
Contemporary Media Issues

Kony 2012

A Case Study

Kelli Yoder

Kony 2012: A case study



Every marketer today knows what it is to aspire to viral infamy. Invisible Children found that through Kony 2012. The film's success, considered within a framework called The Dragonfly Effect, demonstrates the importance of forethought. A closer look at both can reveal lessons for the future of digital campaigns.

The Film

Kony 2012 Timeline

1. Film Overview
2. The Dragonfly Model
3. Case Study Overview

Kony 2012

Kony 2012 is the name of a mini-documentary produced as part of a social media campaign organized by the nonprofit Invisible Children (IC). The nonprofit is working to aid the people affected by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in east and central Africa. This mission in particular is to encourage the International Criminal Court (ICC) to find the leader of the army, Joseph Kony, and arrest him, ending his 25-year reign.



[Watch the original minidocumentary, Kony 2012, here.](#)

**INVISIBLE CHILDREN
USES FILM, CREATIVITY
AND SOCIAL ACTION
TO END THE USE OF
CHILD SOLDIERS IN
JOSEPH KONY'S REBEL
WAR AND RESTORE
LRA-AFFECTED
COMMUNITIES IN
CENTRAL AFRICA
TO PEACE AND PROSPERITY.**

Invisible Children's mission statement

Part I – Introducing the Russells and their world

To begin Kony 2012, Jason Russell, the narrator, filmmaker and co-founder of Invisible Children, opens with an introduction to what he

presents as the new field of communication. This new field presents an outlet for people to connect to each other in a large-scale, instant way that humanity has never before experienced. He sets the stage for a worldwide audience and the power behind such an audience working together.

Next the story begins. It begins with his child being born. Viewers are introduced to his four-year-old son Gavin in the present day. From Gavin the film shifts to a boy named Jacob who was kidnapped by Joseph Kony's army. He watched some of his family being killed. Jacob describes what his life is like, openly



and confidently saying death would be better than this life. The moment is exactly as Russell first experienced it. It is the moment he was inspired to take action against Kony and his army.

With the two boys' stories, the comparison is made between a boy in America who can assume he will live a safe life, and a boy in north central Africa who has already experienced unspeakable violence and assumes he will experience more.

Part II – Building support & making change in Africa

Next the film shifts to an informative tone, overviewing the work of the nonprofit that resulted from Jacob's meeting and Russell's subsequent approach to keep a promise he made that night to help. Interviews with lawmakers and ICC workers talk

about how this sort of action is nearly impossible to make happen. The U.S. is not likely to get involved if they are not directly being affected by the atrocities.

And then clips of



IC support demonstrate what actions have happened at their hands. The organization has managed to unite enough support—mostly youth—that president Obama approved sending military forces there. Then the film describes why that is not enough (because “Kony is still out there”), and what they want to happen next. And it involves the viewers of the video.

Part III – Call to Action: Cover the Night





The final portion of the film is meant to be an inspiring call to action. It lays out a fairly specific plan to “make Kony famous.” Supporters are to spread the word to 20 culture makers and 12 lawmakers in order to make change happen and “stop at nothing” to Stop Kony.

The film shows visuals of people doing exactly what IC wants more people to do next. If people become monthly donors they will receive an “action kit” that helps them spread the word, connect with others online, and finally, take part in Cover the Night. The night meant to plaster towns across the world with Kony

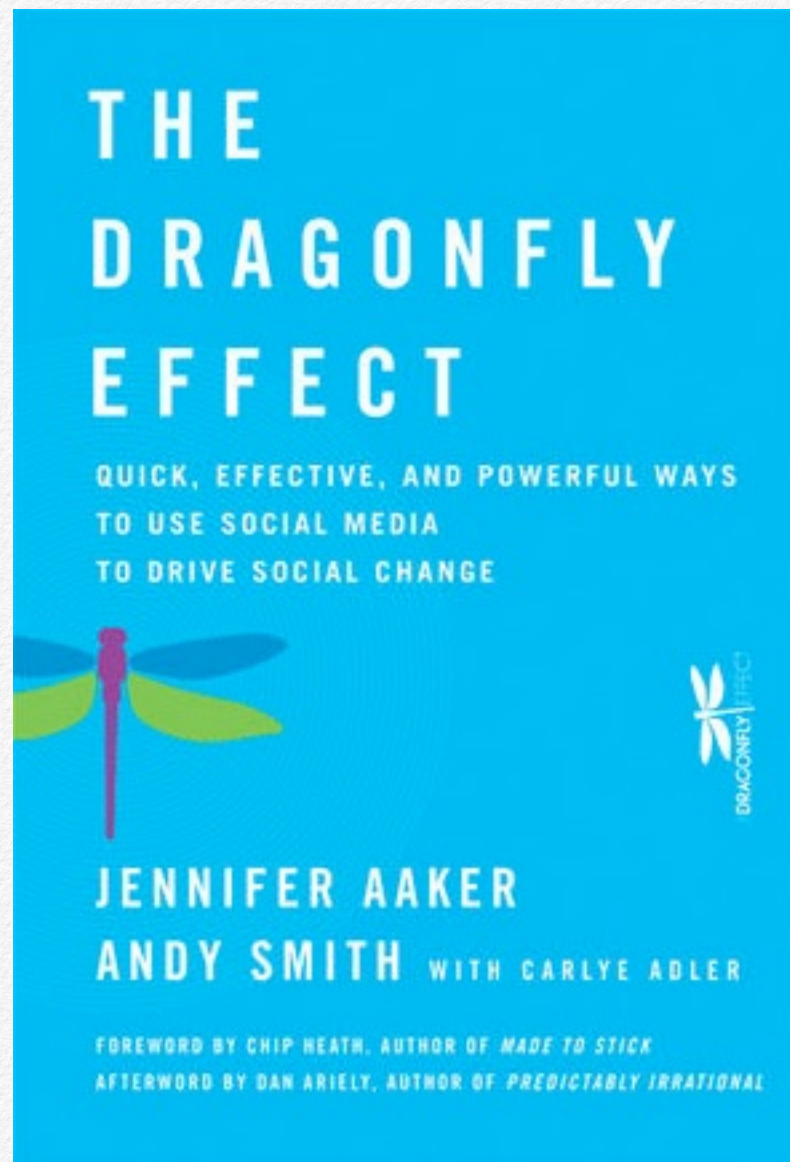
2012 signs and posters is to take place April 20, about a month after the release of the film. The final few moments have three direct ways to help, including sharing the video.

“There are three things you can do right now:

- 1. Sign the pledge to show your support*
- 2. Get the bracelet and the Action Kit*
- 3. Sign up for Tri to donate a few dollars a month. And join our army for peace.*

Above all, share this movie online. It's free.”

The Dragonfly Effect



Why the Dragonfly model?

Every marketer trying to stay on top of digital trends wishes for a magic formula to make a campaign viral. When the video sharing platform YouTube and its cute kittens and sneezing pandas first caught on, the rhyme and reason for crafting a video to appeal to the masses seemed random. But the potential value for uncovering some sort of secret to success was huge. People began studying the campaigns that catch on and formulas began to materialize. There may not yet be a magic formula, but one particularly thought-out, researched model for making a viral campaign can be found in “The Dragonfly Effect” by Jennifer Aaker and Andy Smith.

“The Dragonfly Effect” suggests four areas that must work simultaneously (like the wings of a dragonfly must move) in order for a social media campaign to effectively “take flight.” Those four areas are: Focus, Grab Attention, Engage and Take Action.

Examining Kony 2012 using the “The Dragonfly Effect” model, allows for a better understanding of which elements made it the success that it was—and therefore which motivators provoke viewers to share digitally.

FOCUS

Humanistic
Actionable
Testable
Clarity
Happiness

GRAB ATTENTION

Get Personal
Deliver the Unexpected
Visualize Your Message
Make a Visceral Connection

INTERACTIVE 1.1 The Dragonfly Model

WING ONE · FOCUS »

*Identify a single, concrete,
measurable goal*

WING TWO · GRAB ATTENTION »

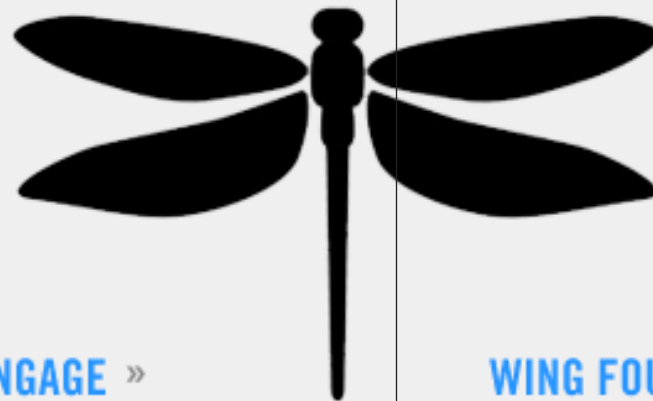
Make someone look

WING THREE · ENGAGE »

Foster personal connection

WING FOUR · TAKE ACTION »

Enable and empower other



ENGAGE

Tell a story
Empathy
Be Authentic
Match the Media

TAKE ACTION

Make it Easy
Make it Fun
Tailor
Be Open

Overview

Kony and the Dragonfly

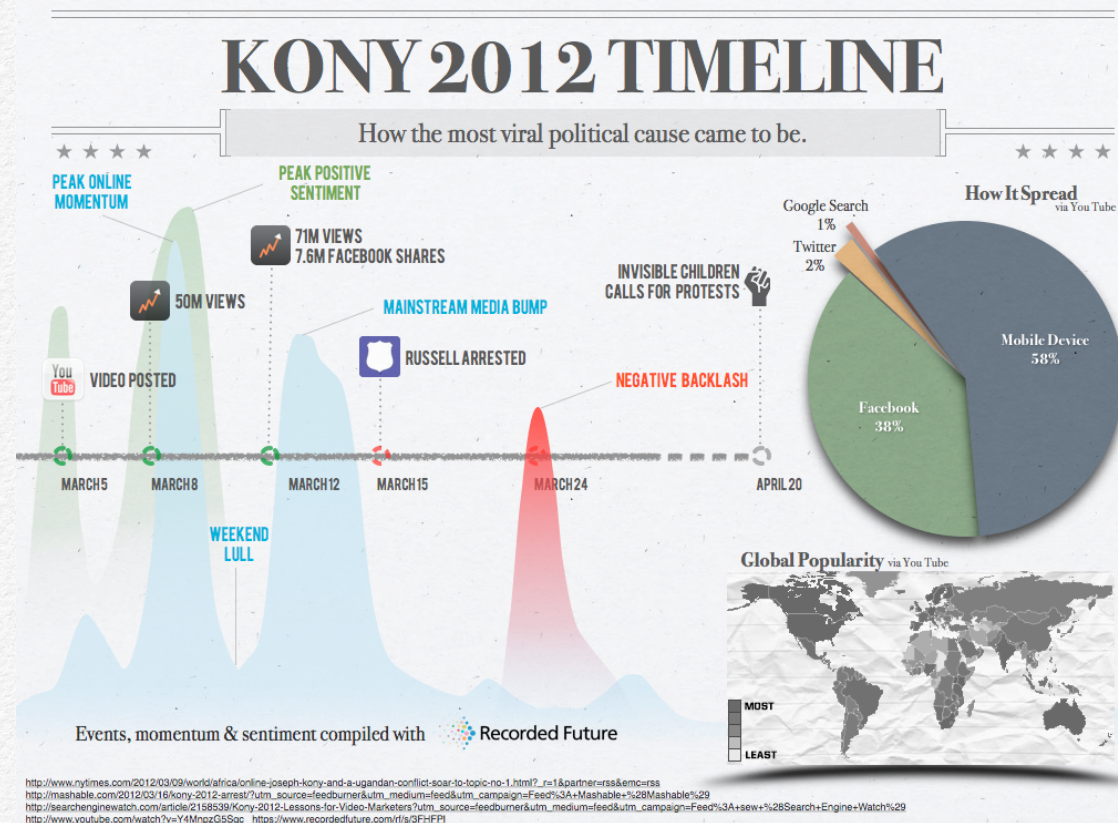
Every marketer trying to stay on top of digital trends wishes for a magic formula to make a campaign viral. When the video sharing platform YouTube and its cute kittens and sneezing pandas first caught on, the rhyme and reason for crafting a video to appeal to the masses seemed random. But the potential value for uncovering some sort of secret to success was huge. People began studying the campaigns that catch on and formulas began to materialize. There may not yet be a magic formula, but one particularly thought-out, researched model for making a viral campaign can be found in “The Dragonfly Effect” by Jennifer Aaker and Andy Smith.

“The Dragonfly Effect” suggests four areas that must work simultaneously (like the wings of a dragonfly must move) in order for a social media campaign to effectively “take flight.” Those four areas are: Focus, Grab Attention, Engage and Take Action.

It was that kind of forethought demonstrated in the book that went into a recent campaign by a nonprofit called Invisible Children (IC), working to end and repair the violence resulting from ongoing rebel wars in east and central Africa. The campaign, called Kony 2012, exploded in popularity at a faster rate than any other video before it. It gained international attention at unprecedented rates (Visible Measures, 2012).

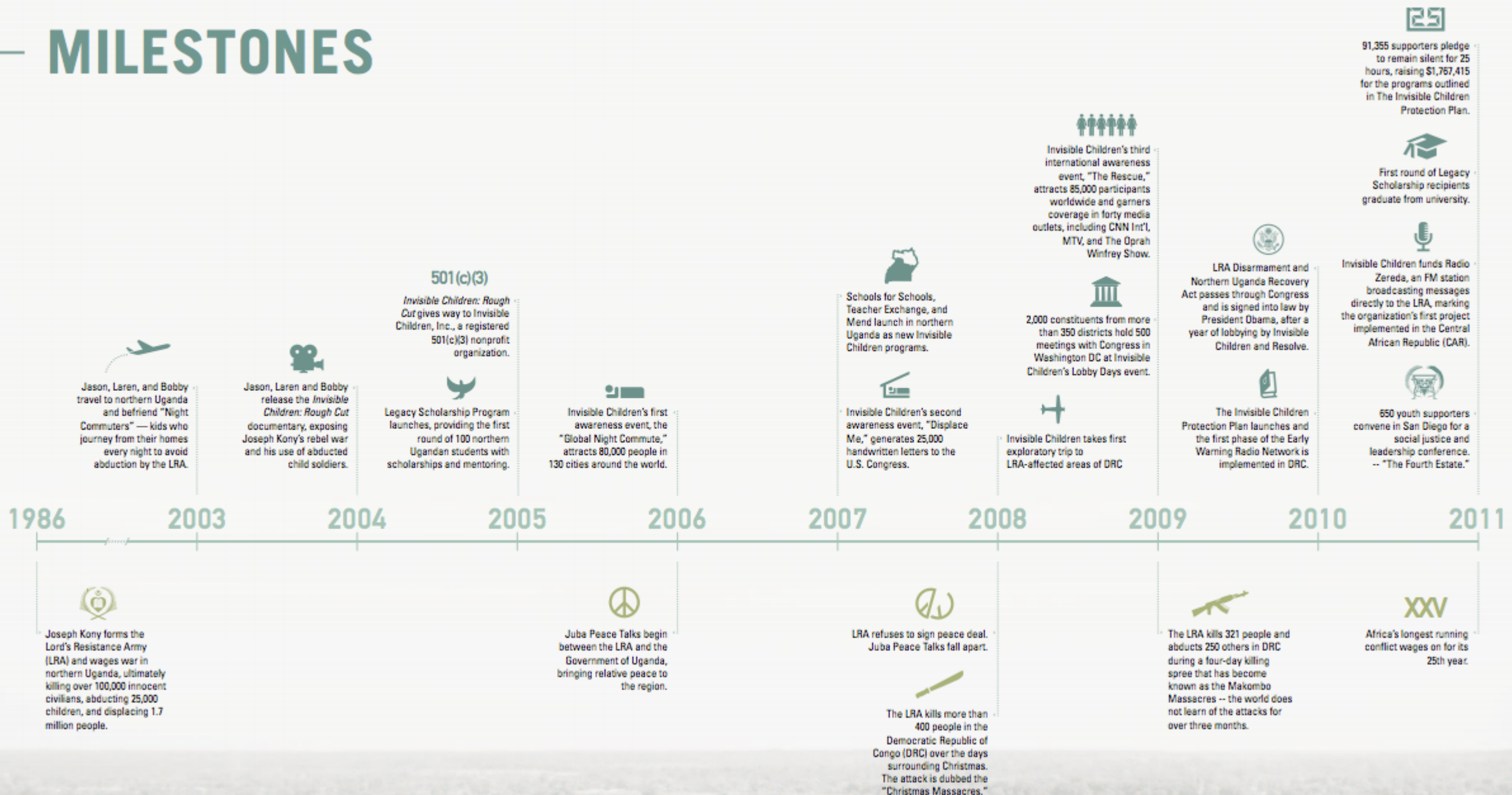
Examining Kony 2012 using the “The Dragonfly Effect” model, allows for a better understanding of which elements made it the success that it was—and therefore which motivators provoke

viewers to share digitally. That the model is so evident within the film shows the importance of forethought in any campaign. Significantly the motivations claimed by “The Dragonfly Effect” of digital viewers are validated through Kony 2012. And additionally, because the success of raising awareness was so unprecedented, a closer look at the movement can also inform future creators of social media movements.



From the 2011 Invisible Children Annual Report:

MILESTONES



Focus

HATCH

1. Humanistic
2. Actionable
3. Testable
4. Clarity
5. Happiness

Focus

“The better world we want is coming, it’s just waiting for us to stop at nothing.” –Kony 2012

To introduce the first wing, Focus, “The Dragonfly Effect” encourages campaign creators to remember the mnemonic ‘hatch’: humanistic, actionable, testable, clarity and happiness.

Some element of all five can be found in the Kony 2012 campaign. In 29 minutes, the film doesn’t fail to lead to a single focus: Stop Joseph Kony, but it does allow some room for various other actionable focuses. Undoubtedly, this campaign had an intended focus from the start, seven years ago when it was just an idea in documentarian Russell’s head. The complexity of that buildup perhaps reflects the time the organization spent failing to attract the volume of attention they wanted. In fact the film caught some



criticism for confusing or hiding actual facts within the film, and this could have easily been caused by an effort to focus simply on one actionable message.

Framed by the goal to Stop Kony seen more consistently throughout each element of the social media campaign (signage, website copy, Tweets, posts, blog entries) than in the film, the film broke down a few areas of focus in each of its three parts (see film overview). Each part had its own focus, one building on the other until it boiled down to the Call to Action section. Using 'hatch' is helpful to demonstrate the elements that brought the film into focus.

Humanistic

The Dragonfly model urges campaigners to think about who their intended audience is and relate to them as humans.

Intended audience - From Jason Russell Q&A: (Morgan, 2012)

The intention of the movie from the very beginning was to make a 20-30 minute piece telling the audience exactly what the facts are and what exactly they can do in order to see this conflict end. And I feel like we've done that.

Actual audience - From Jedidiah Jenkins: (Jefferson, 2012)

Our films weren't made to be scrutinized by the Guardian. They were made to get young people involved in some of the world's worst crimes.

As is evident in the quotations from IC representatives above, the audience for Kony 2012 was meant to be the same audience the organization has been focused on since its founding: youth. This focus influenced many aspects of the film including the look and feel and the simplification of language and perhaps oversimplification of the situation in Africa. Additionally, the filmmakers intended the film to be sent second-hand to 20 culture-makers and 12 policy-makers.

Interestingly, the actual audience only began as the intended audience. But quickly Kony 2012's popularity overflowed from teens to college students and their parents. With enough viewership and the involvement of movie stars and Oprah, the media began paying attention. Scholars and those with vested interest in Uganda all over the world were suddenly very involved with the film. Kony 2012 became impossible to ignore on any social network or news source. In reality, the actual audience became anyone with internet access.

A clear focus clears the way for willingness to act. So what were all those humans to do with this information?

Actionable

At the beginning, don't focus on that long-term macro goal. Instead, focus on your tactical micro goals so that you will have a clear sense of progress. --"The Dragonfly Effect," (Aaker & Smith, 2010, p. 24)

Again, one of the biggest criticisms the film began to receive was that it oversimplified or perhaps in some cases misrepresented the facts about the LRA conflict in Africa. Interestingly, oversimplification is exactly what makes a good viral campaign, according to the Dragonfly model. Anything too complicated

gets shrugged off as too much work or has the risk of seeming overwhelming. A clear focus leading to a manageable action allows people to stick with their initially piqued interest and want to do something more.

Kony 2012 considered this, admittedly and evidently. This was exactly their intent. As, Jenkins put it:

"What we did was paint

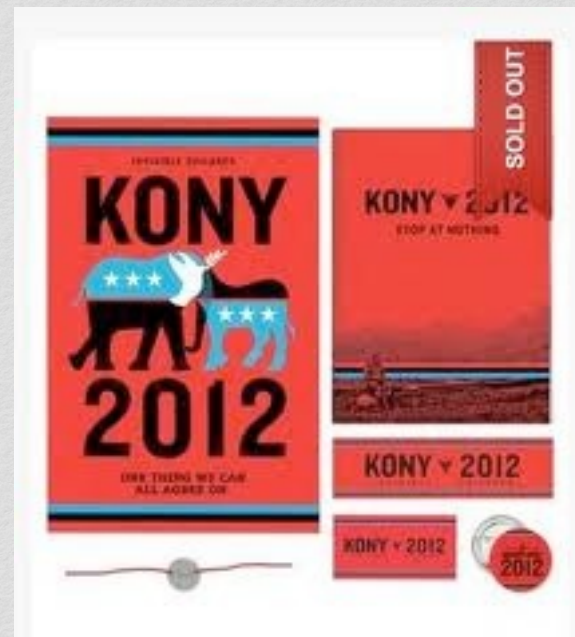
moral clarity and provide direct action steps. There are no credits or anything else. We presented the problem and then ended the film with three steps to help people make a change. That resonates with people. The third step was as simple as sharing the film. People can do that." (Jefferson, 2012)

The problem was presented and so was the solution, or at least the beginning of a solution. The film presented the initial steps simply so that anyone could do them. Kony 2012 presented multiple goals giving options for varying degrees of engagement. The ultimate and most obvious was to first create awareness. Then there was a more veiled ask for funds through the purchase of an Action Kit. The name alone reflects the simplicity of the call to action. The action kit was specifically for one day of action, which was part two of the campaign: Cover the Night.

*"All of these efforts will culminate on one day, April 20th when we cover the night.
This is the day when we will meet at sundown and we will blanket the town
demanding justice on every corner..."*

There were tangible actions, but all were an effort to contribute to making Kony famous, or simply put, raising awareness. It gave vague ideas about how that would lead to stopping Kony, but—as the Dragonfly model recommends—those pieces would be considered later.

The Action Kit



The bottom line is that by focusing the film on an actionable goal, it was more likely to be successful virally. The clear call to action at the end of the film (see overview) made this problem seem conquerable by the power of the masses with Internet access.

Testable

Several elements of the Kony 2012 campaign were testable. Its popularity was measurable in terms of video viewers, shares, celebrity Twitter mentions, trending hashtags, overall presence on social and traditional media outlets, and purchases of action kits. In fact, since March 5 (when the film was first released) the Kony 2012 site keeps a running tally of three quantifiable things: countries involved, people who signed their pledge of support, and total film views.

On April 10 the numbers were as follows:

Additionally in the first month, many news outlets measured even more than those elements, putting together graphics about the success that Kony 2012 saw (Visible Measures, 2012). Mashable officially named it the most viral video in history based on research by Visible Measures indicating Kony 2012's YouTube video took less time than any other to reach 100 million views (Wasserman, 2012).

Another testable measure of success was the participation rate of the call to action: Cover the Night. The world was supposed to wake up on April 21 to public spaces plastered in red. That morning 14,905 photos had been registered through IC's official event site (Cover the night, 2012). The Invisible Children sites demonstrated that people took part, but beyond those who reported back to IC directly, participation numbers aren't as measurable. The mentions on social media were obviously and sig-

nificantly less noticeable than during the week of Kony 2012's release. Media response was minimal.



Clarity

“If my son were kidnapped and forced to kill it would be all over the news. So we are making Kony world news by redefining the propaganda we see all day, every day that dictates who and what we pay attention to.” –Jason Russell in Kony 2012

The goals were to stop Kony, to make him famous and to do so by telling as many people as possible. And these goals would be accomplished by telling celebrities and policy-makers, specifically and by spreading the word through posters, bracelets and social media.

Happiness

“We share what we love and it reminds us of what we all have in common.” –Kony 2012

“The Dragonfly Effect” encourages campaign makers to ask themselves if their campaign is apparently meaningful to them. Is their campaign focused on connecting the mission to their own happiness?

This is perhaps the truest and most ultimately problematic acknowledgement made by Kony 2012 filmmaker Jason Russell. The empathy he created in order to grab attention and engage his audience (discussed in detail below) was only accomplish-

able by first laying bare his own connections to this issue and demonstrating how his own life happiness and that of his friends—both American and Ugandan—was clearly stated by him in various outlets and was also obviously apparent in his earnestness.

INTERACTIVE 1.2 Letter from 2011 Invisible Children Annual Report (pre-Kony 2012)

Dear Friends and Family of the Fourth Estate,

As most of you know by now, I am an emotional person. I'm often dramatic and prone to exaggerate. I know all of this, but I'm telling you the truth and it's from my gut.

The four days at the Fourth Estate with all of you were the most formative in my life so far.

The internal anthem from behind the scenes was, “Exceed expectations and leave them wanting more.” We at Invisible Children had no idea it would exceed even our own expectations and leave us wanting more as well. We thought we were coming together to teach all of you the way forward...and you instead taught all of us (including the speakers) what the future is going to look like.

The reason these four days were so meaningful to me many days and maybe even years from now will figure out. But there were things I was experiencing and hearing and feeling that were beyond imagination.

I ran into the dynamically glowing Carly Parmer in the hallways of Invisible Children, and she said it best, “There are no words to describe The Fourth Estate. I told my mom and my friends, you now just have to watch me live. My actions and life will be the words.”

I want to share this definition with all of you:

Intention: An act of determining mentally upon some action or result. The end or object intended; purpose.

Right now, ask yourself...and write it down. Right now. What is the intention of your day? What is the intention of your friendship with your dad? What is the intention of your

LETTER
FROM
RUSSELL
CO-FOUNDER

In Earnest

Faith in youth

Grab attention

1. Get Personal
2. Deliver the Unexpected
3. Visualize Your Message
4. Make a Visceral Connection

GRAB ATTENTION

“The next 27 minutes are an experiment. But in order for it to work, you have to pay attention.” –Kony 2012

Kony 2012 caught the attention of more than 100 million viewers. The Dragonfly model dissects “grab attention” into four steps: personal, unexpected, visual, and visceral. By telling the story through the eyes of Americans with emotionally jarring imagery in combination with excellent footage and graphics, the Kony 2012 video made a concerted effort to do all four things.

Get Personal

“Every single person in the world started this way. He didn’t choose where or when he was born. But because he’s here, he matters.” –Kony 2012 [02:22]

Framed around the story of a boy being born in America. The blonde-haired, Caucasian child looks like a transplant from “The Waltons” or “Leave it to Beaver.” Everything about his normalness reflects the American Dream and that makes it personal to much of America. He is the Hollywood representation of an American son. But he’s not just any boy, he’s the son of filmmaker and narrator Jason Russell.

The story is personal because it is framed through the eyes of this relatable American child. And it is personal because it is the son of the man telling his story. Their family is a metaphor for viewers' families. And Gavin is a metaphor for the children whose deaths Russell is urging viewers to care about and prevent in stopping the leader of rebel armies in Africa, Joseph Kony.



Gavin Russell looks at a picture of their Ugandan friend Jacob drawing a clear parallel between their lives.

Deliver the Unexpected

The film's contents weren't exactly unexpected. It told a story in a mostly traditional format presenting a problem, building drama and presenting the resolution. Some of the details were likely unexpected as far as the actual crimes taking place and the demonstration of how legislation gets passed. But those weren't probably as effective as the unexpectedness of the video as a concept.

The name of the game in viral videos is the shorter the better. This film ran just shy of 30 minutes. The surprise that such a long film could catch on likely contributed to pushing the momentum forward.

Visualize Your Message

Jason Russell was a documentary filmmaker before he was the founder of a nonprofit. That was the original reason he traveled to Uganda and learned about the rebel wars. That skill is appar-





ent in every aspect of the Kony 2012 story, especially the visuals. The footage is shot in High Definition. Images are sprinkled throughout and when they are, they

have artistic filters that work together with the footage and each other aesthetically. In other words, the images are crisp; the colors are bright.

The imagery is also effective in its content. Watching young children tormented and seeing their sweat and blood sends a specific message. And that's a message that effectively grabs attention.

The other people found in the story visually, are the actor and his family. They can fairly be called attractive by current standards. Take comedian and news talk show host, Jon Stewart's word for it:

"It turns out the hot new viral sensation is a 30-minute YouTube video directed and be-handsomed by Jason Russell," Stewart said on his "The Daily Show" soon after the film had been released. (cite)

In addition to the pleasing aesthetic of the video, the visuals of the campaign in general are cohesive and meant to work together. It's a brand, Kony 2012. There are posters, T-shirts and bracelets targeted to youth, but clean and crisp enough to be respected by adults, maybe even politicians. They contain politically symbolic representations of democrats and republicans.

All of these visuals worked together to make Kony 2012 aesthetically attention-grabbing.

Make a Visceral Connection

Beyond the visuals, Kony 2012 worked to elicit a response from other senses, especially in regard to its soundtrack.

The music choices also reflected a trained documentarian. It included popular songs, especially those that would resonate with teens engaged in alternative pop culture. The musical shifts provoked visceral connection through timing.

That was especially evident during the ending, call to action portion of the film. At 25:24 the music pumps up and the lyrics say, "I can't stop." The lyrical message connects viewers to the campaign, the goal, to Stop Kony. The upbeat song plays to footage of teens hanging posters up all over major cities. And the music comes down again as Russell transitions to telling viewers how

we can take part in the momentum.

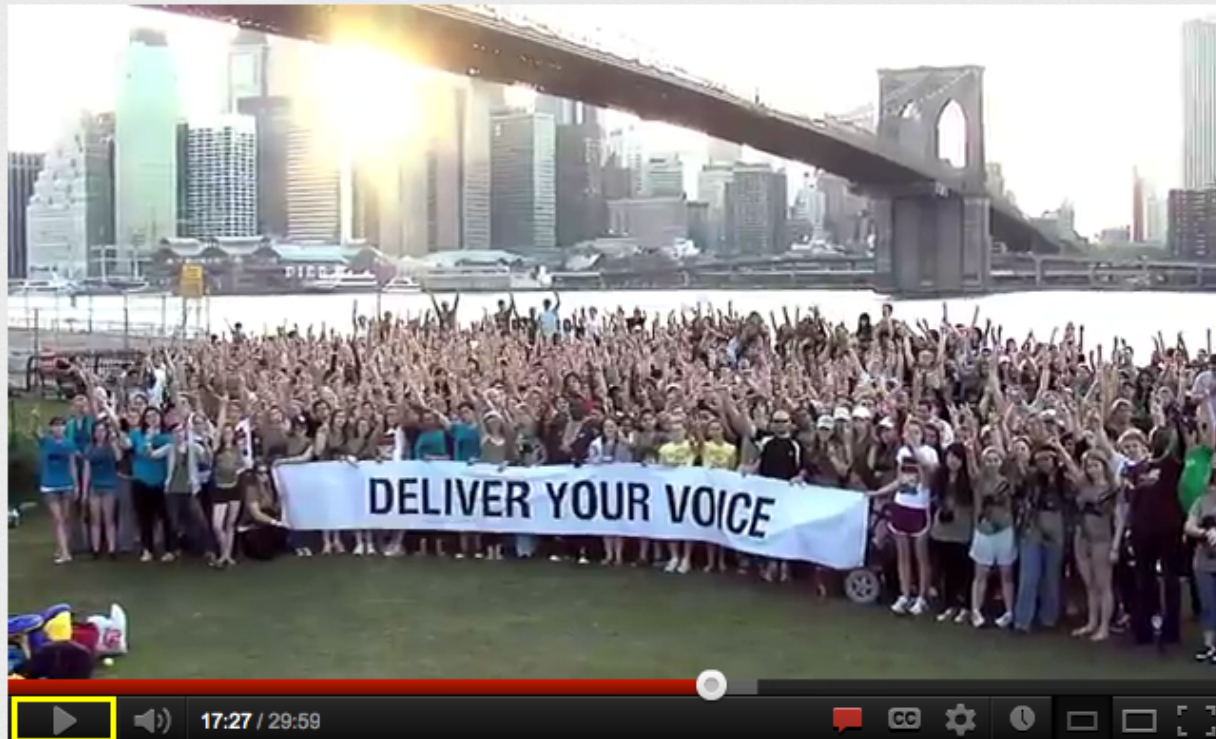
The tone of the music changes effectively with the tone of Russell's voice and more importantly his message. It's serious when he calls to action, it's emotional when there are images of violence, it's light-hearted when Gavin is speaking or shown and, at the most important moments, when the video asks people to act, the music is upbeat and motivational. Very few moments include words, but when they do, they sync with the overall message. All of these elements work as a whole to hold attention from beginning to end.

KONY 2012

INVISIBLE CHILDREN

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Engage

Elements Of Engagement

1. Tell a story
2. Empathy
3. Be Authentic
4. Match the Media



Engage

The third wing of the model says the campaign has to get viewers to do more than just share. There are a four things to keep in mind while doing that.

Tell a story

Kony 2012 is undoubtedly a story. Partly it's told from through a father seeing this horror through the eyes of his young son. And then the story is shifted to another, comparable young boy who inspired Russell to care about stopping Kony and who is meant in this context to inspire and engage others.

Empathize

The story within Kony 2012 is set up to call young Americans to empathize with the children, mothers, fathers and families affected by the rebel wars in Africa. There is a shot of his son, Gavin, being born, representing the beginning of life. That's a moment everyone can relate to.

And then around the 2:00 the story begins. Russell says,

“Every single person in the world started this way. He didn’t choose where or when he was born. But because he’s here, he matters.”

If we believe we matter, it seems to say, then shouldn’t we believe everyone matters? And with that, viewers have an access point of empathy to care about whoever it is that the film will demonstrate needs help. Because if we matter, they matter.

This is a truly all-encompassing call to empathy. Empathy simply for those who are alive has an obviously unending reach.

Be Authentic

The authenticity of the film has been the element under the most scrutiny in the public. Were the filmmakers demonstrating a White Savior’s complex? Did the organization spend too much of donations on salaries and branding? Did the story misconstrue the facts? These are questions that can, for the most part, only be answered apart from the actual video.



In the moment of watching Kony 2012, of interacting with the campaign at its core, the authenticity works to engage, whether or not it is an illusion. The authenticity is created by the passionate looks on the Ugandans faces, the determined voice of Jason Russell and the innocence of his son Gavin. Its message is meant to resonate with as many as possible because it is real. It is authentic.

The authenticity can be felt from the final message that isn’t easy to disagree with because it calls upon truths presumed to be universal:

“We are not just studying human history, we are shaping it.

At the end of my life, I want to say that the world we’ve left behind is one that Gavin can be proud of. A place that doesn’t allow Joseph Kony and child soldiers.

A place where children, no matter where they live have a childhood. Free from fear.

The better world we want is coming, it’s just waiting for us to stop at nothing.” --Kony 2012

Match the Media

According to Invisible Children staff member Jedidiah Jenkins, Kony 2012 was originally made to appeal to teens. Jenkins said

they also intentionally used the platforms where they believed teens would be: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube. Social media is visually part of the film too. The history of the nonprofit is demonstrated through Russell's Facebook timeline. The story of a new time for activism is told through YouTube video clips and shots of people clicking 'share' and 'like' on common social networking outlets.

Invisible Children has an established presence on every major and many minor social media platforms: website, blog, Tumblr, Vimeo, Pinterest, Instagram and Followgram.

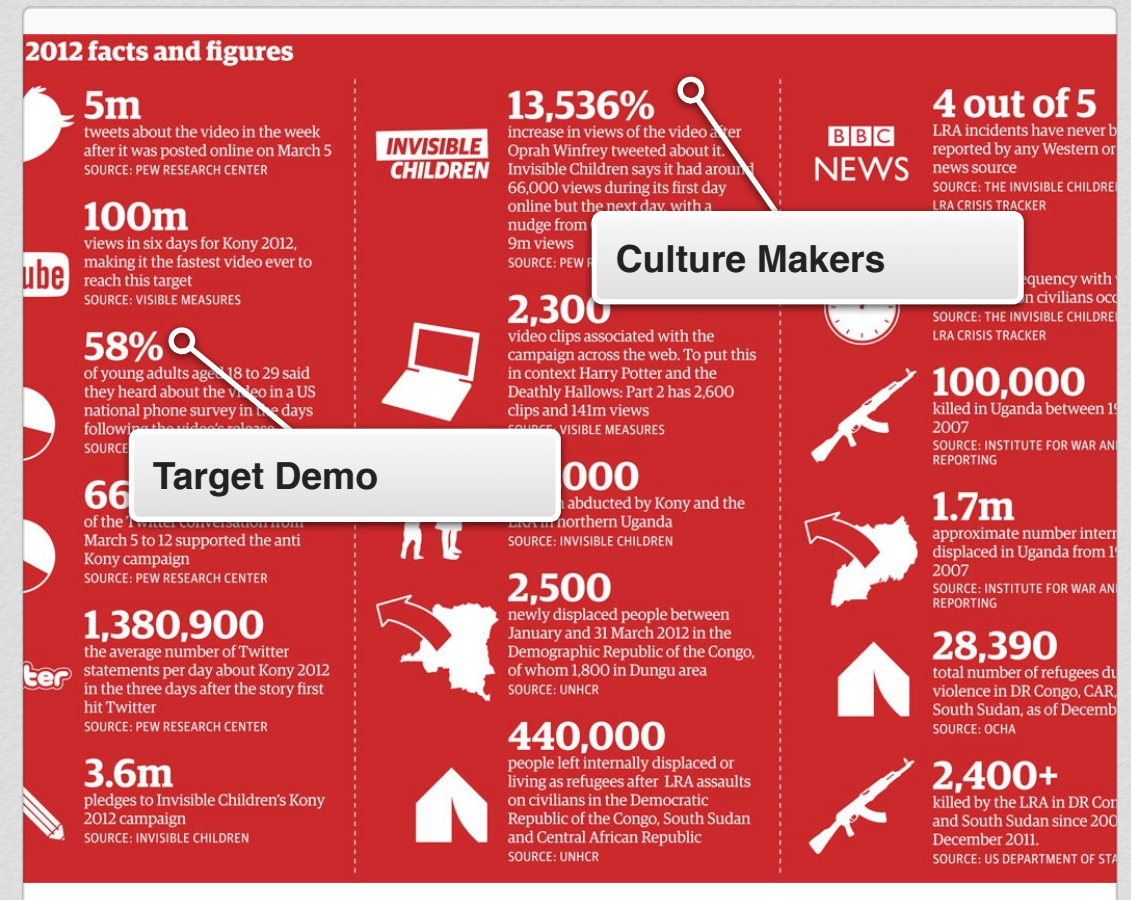
And after it started to take off, the media the campaign found itself on shifted out of their control. Suddenly it was on "The Daily

Jason Russell parodied on South Park



Show," "Colbert," NPR, The NY Times, Washington Post. "South Park" made an episode to parody it. In fact, it's probably easier to count the media that didn't mention it.

INTERACTIVE 1.3 Click to zoom for stats about Kony 2012's digital success.



With focus, attention and engagement securely in place (for the most part) the film just needed one thing: a call to action.

Take Action

Call To Action

1. **Make it Easy**
2. **Make it Fun**
3. **Tailor**
4. **Be Open**

Take Action

“You must specify what you want people to do right now, even as you anticipate and provide further opportunities for them to become even more involved.” –“The Dragonfly Effect,” p. 118-9

As was addressed earlier, degree of response is reflected in many aspects of a campaign. Two major elements are clarity of the goal and ease with which the action can be taken. The clarity of the goal, as discussed earlier, was mostly in place as far as just the video and its macro-goals were concerned. The ease of action came into play in the final call to action section of the video. The Dragonfly model suggests remembering four things when making a plea: make it easy, make it fun, tailor it to your audience and being open. With these in mind, the small action can lead to a long-term relationship with the organization or a second action.

Make it Easy

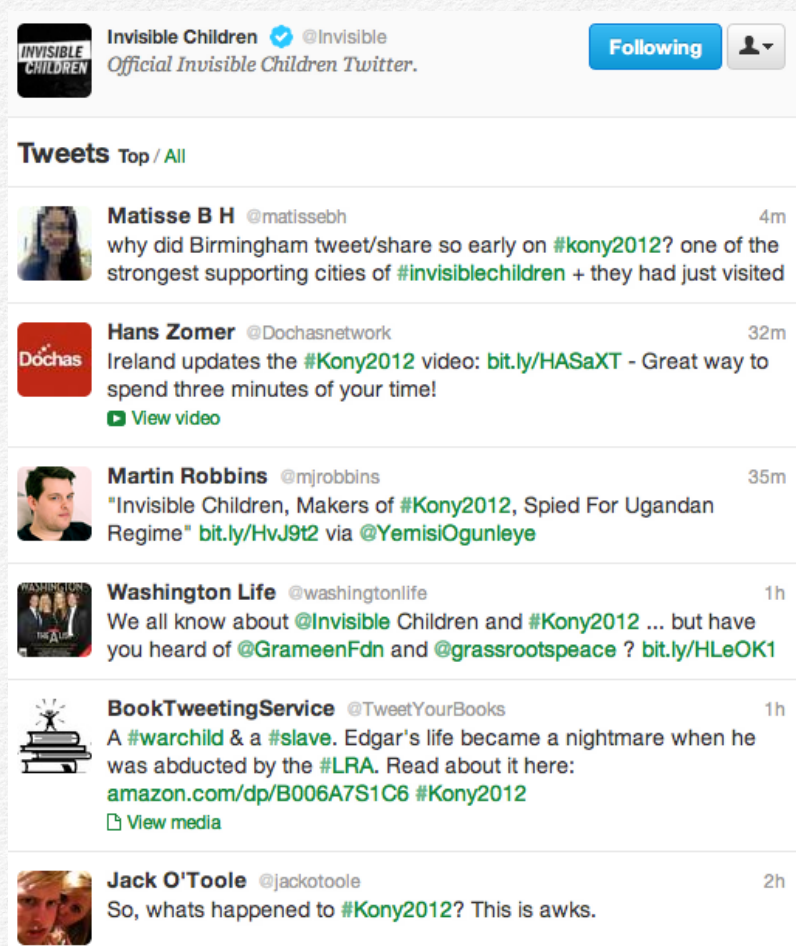
There's some tough material in Kony 2012. At face value, IC is asking common people to get involved in a war. That, for many people would not seem like an easy choice to make. They are asking people to take action against a violent war criminal, to involve themselves in the matters of the International Criminal Court and even to contribute to US involvement in such a war. If

considered from certain angles, Kony 2012 is asking people to put their lives in danger.

But the large majority of people who watched the film presumably did not feel this way because they shared the film with much different intent.

Even though there was some criticism in regard to the film, the praise was much higher in quantity. As of April 21, 2012, the YouTube upload of the film had received

1,386,540 likes in comparison to 148,145 dislikes. And if the content of the reactionary videos and social media references are any indication, the disliking of the video largely reflect two areas of disagreement mostly with the filmmaker as a person. One is that filmmaker and IC co-founder Russell had a public breakdown that involved drugs, nudity and was captured on



camera. The other is that he was accused of being too arrogant and that he was thinking of himself before he was thinking of Ugandans.

So the fact that the reaction was mostly positive (in that the majority of people were willing to hit “share”) and that the negative feedback was largely focused on the personal actions of the co-founder, reflects the simplicity with which Kony 2012 managed to request action on a very complicated, potentially dangerous situation. The solution was presented so easily that people were willing to do it, despite a lot of potential obstacles.

Here’s how easy Kony 2012 made its call to action:

“There are three things you can do right now:

1. Sign the pledge to show your support
2. Get the bracelet and the Action kit.
3. Sign up for Tri to donate a few dollars a month. And join our army for peace.

Above all, share this movie online. It’s free.”

Make it Fun

“All of these efforts will culminate on one day, April 20th when we cover the night.

This is the day when we will meet at sundown and we will blan-

ket the town
demanding justice on every corner...”

“The Dragonfly Effect” encourages campaigners to consider how to incorporate competition and game theory into their campaigns. Kony 2012 doesn’t apparently have this intention. But the model suggests that above all the success comes from the action being fun. This is more on the mark for Kony 2012.

There’s an action kit with slick looking colors and the sort of cause bracelets made popular by Lance Armstrong. Even better, the bracelets have ID numbers in them so you can digitally register yourself as a supporter and geotag your poster placement in real time. You can share the experience through technology with people across the world.

Tailor

In addition to the fun and ease, the same call to action won’t necessarily appeal to all people. The Dragonfly model recommends tailoring it to different types (Aaker & Smith, 2010).

Kony 2012 does this by incorporating different layers of goals and access points for action, (which have been discussed in more detail in the Focus and Engage wings). But they also intentionally appealed to what the Dragonfly model dubs as “con-

nectors.” Connectors are the people who have the widest circles of influence. In the case of Kony 2012, this was the hand-chosen 20 celebrities and 12 policy-makers. The list included some of the people with the most followers on Twitter—like Rihanna, Justin Bieber and Stephen Colbert—and also those who are known for being the most influential and active on those platforms, like Kristen Bell.

By tailoring their campaign to a layer of goals, and targeting connectors, Kony 2012 creators demonstrated careful forethought in laying the groundwork for urging action on their agenda.

KONY 2012



Be Open

“We WANT you to see everything we are doing, because we are proud of it.” –InvisibleChildren.com

Transparency is a popular buzzword in the language of today’s digital interactions. It’s hard to hide much of anything when things can be so easily made digital and shared online with a huge audience in an instant. But the Dragonfly model urges campaigners to use transparency to their advantage. It’s better to be honest and open about something negative, the reasoning goes, than for the public to think you have something to hide.

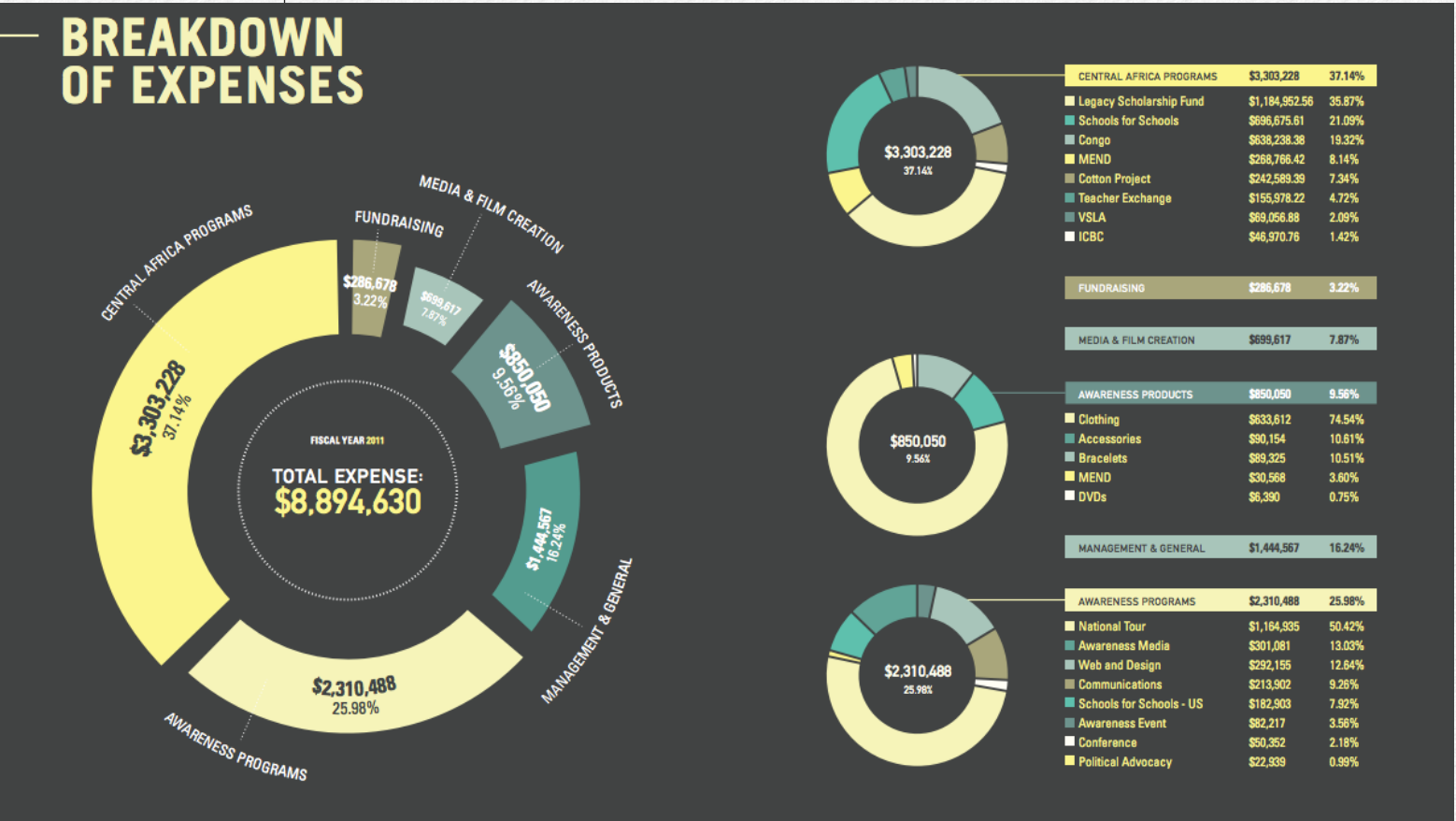
When Invisible Children’s Kony 2012 video campaign was suddenly in front of an audience of more than 100 million people worldwide, that audience also meant an unexpected and sudden increase in people scrutinizing their actions.

As has been discussed, Kony 2012 garnered a sizable critical response. One of the major criticisms initially involved transparency. This was true so much so that IC quickly went on the defensive about their operations, their budgets and in one highly-discussed instance, a photo of some of the team holding weapons with soldiers from

the Sudan People’s Liberation Army.

Within 24 hours of a Washington Post article about the photo and within three days of the initial launch of the campaign, IC’s team compiled an official response, a personal statement and conducted interviews about the topic. On their website they included charts and graphics about their spending, in a seeming attempt to remain as transparent as possible.

This was almost certainly a calculated decision to embrace transparency before attempting to squash negative PR.



Conclusion

Analysis

By applying the concepts of “The Dragonfly Effect” to Invisible Children’s Kony 2012 campaign, we can see how they contributed to its initial viral success. In this instance, nearly every suggestion or tip offered by the model for acquiring an audience through social media was established and seems likely to have been the foundation of an effective campaign.

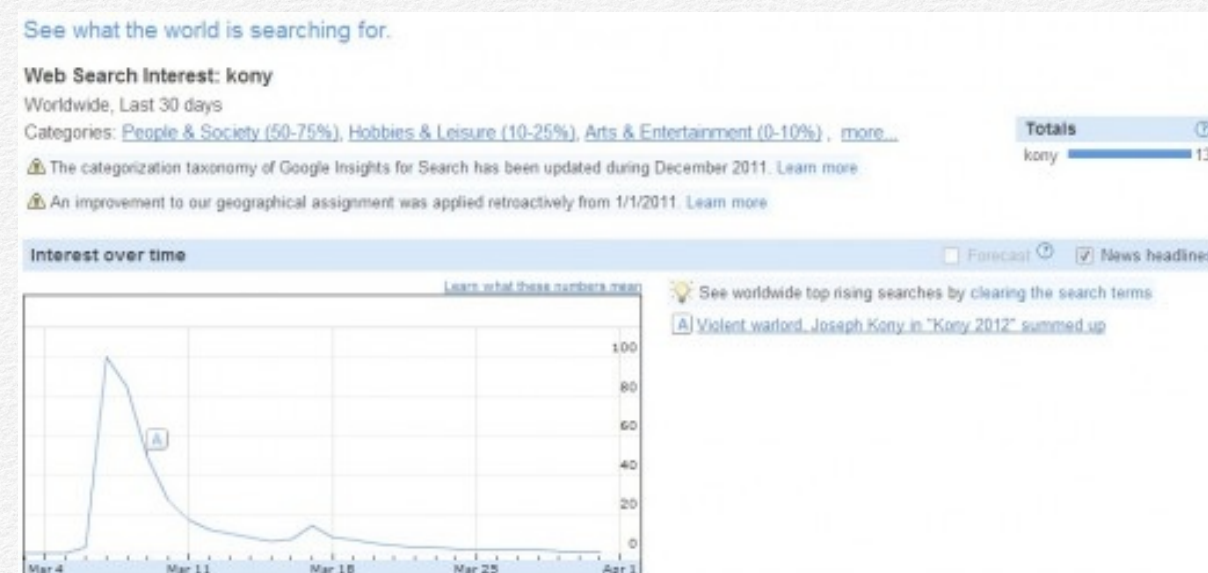
But while, by all measures, the campaign was effective in drawing attention to the plight of Invisible Children, it wasn’t quite as effective in finding positive feedback and committed follow-through of new supporters.

This might reflect the unpredictable nature of digital movements. It might be easy to pinpoint a few things that could have been planned differently. But for the most part any ideas for its failure would be supposition. Because the holy grail of driving social change through social media was previously thought to be exactly what IC accomplished. Yet, things are not roses for them. In fact the numbers are showing that the attention they’ve drawn dropped drastically and then flat-lined (chart).

What happens after a campaign becomes viral is hardly addressed by the Dragonfly Model. There is some talk of turning followers into long-term supporters, but it clearly isn’t in line with the focus of the model. The model is to get to viral success. Guidebooks for what happens after that are harder to find. Be-

cause no campaign has ever caught on so quickly, inherently no examples are available for IC to look to.

What IC achieved through Kony 2012 is the stuff of internet/social media/nonprofit/Twitter etc. legend, but it would be a stretch to call the campaign a complete success and importantly what’s truly to come of it has yet to be seen. In fact, what’s to come quite possibly has yet to be charted.



<http://thenextweb.com/socialmedia/2012/04/02/graphed-the-rise-and-fall-of-people-caring-about-kony-and-the-ira/2012/>

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