Influencer but there are a few other keywords like Love letter to my daughter that could be optimized, updated and re-shared to increase rankings.

By doing in depth keyword research beforehand, content can be optimized to be found in SERPS by using the best keyword combination. In addition, taking into consideration where the target audience is on social and using those platforms to appropriately reach and engage those people in the way they want to be engaged, where they want to be engaged will help to increase engagement and exposure. Keyword research is imperative to the success of the strategy.

To strategically implement our marketing approach across digital platforms over a two-week period, we will start by doing extensive keyword and buyer persona research and diving heavily into website analytics, as well as social media insights and analytics to know what resonates with the audience. After doing this research, we will have best performing keywords, up-to-date buyer persona, analytics to demonstrate which content is best performing and insights will give us a

clearer idea as to when our audience is on and engaging. It is the brand's responsibility to give the right audience, the right content at the right time in the right place. To be successful with this information, there must be a capable understanding of how the audience engages and responds to content on each platform and then be there to exceed consumer expectations. A two-week period of consistent content sharing (with the help of an editorial social media calendar) across platforms at their optimal times with strong calls-to-action would be a great start. For The TRUTH about Motherhood's demographic, I would start by posting:

- On Instagram, post between 3-7 times per week.
- On Facebook, post between 1 and 2 times a day.
- On Twitter, post between 1 and 5 Tweets a day.
- On Tik Tok, post 1-3 times a day.
- Email newsletter, send once or twice a week (no more).

The goal is not only to grow following and engagement on social media but to increase traffic and engagement to the website, as well. Consistent posting and research will grow the brand. Insights on social platforms will be used to monitor and manage social campaigns to see what works and to make sure that the intended message is being communicated to the target demographic. In addition, using Critical Mention and social mention would be helpful to learn what's working with the audience and why. With Critical Mention, you can track and analyze your brand on social channels, stay on top of what's trending in your industry, and gain insights on sentiment and trends. This tool helps in establishing some baseline numbers like your engagement score, the number of clicks to your social page, the number of followers you've gained, and so on which comes in handy when you perform a social media audit (Ramakrishnan, 2019).

Social Mention allows you to easily track and measure what people are saying about you, your company, a new product, or any topic across the web's social media landscape in real-time. All of this is useful for a social media audit because it helps you discover the context in which your brand is being talked about which in turn will help tweak your content strategy and avert a crisis if one should arise (Ramakrishnan, 2019).

These metrics will give a clear and concise measurement of whether or not the strategy is working and they are industry standard metrics. By paying attention to what The TRUTH's audience is saying about the brand, what they are talking about in the world it will make pivoting to cater to the audience easier and more effective.

This approach promotes a consistent message and customer experience across digital platforms because every post has been meticulously planned and researched before going live and then reevaluated after going to live to monitor effectiveness. By knowing the platform and target audience, the brand can share their narrative in the most effective way without changing the heart of their content. It's like knowing how to dress for an occasion, while a person is who they are regardless of what they wear, it's better to dress appropriately for each occasion.

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