Facebook is for dinosaurs:

The practices and motivations of storytellers in creative Facebook community groups

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Attestation of authorship

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

Signed:

November 2024

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Abstract

This study explores the motivations and practices of ordinary people who use social media to engage in storytelling in a creative Facebook community group. It specifically looks at the stories shared by members of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group which is made up of parents and caregivers who stage scenes with toy dinosaurs every night of November for their household members to find in the morning. They then post the dinosaur stories to the Dinovember Community Facebook Group.

In order to answer the research question, a qualitative research process was undertaken. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 members of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group and their posts to the group from November 2022 were collated. That data then underwent reflexive thematic analysis.

The findings revealed that social media storytellers use elements of seriality, world-building and character development to convey messages to their audiences through intentional text and image choices. They were motivated by a desire to identify as creative storytellers and to support fellow members of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group. Finally, their greatest challenges stemmed from the perceived pressure to deliver content of a high standard as well as social media issues such as posting fatigue, privacy and algorithm concerns. This study suggests that elements of previous research into brand storytelling on social media are relevant to non-brand storytelling and it highlights areas for further investigation as well as possible applications for the practice and teaching of social media storytelling and engagement.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Social media and user engagement

Media environments are not so much about "being known but about being seen" (Bauman, 2010, p. 20) and no environment enables so many people to put forth their individuality more than social media (De Fina, 2016). Social media makes its participants active through its design whereby people are no longer passive consumers of content, but active participants and co-producers through their online interactions. People can connect and interact with news, brands, communities and their personal networks via social media 24 hours a day, and with brand posts able to garner upward of a million likes and 95,000 comments (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2020), online engagement behaviour has evidently become everyday practice (Rubio-Hurtado et al., 2022).

Social media enables any individual to form part of an active and participative audience when creating, sharing and interacting with content, and smartphones enable people to do so from anywhere (Rubio-Hurtado et al., 2022). Social media engagement ranges from simple levels of effort on the part of the participant (such as liking, sharing and commenting) to higher levels such as creating a video response to a post that requires producing user-generated content (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2020). Originally a marketing term, user-generated content (UGC) refers to content created by customers or brand advocates rather than the brand itself. Such content can include written posts, photos, videos, reviews, etc. (Ismagilova et al., 2020). UGC also makes up most of the content in social media groups that are not related to brands, for example niche-interest groups and fan groups that bring together people with shared interests (Kapri, 2021). In respect to both brand-related and non-brand-related groups, the content serves to engage the group members and encourages them to return and contribute and is therefore a useful member-retention tool (Han et al., 2020).

To learn more about how to attract and retain customers, engagement has been studied in many fields including psychology, education, management, communications and public relations,

marketing and information systems. One such example is Shahbaznezhad et al.'s study (2020) which looked at the engagement behaviour (such as liking and/or commenting) on more than a thousand Air New Zealand and Jetstar posts across a 12-month period. The findings supported the hypothesis that the interactive characteristics of engagement behaviour led to different levels of intensity - passive (low intensity) and active (high intensity), and those behaviours can also be positive or negative. Overall, it was found that active engagement behaviour was more positive for both the brand and the social media user than passive engagement (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2020) and the active engagement in Facebook Community Groups appears to reflect that, too.

1.1.1 Facebook Community Groups

Social media channel Facebook not only gives people individual accounts with which to create their own content and consume and engage with other people's content, but it also allows people to join communities where members share common interests or concerns (Mansour, 2020). While earlier online communities were usually established, monitored and sponsored by professional organisations, interest-group communities on Facebook are usually self-governed (Lupton, 2016). Here, participants are not merely consumers of content, but actively contribute to the creation of the group's material by posting to the page or responding to the posts of other group members. In examining a multicultural Facebook group of migrant mothers living in Sweden, Mansour (2020) found that community groups are gaining popularity and attract diverse members.

Such groups appoint administrators (colloquially known as *admins*) who control group membership, moderate content and may block members who violate the group guidelines that govern content and interaction (Mansour, 2020). These shared practices are often negotiated within the group as evidenced by Mansour's (2020) analysis of a conflict within the mothers' group over the hotly debated topic of vaccination.

Closed Facebook groups (such as the Dinovember Community Group which is the focus of this research - see 1.1.2) offer a space for more niche interests to be celebrated, shared and discussed. Closed groups can be searched, or a person can be invited to join, but one must be accepted by the administrators of the group to see the group posts and to interact (Bar-Ilan et al., 2020).

Bar-Ilan et al. (2020) joined closed Facebook groups to study the factors that enhanced engagement from within. Their research entailed coding 274 group members' engagement over two months for the number of posts they made, comments they posted and likes they bestowed on other members' posts and comments. Following this, the scholars conducted an online survey with the group members to understand their demographics, the importance of the group to them, their offline activity and their personality type. The research found that women and "older" participants (the study neglects to define an age range so it is unclear who is included in this group) who considered themselves willing to try new things are more likely to engage in social media group discussions (Bar-Ilan et al., 2020), which supports Gazit et al.'s (2019) finding that people with a higher level of openness to experience engage more in online groups.

Various studies (Herrero et al., 2004; Wang et al. 2018) have shown that active participation in online community groups enhances one's well-being, whereas lurking (reading posts without liking or commenting) in groups may undermine one's sense of well-being (Sun et al. 2014). Bar-Ilan et al. (2020) concluded that being in an online group strengthens the members' mutual identity and enhances the individual's self-esteem. Furthermore, active engagement within the group page is essential for maintaining the group's dynamic. Bar-Ilan et al. (2020) highlighted that "when Facebook groups are created 'naturally' and without coercion or necessity and members join voluntarily, members have interest in being more engaged since the topic of the group is particularly relevant to them." (p.10).

1.1.2 The Dinovember Facebook Community Group

A search of Facebook community groups shows that they often cater to interests such as health, hobbies, religious or political leanings, parenting, local geographic communities, education and fandom (including brands, celebrities and popular culture). However, some celebrate, encourage and support creative pursuits. One such group is the Dinovember Community Group, a relatively small, closed Facebook community group (with a membership of 4,900 as at 13 September 2024) for parents and caregivers who create the Dinovember tradition in their households or workplaces. Dinovember is a modern childhood tradition akin to Elf on the Shelf. Initiated by husband-and-wife duo Refe and Susan Tuma in 2012, the premise is that every night during November the household's toy dinosaurs come to life, wreak havoc and freeze when the humans awaken; they are then discovered by the children (Dinovember n.d.-a). In 2013 the Tumas blogged about their creative antics, and in 2014 they published the picture book *What the Dinosaurs Did Last Night* which prompted educators, librarians, museums and parents around the world to adopt the tradition (Dinovember, n.d.-b).

In August 2017 Susan Tuma created the Dinovember Community Facebook Group, for which she is still the administrator. The group's description is "Making messes and creating imaginative experiences" and it has three core group rules which are to do with being kind and courteous, not bullying or using hate speech, and not using the group for promotions or spam (Dinovember Community, n.d.). The group's membership is made up of Dinovember creators scattered around the globe and the page is most active during October (in the lead up to Dinovember) and November when members post stories about what their household's toy dinosaurs have done.

As a member since 2019, I identified this group as being ideal for this research due to its size, its reliance on user-generated content for survival and the fact that the majority of the posts involve a degree of social media storytelling.

1.2 Purpose, scope and importance of the research

The purpose of the present study is to investigate how ordinary social media users tell stories on Facebook community groups. It expands on the raft of research which has been conducted around brand storytelling and aims to contribute to a better understanding of how Facebook's 2.9 billion users worldwide (Facebook, n.d.) engage with the platform.

This research draws from existing literature concerning online or virtual communities as well as storytelling and creativity. The literature review reveals existing scholarship and gaps in understanding about the motivations, opportunities and challenges of storytelling through social media. Since most of the existing studies focus on branded content (Li & Xie, 2020; Lim & Childs, 2020; Lin et al., 2024; Shahbaznezhad et al., 2020) the current study acts as a foundation to explore user-generated content in social media communities. The existing literature about how stories are told on social media as opposed to traditional media was pertinent to this research. That led to an examination of scholarship about engagement and how creativity is measured, however much of that research focuses on branded content and groups.

Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the following research question was outlined:

> How do Dinovember participants engage with creative storytelling on its community Facebook group?

To answer the question, the study followed an interpretivist paradigm and a qualitative approach by examining data gathered from interviews with a selected sample of members of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group. Thirteen face-to-face (virtual) semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted along with gathering the posts those participants made to the Dinovember Community Facebook Group during November 2022.

The study is directed towards contributing to the research and practice of social media storytelling and creativity. Social media storytellers might use this research to refine their creative craft to better connect with their audiences, and the study adds value to the existing

body of knowledge by examining the storytelling motivations of ordinary Facebook users in a niche-interest creative community group as opposed to a branding-focussed group. In terms of social media challenges, it identifies key areas of concern that lead to social media fatigue which can impact the sustainability not just of Facebook community groups, but also of the social media platform which houses them. Overall, this thesis attempts to broaden the scope for future research by identifying under-examined areas of interest within the fields of social media engagement, storytelling and creativity.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This chapter introduces social media engagement, social media community groups and the particular group examined for this research as well as offering an overview of the purpose, scope and relevance of this study. Chapter two gives an in-depth review of the existing literature identifying how storytelling applies to social media platforms and the implications that has on how and why people tell and receive stories on social media. The chapter also discusses other studies that have looked at engagement and creativity within social media community groups and identifies gaps in the research that this study aims to address. Chapter three explains the methodology followed in this study. It outlines the qualitative technique of semi-structured in-depth interviews with an explanation of the sampling, data collection and data analysis and explains how the Facebook posts were obtained and analysed. Chapter four presents the reflexive thematic analysis of the interview and post results, explaining and exploring the data gathered, and chapter five provides a combined interpretation of the results and identifies areas for future research. Chapter six summarises the entire study, identifies the limitations of the research and recommends directions for further investigation.

Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the literature that exists in communication studies' scholarship on traditional storytelling and storytelling on social media platforms. The first section provides context as to how stories are constructed and why they are told, while the second section discusses how those constructions and motivations differ for stories told in the social media realm. It outlines the ways in which social media storytellers manage the impressions they make on their audience, how they apply creativity within the confines of a social media post, and it discusses the current research on the impact of social media fatigue and comparison. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature review and identifies the gaps in knowledge that guide this thesis.

2.2 What is storytelling?

People love stories. For millennia stories have been used to pass on knowledge, teach morals, and connect with each other. They bring meaning and colour to peoples' lives and are an important aspect of human activity (Pangborn et al., 2023). While traditionally those stories were passed down through word of mouth or performed to larger audiences collected in one place for a shared experience, Pangborn et al.'s (2023) analysis of the tweets of frontline healthcare providers during the COVID-19 pandemic shows that even when they are told via social media platforms, collective stories allow people to contextualise their life experiences and offer a framework by which to make meaning of experiences they may not encounter themselves.

In her examination of the various forms of storytelling from its origins to the post-industrial age, Benjamin (2006) explains that the word 'story' is rooted in the Indo-European word *ueid* which means to *look at* or *see*. In Sanskrit, the term is *veda*, meaning knowledge, and in Greek it is *eidos* which means an idea formed in the mind. So, it is clear that across cultures, storytelling is

a way to transfer knowledge about how to see the world. Mattingly and Garro (2000) sum stories up well as:

> "...the fundamental human way of giving meaning to experience. In both telling and interpreting stories, narrative mediates between an inner world of thought-feeling and another world of observable actions and states of affairs." (p.1).

In the early days of human evolution, stories ensured human survival by reinforcing cultural values and imparting previous learnings in a memorable way (Benjamin, 2006). However, in the modern world where almost all human knowledge is a mere click away, stories have become less about continuing human life and more about garnering an understanding of other people's experiences. We no longer need stories to tell us which plants are safe to eat, but we do need to be shown what it is like to approach life in different ways (Benjamin, 2006). Stories are still used to reinforce cultural values, both in people's private and working lives where organisations and brands use storytelling to reinforce corporate culture (Benjamin, 2006), and connect with stakeholders (Hurman, 2011).

Regardless of a story's purpose, it is a joint enterprise that requires a storyteller to encode meaning into it and then deliver it verbally, in written form, or visually, and an audience to receive the story, decode it, and then interpret it in order to make meaning from it drawing on their own experiences and world views (De Fina, 2016). A storyteller can use several methods, such as narrative and seriality, to construct and encode their message to engage their audience and ensure the story is received as it was intended.

2.2.1 Narrative

In Sibierska's 2017 discussion of storytelling beyond the verbal medium, she approached storytelling from a cross-disciplinary perspective and defined it before setting out the minimum criteria for a narrative act. The research positions storytelling as the process of composing narratives (encoding), and positions narratives as the material product of transmitting a story to someone else (dissemination) by translating the concept into a material form via a given medium

that need not be verbal (Sibierska, 2017). Her paper provides a set of minimum criteria of what a narrative should incorporate — a spatial constituent in the form of a world or setting, a temporal constituent by which the storyworld undergoes change, a mental constituent or intelligent agency, and a formal and pragmatic constituent that ensures the story has closure and delivers a meaningful message (Sibierska, 2017). Following Sibierska's outline, every narrative must have a setting, characters, actions or events that take place within a temporal frame, and to distinguish a narrative from a description of events, it is imperative that it has a play frame; an element of "pretend" that makes it necessary for the audience to suspend disbelief (Sibierska, 2017).

Pangborn et al. (2023) asserted that narrative theory establishes storytelling as a legitimate resource that helps individuals to make sense of the self, others, responsibilities, life-changing circumstances, uncertainties, the social world and possible futures. The 'self' in that study was the frontline healthcare workers who shared their experiences to an audience (the other who decoded the narrative) about their responsibilities within their job during the life-changing circumstances and uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic at a time when the social world had changed, and possible futures seemed unclear.

Scholars including Young (1986), Hayward (1997) and Jones (2005), agreed that narrativity involves a temporal sequence of events that are causally linked through a timeline. That timeline may occur in one of two realms — the tale world where characters move and exist, or the story realm which is the storytelling event at the centre of the tale world (Young, 1986). Young (1986) identified this story realm as a key factor that enables the audience to suspend disbelief and buy into the events of the narrative, and it also serves to distinguish stories from other discursive sequences such as explanations, arguments and confessions. Page (2013), and more recently Sibierska (2017), reiterated Young's (1986) assertion that a timeline is crucial to storytelling when they defined a story as a conceptual arrangement of events. The most familiar way to communicate that to the story's audience is through a logical progression of events within a

standalone tale or, as in the case of longer stories, the serial continuation of a story over instalments (O'Sullivan, 2019).

2.2.2 Seriality

The established definition of the serial is "an ongoing narrative released in successive parts" (Hayward, 1997, p. 3.). O'Sullivan's (2019) work, which draws on examples from television, film, novels, podcasts and comics to identify the central characteristics that are used as narrative strategies in instalment publication, states that a serial is a continuing narrative that is distributed over time in instalments. The key driver of seriality is that it creates a desire in the audience to find out more, to learn what happens next, or to resolve a storyline; it creates curiosity. Noordewier and van Dijk (2015) talked about this as the state of knowing, or almost knowing, and their study found that the desire to know something is triggered when a person realises that there is a gap in their knowledge. They also found that time is a key factor in the experience of curiosity in that the larger the gap between recognising a lack of knowledge and being able to resolve that, the more uncomfortable and frustrated a person becomes (Noordewier & van Dijk, 2015).

Seriality dictates how long that time gap is, and the frequency of social media posts has meant that curiosity is now satisfied sooner that it was with more traditional media. Jones (2005) suggested that serials have a gap between one instalment and the next and they are often disseminated on a regular basis. Page's (2013) investigation supported the idea that the sequence of instalments is usually linear and each release is read or viewed consecutively, however this is not true of new forms of seriality, such as social media serials which are reverse ordered with the most recent appearing first in a user's newsfeed (O'Sullivan, 2019). This reverse order means that social media users need to view each instalment as it is released or, if they prefer to understand context, they must make the effort to scroll through the creator's page to view the episodes in the order they were intended.

It is more common for seriality to take place in the tale world than the story realm because the production of an ongoing narrative requires a part-whole relationship between smaller units that collectively constitute a longer narrative, such as the episodes in a season of *Stranger Things*, or a more complex expansion of an established storyworld like the seemingly limitless *Star Wars* franchise (Page, 2013). However, serial storytelling need not rely on highly crafted plot trajectories, problem-solution patterns, or place an emphasis on a point of closure as enduring serials such as long-running soap opera *Shortland Street* demonstrate (Page, 2013).

Seriality not only provides a structure to explore plot dynamics and suspense to drive audiences to return (Page, 2023), but it also allows the creator to make meaning by selecting, distributing and combining segments in a chosen manner (O'Sullivan, 2019). According to O'Sullivan (2019), the six common elements of a serial, no matter the medium, are iteration, multiplicity, momentum, world-building, personnel, and design. Iteration is described as "something other than the patterns of repetition or parallelism by which… a lot of narrative is organised" (O'Sullivan, 2019, p. 53), this could be a call-back to a previous scene or event, such as a reference to a prior storyline or character. Multiplicity involves the interweaving of several storylines, or the fact that the intention of a serial is to prompt repeat views by encouraging the audience to return (O'Sullivan, 2019). Momentum refers to the relationship between instalments and is often associated with the cliffhanger (particularly in television and audio serials); some serials use momentum while others actively resist it (O'Sullivan, 2019). Further to Young's (1986) discussion of the storyworld, O'Sullivan (2019) attested that world-building is a key element of seriality; "serial narratives are positioned, more than any other publication method, to gradually map out, fill in, and then re-expand a diegetic universe" (p. 57). Personnel refers to characters and how they are organised and distributed across a series (O'Sullivan, 2019). Typically, stories have main or lead characters whose perspectives drive the narrative, however, there are occasions when a previously marginalised character takes the lead to enable the audience to understand the events from a different point of view. For example, M*A*S*H season 7, episode 11, *Point of View,* was told from the perspective of a wounded soldier. The

sixth and final of O'Sullivan's (2019) serial elements is design which signals the episode's authorship. O' Sullivan (2019) described this as aspects of the creator's voice, which may be the creator's literal voice, or simply how the narrative unfolds, or it may be indicated by the format of the serial which only becomes evident when it is subverted.

2.2.3 Why tell stories?

So, if stories take creative energy to encode and decode, and if they need to include a story world, characters, a structure and sense of authorship, why do people tell stories? Researchers such as Snow and Lazaukas (2018), Nosrati and Detlor (2021) and Rubio-Hurtado et al. (2022) have articulated that storytelling is a powerful tool for influencing others and presenting oneself to the world. Rubio-Hurtado et al. (2022) investigated the digital storytelling posting practices of young people on social media. Their study found that the act of telling a personal story allows an individual to recognise themself and represent who they are in the way they want to be perceived (Rubio-Hurtado et al., 2022). In doing so the storyteller is able to establish meanings that relate to the storyteller's emotional side. Furthermore, the act of storytelling via posted content on a social media platform means that the storyteller takes for granted the existence of a real audience despite their non-presence at the time of posting, further enabling them to control how they present without having to respond in the moment to the reactions of the audience (Rubio-Hurtado et al., 2022).

In Canada, Nosrati and Detlor (2021) conducted an interpretative case study on a digital storytelling initiative designed to engage visitors to a Canadian museum. Their findings supported Green and Brock's (2000) narrative transportation theory whereby narrative "consumers" (audiences) tend to mentally travel to what is described in the narrative. They are immersed and have emotional and cognitive responses to the story content (Nosrati & Detlor, 2021). This builds upon Snow and Lazauskas' (2018) assertion that because a story engages more parts of a person's brain than abstract language does, stories are more engaging and memorable. This ability for narratives to live longer in the audience psyche than other messaging

makes storytelling a powerful tool for influencing others, which is why storytelling, such as 30-second creative advertisements, is a good way to ensure a message reaches and connects with busy people (Nosrati & Detlor, 2021). Stories connect people on a personal level and can also be used as a tool to communicate, inspire, engage and lead (Nosrati & Detlor, 2021).

2.3 Storytelling and social media communities

Social media platforms allow anyone to be a storyteller and to reach a large audience depending upon the number of followers they have and the privacy settings on their account. Unlike traditional transmitter-receiver media such as print, television and radio, social media has an additional benefit that helps to engage audiences; a feedback loop through the receiver's ability to like or dislike a post, and to comment on it (He et al., 2023). There are several other factors that make social media an ideal storytelling platform although the structure of social media channels challenges how stories are told. These factors include a lack of closure or story resolution, chronology and real-time narrations (Page, 2013).

As previously mentioned (section 2.2.2), seriality in traditional media has a tendency to rely on an underlying story arc that focuses on reaching a point of closure. For example, a long-running television series may have a key storyline for the season, with the final episode tying up all the loose ends and reaching a resolution to satisfy the audience. Throughout that season there may be multiple plot lines and unexpected twists to draw the audience into the story realm, provide the conflict required to drive the narrative forward, and establish a sense of chronology (Page, 2013).

However, this form of storytelling seriality does not translate to social media because posts are delivered and received non-sequentially with the most recent instalment emphasising the importance of recency over retrospection (De Fina, 2016; Page, 2013; Sanchez-Lopez et al., 2020). Despite the reprioritization of instalments, social media is inherently episodic making it the ideal environment for seriality; followers are shown the latest videos and posts from the creator as they are released, and that content can be collated to form a single collection.

Furthermore, the platforms archive instalments progressively in reverse-order sequencing (Choo et al., 2020; Page, 2013). Rubio-Hurtado et al.'s (2022) study of youth posting practices for digital storytelling found that participants would look back over their social media content and were able to measure how much their posts had evolved with age and experience.

Page (2013) identified that the general characteristics of social media interactions influence how stories are told on those platforms. Social media stories are collaborative and dialogic involving different authors and participants which means they develop over time (De Fina, 2016). On social media, stories typically depart from the Labovian canonical narrative form of abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution and coda (De Fina, 2016). Instead, the online environment offers enhanced reflexivity and lures the audience to participate by interacting and sharing opinions, arguably in part due to real-time narration which favours present-tense or non-finite verb forms (Page, 2013). This supports Benjamin's (2006) assertion that digital media strongly resembles oral traditions (rather than print) where content evolves rapidly and uses colloquial phrasing and approachable language. Lazar's (2022) examination of digital storytelling by Israeli union supporters and opposers further substantiated earlier claims (Benjamin, 2006; Page, 2013) that informal, self-reflexive language and candid disclosure enticed audiences to respond and engage.

In addition, scholars (Choo et al., 2020; Lim & Childs, 2020) have also argued that visual elements play a key role in digital storytelling. To answer a research question about the use of visuals in social media posts, Lim and Childs (2020) conducted two studies. The first took still images from the Adidas Instagram account and removed the backgrounds before an online panel of participants was asked to rate the degree of perceived motion. In the second study for the same article, they asked 132 university students in a laboratory setting to sort images based on whether they were snapshots or posed, and the degree of perceived motion was rated. They concluded that a photo with narrative elements results in a higher level of transportation (suspension of disbelief and transportation to the story realm) than a photo with no narrative

elements (Lim & Childs, 2020). The scholars asserted that visual narrative media can offer an emotional experience to the viewer who will interpret the narrative in a way that is meaningful to their own life (Lim & Childs, 2020).

2.3.1 Motivations to engage in social media communities

Social media is a space that brands and celebrities have used to connect with audiences for the purpose of storytelling and conversation through user-generated content, which Santos (2021) defines as

> "… any kind of text, data or action performed by online digital systems users published and disseminated by the same user through independent channels, that incur an expressive or communicative effect either on an individual manner, or combined with contributions from the same or other sources." (p. 108).

Online brand communities give brand fans an online meeting place to discuss, share, exchange information, make suggestions and ask for recommendations (Lin et al., 2024). In Mansour's 2020 study of a Facebook group of foreign mothers living in or planning to move to Sweden, it is clear that community groups can provide the same environment for niche, non-brand-related interests. Both groups rely on user-generated content to maintain engagement in order to survive.

Lin et al. (2024) surveyed 400 people who follow brands on Instagram to determine their motivations for joining and participating, and the research found that such communities enhance consumer engagement and create brand value. While this is of no relevance to Facebook community groups that do not have a branding or marketing purpose, the fact that members who identify strongly with a group and are characterised by the collective identity shared by other members, are more likely to pass on their knowledge, attitudes and behaviours via content and comments (Lin et al., 2024) is pertinent. Such communities give members a place to create more varied content than traditional media allows (Lin et al., 2024) and the creators can see the level of engagement and responses their posts prompt in real time proving that user-generated content (UGC) provides the opportunity for social interaction (Lin et al., 2024).

In 2023, 300 million photos were uploaded to Facebook every day (He et al., 2023). Some of those images would have been for financial gain as some brand pages incentivise content creation with monetary rewards (as is the case with sites like Amazon and Dianping.com rewarding reviewers with points or discounts), however many posters are motivated by personal and social goals such as self-expression, social interaction and information exchange (Lin et al., 2024). People have a desire to be admired by others (He et al., 2023), and social media groups provide a space for that. Such admiration is more highly prized if it comes from peers (He et al., 2023) and prior literature (Huang et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2018; Zhang and Zhu, 2011) suggests that the larger the group, the greater the social benefits for the poster.

A group member's initial willingness to post is subject to reciprocity and identification. If their sense of personal identification correlates closely to the community, they participate more actively (Lin et al., 2024). However, their ongoing willingness to post is related to feedback-based mechanisms that show how engaged other group members are with their content (He et al., 2023), implying that the more likes and positive comments they receive, the more likely they are to continue to contribute by posting to the group's page.

Marengo et al. (2021) examined the links between active Facebook use, received likes, self-esteem and happiness by conducting an online survey with and accessing the Facebook data of 2,349 adult Facebook users. They found that the more Facebook users updated their profile and shared personal content, the greater the frequency and intensity of the feedback they received. There was a positive link between the frequency and intensity of feedback and the perceived happiness of the poster, who was then motivated to post again (Marengo et al., 2021).

2.3.2 Managing impressions through social media storytelling

An individual's need to manage how they present to the world is a key motivation for participating in social media; it focuses on the story they wish to share about themselves and their identity (Schlosser, 2019). Impression management is the term given to the process whereby individuals attempt to control the impressions that other people (the audience) form

of them (Thomson-Whiteside et al., 2017). In his dramaturgical theory, Goffman (1959) describes impression management as a way of controlling how a person is perceived by others by selectively revealing or concealing aspects of themselves. Picone (2015) used Goffman's (1959) seminal work as a foundation to explain how impression management was applied in media studies, internet studies and social media studies. In doing so, Picone (2015) established that, even in an online environment, people are performers and their performance is a way of presenting an image to their audience. When posting online, people give signals both consciously (or willingly) and unconsciously (or inadvertently), and their audience interprets those signals to form an impression (Picone, 2015).

Scholars such as Picone (2015), Thomson-Whiteside et al. (2017) and Yoo (2021) have discussed that social media platforms offer an almost ideal stage for performers to present themselves and their stories to a range of audiences. However, it is the nature of social media platforms such as Facebook to gather commonly distinct audiences together. For example, if a person posts to their personal page, that post may be seen by friends, close family members, former colleagues and mere acquaintances. This means that the performer is placed in a position where they are presenting to a variety of spectators (Picone, 2015). Goffman (1959) asserted that audience segregation was "an essential part of impression management," (p. 49) however, Picone (2015) argued that social media converges audience, a plurality which can lead to a misalignment between imagined and actual audiences.

Additionally, Yoo (2021) posited that social media is the prime place for self-presentation because its users control what is posted and when. The fact that most of social media is composed, edited, refined, tweaked and checked before it is posted enables presenters to strategically manage their stories and how they reveal these to their audiences (Thomson-Whiteside et al., 2017; Yoo, 2021). The exception to this is live streams which are broadcast in real time.

New media platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for individuals to present and express themselves as part of impression management (Thomson-Whiteside et al., 2017). In analysing semi-structured interviews with 11 entrepreneur businesswomen, Thomson-Whiteside et al. (2017) found little separation between the participants' individual and business stories. Their businesses were part of their identity and therefore a key part of their impression management strategy (Thomson-Whiteside et al., 2017). They further noted that the participants willingly shared their weaknesses and imperfections (showing supplication) through their social media channels, often asking followers to serve as collaborators in the problem-solving process, which the researchers compared with storytelling in improvisational theatre (Thomson-Whiteside et al., 2017). Nonetheless, personal branding became a way to leverage specialist knowledge, thereby projecting a particular persona to the audience (Thomson-Whiteside et al., 2017).

Schlosser's (2020) review of the recent literature on whether social media generally increases a person's self-disclosure or self-presentation supports Thomson-Whiteside et al.'s (2017) findings. Schlosser (2020) focussed on five characteristics that distinguish online communications from face-to-face communications (anonymity, reduced information richness, asynchronous communication, multiple audiences and audience feedback) and found that people are more likely to post positive information than negative when presenting themselves on Facebook, which she asserts can lead to those who see the posts experiencing envy (Schlosser, 2020).

Schlosser (2020) defines self-disclosure as communicating personal information about oneself to another person and explains that such personal information may cause the sharer to be seen in a positive or negative way. Self-presentation is defined as a goal-directed activity of controlling the information one shares in order to influence an audience to form good impressions of oneself (Schlosser, 2020). Interestingly, Schlosser (2020) notes that self-disclosure and self-presentation are not mutually exclusive, which may explain why the

businesswomen in Thomson-Whiteside et al.'s study (2017) chose to share their weaknesses with their social media audiences.

According to Schlosser (2020), an awareness of having multiple audiences online causes people to manage their impressions in terms of what they do or do not say. This awareness implies that they are conscious of the challenge of communicating the same message to segregated audiences and are therefore more likely to present themselves in ways that will generate positive feedback, for example, they will choose to communicate a message that is unlikely to offend a subgroup of their audience (Schlosser, 2020). The nature of social media means that audience feedback (via likes, comments and the number of shares) is publicly visible and quantified, and because some online communication can be anonymous (for example people setting up private accounts simply to comment on others' posts) negative comments or opinions, and controversial content can be shared as feedback (Schlosser, 2020).

A social media users' application of impression management can lead to social comparison in their audience members. At the same time as Schlosser (2020) was investigating self-disclosure and self-presentation behaviours in those who post on social media platforms, Verduyn et al. (2020) reviewed the existing research regarding the correlation between social networking sites (such as Facebook and Instagram) and a user's subjective well-being; in effect, looking at the impact of social media use on the audience. Together Schlosser (2020) and Verduyn et al.'s (2020) findings paint a rich picture of the benefits and challenges of social comparison.

While Schlosser's work (2020) refers to the impact of social media on the poster, Verduyn et al. (2020) look at the effect of social media on the audience. They consolidated the findings of existing research on social comparison (using other people's stories about themselves as benchmarks against which to compare how one is doing relative to them [ability comparison] or how one should think, feel or behave relative to how they are [opinion comparison]) and concluded that people who are prone to engaging in social comparison are negatively impacted by social media platforms (Verduyn et al., 2020). Social media provides the ideal environment

for people to compare themselves with others. Verduyn et al. (2020) explain that people select a target with whom to compare themselves and that choice has an impact on how they see themselves. If they choose an upward target, they see that person as being superior to them, and if they choose a downward target, they see that person as inferior. They may then attempt to adapt their thinking and behaviour to be more like the comparison target (assimilation) or less like the comparison target (contrast) (Verduyn et al., 2020). For those who choose an upward target and feel that they are not assimilating as they had hoped, social media has a negative impact on their subjective well-being (Verduyn et al., 2020), as they fail to take into account the asynchronous nature of social media which allows those who post to construct their posts and comments, choosing the best, but not necessarily the most true, representation of themselves (through the use of photography angles, filters, carefully selected words, etc.) to relay their story (Schlosser, 2020; Verduyn et al., 2020). Unsurprisingly, both impression management and self-comparison concerns have been associated with social media fatigue (Ou et al., 2022).

2.3.3 Applying creativity on social media

While creativity has long been researched in the field of marketing, often from the perspective of personal creativity or the process of creativity (Smith & Yang, 2004), and while virality, text characteristics and the effect of perceived creativity on engagement have been researched in terms of social media, little is known of the creative process of online storytelling for niche community group contributors. This significant gap in the literature is something which this research aims to address.

As Ahmad et al. (2017) pointed out, the nature of creativity is ambiguous and the creative process is not fully understood as people have unique ways of generating a creative output to tell stories. Early research by the likes of Wallas (1926) and Taylor (1959) tried to establish the creative process as a sum of sequential steps — preparation, incubation, epiphany and then exposure. However, Ahmad et al. (2017) argued that such a framework was not universally

applicable as it implies that a linear approach is the only path to a creative output, and that creativity is an isolated process. Lucas and Nordgren (2020) established that while people's creative processes may differ, their creativity remains constant or improves over time. To gauge the creative levels of people, Lucas and Nordgren (2020) conducted eight studies where they asked participants to predict their creativity level before giving them an idea-generation task. They found that people believe their creativity will decrease over time, but in fact it remains constant or even improves. When solving a creative problem, the most creative ideas come later; the first ideas are obvious and likely to be the same ideas that other people have (Lucas & Nordgren, 2020). As time progresses it takes longer to generate ideas that are novel and useful, however the ideas that participants came up with later in the process were more original, showing that there are many ways to integrate and recombine knowledge (Lucas & Nordgren, 2020).

Most studies looking at creativity on social media platforms choose Instagram for its predominantly visual component (Arriagada & Ibanez, 2020; Casolo et al., 2021; Cheung et al., 2022), and while much has been investigated in terms of Facebook engagement, there is a dearth of research to do with creativity and Facebook. Previous literature agrees that creativity comprises two main factors, novelty (originality and uniqueness) and appropriateness (relevance and meaningfulness) (Smith & Young, 2004). Casolo et al. (2021) looked at the data from 808 followers of a fashion brand's Instagram page to see whether the positive emotions connected with creativity are a crucial element of brand engagement on the platform and discussed creativity in the advertising context. They defined creativity as the extent to which content is original, unexpected, appropriate and relevant, and it conveys a lot of meaning in a simple message (Casolo et al., 2021). Using the stimulus (Instagram post), organism (page follower), response theory developed by Pavlov in 1902, they found that creativity was a crucial element of brand engagement (Casolo et al., 2021).

As mentioned previously, little has been investigated in terms of creativity and Facebook, although text elements have been researched by the likes of Yoo (2021) who states that text-based social media lets people express themselves in writing which, while tone can be difficult to determine, allows for clarity of meaning. Gkikas et al. (2022) analysed 135 image posts with description text from a retail fashion Facebook page to see what was associated with engagement and awareness. Building on previous work by Lee and Aaker (2004) that found consumers respond best to messages that feel easier to process, Gkikas et al. (2022) examined the dataset in terms of readability indices, text length and the number of hashtags the text included and compared that with the post-performance metrics (likes, reaches and impressions). They concluded that posts with easy-to-read text that were longer (more than 31 words or 321 characters) and contained many hashtags tended to achieve higher engagement and awareness (Gkikas et al., 2022).

What seems to be missing in the research is an investigation into the creativity of social media posts that include both image and text. Image-based social media allows for more varied interpretations and can be more nuanced (Yoo, 2021), but Facebook offers users a bounded space to tell stories through both visuals and text in the same way as print advertisements. Advertisements do not exist in isolation (Nan & Faber, 2004) and it is estimated that people are exposed to as many as 10,000 marketing messages per day (Kirk, 2022), which is where tactics such as persuasion, storytelling and creativity come into play to cut through the media noise (Hurman, 2011). Attention is even more difficult to capture on social media platforms because users judge whether a post is worthy of watching or reading within 1.7 seconds (Facebook, 2016). Much as advertising agencies strive to engage their audiences so that they think favourably of a brand or product, creators who use Facebook also need to attract their audience's attention quickly in a feed of thousands of posts per day; they need to capture their interest long enough for them to engage, and they need to spark desire in them to take action by liking, commenting or sharing. This is challenging given the constraints of the posts (in much

the same way an advertising creative is constrained by the borders of a print advertisement), and the fact that there are accepted norms of what a post should look like.

2.3.4 Social media fatigue and comparison

Even before the increased use of social media and online platforms that the COVID-19 pandemic brought, researchers such as Cao and Sun (2018) had expressed increasing concerns about the correlation of mobile devices and the dark side of social media use (fatigue and addiction).

The Pew Research Center reported in 2019 that two thirds of users suffered exhaustion from Facebook use and half of that figure were spending less time on the platform as a result. In the US Presidential election the following year, 55% of social media users surveyed said they felt "worn out" by political posts and discussions on social media and that was undermining their willingness to engage with social media (Ou et al., 2022). Such sensory overload is one of the key drivers that Ou et al. (2022) pinpointed in their meta-analysis of social media fatigue. Looking at 64 empirical studies, Ou et al. (2022) determined that the causes of social media fatigue are all psychological factors to do with perception. These causes included perceived information overload, perceived social overload, perceived system feature overload, social media anxiety (how one is perceived through social media) which relates directly to storytelling and impression management, privacy concern, impression concern and the fear of missing out (Ou et al., 2022). Fatigue from social media use can affect users' daily lives by creating a sense of apathy that impacts on academic and work performance and can lead to mental health problems (Lee et al., 2019). This is supported by the finding of Verduyn et al. (2020) that people suffering with depressive symptoms and low self-esteem are vulnerable to comparing their lives negatively to the carefully created stories and content they see others share on social media, which can lead to worse mental health.

Lee et al. (2019) found that social media's requirement that a user constantly interact with others can cause fatigue and lead to negative emotions such as loneliness, dejection and fatigue, which is the opposite of the purpose of community groups on social media platforms. Ou et al.

(2022) noted that some fatigued users tend to withdraw or practise avoidance behaviours as a means of self-preservation and would rather disengage than risk posting something that would negatively impact how they are perceived by others (Rubio-Hurtado et al., 2022.). However, in order to disengage they must not be addicted to social media.

In an investigation of how social media addiction develops in some users, Vaghefi et al. (2023) analysed primary data from interviews and surveys, and secondary data from narrative accounts and found that as users' needs change, their social media use may progress from nominal to compulsive, and then to addicted use. The research was prompted by growing concerns about the detrimental impacts of hedonic information use, whereby a person becomes inured to a certain level of use and then needs more to achieve the same dopamine "hit" (similar to that associated with drug use) (Vaghefi et al., 2023). The researchers defined social media addiction as "a maladaptive psychological dependency on use of a hedonic system that is associated with significant negative consequences across important life domains" (Vaghefi et al., 2023, p. 85.) and explained that the addiction is to the system (social media platform) which is designed to provide a sense of self-fulfilment and intrinsic value to the user. Vaghefi et al. (2023) elaborated that people are not addicted to the internet but to the hedonic tools they use on the internet, such as Facebook (Vaghefi et al., 2023).

Vaghefi et al.'s work (2023) supports previous research which shows that addiction develops gradually and evolves over time (Grover et al., 2011; Marlatt et al., 1988; Martin et al., 2013). Depending on their physical, environmental and physiological factors, social media users may increase their consumption to a point where it is considered harmful (Vaghefi et al., 2023). For example, the lockdowns experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic created an environment where people were isolated from each other and turned to hedonic systems such as social media to feel connected, and that increase in use did not diminish once "normal" life resumed (Vaghefi et al., 2023). Scholars such as Docimo et al. (2021) and Nandy (2022) have established that

membership of Facebook groups surged during the pandemic as people sought both to fulfil the need to belong and to help make sense of a world in crisis through storytelling (Nandy, 2022).

As mentioned earlier, a key driver of increased social media use is the sense of intrinsic value that the system offers the user (Vaghefi et al., 2023). Social media platforms are designed to engage users with the purpose of keeping them on the platform for as long as possible. That is because the longer a user is on the platform, the more advertisements they are exposed to, which is how social media companies like Meta profit (Kim, 2017). According to Kim (2017), algorithms predict the content a user may find interesting. Simply put, it looks at the likes, clicks and even the time spent on posts that are not interacted with (for example watching a video but not liking or commenting on it), analyses the user's behaviour, predicts from that which content the user will enjoy, and populates their feed with such content (Kim, 2017). The more frequently a person engages with a particular type of content or story, the stronger an association the algorithm will make, which means that passive social media users pose a challenge because they may look at a post but not perform any actions in response to it (such as like, comment, share, etc.). However, Kim (2017) also found that "even if a user is passive and does not engage with a post, the algorithm records the duration of time a user keeps the post on the screen as opposed to simply scrolling through." (p.150).

While algorithms cannot be held completely accountable for luring people through the stages of nominal and compulsive social media use, they certainly attract users to the platforms and keep them there longer. Some social media users recognise this better than others as evidenced in Lomberg and Kapsch's (2019) study of how a range of Danish citizens felt about, evaluated and dealt with algorithms. They conducted semi-structured interviews with 16 people aged between 19 and 72 from various walks of life and with a range of education levels and found that having knowledge of what algorithms are, how they work and why social media platforms use them does not prompt critical engagement with them (Lomberg & Kapsch, 2019). In fact, only one of the study's participants reported having an awareness of the algorithms and

deliberately attempting to disrupt the content that was delivered to them; that was because they identified as non-binary and wished to receive less gendered content in their feed (Lomberg and Kapsch, 2019). This participant's action illustrates that texts offer cues to meaning making, but the decoding of those texts requires interpretation. The decoder makes inferences about what the producer intended (Lomberg & Kapsch, 2019) in the same way that De Fina (2016) describes the process of interpreting a story (see 2.2.3). In this instance, the participant's interaction with social media and the content the algorithm had delivered to their feed is a deliberate choice to demonstrate their preferred, negotiated and oppositional use of the platform. They are aware that algorithms do not encode semiotic meaning but perform a process of social ordering (Lomberg & Kapsch, 2019). So, by trying to disrupt the algorithm the participant wants to train it, in order to control the stories they are told (Shaw, 2017).

2.4 Summary

The literature overview has identified that social media storytelling is an under-researched area of communication studies scholarship. Existing research has focussed on branding and marketing storytelling, but little is known about how or why ordinary social media users tell serialised stories. Given that storytelling is such an integral aspect of communication studies — stories are used to connect, teach morals, reinforce cultural values and to contextualise life experiences — scholarship stands to benefit from a deeper understanding of what motivates social media users to engage in storytelling practices.

Both storytelling and social media are powerful tools for influencing others and presenting oneself to the world, so it is surprising that there is little research into the motivations and creative processes of ordinary social media users. Therefore, this study will analyse the themes discussed by social media storytellers in a niche Facebook community group, and the posts that tell their stories to answer the question 'How do Dinovember participants engage with creative storytelling on its community Facebook group?'. The research aims to address a gap in knowledge and to contribute to understanding what motivates ordinary social media users to

identify as storytellers, and to uncover insights to do with creativity and the creative process in image-and-text-based social media posts. It further aims to contribute to existing research into social media fatigue and the effects of social comparison on ordinary people who create content and tell stories on social media. The knowledge gained from this research could help improve both creative social media practices and the level of long-term engagement of members of social media community groups.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design and process which was selected and undertaken to answer the research question determined in the literature review. It presents the aim of the study, gives a detailed overview of the paradigm that guides the research and explains the methodological approach, including the processes which were followed to ensure a reliable and credible outcome. It rationalises the choice of in-depth semi-structured interviews combined with the thematic analysis of social media posts as the research methods of choice, outlines the process undertaken to select participants and data and gives a detailed account of the data analysis process followed to develop the research findings.

3.2 Research aim

The aim of this research is to investigate how and why people post to a creative Facebook community group. Existing social media research has explored why people join social media groups and how and why they post user-generated content to brand pages (Alalwan et al., 2019; Arriagada & Ibanez, 2020; Cheung et al., 2022; Chuang, 2020; Dholakia et al., 2004; He et al., 2023; Lin et al., 2024), but there is a distinct gap when it comes to community groups.

It is against this backdrop that the following research question will be answered:

> 'How do Dinovember participants engage with creative storytelling on its community Facebook group?'

3.3 Research paradigm

Paradigms have their origins in ancient philosophical thought and serve to orientate research outputs by giving them theoretical perspective (Corbetta, 2003). Guba (1990), a notable contributor to qualitative research, defines paradigms as "sets of beliefs that guide action" (p. 17). There are many research paradigms, however, the three most used by researchers who wish to analyse the world are critical research, positivism and interpretivism (Lincoln et al., 2018).

Critical research, sometimes known as emancipatory research (Davies & Fisher, 2018), challenges the beliefs shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender values that have formed over time (Lincoln et al., 2018) and assumes that knowledge is learned through critical debate rather than being discovered or understood (Davies & Fisher, 2018). Positivism concentrates on cause-and-effect relationships and assumes that there is one reality (ontology) and in order to know this reality, the study of a phenomenon must be undertaken with objectivity and an impartial detachment (Davies & Fisher, 2018). With positivism, laws, rules and theories are discovered and applied to discover patterns and predict and explain behaviour (Lincoln et al., 2018).

In contrast, interpretivism (also known as constructivism) is based on a relativist ontology and views reality as being subjective and something which differs from person to person (Davies & Fisher, 2018). Interpretive research does not test theories, rather it develops them from specific observations (Schreier et al., 2018), and knowledge is constructed through interaction with others. The current study is an exploratory analysis of the process, motivations and challenges faced by members of a niche Facebook community group who produce user-generated content. The researcher identified interpretivism as the paradigm which best serves this study.

Interpretive researchers assert that there is no single reality (Davies & Fisher, 2018) and the current research embraces Guba's (1996) notion that multiple realities exist and are dependent on the individual. This thesis draws on the multiple realities of the participants whose common ground is the creation of a modern childhood tradition for the people in their households, an approach which is in keeping with Creswell's (2013) assertion that "when studying individuals, qualitative researchers conduct and study with the intent of reporting these multiple realities" (p. 45). Accordingly, qualitative research methods such as qualitative content analysis, observation, interviews or focus groups are often selected to explain unique situations (Davies & Fisher, 2018; Lincoln et al., 2018; Flick, 2018).

3.4 Qualitative research approach

While methodology refers to the collection and analysis of data (Creswell, 2013), the research methods used to do so can be divided into two main approaches; quantitative and qualitative (Lincoln et al., 2018). While quantitative research concentrates on measurements and statistical data, qualitative research focuses on words, meanings and producing descriptions of social actors (participants) or actions (Bryman, 2016).

In order to have the best understanding of the context within which a research participant exists, and to co-create meaning with the participant, qualitative researchers commonly employ research methods such as interviews and focus groups to interrogate the world within which the participant operates (Lincoln et al., 2018). They believe that the individual's point of view is best understood through immersion in their social world and interviews, participant observation and focus groups allow the researcher to do just that (Lincoln et al., 2018).

For this research, a qualitative research method allowed the researcher to interact directly with members of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group to learn about their thoughts, interpretations and the meaning they place on the content that they create. Typically, interpretive research has small sample sizes which allows the researcher to collect rich, in-depth data to describe the experiences of the selected participants (Schreier, 2018). Due to the dialogical nature of such research, the qualitative researcher cannot be separated from the research or the participants, for the data and findings are generated through the collaboration of researcher and participant (Davies & Fisher, 2018).

The validity of qualitative research is often criticised by quantitative researchers for the fact that it applies inductive reasoning to develop theories, rather than testing existing theories (Davies & Fisher, 2018). They further argue that the findings of qualitative research are not able to be replicated and cannot be transferred to the general population or applied to other settings (Davies & Fisher, 2018). Qualitative researchers counter that criticism by asserting that social worlds constantly evolve and argue that because there is no single reality, the exact or absolute

replication of findings is not possible (Lincoln et al., 2018). Therefore, it is imperative for the researcher to apply best practices and to provide a credible account by seeking the approval of the participants that the data is an accurate account of their reality (Lincoln et al., 2018).

The methodology for this research is interpretive and relies on naturalistic methods such as interviewing and observation of the participants during the interview (Angen, 2000). In this instance the method of data collection is the capture of posts to the Dinovember Facebook Community Group and semi-structured interviews with 13 members of the group. The method of data analysis is the reflexive thematic analysis of interview transcripts, combined with the researcher's thematic analysis of a sample of the participants' social media posts which were examined prior to the interviews to give context to the discussion. Meanings emerged from the iterative research process (Angen, 2000) of analysing both the posts and the interviews.

3.5 Research method: In-depth interviews and Facebook post analysis

Interpretivists seek to understand the social world through personal accounts and reflections of research participants and therefore gather data in the participants' own words (Lincoln et al., 2018). Because the aim of the present research was not only to collect information, but also to discover insights to do with the subject's motivations, perceptions and social reality, interviews were considered to be a valuable research tool for uncovering the information needed to answer the research question (Lincoln et al., 2018).

Perakyla and Ruusuvuori (2011) set out that there is good reason for using interviews in qualitative research. They assert that interviews allow the researcher to access areas of reality, such as people's subjective attitudes, that would otherwise remain inaccessible (Perakyla & Ruusuvuori, 2011). Not only do interviews enable participants to provide information in their own words and give insight into the meaning of their account, but interviews also allow the researcher and participant to overcome distance in both space and time (Perakyla & Ruusuvuori, 2011).

3.5.1 Applying the semi-structured interview method to the research study

The research project seeks to provide insight into the methods, motivations and challenges of people who create and post content to a niche Facebook interest group called Dinovember Community. Such insights cannot be ascertained without viewing the created content and interacting with its creators. Therefore, semi-structured in-depth interviewing was selected to guide the direction of the conversation.

It is widely accepted that there are three interview types: structured (standardised) interviews using a survey-like prescriptive interview guide; unstructured (unstandardised) which take a free-flowing narrative approach; and semi-structured (semi-standardised) which have a topic guide or selection of clear questions to steer the interaction (Knott et al., 2022). Semi-structured interviews were selected for this research project to ensure the generation of in-depth data and to enable the researcher to elicit further information or elucidation from the participants during the conversation. Thirteen interviews were conducted, each lasting between 39 and 75 minutes.

The framework of semi-structured interviews ensures key questions are answered, yet there is flexibility to explore topic areas and themes of interest further should they emerge during the interview process (Kakilla, 2021). Following a semi-structured format may place the power of control with the interviewer as the interviewer's axiological assumptions may steer the topics discussed. It is argued that, in such a format, the interaction between interviewer and participant cannot be exactly replicated (Knott et al., 2022), and that it is likely that some key data might not be collected. In this study, the researcher has attempted to mitigate any power imbalance by employing a naturalistic, conversational interview style so that participants feel comfortable to share their thoughts and experiences. Additionally, to enable any missed data to be collected, the researcher invited participants to include any additional thoughts when they approved the transcript, knowing that by reading the transcript they would be prompted to think about what they may have intended to say during the interview.

3.5.2 Collecting the posts for analysis

Since 2015 there has been an increasing interest in social media images as research data, particularly in the fields of sociology, cultural studies and communication studies (Chen et al., 2023). The concurrent development of Web 2.0 technology and smartphones with cameras and photo-editing applications has meant that photographs capture daily life and photography as self-expression has been democratised (Chen et al., 2023). Chen et al. (2023) reviewed more than 2,000 published peer-reviewed articles that used social media images as data and found that photo sample size was usually smaller than that of text-based social media data and that the most popular methods of data analysis are thematic coding, object recognition and narrative analysis. Thematic analysis is the most popular method used to analyse data in a way that enables researchers to understand emotions, values and attitudes (Chen et al. 2023).

The participants' Dinovember Community Facebook Group posts are important to this research as they supplement the interviews by providing context to the discussion. As artefacts they are a record of what the participants have created, and they offer information about the levels of engagement within the Facebook group. Often social media images come without commentary or explanations, but by combining social media posts and interviews with the posts' creators, a greater depth of analysis was able to be reached.

Those posts that the participants made to the Dinovember Facebook Community Group during November 2022 were captured by screenshot from the community page and some participants volunteered to share the posts from their personal social media accounts for the same time period. The screenshots included the images and text posted by each of the Dinovember creators, but any comments and the number of likes were excluded so that only the original post was considered for analysis. A total of 66 posts were collected for this study. The researcher familiarised herself with them prior to the interviews so that they could be discussed with the participant who created them. They later underwent Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive

thematic analysis to add context and depth to the research and to see whether the artefacts supported the themes that emerged from the interviews.

3.6 Selection of interview participants

3.6.1 Criteria

The first stage of the research participant selection process is to define a sample universe or study population (Robinson, 2013). For this study, the sample universe is defined as members of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group, a closed niche-interest Facebook group of parents and caregivers who create Dinovember in their households and post about it. When this study commenced, the Dinovember Community Facebook Group had a membership of 4,900 people.

The second stage requires the researcher to identify the participants. Given that this study investigates the methods, motivations and challenges of creating content for the page, the participant is required to be the person responsible for posting to the group.

3.6.2 Sampling technique

Once the overarching participant criteria had been established, the sampling technique was applied to determine the population's sub-group. Purposive homogeneous sampling was used to establish the specific criteria potential participants must meet to be included in the study (Robinson, 2013). Purposive sampling allows for the inclusion of the most relevant participants for the research topic in terms of being able to generate data that is rich in information or insights (Robinson, 2013), whereas homogeneous sampling allows selection based on members of a sub-group and includes individuals who have similar characteristics or attributes (Robinson, 2013).

This study specifically looks at a niche interest group with a presence on Facebook, therefore the pool of possible participants is already a sub-group of all Facebook users. Further, it is a creative group as opposed to other groups such as fan groups, support groups or information-

sharing groups. The following inclusion criteria were used to ensure participants would be able to provide information and insights to answer the research question — they needed to be a member of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group, they needed to create Dinovember in their household for other family members, and they needed to share their own Dinovember posts either to the group page or their personal social media page. The one exclusion criterion was that they could not have studied or worked (or currently be studying or working) in advertising, as that could give them privileged knowledge and understanding of persuasive techniques and engagement principles which they might apply to their social media posts. Geographic location was not a criterion because the virtual Facebook community group has members around the globe and technology allowed for face-to-face interviews.

It must be acknowledged that the participants of this study all come from a place of privilege. While they are situated across the globe (in Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Canada), their places of residence are all Western first-world nations. While those countries may experience a digital divide, all 13 participants have unencumbered access to digital technology; this is salient as it means they engage with social media messaging regularly.

It is also important to declare that the researcher is an active member of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group and has created the tradition for her children since 2014. The researcher was aware of the potential bias this may bring to the study and so ensured that objectivity was achieved by working with participants who were unknown to her before the study commenced. This allowed distance to be maintained, while the familiarity with the Facebook group and childhood tradition enhanced rapport-building and the ability of the researcher to gather data to answer the research question.

3.6.3 Sample size

Robinson (2014) states that the size of a sample for a qualitative research project should be influenced by both theory and practicality. He argues that projects with an idiographic aim, such as this work, should have a sample size small enough that individual voices can be identified

within the study, and that the responses can be intensively analysed. The sample size needs to be small enough to generate rich information, but broad enough to encompass a range of representation and to identify patterns within the data (Robinson, 2014).

Saturation is the most common guide to sample size — Hennink and Kaiser (2022) analysed 23 articles that used empirical data and found that saturation was reached with a narrow range of between 9 and 17 interviews. Such numbers provide scope for developing generalities and prevent the researcher from being overwhelmed with data (Robinson, 2014). Creswell (1998) recommends 10-12 interviews as a sample size for such a study that aims to give depth of insight into a specific group's behaviour and experience. Following these recommendations (Creswell, 1998; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022), the researcher interviewed 13 participants for this study. The fact that the participants spoke of similar experiences and behaviours despite their geographic distance from one another indicates truth value and consistency of the data (Hennink & Kaiser, 2002).

3.6.4 Data collection

Prior to the call for participants, ethics approval was sought from the AUT Ethics Committee. Information sheets, consent forms and indicative questions (Appendices B, C and D) were submitted with the application which was granted approval on 20 October 2022 (Appendix A). Once this was received, the administrators of the Dinovember Community Group were contacted with an information sheet outlining the scope, nature and purpose of the research and permission was sought to post an invitation to participate (Appendix E) on the group's page. When approval was granted, the invitation went live calling for interested parties to contact the researcher via direct message. Individuals who responded to this call were asked to share their email so that they could be sent participant information sheets and consent forms (one consenting to participate in the interview, and one consenting to allow the researcher to view their social media Dinovember posts for the purpose of getting context prior to the interview). If the Facebook group member had not responded within ten days, follow-up emails were sent.

Once consent was received, the researcher communicated with the participant directly via Facebook Messenger to schedule a video call for the semi-structured interview. The entire process was charted in a spreadsheet.

Of the 20 initial respondents, five chose not to continue and two were excluded due to their advertising experience. Eventually, 13 participants were selected, their posts from the Dinovember Community Facebook Group and/or those they shared from their personal Facebook accounts were captured by screenshot, and they were interviewed. An overview of the participants is presented in the table below.

Table 1: Participants' country of residence, household composition, ethnicity and years creating Dinovember.

PARTICIPANT	COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE	HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION	ETHNICITY	YEARS CREATING DINOVEMBER
1	United Kingdom	1 adult 2 children	English	8
2	Canada	2 adults 2 children	Canadian	6
3	United States	2 adults 3 children	American	8
4	United States	1 adult, 1 child	American	9
5	United States	2 adults 3 children	Indian	5
6	United States	2 adults	American	2
7	United States	2 adults 2 children	African-American	8
8	United States	2 adults 1 child	American	2
9	Australia	2 adults 2 children	Australian	9
10	United Kingdom	2 adults 2 children	English	2
11	Australia	2 adults 1 child	Australian	7
12	Canada	2 adults 3 children	French-Canadian	4
13	United States	2 adults 2 children	American	7

Since the participants were all from overseas and not residing in Aotearoa New Zealand, interviews were conducted via MS Teams which allowed for one-on-one, face-to-face virtual

interactions. The platform also allowed for the interviews to be recorded and transcribed with the participants' consent.

As previously mentioned, (see 3.5.1), the interviews followed a semi-structured format whereby indicative questions were used as a reference to ensure the key topics were addressed. These were broad, open-ended questions that led to extended responses from the participants and, as is advised (Knott et al., 2022), follow-up questions were asked when necessary to elicit further information. Flexibility allowed the researcher to delve into topics that arose during the interview that merited further investigation. Explanations were offered by the researcher when the interviewee needed clarification, just as clarification was sought when participants' answers were ambiguous.

The interviews commenced with a period of rapport-building including the exchanging of pleasantries and introductory chat about how and why we "do Dinovember" in our households. The purpose of this rapport-building was to establish a relationship quickly and to make the participant feel comfortable and supported to share their knowledge (Knott et al., 2022). The fact that the researcher was also a member of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group enabled rapport to be easily established at the outset and meant that the participants did not have to explain the specifics of the tradition. Once the semi-structured interview began, the questions (Appendix D) pertained to the discovery and adoption of Dinovember, how social media was part of the process throughout the month, and feelings, attitudes and practices around posting about it. Finally, the participants were invited to add anything that had not been covered in the questions that they wanted to express about their Dinovember Community Facebook Group experience.

Once the interviews were completed, the video recordings and their auto-transcriptions were downloaded, and the recordings were used to correct the transcripts if the participants' accents meant words had been misinterpreted and transcribed incorrectly. This fulfils Slevin and Sine's strategy (2000) to ensure credibility by ensuring the findings were rich verbatim descriptions of

the participants' accounts. To ensure the accuracy of the data, the transcripts were sent to participants for approval (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). Participants were also invited to add further thoughts or comments in their reply to capture any relevant information that may not have come to mind during the interview. This served to ensure credibility through respondent validation (Long & Johnson, 2000) and some participants chose to elucidate on the answers further before deeming the data accurate. No data analysis took place until this stage was completed.

Finally, all data pertaining to the participants, including their contact details, signed consent forms, screenshots of their Dinovember social media posts, and interview recordings and transcripts, were stored on an external hard drive and kept locked in the researcher's office to ensure their privacy is protected. In the research they are identified by number, rather than name or initials to retain confidentiality. This practice is in keeping with the recommendation that meticulous records be kept to determine a clear decision trail (Sandelowski, 1993; Long & Johnson, 2000; Noble & Smith, 2015).

3.6.5 Validity, credibility and reflexivity

Noble and Smith (2015) outline nine strategies for researchers to apply to ensure the credibility of their studies and findings, seven of which were applicable to this study and have been adopted. They are addressed throughout this chapter where relevant to indicate the robustness of the study in terms of reliability and validity.

Truth value (internal validity) recognises that multiple realities exist (Noble & Smith, 2015), in keeping with the interpretivist epistemology this research follows. Consistency requires that the researcher maintains a clear decision trail so that the research is as replicable as possible (Noble & Smith, 2015). However, it is worth noting that variables such as multiple realities mean that most qualitative research cannot be perfectly replicated. Applicability (external validity) relates to how far the results can be generalised (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is not the researcher's intention that the findings be generalised beyond the intended scope. There is a specificity to

this research in terms of the scope being limited to members of a niche-interest closed Facebook community group and it is possible that further studies of other such groups would see similar results and moderatum generalisations; additional research would need to be undertaken to investigate whether these findings can be transferred to other contexts and settings.

Neutrality is achieved when truth value, consistency and applicability are completely addressed (Noble & Smith, 2015). Since in such methods the interpretation may be affected by the researcher's philosophy and perspective and, therefore, cannot be completely neutral, reflexivity has been applied to mitigate any bias.

Reflexivity, an element of qualitative research, is a significant factor of this study. The collection of data occurred through the collaboration of participant and researcher, parties with subjective views. While the positions of the participants have been acknowledged above (3.6.2), the researcher recognises that her lens of culture, class, gender and ethnicity may lead to possible bias and her past experiences might impact on the interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Creswell (2013) calls upon researchers to report their own biases and values for the purpose of transparency, and to be critically reflexive. In the context of this study, I acknowledge that I am an educated, middle-class, Pakeha first-generation New Zealander who grew up in an affluent part of Auckland in the 1980s and 1990s. As a single working parent, I am a quietly ardent feminist. Having worked in the creative industries I am aware that I look at the world from a humanistic perspective rather than a positivist standpoint, however I respect evidence. Furthermore, I have been a member of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group since May 2019 which suggests that I am closely positioned to the subjects in this study.

In mitigating my possible biases, I have positioned myself as an outsider in this study to provide an objective interpretation of the data. My research follows AUTEC's ethical guidelines, I maintained a reflective diary throughout the entire process, I ensured I selected participants

with whom I had had no prior interaction, and I ensured that they had opportunities to provide further commentary.

3.7 Data analysis

3.7.1 Reflexive thematic analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) is a data analysis method for identifying, analysing and interpreting patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2022). As reflexive thematic analysis can be used within a critical framework to interrogate meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2022), it suits research that derives data from texts, interviews, and other forms of human-to-human communication (Scharp & Sanders, 2018). RTA enables the capturing of qualitative data and interpreting both the blatant and not-yet-revealed elements to infer meaning, and it allows researchers to process and interpret material in a systematic way (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Guest et al. (2012) argue that thematic analysis can help find meaning in the data, and due to its flexible nature, it is well suited to detailed descriptive data sets such as interview transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest et al., 2006). Further, it enables the researcher to determine what is and is not relevant and important.

> The criteria for a theme to be considered noteworthy via recurrence is simply that the theme should present repeatedly within the data. However, what is common is not necessarily meaningful or important to the analysis. (Byrne, 2022, p. 1395)

In order to answer the research question, the questions asked of the participants sought to elicit information about their motivations, processes and challenges of creating content for a closed Facebook Community Group. For example, they were asked why they share Dinovember posts on social media. Furthermore, the study examined a selection of posts published to social media during Dinovember 2022. Given the two sources of data collection, it was decided that reflexive thematic analysis would allow for consistent analysis to be conducted across the data sets. Section 3.7.4 provides an overview of the process used to extrapolate the key themes.

3.7.2 Theme criteria and selection

A theme is a recurring pattern that occurs within a data set (Byrne, 2022). It enables information to be organised in a way to interpret "aspects of the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4).

Themes enable comparisons to be made in and between both the data item (in this instance one participant's interview transcript) and the data set (all the interview transcripts and the social media posts) (Byrne, 2022). While much can emerge from a data set, ultimately a theme must capture "something important in relation to the overall research question" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 10).

It is deemed crucial that researchers clearly identify the type of analysis they aim to implement (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This research aims to provide rich descriptions of the data set to explain how and why niche Facebook Community Group members create and share their Dinovember posts. As previously mentioned (3.7.1), the repeated instance of a theme is important, but so too are themes that may appear sparsely yet are spoken of in depth or with passion by the participants. For this research, the most important criterion for the selection of a theme was that it would allow the overall research aim to be achieved. Therefore, themes were selected for both their frequency of occurrence, and their contribution to fulfilling the research aim.

3.7.3 Inductive thematic analysis

A researcher can approach themes one of two ways when using RTA; inductively from the data (a data-led approach), or deductively from existing theory or previous research (a theory-led approach) (Boyatzis, 1998). An inductive approach requires the researcher to interrogate the data to allow themes and codes to emerge, whereas a deductive approach entails evaluating the data against pre-determined assumptions (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Byrne, 2022). This research study follows an inductive approach whereby the themes and codes are generated through the thorough thematic analysis of the collected data.

Once the type of thematic analysis is decided, Braun and Clarke (2006) state that the "level at which themes are to be identified" (p. 13) should be determined. Thematic analysis is used either to analyse the semantic meanings of the words used by the participants in the data, or to analyse the latent meanings of the participants' responses (Boyatzis, 1998). It describes and summarises

the participants' responses or looks for underlying meaning. While there will be some instances where semantic analysis is required to provide an explanation of how the participants create their posts, this research primarily analyses latent meanings in order to explain the underlying meanings in a participant's response.

3.7.4 Thematic analysis process

Scholars and researchers assert that there are many ways to approach thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Byrne, 2022), however Braun and Clarke (2006) developed a six-step process which has been used and cited by many researchers since (Byrne, 2022). This study followed the steps recommended by Braun and Clarke (2022) in their revised process.

The researcher first becomes familiar with the data during the collection of social media posts and the interview process when the participants give their responses to the questions asked (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The second instance arises during the transcription process when the researcher goes through the data word by word. While all 13 interviews used the transcription functionality on MS Teams, the researcher went through the recordings and transcripts to ensure that the transcripts were accurate. Careful attention was paid to punctuation and emphasis to ensure the data sets were reliably recorded and reflected the participant's original response and intended meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Natural fillers such as "umm", and conversations which were not relevant to the interview questions were excluded. The accuracy of the transcripts was then confirmed with the participants. If changes were made, they were checked against the recordings again before undergoing coding.

Each of the 13 transcripts was then coded line-by-line to identify potential themes with which to answer the research question and achieve its aim. Codes are understood to show the researcher's interpretation of the data (Byrne, 2022). As codes emerged, they were added to a list and considered against existing codes to ensure that they best captured the meaning of the data. Care was taken to make sure that the codes reflected the intended meaning of the

participant. Initially these codes were written in the margins of printouts of the transcripts. Later, an electronic spreadsheet was created with the codes listed in the left-hand column and the related text (words, phrases and sentences) in the column alongside it. This made the collating of codes under potential themes more straightforward.

At the coding stage, the data was examined three times. First, open coding identified and coded the main themes within the data set, then axial coding compared themes. At this stage, themes were developed to encompass similar codes. For example, the codes 'time pressure' and 'social media fatigue' were both encapsulated by the theme 'challenges to posting'. The second stage re-examined any codes that stood alone or did not fit the theme; they were re-examined to determine whether they indicated a new theme, could be moved to another theme, or should be eliminated. The third stage in the process was selective coding whereby the number of participants who mentioned a theme was included to indicate its strength as a concept. The same three-step coding process was then repeated using the social media posts as a data set to determine the prevalence of the themes in the content and to add veracity to the findings. In terms of the social media posts both the images and any accompanying text (where relevant) were coded. The results are presented in chapter four.

In order to ensure the soundness of research in terms of the integrity of the findings, efforts have been made to ensure that the data collection and analysis processes were as robust and transparent as possible. Using the parameters outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), specific attention has been paid to truth value, consistency, neutrality and applicability.

Clarke and Braun (2017) state that the researcher's role as a data interpreter means that the research question itself can evolve throughout the analysis process. That evolution has the potential to bring into question the validity of the research as the results rely upon the researcher's subjective analytic lens (Guest et al., 2006). To counter that, Guest et al. (2006) recommend that the researcher should monitor and review the codes throughout the analysis stage. Furthermore, Terry et al. (2017) state that reflexive thematic analysis has quality

procedures built into it, such as a two-stage review process whereby potential themes are reviewed against the coded data and the entire data set. They assert that the process of reflexive thematic analysis coding in fact allows the data to reveal greater richness and depth the longer the researcher immerses him or herself with it, or repeatedly engages with it (Terry et al., 2017). The researcher found this to be true.

3.8 Summary

This chapter outlined the extensive process of gathering and analysing data from Dinovember Community Facebook Group members to answer this study's research question. In keeping with the interpretivist paradigm, it is concluded that a qualitative design, using data collected from social media posts and through 13 in-depth interviews is the appropriate method to allow the Dinovember Community Facebook group members to provide rich, detailed descriptions of their process and motivation for posting about a creative endeavour. The qualitative approach allows the researcher access to personal accounts and perspectives. Reflexive thematic analysis has been selected as the data analysis method of choice to ascertain the research findings. This reflexive thematic analysis of the posts and interviews focused on providing a detailed overview of the motivations and processes of contributors to a creative social media community group. The following chapter will discuss the findings that emerged through the process of reflexive thematic analysis.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to understand how Dinovember participants engage in creative storytelling within a closed community Facebook group.

This chapter presents the findings drawn from the reflexive thematic analysis of interviews with 13 participants accompanied by a content analysis of their posts shared on the Dinovember Community Facebook Group page. The following sections outline the three umbrella themes — the process of creative storytelling, motivations for being a creative storyteller, and challenges in keeping-up with a creative pursuit — and explain the findings related to them.

4.2 The process of creative storytelling

Storytelling emerged as a strong theme during the data analysis. All 13 participants specifically spoke about creative storytelling being an integral part of their Dinovember tradition and the Dinovember Community Facebook Group. This theme is evidenced through four subthemes — seriality of narratives, world-building, character arcs and intentional messaging.

4.2.1 Seriality of narratives

Eleven of the participants created smaller ideas or episodes that linked to a common theme which, when combined, had a serial effect contributing to that year's whole story. These participants talked about how knowing that each night's set-up was an episode made the social media posts easier to create.

In fact, those who decided on the year's theme or whole story before the month began (one year, Participant 3 had a film theme and had the dinosaurs recreate famous movie scenes each night) were grateful to have a framework for multiplicity and found it gave their posts momentum. Since multiplicity and momentum are both integral to the Dinovember tradition (given creators must create a scene for 30 nights of the month). It appears that having seriality in the narrative by constructing a temporally ordered sequence of events (O' Sullivan, 2019; Page, 2013) was key to the process of creative storytelling for the majority of the participants.

For example, Participant 1's "Magic Beans" post was an episode resolving the curiosity from the previous night's post and taking the story sequence forward. In this example, the previous night's post had the dinosaurs venture into horticulture as they were shown planting magic beans, leaving the audience to wonder what might sprout the next night. The subsequent post's caption "The magic sugar beans they planted last night grew" serves to remind the audience of their speculation and the unpleasant deprivation state of not knowing (Noordewier & van Dijk, 2017) before the image revealed shoots of candy canes. It rewarded the audience for returning to the story and indicated that the dinosaurs' adventures were ongoing and that the story will continue, in much the same way that soap operas resolve cliffhangers over sequenced episodes.

Figure 1. Magic Beans. Participant 1.

4.2.2 World-building

While all 13 participants gave their dinosaurs names and personalities; nine participants (who have all been creating Dinovember for at least the last five years and considered themselves to be *veterans*) created fictional worlds with defined characters, props, norms and visual settings for their dinosaur characters.

Participant 13 explained that for her, this world-building offered the freedom to embrace the "anything-goes" aspect of the Dinovember tradition and her audience has accepted her approach. For example, in the world she has created there is a toy Yoda (a character from *Star Wars* movies) who joins the dinosaur characters as a god-like entity to observe what is happening. Here, the integration of Yoda seems to draw on existing cultural capital (Williams, 2008) because anyone who is familiar with *Star Wars* knows that Yoda is a wise teacher. By using that popular culture identity Participant 13 can extrapolate the world of the dinosaurs beyond just the dinosaurs. Yoda oversees their adventures within the narrative and brings the audience in by inferring meaning which serves to widen the confines of a social media post (Williams, 2008).

Similarly, a stick, aptly named Stick, has become another character in the world and its involvement is unquestioned. Participant 13 explained "So now there's just one Dino that holds Stick everywhere and Stick is now a thing". She noted that her audience seeks out Stick and if her posts do not include an image of Stick she receives concerned messages and comments. Stick, then, has become part of Participant 13's signature style (as shown in figure 2 below), which Elsbach (2009) suggested was a way of signalling authorship and making a person's creative work distinctive among others.

Figure 2. The dinos are back in their home. Participant 13.

Participant 2 uses world-building as an opportunity to tell stories in a way that challenges the status quo of society by anthropomorphising her dinosaurs, yet the dinosaurs retain some of their natural characteristics. Her stories combine human practises with the behaviour of creatures who have not been socialised, which she finds opens the door to unexpected ideas. For example, her dinosaurs have built a bonfire for Guy Fawkes in the middle of the living room, rather than in the hearth, which shows the personification of her dinosaurs through human behaviour. However, in her post showing a human skeleton picked clean by the toys (Figure 3 below), the dinosaurs exhibit the kind of scavenger-like behaviour which the audience would associate with animals in the wild. This demonstrates that she has created a world with its own set of norms, whether intentionally or not, and that world can be confining, but equally directive.

Figure 3. Halloween Skeleton. Participant 2.

4.2.3 Character arcs

Eight of the nine participants who built fictional worlds also talked about creating recurring characters with carefully considered narrative arcs. These characters were designed to forge a connection with the audience so they could easily identify the characters and more importantly, track how their stories develop.

For example, Participant 9 explained that those who have followed her dinosaur antics for the last nine years have been “surprisingly invested” in the characters she created. Her much-

maligned iguanodon character, that she named Iggy, has an underdog arc (Quesque et al., 2021) and so never comes out on top when compared with her other dinosaur characters. For instance, Iggy got the worst costume in one of her Dinovember scene creations. Even though Iggy is shown as the butt of every joke, he is much loved by Participant 9's audience. Participant 9 felt that Iggy's sub-plot and the "Oh, Iggy" moments (see example in Figure 4 below) was what keeps her audience engaged with her posts. She articulated that while they have a general interest in what the other dinosaurs do, they are motivated to discover what happened to Iggy. Here, it seems that the use of the underdog archetype has made Participant 9's Dinovember scene relatable and engaging (Quesque et al., 2021). This may be attributed to resonance with popular underdog characters in classic tales such as *David and Goliath* and *Cinderella* and in popular films such as *Rocky* and *Bank of Dave,* where the audience is accustomed to the underdog eventually triumphing (Quesque et al., 2021). Additionally, it may be implied that this character's seemingly insignificant misfortune also demonstrates multiplicity (O'Sullivan, 2019) insofar as Iggy's storyline interlocks with the rest of the narrative and draws the audience back. So, perhaps, with Iggy, Participant 9's audience stays engaged in hopes that one of the Dinovember scenes will eventually be Iggy's night of triumph.

Figure 4. Even dinos deserve self-care. Participant 9.

4.2.4 Creating stories driven by specific values

Eleven of the participants spoke of using Dinovember posts to communicate a moral message that represented their family values. For them, constructing a story that shared their family's values with the social media audience helped to explain big, potentially divisive, topics in a gentle way.

For example, three participants talked about giving their dinosaurs surgical masks or having them queue up for vaccinations at a time when mandates were causing conflict on a global scale and many of them had family and friends who were both anti-vaccination and anti-mask. The Dinovember storytelling allowed them to communicate their personal stance in a way that did not cause criticism or dissent in their comments, because they presented it as a fanciful fantasy for children.

Similarly, Participant 6 included an episode where dinosaurs were seen "paying homage to the almighty T-rex" and in her Facebook post she questioned if religion, cult, and monarchy were synonyms. Here she raised a critical societal issue and appeared to have also offered a personal stance against it in saying "good thing I broke this up". However, while she guided her audience to interpret the images (see figure 5), Participant 6 ultimately left the decoding up to the audience. It also established that the toys have their own will and cultural norms which the audience is invited to decode based on their own definitions.

Figure 5. Religion, cult, monarchy? Are all those words synonyms?!?! Participant 6.

Similarly, Participant 9 used her Dinovember world to challenge the status quo, in effect using the dinosaurs to model the world she wants her children to grow up in. She explained that her household has a transgender dinosaur and that their inclusion was led by the children. Originally their Parasaurolophus was a male named Paris, but at some point, it was given a string of pearls and the children started to call it Susan. She explained that "all the dinosaurs are very respectful of Susan's life choices" (Participant 9). The family also has a non-binary dinosaur named Trowby whose pronouns change all the time. Participant 9 noted that her friends have been following the stories and are more interested because they have been there through both characters' story arcs (see figure 6). This shows a deeper level of storytelling from a values-driven perspective. It was the participant's way to create and show what a world where people were more understanding of each other's differences could look like. Participant 9 felt that

Dinovember was a way to start conversations with her children and to destigmatize ideas that they would encounter in the real world, but the fact that the social media response was positive indicates that her followers will also accept that messaging, even if only in a fictitious story world.

Figure 6. Dinovember throwback to when I introduced our much smaller gang. Participant 9.

The above approaches demonstrate that those participants were conscious of their power as creative storytellers and intended to use them to question the status quo in a positive and gentle way and represent their values and moral motives.

This finding supports the views held by scholars such as Benjamin (2006) who asserts that storytelling is a memorable way to impart values, and Sibierska (2017) who considers that moral message is a formal and pragmatic constituent of a narrative. Using the posts to communicate specific values or morals through the story could be seen as an aspect of the influence of authorship (O'Sullivan, 2019).

4.2.5 Evolution of the storytelling style over the years

Through the interviews and by comparing the posts of those who have recently started Dinovember and those who have been posting about it for more than four years, it is evident that the participants' creative processes and storytelling styles developed and changed over time. Participant 3 stated "It's definitely evolved over time. I mean, I feel like in the very beginning it was like 'Ohh, look what they did,' and then now it's just like some kind of smart-ass comment," which confirms the premise that creators follow a process of trial and error to construct their narratives (Sanchez-Lopez et al., 2020).

The 11 participants who have created Dinovember content for social media for more than four years spoke about how their style has developed from the initial wide shots to capture everything, to close-up shots that put the viewer in the story as demonstrated in the following selection of images. In "Tea party" (figure 7, Participant 8) the viewer is positioned among the dinosaurs on the table, and intrigue has been added by cropping the scene on the left. Participant 3's "Rex's Birthday" (figure 8) uses the viewer to close the cake circle and directs the attention to the action through the use of a candle as the sole light source. This serves to illuminate the characters, add warmth and a sense of celebration, and it draws the audience in.

Figure 7. Tea Party. Participant 8.

Figure 8. Rex's Birthday. Participant 3.

Participant 3 described the photographic process as being driven by a desire to tell a story saying that the image is for the audience. She was conscious that her style had evolved and said she chooses to "snap a piece of it that you can see" and that she made an effort to photograph the scenes in a way that looks interesting and "doesn't just look like my record that I did something today." So, while the participants used their social media channels as a means to archive their

creative outputs, they endeavoured to make the posts engaging stories rather than factual accounts of a set-up.

Others, like Participant 4, explained that emulating the style of Refe and Susan Tuma (the authors of the picture book that launched the Dinovember tradition) helped them to refine their style to engage their social media audiences better. Participant 4 shared one of her earlier posts (figure 9) with me and explained that she thought her audience could not tell what was happening. She felt that it looked like the dinosaurs had made another mess, however when she read the book *What the Dinosaurs did Last Night,* it inspired her to get closer with the camera and to approach her setups from different angles. Figure 10 illustrates how her approach developed over time; it is much closer and focuses on one character, rather than the entire herd. Figure 11 is an example of the photography style of the Dinovember originators, Refe and Susan Tuma, and demonstrates how the audience is drawn into the scene through the camera position giving the dinosaurs' perspective, and the lighting, composition and exposure adding drama to the story.

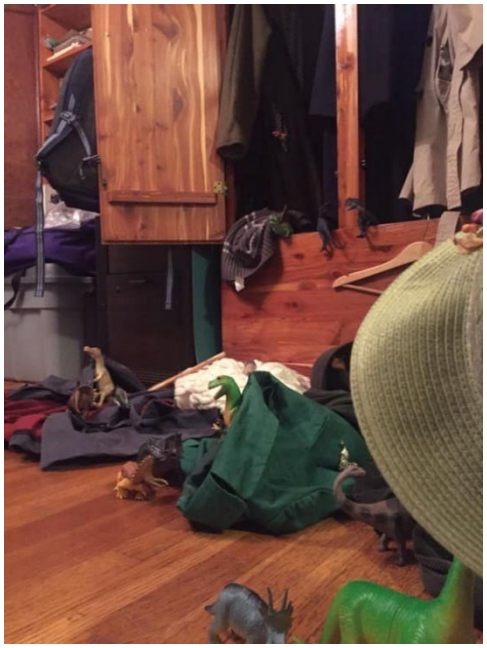

Figure 9. 2019 set up. Participant 4.

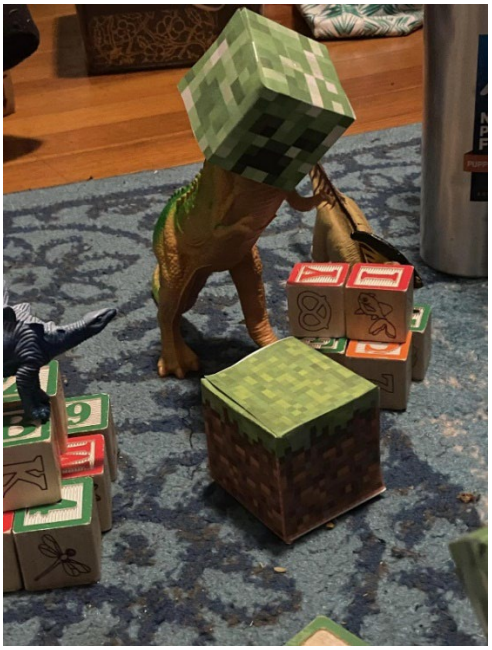

Figure 10. 2022 set up. Participant 4.

Figure 11. Image by Refe and Susan Tuma for reference.

The other participants who have created Dinovember for more than four years commented that they have an awareness of the styles of photos that are associated with the platforms they post to. Those who preferred Instagram were aware of a less-is-more aesthetic, while those who were more familiar with Facebook felt that the captions were more important to their audience than expertly art-directed images, so they took care with authorship.

Interestingly, while they felt their style had developed, none of the participants felt that it was their own style. They acknowledged the parameters and conventions of their preferred platform and credited others with shaping the look and feel of their posts. For example, Participant 3 (who collaborates with her husband on the ideas and post composition) still did not feel as though her approach to creating posts was her own, even after eight years. She alluded to influence and said that when something strikes her, she tries to pinpoint what about it caught her attention, then she will try to imitate that In some way with the dinosaurs. This was echoed by the other veteran creators who all acknowledged that while their audiences see their Dinovember posts as noticeable, original and memorable, the participants did not credit

themselves as being originators and felt as though they have yet to find their individual creative style.

4.2.6 Collaboration

Twelve participants indicated that they collaborate with their social media audience by taking onboard comments and suggestions made as part of the feedback loop (De Fina, 2016), or by keeping what they know of their audience in mind when creating their posts. Eight participants stated that their dinosaur storylines were often prompted by the audience's response. Participant 9 explained that the Elf (from Elf on the Shelf, a similar and better-known modern childhood tradition) had been incorporated into her storytelling due to a comment from an audience member, saying that the elf came in by request and that the dinosaurs stayed true to their predatory nature by trapping it and interrogating it over a four-night storyline. Since then, the elf has walked into a new trap each year (figure 12), which helps to remove Participant 9's fear of the blank page by giving her an expected story to reimagine, or a framework for creative activity (Adler, 2008; Bilton, 2007).

Figure 12. The Christmas decorations went up today. Participant 9.

All 12 were clear that knowledge of their audience influenced the story and how it is told. They were aware of the existence of an audience and the specific personalities, likes and dislikes of that audience. Participant 1 articulated that she often posts for her personal audience, but "sometimes you almost have the Dinovember page in your head when you're setting stuff up.".

So, this research supports that the act of storytelling via posted content on a social media platform means that the storyteller takes for granted the existence of a real audience despite their non-presence at the time of posting. This further enables them to control how they present without having to respond in the moment to the reactions of the audience (Rubio-Hurtado et al., 2022). Despite this lack of presence in the moment, the audience is invited to collaborate. Eight participants found that collaboration occurred once the Dinovember scene had been posted, particularly when they had left the post for the audience to unpack and then comment on. Participant 13's observation that when she posts a story without a supporting caption or context is "like when you paint a picture and people interpret it as something else and you're like, yeah," shows that people will interpret things in a way that has meaning to their own lives (Lomberg & Kapsch, 2019; Lim & Childs, 2020).

Interestingly some of the participants collaborated with their audiences and another adult in their household. While 10 participants were the sole creators for their households and social media audience, the other three participants worked in creative teams with their partner. Those participants who worked in pairs to collaborate found it easier and observed that the resulting posts have evolved and improved with time. One explained that working as a duo on idea generation was informal saying, "It's often just conversations with me and my husband, or one of us will have been thinking of something and we'll get inspired." (Participant 13). While another spoke about how the collaboration was important throughout the entire concepting, creation and posting process. She described how she and her husband would "go back and forth" when it came to the post captions because they brought different styles, "he has a tendency to be more punny… I think my flavour is probably to be a little bit more dry" (Participant 3). This

clearly shows that their process is a creative synthesis of different perspectives that is unique to the team dynamic and that they are capable of integrating their diverse styles (Elsbach, 2019). It works for them because they each value what the other offers in terms of ideas and authorship (Elsbach, 2019).

4.2.7 Intentional messaging to attract the audience through image and text

Ten of the 13 participants stated that they were intentional about the choice of image and text in their Dinovember Facebook posts and did so with the goal of drawing the audience to the story.

As one participant summarised, “The captions are, I think, entirely for the audience.” (Participant 3). Participant 9 added that she uses the captions under the pictures (as opposed to the main post) to reward her audience, saying “So particularly if I’ve got a good pun or a joke or something that I haven’t wanted to cram into the main post, they go in the captions.”.

Participant 8 articulated the process in a way that summarised what the other nine had expressed, explaining that they deliberately try to construct posts so that the image gets the audience’s attention and inspires them to “at least read the main blurb”, effectively positioning the participants as persuaders.

These attention and interest aspects demonstrate the two initial steps of the Attention Interest Desire Action (AIDA) model which was developed by Lewis (1903) and remains a commonly used framework within the creative advertising and visual storytelling fields today. The model shows that to persuade a target audience, a piece of communication must first get their attention, then pique interest long enough to create desire for the product or idea, so that the audience then acts by responding in the preferred way (Priyanka, 2013).

The current study found that in some instances, the participants were aware that the caption and image worked better together to capture attention and interest, and that knowledge informed how they constructed the posts. In figure 13, Participant 7’s post uses the caption “just

a dino being a creepy neighbour" to direct the audience to interpret the image in a specific way, changing a seemingly innocent scene of a dinosaur looking out of the window to one where the dinosaur is behaving in a socially unacceptable manner. Furthermore, the term "just a" implies that this is a regular occurrence for these particular dinosaurs.

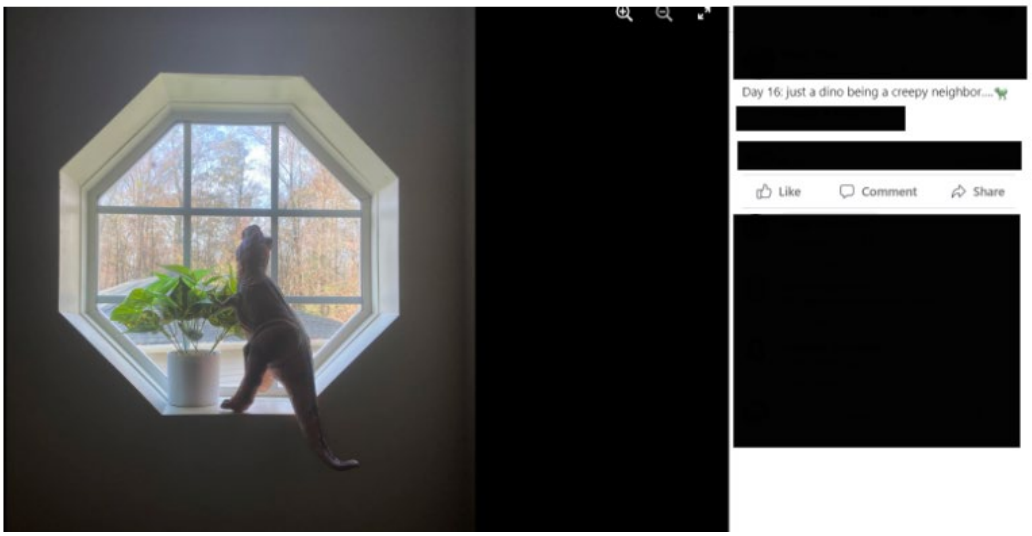

Figure 13. Day 16 just a dino being a creepy neighbour. Participant 7.

Participant 7 spoke for another eight participants when she said that while she often took 20 pictures to post only two, she tried to keep her captions short and targeted to an adult audience (rather than the children the scene is created for). This reflects the standard advertising creative practice of working through multiple iterations of the executions to simplify and refine them as much as possible (Barry, 2016; Sullivan, 1998). An excellent example that supports this is Participant 3's "Tasteless" post which, at one word, could not have a shorter caption. It is all that is required to invite the audience to make meaning and interpret the story.

Figure 14. Tasteless. Participant 3.

Despite the participants having little or no knowledge of advertising theory, they all made conscious decisions in terms of their word choices for social-media storytelling on their personal pages. They chose to use words that make the dinosaurs responsible for the scenes (in such a way that denotes authorship) to draw the audience in and help to maintain the suspension of disbelief, as opposed to writing an "I did this" style of caption. Participant 2 explained her process as being deliberate and said she always phrases it as "the dinosaurs did it." She elaborated that she never alludes to how difficult the set-up was and takes herself out of the narrative altogether, although she may hint at what the inspiration was, and no matter how mundane she feels the scene is she will "try to put a bit of story behind it" (Participant 2).

The responses showed an even balance between participants wanting to capture a sense of movement, despite photos with implied motion not resulting in higher audience transportation in visual storytelling (Lim & Childs, 2020), and a desire to convey the story in the most engaging way. This reflects the concept that photos with a narrative element transport the audience better than a photo without a narrative element (Lim & Childs, 2020). Those who said that storytelling was the primary motivation for image selection expressed greater joy with the result saying that finding the angle for the picture and conveying the story through moments "makes

me happy" (Participant 4). Regardless of the motivation for image choice, there was greater intentionality with the images than with the words, intimating that the participants relied on the visual strengths of Facebook for storytelling. Participants 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9 and 13 each mentioned the influence that the channel has on their style saying, "really a lot of It is, *how is this going to look on social media, or how is this gonna look on a post*, right?" (Participant 13).

4.3 The motivations for being a creative storyteller

All 13 participants felt that participating in the Dinovember Community Facebook Group strengthened their identity as a creative person. They felt that although the page was predominantly active over a two-month period each year, their identity as a creator was reinforced through their niche interest all year long. Their motivations to be creative came from both within and outside the group, as explained in the sub themes below.

4.3.1 Getting inspiration from group members

All participants spoke of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group being a supportive environment for their creative pursuits and that they felt very engaged because all the other members were "their kind of people" (Participant 8).

All 13 participants said that getting inspiration and ideas from the group helped their creativity and therefore was the key reason for engaging with the page during the months of October and November, something that Participant 11 described as "seasonal engagement."

Participant 1, one of the six members who enjoyed the give-and-take aspect of the group membership, said "I like putting the post up and I like getting the inspiration and ideas from it".

Participant 11 openly admitted to being a member to "get ideas from what other people have done… if something comes up, I'm like oh that was a good idea. File it away".

Similarly, Participant 13 explained that when she was struggling for ideas, she would go to the Dinovember Facebook Community Group's page to ask what everyone thought the dinosaurs were going to do. She found that "the page really helped".

Similarly, Participant 8 even posted to the page to ask for help before the Dinovember month began to be further inspired (figure 15).

Figure 15. It's almost time. Send me your most over the top ideas! Participant 8.

4.3.2 Offering support to encourage group members

All 13 participants also spoke of being motivated by a need to help others be creative. Participant 4, who has avidly engaged with the Dinovember Community Facebook Group since it was created, kept a spreadsheet of every set-up that she has ever done. She said she always shared the link to the group whenever other members asked for ideas to see them through the month. This demonstrates the consciousness of kind and sense of moral responsibility that Kapri et al. (2021) established as key distinguishing markers of Facebook community groups. By contributing her spreadsheet, Participant 4 was interacting socially to help other individuals accomplish their needs to do with a common objective (Kapri et al., 2021).

Another example of offering support is Participant 5's earwax contest suggestion post (figure 16). It shows how she set up her dinosaurs through the images and explains what she used for the earwax in the caption. In this instance, the post was not about creative storytelling but instead explained how to execute the creative idea. This demonstrates the informational support that scholars like Hooper et al. (2023) identify as a reason for joining community groups and indicates that Participant 5 had carefully evaluated how to share her idea without disclosing personal information (Mansour, 2020). It also demonstrates what Elsbach (2019) calls pragmatic idea-giving behaviour in that it explains a practical, creative approach that like-minded Dinovember creators would find easy to emulate.

Figure 16. I've been having trouble posting… Earwax contest. Participant 5.

Another way of offering support was found to be encouraging people by liking or commenting on their Dinovember posts. Eleven of the 13 participants liked or commented on other people's posts to engage with them and encourage their creativity during November. However, there was only one, Participant 9, who actively posted to cheer on fellow creators, as shown in this text-only post (figure 17) which was intended to express solidarity.

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Figure 17. For anyone who needs to hear it. Participant 9.

This is interesting because it implies a deeper level of involvement and engagement with the community. As Swani and Lebrecque (2020) established, there are varying degrees of engagement on Facebook, the least involved is liking a post which takes one click. Commenting requires more effort and creating a text-only post to motivate others and share a personal experience requires even more involvement and invites a response.

Surprisingly, while participants engaged in supportive behaviour, the majority (12 of the 13 participants) expressed that their engagement with the Dinovember Community Facebook Group would end once they ceased to create Dinovember in their homes, stating that they would no longer have a need for the group. Only one participant indicated a moral responsibility to continue to support others saying he would remain in the group to share his ideas and experience "because I appreciated that when I needed ideas or tips people were there" (Participant 12).

Therefore, overall, it seems that the degree to which the group inspired the creators was based more on receiving inspiration and validation for one's own creativity, rather than driving and supporting others to be creative.

4.3.3 Desire to be seen as a creator who entertains and inspires non-group members

While the Dinovember Community Facebook Group motivates participants' creativity by offering a sense of belonging, inspiration and support, the participants in this study also acknowledged the role of their personal communities (friends, family, acquaintances) with whom they engaged through their personal social media pages.

All 13 participants shared their Dinovember related posts with their personal communities; 12 via their social media pages on Instagram and Facebook, and one (who expressed privacy concerns) to a select group of close family via Facebook. No matter where or how they shared the posts, all 13 were surprised that such a little-known tradition was embraced avidly by their

community and that the enthusiastic response spurred them to continue to share their creative pursuits and be seen as a creative person.

In fact, all 13 participants stated that they tailored the posts to maintain the audience's perception of them as creative, witty and cheerful, thereby controlling the impression they make on others (Thomson-Whiteside et al., 2017), while also strategically choosing what to disclose (Yoo, 2021). Participant 1 said that she looked for the most amusing angle because her friends have commented that seeing her posts "gives them a lift" when they have had a bad day. One could argue that this indicates a form of parasocial creativity or giving the people what they want in order to maintain ongoing audience engagement and validate the participants' self-esteem as a creator. This was reinforced by Participant 8 who says she is driven to continue because she has had colleagues tell her "I had a crappy week. And then your post made me feel so much happier" (Participant 8). She felt as though such comments from her colleagues inspired her to present content that would generate positive feedback from them, which Schlosser (2020) has established as a major driver of self-presentation on social media.

Participant 3 explained that there is always "a lot of excitement" among her friends when the year's Dinovember posts start and that motivates her creativity. Another, Participant 12, went out of his way to make sure the people he thought would be most interested in the dinosaurs' adventures got to see what was happening in his household. That required him sharing posts not only to his personal Facebook page, but also to another friend who creates Dinovember, and to other people with adjacent creative interests. He is a member of a Discord group of people who play *Jurassic World Alive* and he sent them some of the posts that he thought they would enjoy, which demonstrates an effort to entertain multiple personal communities through a range of online channels. It was Participant 12's way to leverage his value within his other networks and make a unique contribution through self-expression, thus building his personal brand (Thomson-Whiteside et al., 2017) as a creative person. This finding indicates the desire to

entertain and inspire others that Nosrati and Detlor (2021) identified as a core aspect of impression management as a creative.

Everyone who took part in the study said that they initially posted about Dinovember to their personal pages because they wanted the tradition to spread as they intended to lead by example and inspire others. Researchers including Snow and Lazauskas (2018), Nosrati and Detlor (2021) and Rubio-Hurtado et al. (2022) have established that storytelling is a powerful tool for influencing others and all 13 participants used the stories in their posts to motivate others, however only four spoke of doing so successfully. One now has friends whose dinosaurs come to life in November, one has inspired a librarian friend who introduced it to her workplace to attract younger readers during the month, and the other two Dinovember adopters are pre-school and primary-school-level teachers whose classroom dinosaurs delight the children each year.

As well as providing motivation to share Dinovember in the hope of persuading others to adopt it in their homes or workplaces, the data shows that personal community engagement drove the participants to modify or shape their creativity and stay accountable. This was more important for the nine participants who have created Dinovember for social media for five years or longer. This aligns with Marengo et al.'s (2021) finding that the more often a person shares online, the greater the intensity of the response from their audience.

Those participants who had shared Dinovember diligently in previous years found that the anticipatory response from their audiences outweighed their desire to stop posting. Four participants spoke about wanting to end the tradition but being driven to continue out of a sense of duty to their community. Participant 3 explained that she had thought about making a goodbye post but ended up continuing the tradition out of a fear of backlash saying, "I just moved on, and I thought, well we'll do it. We'll see what happens next year."

It was also evident that creators did not want to disappoint their communities. Seven participants said that keeping the audience happy influenced what they posted. Participant 8 explained that her friends' comments shaped what she uploaded to Facebook. She accepted that "All my friends are like… I just want to see the dinosaurs. I don't care about the process" and explained that since the story is everything to them, they express displeasure if she only has time to post a photo of the setup. Participant 13 said that she only posts to her own page because she knows that her friends look forward to it. As she explains, "Otherwise, I probably wouldn't [post on social media]; I would be like 'I don't need to bombard people's Facebook feed with my Dinovember posts'." Overall, the findings of this study corroborate He et al.'s (2023) assertion that a creators' ongoing willingness to post is linked to the social media feedback mechanisms that show engagement, creating a self-perpetuating post-response cycle.

The present study also revealed that the closeness of connection between the creator and their followers had no effect on how motivating the feedback was. Feedback from a former colleague was just as encouraging as the feedback from a close friend. The following example represents the similar experiences of seven participants who were contacted by people they consider to be "mere acquaintances", but who are highly engaged in the story of Dinovember.

> This one guy comments on my stuff, or he'll like the pictures. I know him because he was married to one of my friends...I never see him, but he sees the dinosaurs...And he will comment on everything, and one day...He's like, "You know I am loving seeing how things have progressed, like the kids and this and that. My favourite is those damn dinosaurs." He's like, "That is my favourite thing to see. I will open my phone in November just to go see those posted pictures. (Participant 7)

Participant 2 expressed surprise that some of her followers actively sought out her Dinovember content throughout the year saying that she has a Dinovember folder in her Facebook photos and she adds the album for the year to that folder. She has noticed that people access those pictures and comment on them throughout the year. This is interesting because not only does it reflect how people can use the platform to archive story instalments (Page, 2013; Choo et al., 2020) and look back on their content to see how they have progressed or evolved as creators

(Rubio-Hurtado et al., 2022), but it also demonstrates that segments of their audience are so engaged that they will actively seek out content, rather than wait for it to appear in their feeds.

4.4 Challenges of keeping up with a creative pursuit

The participants encountered various challenges in their creative pursuit of participating in the Dinovember Community Facebook Group.

4.4.1 Impression management

While a key motivation for participating in Dinovember storytelling was the desire to be seen as a creator (see earlier section 4.3), participants also felt that keeping up this impression became a challenge.

Ten participants raised the fact that they were delighted to be identified for their creativity by their followers and be known as the “dinosaur person”, and they even fostered that reputation. Participant 10 took that responsibility as seriously as a brand manager and explained “You are marketing Dinovember, aren’t you? The dinosaurs themselves are the brand, aren’t they?”. However, six of the 10 expressed that they felt pressure to perform and deliver content to a certain standard. Some, such as Participant 3, felt that their social-media audience expected a level of commitment and said “we started doing this as fun, and then it took off. Now it feels like we do it out of obligation.” (Participant 3).

Participant 5 spoke in detail about how prioritising posting for Dinovember put stress on relationships within her household. Her drive to be the best creator on the Dinovember page created tension with her husband. She revealed that her husband felt that posting for Dinovember was “crazy” and that she was prioritising it over cleaning up “the last seven setups.”. She highlighted that it was important to her to present herself in particular ways to reinforce her desired identity through carefully constructed content, something which Swani and Lebrecque (2020) state are drivers of social media use.

Interestingly, while people felt motivated when sharing ideas with group members, social comparison and ownership of intellectual property became key concerns. For example, Participant 5 found it challenging to continue posting when she could see her ideas being used by other participants who presented them as though they were their intellectual property. She felt that they were dismissing all her hard work, effort and the chaos (tiredness, untidy house and husband's displeasure) that went on in her household to create those ideas in the first place. Participant 5 therefore felt the investment in being 'seen as a creative' was not worth the returns (in this case a lack of appreciation for her behind-the-scenes effort).

> I think I intentionally stopped posting in the group towards the end just because I caught myself getting too invested into, not just the likes, but I didn't like what it was doing to me… I felt like I was getting too invested in it with people I didn't know. If certain ideas were being repeated, or people were doing stuff that I know I had done in years past – it didn't sit well with me. (Participant 5)

Over time she found it too hard to maintain her creative image and stopped posting which supports the finding of Lee et al. (2020), that impression management is one of the top three of six social and psychological antecedents to social media fatigue.

4.4.2 Social media fatigue

Ten participants spoke of feeling jaded about creating Dinovember posts after so many years, and that the apathy had an impact on other aspects of their lives. Participant 2 explained that posting fatigue led to a despondency in her posts that became evident to her audience. She said that as the month drags on and she is tired due to waiting for her children to go to sleep, she will set the dinosaurs up and post without an explanation. Yet despite not having any idea of what the dinosaurs were doing, she still made sure there was something for her social media community.

The same 10 participants described having a fraught or reluctant relationship with social media, saying that they avoided it during the rest of the year, or noting that their engagement with other people's posts had diminished from commenting to the lower-engagement action of

liking. Participant 13 described her use of Facebook as sporadic, saying that she avoided social media as much as possible through the year, “And then November comes up and I’m like ‘God dammit. I’m gonna get sucked into that Facebook thing’.” (Participant 13).

Participant 5 expressed a similar feeling of compromised behaviour saying she would push herself to post in November and that she had noticed when scrolling back through the previous posts on her social media page that more than half her posts in previous years were for Dinovember. It led her to question why she was “going out of the way to post so much” (Participant 5).

Participant 4 clearly articulated the point that all 10 fatigued participants made declaring that “social media is draining and you gotta fight to get through.” (Participant 4). These sentiments support the statement that active social media use promotes social connectedness while passive use leads to disconnection (Verduyn et al., 2017) — by this stage the fatigued participants’ social media use had changed from actively engaging with comments and like to passive disconnection. Lee et al. (2020) found that the requirement that social media sites place on users to constantly interact with others can cause fatigue and have detrimental physical and mental effects on the individual. This research supports that finding.

4.4.3 Perceived pressure, overload and tiredness

Scholars such as Ou et al. (2022) have established that perceived overload (of information, the social media system, or social overload) is a key contributor to social media fatigue. The findings of the current study exemplify Ou er al.’s (2022) sentiment in pointing to the participants feeling social pressure to post, pressure to engage with the platform, and pressure to create to a high standard.

Ten participants expressed that the creation of Dinovember for 30 nights for the members of their households did not put as much pressure on them as capturing those scenes for social media. Participant 5 explained that Dinovember itself was not stressful, but that the need to

take good photographs every night and post to social media within the expected timeframe became too much pressure and took joy out of the experience.

The same ten also found that interacting and responding to their audiences was a big commitment and they perceived that obligation as too much pressure. Despite all of them stating that they appreciated any ideas that their followers suggest, they felt that replying to comments and liking likes intruded on their limited free time. While they were grateful for the engagement, they expressed feeling caught in a loop, with Participant 3 even going so far as to suggest that the festive season, the most hectic time of the year, would feel like a break, saying "It's just, 'Thank God it's December'.".

Eight participants mentioned feeling overwhelmed, overloaded and tired. Despite three quarters of that group (6) planning ahead and having ideas ready to execute, all eight talked about finding it too hard to perform to the expected level some nights. Some took shortcuts; "Sometimes I'm just so tired I can't do the captions." (Participant 9) and others looked for easy, effortless set-ups just to get the task completed; "What can I do that's a really quick job? Throw them all in the washing machine… the last couple of days you're just brain fried." (Participant 11). Participant 13 found that the pressure to meet a standard had ruined the purpose; she explained that after six successful years, 2022 was the first year that she and her husband were tired of the tradition and the process.

A selection of posts to the Dinovember page demonstrates the sense of overload the participants raised. In Participant 5's post "Days 11-13" (figure 18) she shows a selection of images from the three days' setups with the caption "Days 11-13: glow sticks, bubble wrap and curious notes" which, compared with the significantly higher level of effort in her previous posts, indicates creative fatigue and despondency. There is no storytelling, the post is a record of the events of the previous nights, but it has none of the elements she had previously used to engage the audience and prompt feedback.

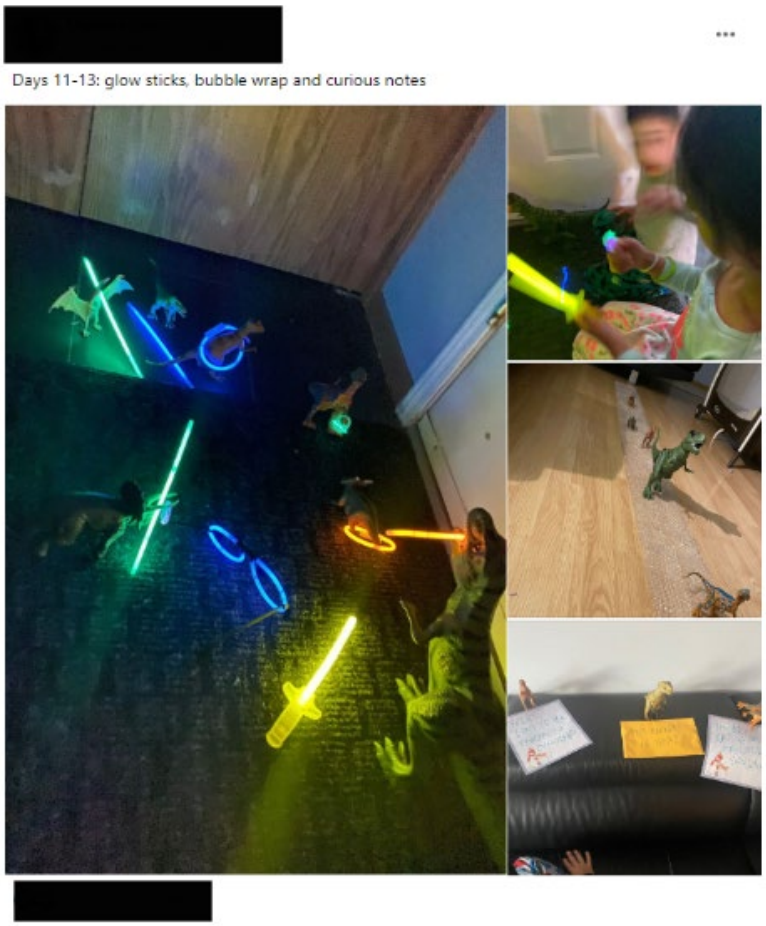

Figure 18. Days 11-13. Participant 5.

In Participant 9's "I'm so tired" post (figure 19), the post makes direct reference to the creator's exhaustion both through the phrase "I'm so tired, but luckily so are the Dinos" and the images of sleeping toys. Some effort has been made to leave the dinosaurs where the children will find them in the morning, but this setup required almost no energy or forethought. Some effort has been made to suggest this as an option for the other members of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group who may feel the same pressure, which implies that Participant 9 was still engaging with the other posts on the page and had an awareness of how other creators felt at that point in the month. Despite social media fatigue, Participant 9 demonstrated that there was still a sense of social connectedness within the group (Verduyn et al., 2017). The "I'm so tired" post is an excellent example of what Hancock et al. (2022) describes as a *trade-off in well-being* that increases both distress and benefits for social media users. Participant 9 experienced distress through giving in to the pressure to post while exhausted but benefited from knowing

that her post helped other Dinovember Community Facebook Group members who were in a similar situation.

Figure 19. I'm so tired. Participant 9

4.4.4 Privacy concerns

Privacy concern has been identified in several studies (e.g., Wang, 2021; Ou et al., 2022) as a key component of social media anxiety.

Ten participants mentioned that they had privacy concerns and three of those ten explained that their mistrust of the privacy and security of social media platforms is the key reason why they have ensured that their children have no social media presence at all.

Participant 11 only shared images of her son via direct message to close family, Participant 12 may mention the children but did not share images, he explained "I don't post a lot on my regular Facebook or social media page. Especially with things related to the children, I really don't post about them at all." (Participant 12). Participant 13 neither posted images, nor mentioned her children by name. She gave an example of a time when she used an alphabet train set for a

dinosaur scene and took photos after her children had discovered it. She explained that her son rearranged the train carriages to spell his name, so she went through her pictures to make sure that she did not use photographs where that was visible, either on the Dinovember page, or her personal page.

Of the ten participants who mentioned privacy concern as a challenge of social media, one felt that her images would create more engagement if she included people, which is contrary to the findings of scholars such as Li and Xie (2020); they concluded that the presence of a human face does not lead to higher engagement on visual social media platforms. So, she included the children, but censored their faces. The other nine have never posted Dinovember pictures that show interactions with people.

4.4.5 Social media algorithms

While fewer than half (five) of the participants mentioned algorithms as a social media challenge, those who did discussed it in depth. They were aware that algorithms perform a process of ordering (Lomberg & Kapsch, 2019) and are responsible for which posts appear in a social media feed and when. However, their comments reflected Lomberg and Kapsch's (2019) findings; that the average social media user does not understand how algorithms work.

The five participants emphasised that algorithms influenced when their followers saw their content, which inadvertently impacted on engagement levels and in turn decreased their willingness to post. Participant 9 posited that her frustration with the algorithm might be due to a perceived a decline in the number of people who were actively using Facebook, and said she felt that her audience was diminishing as a result. She observed that there seemed to be a two-day delay between when she posted and when her friends saw those posts in the feeds saying, "And I'm noticing that with Dinovember and what people are liking is they are two days behind what I'm posting. So, I've definitely noticed that this year and yeah, less engagement, but I kind of put that down to the fact that I think people are leaving Facebook." (Participant 9).

Participant 4, who at the time of the interview had created and posted about Dinovember for nine years, found that her wildly engaged audience was not seeing her posts and she expressed frustration at her lack of control over whether her posts appeared in her friends' feeds saying, "I do think there are algorithms at play that I just don't understand." (Participant 4). The concept of algorithms as she understood it was as Kim (2017) outlined; algorithms predict the content that a user will find interesting based on what they have previously liked, commented on or spent time on. Participant 4 expressed confusion that her engaged followers did not see her posts in their feed given how much they had interacted and commented earlier in the month.

All five participants who raised concerns about algorithms commented that seeing the audience respond to their posts was a key motivator for continuing to post. Participant 2 stated that she needed to see that her audience has seen what she has done, and that they enjoyed it, and she felt as though the delayed feedback loop had a negative impact on her willingness to create (Swani & Labrecque, 2020).

4.5 Summary

Several common themes emerged from the analysis of both data sets: the process of creative storytelling; the motivations for being a creative storyteller; and the challenges of keeping up with a creative pursuit.

Firstly, the process of creative storytelling was evidenced through the participants' use of seriality, world-building, giving their characters arcs and using stories to convey specific values and morals to the audience. Their storytelling style developed, evolved and matured over time, and the participants collaborated with creative partners and/or their audiences to generate story ideas and create messaging that was composed and communicated through intentional image and text choices.

Secondly, the participants' motivation to be a creative storyteller stemmed from inspiration from fellow Dinovember Community Facebook Group members as well as their personal social

media audiences. They were compelled to post to the group to offer support and encouragement to fellow Dinovember creators, and there was a strong desire to be seen as a creator by non-group members which was driven by a need to inspire others to embrace the childhood tradition.

Finally, keeping-up with the creative pursuit was challenged by perceptions from the real world and the realities of the social media world. These included a desire to manage the impression they made on their audiences, a perceived pressure to create and post content of a particular standard, the sense of overload and tiredness that comes with creating 30 daily creative-content instalments, social media fatigue, privacy concerns and perceived changes to social media algorithms. The discussion of the themes' significance in terms of how Dinovember participants engage with creative storytelling on its community Facebook group is explored in the following chapter.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the meaning and significance of the findings to answer the research question "How do Dinovember participants engage with creative storytelling on its community Facebook group?". In addition, it considers the impact of this study on current and future social media and storytelling theory, research and practice.

The previous chapter revealed that three common themes emerged from the data — the motivations of being a creative storyteller, the process of creative storytelling, and the challenges of keeping up with a creative pursuit. By evaluating these findings against established theory and integrating insights from current literature, this discussion seeks to examine how and why members of social media community groups meld creativity and storytelling. The discussion aims to contribute to the broader academic discourse on social media storytelling and creativity which, until now, focuses predominantly on branding and marketing or professional practices as opposed to user generated content (Lim & Childs, 2020; Lin et al., 2024; Pangborn et al., 2023; Shahbaznezhad et al., 2020).

5.2 Identity: the creation of the creative self

Throughout the interview process and as shown in the findings chapter, the participants openly spoke about their desire to be seen as storytellers (see 4.3) and that social media provided the platform to fulfil that desire. By posting to the Dinovember group and their personal pages, they established their identity as a creative entity and the desire to be seen as a creative storyteller motivated the evolution of their authorship style. They posted to the Dinovember Community Facebook Group in order to have that creative storyteller identity validated through the likes and comments from like-minded peers. The need for further validation of that creative storyteller identity drives them to post on their personal pages. In the group they are one of many who have a shared interest, but on their own pages they have carved out a niche as creative storytellers. The Dinovember creators sought to elevate their creative Dinovember

identity and had that validated and reinforced in the personal space through people seeking out their content throughout the year and expressing delight when the dinosaurs return each November (4.3.3).

The current study's findings, therefore, support Cheung et al.'s (2022) point that creativity and design (as well as technical quality) predicted parasocial relationships. In other words, while the Dinovember creators had a real relationship with the followers of their personal pages, by taking on the identity of the creative dinosaur storyteller, they positioned themselves as the expert on the subject and shared aspects of their personal lives and beliefs in the same way as social media influencers and celebrities do (Cheung et al., 2022; Lazar, 2022; Ren et al., 2012; Weismueller et al., 2020).

Another key aspect of identity in terms of this research is to do with identifying with the Dinovember Community Facebook Group, not just being one of many creative people within the group. Lin et al. (2024) found in their study of consumer-generated content in brand social media communities that group members who identify strongly with the group share a collective identity with other members of that group. In effect the group identity allowed Dinovember creators to negotiate a definition of who they are (for example, storytellers who create magic for their households) and then share goals, and build relationships (Ross et al., 2009). This sense of tribe is evident in the Dinovember Community Facebook Group posts where the group identity or culture is perpetuated by the members sharing their ideas and experiences. Many of the participants spoke about group membership bolstering their identity because of the sense of being among "their kind of people" (Participant 8, 4.3.1). The findings also showed that the participants used the group for ideas and to solicit feedback when they posted something original, as Participant 5's earwax competition demonstrates (4.3.2). Therefore, this study supports Lazar's (2022) point that personal storytelling on social media allows people to engage with a collective cause (in this instance, the Dinovember Facebook Community Group), to

demonstrate how they contribute to the group's collective identity and perform self-promotion (both on the group and their personal pages).

Dalby and Freeman (2023) state that social media platforms enable users to create a virtual self using constructed narratives to represent themselves. In the case of the Dinovember creators, their creative identity was at the heart of their virtual self and managing the perception of that was a large part of the participants' self-promotion and impression management. The research shows that storytelling enabled them to seem to relinquish creative control to their characters. While the content of the posts revolves around the creators (regardless of where they post to the group page or to their personal pages), it is positioned as being communicated as though the dinosaurs are the decision makers or drivers of the narrative (see figure 19, "I'm so tired," Participant 9), or the creator becomes an interpreter or conduit of the dinosaurs' antics (for example figure 5, "Religion, cult, monarchy? Are all those words synonyms?!?!", Participant 6).

Despite the illusion of an abdication of creative responsibility, the participants still reveal their identities in the act of telling a story. They recognise aspects of their personalities and through the dinosaurs they represent themselves in the way they wish to be perceived. This supports the findings of Rubio-Hurtado et al. (2022) that social-media storytelling is driven by a desire to communicate identity and control perception. Posts such as Participant 6's "Religion, cult, monarchy? Are all those words synonyms?!?!" (figure 5) and Participant 9's non-binary dinosaur named Trowby (see 4.2.4) clearly communicate the values and attitudes that make up the creators' identities. Participant 6 makes it clear that they take umbrage with organised religion, and Participant 9 signals that she is someone who does not discriminate based on a person's sexual identity or orientation. They made deliberate choices in the composition of the posts to direct the audience to decode the message as intended (Dalby & Freeman, 2023) so that their virtual self is recognised.

Social media platforms mean that one person's page may have multiple audiences, for example, a participant's Facebook page may be viewed by family, close friends, acquaintances, former

colleagues, etc. which can make it challenging to control perception and means people are more careful about what they choose to discuss or reveal (Schlosser, 2019). However, for the Dinovember creators who posted to their personal pages the fact that they engaged in the childhood tradition became their identity, and for the majority of participants that was reinforced by looking for the amusing angle to post so that they continued to be perceived as quirky, creative and bringers of cheer (see 4.3.3). What, when and how they posted enabled them to control the audience's perception of them as creators (Yoo, 2021) and the fact that they worked hard to craft text and choose images that would entertain their audience shows that they used their personal pages as a performance platform to manage others' impressions of them (Picone, 2015). This implies that they were very aware of what their storytelling said about them as creative storytellers.

Presenting one's identity as a creative leader or expert was important in the personal space where creators were conscious that the audience was not interested in the behind-the-scenes details. Again, they managed that impression by posting only polished captions and carefully selected images to maintain the perception that they were creative storytellers. Participant 8's comment "All my friends are like… I just want to see the dinosaurs. I don't care about the process." (4.3.3) illustrates an awareness of the audience's needs and her willingness to deliver. Yet the Dinovember Community Facebook Group gave these same creators a space to be openly vulnerable and safely disclose feelings of inadequacy, particularly when they were tired or struggling creatively. This indicates that some Facebook community groups can be a space to be authentic and relax in terms of impression management which supports recent research around homophily in online groups (Cinelli et al., 2021) and may be determined by how administrators manage groups, or by the kind of members they attract.

5.3 Creativity comes with responsibility

With creativity comes responsibility (Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura, 2007) and this research found that the participants felt responsible towards the audience and to their creative process.

The participants of this study were conscious of their power as creative storytellers and how their story could affect the audience through persuasion and co-creation. For some, that power came in the form of freedom to drive the storytelling and control the morals the dinosaurs displayed. That was the case with the 11 participants who used the dinosaurs to convey their family values, such as supporting mandatory mask wearing in a pandemic, questioning the motivations of organised religion, and creating a world where inclusion and diversity are celebrated (4.2.4). This supports Rubio-Hurtado et al.'s (2022) assertion that the act of storytelling via posted content on a social media platform means that the storyteller takes for granted the existence of a real audience despite their non-presence at the time of posting. This further enables the Dinovember creators to control how they present without having to respond in the moment to the reactions of the audience (Rubio-Hurtado et al., 2022).

O'Sullivan (2019) explains that influence of authorship, or story design, allows the creator to select, deploy and combine segments in ways that gives them control of how the story is told, but does not necessarily determine how the story is received; the storyteller can persuade their audience, but it is up to the audience as to whether or not they are persuaded. The findings clearly show that the influence of authorship was a key motivation for why the Dinovember creators continued to share their posts online, which indicates that the creators were conscious that their power as storytellers could be used to reinforce their moral motives. While storytelling can be used to normalise societal values (Benjamin, 2006), issues can arise if the power of the storyteller is unchecked (Blau, 1964; De Fina, 2016). For example, Dinovember posts could lean towards propaganda if the audience allows themselves to be persuaded or convinced by blindly accepting what the dinosaurs show, which can occur when the audience believes the creator to be a credible source (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

In effect the participants used the power of persuasion that storytelling holds (De Fina, 2016) and the dinosaurs to promote an agenda to their audience, and because no one can argue with a plastic toy, by projecting their values onto the dinosaurs through creative storytelling, the

participants were able to deflect the ire of keyboard warriors. The creator could argue that the dinosaurs were operating in their own story realm, not that the creator drove the story.

The fact that the audience members become co-creators of meaning seems to temper that outcome in this instance. The data supports the fact that while the creator holds power in terms of the scene presented to the audience, they cannot control the associations the audience makes during the decoding process. This implies that the "persuadee" has some measure of freedom (O'Keefe, 2002). This can be seen in examples such as Participant 3's "Tasteless" post (figure 14) that invites the audience to decode and decide which aspect of the scene is tasteless, if any, and Participant 6's "Religion, cult, monarchy?" post (figure 5) which hands interpretative power over to the audience. The fact, too, that audience members' idea suggestions were used by some of the participants (for example, Participant 9's introduction of the elf-dinosaur feud storyline [see 4.2.6]) suggests that such an overtly creative-story-based output is less likely to be seen as having an agenda when the audience collaborates with the creators. Replicating this study with other creative and non-creative niche Facebook Groups could shed more light on that hypothesis.

Awareness of the community and audience engagement kept the participants accountable. While that brought purpose, it also clearly shows that the Dinovember creators relinquished some control to their communities, which differs from brand social media storytelling which is more carefully managed (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2020).

Giving in to the audience's demands created additional pressure but meant that the Dinovember Community Facebook Group members were constantly evaluating what, when and how they posted in order to protect themselves from hostility (Mansour, 2020), and in some cases made them feel as though the exchanges were inauthentic (see 4.3.3). Participant 5's experience of perceived pressure to be the best in the group, and her feelings of being dismissed when other members replicated her ideas and presented them as their own, caused her to step back from participating out of a desire to protect her creative integrity (see 4.4.1).

As well as having a responsibility to the audience, this research also shows that the participants had a responsibility to the creative process through character development and world-building. The identities of the characters become a frame of reference for both the creator and the audience, and those identities provided an opportunity for the creator to respond to the audience, or to allow the dinosaur stories to grow along with their children. Had the creators not developed the characters' stories (such as in the case of Participant 9's non-binary Trowby, Paris/Susan and underdog Iggy, and Participant 13's Stick) their audience was in danger of becoming disengaged due to a lack of an obvious narrative timeline that is key to the audience being able to suspend disbelief and embrace the story (Page, 2013; Sibierska, 2017). Character development also accounts for instances where the participants acknowledged that they had received comments from the audience if posts did not automatically appear in their feeds or certain characters were absent. This indicates that the audience was accustomed to the serial nature of the posts and when there was a delay it left them with unresolved curiosity; they recognised a gap in their knowledge and were compelled to fill it to appease the sense of frustration they felt (Noordewier & van Dijk, 2015) by engaging with the next instalment. Such character interest also contributed to the establishment of parameters for the world that was being built by these creators.

All 13 participants spoke of a play frame, or a "let's pretend" element which is what Sibierska (2017) asserts advances a record of events from being just a description of what happened, to a story. Rather than using the term 'play frame', the participants talked about the magic of Dinovember and the fact that they make a deliberate choice to reinforce the 'it's magic' message in their posts to their personal pages, reflecting how they speak about it at home to encourage a suspension of disbelief. Participant 2 explained that even her social media audience tacitly agreed that dinosaurs are extinct saying "These are just plastic figures, but we can all agree that we have this magical time when the dinosaurs come alive" (Participant 2). The creative storytellers acknowledged that they subconsciously used AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) principles in their posts as they attempted to persuade their audiences to willingly buy

into the play frame. The fact that the audiences did so indicates that their engagement in the storytelling has brought them to the action part of the AIDA persuasion framework (Priyanka, 2013), and the fact that they like and comment indicates that they have "bought into" Dinovember even though they do not aspire to create it themselves.

What is clear from this research, though, is that world-building provides a safe opportunity to be creative and try new approaches to communicate ideas about society. The participants explained that they were aware that they held power as the authors of the dinosaurs' stories and that there was a need to use that power wisely to create momentum within the narrative and to engage the audience while still imparting a set of values or a moral code.

5.4 Interaction in online groups

While the members of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group joined the group for positive reasons, such as to connect with like-minded people and share or garner ideas, this research has identified specific challenges to the sustainability of creative community groups. These challenges are largely to do with social comparison stemming from impression management, fatigue and the pressure to perform.

The findings of Herrero et al. (2004), Wang et al. (2018) and Bar-Ilan et al. (2020) show that membership of a Facebook group strengthens one's social identity by validating a sense of belonging and providing a sense of self-esteem and acceptance. This study supports the fact that voluntary group membership equates to higher group engagement. All of the participants indicated that their sense of identity as a creative person was strengthened by being members of the group (4.3) which demonstrates that Facebook groups have the same key markers as in-person community groups — consciousness of kind, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility among members (Kapri et al., 2021). However, all but one participant intended to leave the group when they no longer created the tradition within their households indicating that as their creative identity changes over time the desire to belong to the group will wane.

It is clear that engagement in the group is led by the participants' perception of the group's importance and by their offline activity (Bar-Ilan et al., 2020). Engagement with the group was greater during October and November which coincides with when the participants prepared and executed their creative scenes (the offline activity) and looked for ideas or validation from the group, or when they wanted to share information and offer support (see 4.3.1). This need to help others and sharing social information were the two non-brand factors that Swani and Lebrecque's (2020) research identified when they looked into why people engage with brand-related community groups. While the Dinovember Community Facebook Group page is not a brand page, it could be argued that some of the members use it to build their personal brands as creators, as shown by the fact that for five participants helping others meant willingly sharing their creative intellectual property either as captioned photo posts like the earwax example (figure 5), or in a more detailed list (such as that described by Participant 4, see 4.3.2) that serves as a "how-to" file.

Shahbaznezhad et al. (2020) found users' behaviour is influenced by the social media platform they use. Shahbaznezhad et al. (2020) established that Facebook users are more likely to post comments than Instagram users who simply tend to like a post. This research supported that finding with Dinovember Community Facebook Group members reporting comments on their posts, however, with that came fatigue. This research highlights that the willingness to engage with the Dinovember Facebook Community Group diminished the longer the participants had created content for the group and engaged with other people's posts. In fact, long-term engagement with the group led to social media fatigue for ten of the 13 participants (see 4.4.2), and the same ten also noted that they were reluctant to use social media at all outside of the Dinovember Facebook Community Group, with some like Participant 5 questioning why she was "going out of her way to post so much" when it felt like such an effort. This implies that long-term group participation leads to a drop in engagement and a weakening of the sense of group identity over time. Lee et al. (2019) found that the antecedents of social media fatigue are personal relative deprivation, impression management and relationship concern, and they

identified impression management as the key contributor. For the majority of the participants of this study, they felt an obligation rather than a desire to post and comment on other people's posts, in order to appear willing and engaged members of the group.

Notably, social media fatigue on its own was not enough to prevent group members from posting; only fatigue coupled with perceived pressure to post (4.4.3), privacy concerns (4.4.4) or feeling that algorithms limited audience engagement (4.4.5) deterred them from contributing to the group regularly. As Marengo et al. (2021) state, the more a social media creator updates their content, the greater the frequency and intensity of the positive feedback they receive, however if that feedback loop is interrupted, the creator's willingness to post diminishes. Similarly, Lin et al. (2024) found that a group member's willingness to participate and post is subject to reciprocity and identification. Therefore, it follows that once the participant loses the sense of their effort being recognised and reciprocated (for example, through pressure to post or feeling that algorithms prevent their content from reaching the intended audience), they withdraw, which leads to a weakening of their sense of group membership (Lin et al., 2024). This has implications not just for the long-term sustainability of creative community groups, but also for social media platform engagement overall. If creators cease to create, the community groups they co-produce lose their appeal (De Fina, 2016; Mansour, 2020).

In terms of creative community groups, only one participant of the 13 intended to continue as an active group member once he ceased to create Dinovember scenes for his family, or once being a Dinovember creator was no longer part of his identity. That indicates that social media groups need to continue to attract new members to balance out attrition. Furthermore, the findings showed that the longer a person participated in the group, the more fatigue they experienced (in terms of social media, not creatively), and the less willing they were to engage online as a contributor and creator. This indicates that the novelty of creating content wears off, and impression management becomes the motivation to continue. As Participant 3 expressed (see 4.3.3), there was a desire to stop creating, but the fear of angering the audience was enough

motivation to persevere. She alluded to feeling a need to create being less compelling than having a desire to create and said that for her it had become a chore (see 4.3.3). Such sentiments may have implications for social media use over the long term and raise questions about the sustainability of social media models that use algorithms to keep people online long enough to get as many advertisers in front of them as possible (Kim, 2017; Lomberg & Kapsch, 2020) when the people who have been deeply engaged choose to leave the platform due to disenchantment. Further research into other creative Facebook community groups is needed to determine whether or not the current study's findings are supported.

5.5 Amateur creative practices reflect professional creative practices

This study's findings showed that amateur creatives emulated the creative problem-solving practices and processes of those who work professionally in creative industries such as advertising. Their processes reflected stages of ideation, collaboration, persuasion, and the crafting of executions (what they posted to the group and their personal pages) (Barry, 2016).

Bilton (2007) contends that while creative people need autonomy, structure (or bounded creativity) is integral to enabling them to start generating ideas. For example, a writer who is given an opening sentence finds it easier to write than someone who has no prompt. In terms of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group, participants found that the limitations of social media posts (still images and a limited number of characters before viewers had to click to see the full text), as well as the premise that the dinosaurs were partially anthropomorphised provided the bounds they needed. Furthermore, if there was a theme such as Participant 3's film scene year (see 4.2.1), the ideas were easier to come up with and evaluate as being likely to appeal to the audience, or not. Furthermore, the fact that nine participants had created the tradition for at least five years and therefore generated a minimum of 150 ideas each supports the findings of Lucas and Nordgren (2020) that there is an increase rather than decrease in creativity over time. This increase in creativity is marred by the increase in physical fatigue that the participants also experienced due to this tradition requiring them to wait for household

members to be asleep before they can stage the scenes. While the participants spoke of the challenges of a month's worth of late nights causing compounding tiredness (see figures 18 and 19), that tiredness did not impact on their willingness to create the tradition, but it did on their willingness to post about it. So, the findings showed a correlation between physical tiredness having an impact on social media fatigue, but not on creativity.

Creativity was further bolstered when the creators collaborated on Dinovember with another household member. While only three participants stated that they worked with a partner to generate ideas, capture images, write captions and post to social media, they found that the process of bouncing ideas off someone else enabled them to produce more creative concepts which supports Ahmad et al.'s (2017) point that the most creative work is the result of rich collaboration with team members. This practice indicates that the participants naturally took on the copywriting and art direction roles which are specific to the advertising industry, despite having no personal experience of the field. Since 1949 when Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB) was set up it has been standard advertising industry practice for copywriters and art directors to work in a team to generate ideas and craft the final executions (Richards et al., 2009; Samuel, 2012). For the participants who worked in similar teams, the collaboration was the result of the partners playing to their strengths, but it warrants further research into whether these people are used to working in pairs or teams and feel confident that they have something of value to offer (Elsbach, 2019), or whether this partnership evolved naturally — in effect is it learned or human nature?

All of the participants recognised that they, largely unknowingly, followed the attention, interest, desire and action (AIDA) persuasion model (Priyanka, 2013) when they created their Dinovember stories and attempted to spark audience engagement (see 4.2.7). They selected images and wrote the accompanying text to capture attention, pique interest, prompt a desire to return for the next instalment, and cause the audience to act by liking or commenting. This raises the question of whether that model is something that humans inherently respond to in

order to satisfy curiosity, or whether a lifetime of exposure to western advertising and storytelling conditions such an engaged response.

Another way in which the members of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group demonstrated a reflection of professional creative practices was how they told their stories through words and pictures. All 13 participants acknowledged that they followed a process of trial and error to construct their narratives (Sanchez-Lopez et al., 2020), but that they always kept the audience in mind. The fact that 10 were intentional in their choice of text and image (see 4.2.7) and nine would take upward of 20 photos to post only two demonstrates the importance of visual storytelling within the group. Furthermore, given that the longer-standing members of the group (those who have created Dinovember posts for five or more years) displayed greater intentionality in the composition of their posts, had learned from audience feedback that striving for higher-quality images led to higher engagement (Li & Xie, 2020) and understood that images with narrative elements perform better (Lim & Childs, 2020), shows that practice had made their content-creation style better. Those, such as Participant 4 (who shared pictures of her evolution as a photographer in figures 9 and 10), who have refined their authorship style over time demonstrate a progression of ability similar to that of a junior advertising creative progressing to intermediate level.

The existing literature about creative social media posts offers no framework for how to evaluate them, yet the participants could recognise what was a good, or even great post on the group. Many spoke of the one “original” idea each year that everyone replicated (4.3.1) and they all valued the right combination of image and text to make a post memorable. Accordingly, I propose a framework similar to that used to judge the noticeability, originality and memorability of print advertisements. This would entail evaluating posts in terms of shot framing (what is left outside the frame is as important as what is included) and perspective, how the relevant text adds to the story (rather than serves as descriptions of what is visible), whether there is a contrast between the image and text — whereby either the text or the image is “twisted” while

the other element remains “straight” (Barry, 2016) — and whether the post prompts an emotional response from the audience. Such an agreed framework would make it easier to replicate this research in other creative social media groups.

5.6 Summary

This research set out to answer the question ‘How do Dinovember participants engage with creative storytelling on its community Facebook group?’. To address that question, reflexive thematic analysis established that creative storytelling is a process, that the participants are motivated by a desire to express their identity as a creative person, and that the biggest challenge that they faced to accomplish that is social media fatigue brought on by the factors intrinsic to the platforms, such as algorithms.

This study determined that community Facebook groups provide a space where storytelling is welcome. Group members can evolve and grow as storytellers by building worlds, developing characters and communicating morals, and they can use the platform’s latest-post-first ordering to embrace seriality. This allows group members to express their identity as a creative person by collaborating with and encouraging other members while also being inspired to refine their own creative style over time. In terms of challenges, the platform itself proved to be the greatest hurdle for storytelling. Aspects of social media such as algorithms, privacy concerns, the perceived pressure to present and respond in a certain way to maintain a desired impression were identified as reasons why group members disengage, which had nothing to do with the creative process.

This thesis moves research forward in terms of understanding why and how people create content for and engage with user-generated groups beyond the work that has been done in the field of marketing. It proposes a framework with which to evaluate creative social media posts for future studies and it adds to the sparse body of research into the motivations and creative processes of ordinary social media users and what drives them to identify as storytellers. Throughout the process it uncovered insights to do with individuals’ creativity and the creative

process in terms of image-and-text-based social media posts, contributing to the existing literature on text-only or image-only posts. Finally, it has added to the existing scholarship about social media fatigue by examining the effects of social comparison on ordinary social media users who create content and tell stories on Facebook which may contribute to better community group management or social media practices in the future.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Overview and significance of the research findings

The findings of this study contribute to scholarly research into storytelling in creative community Facebook groups. The study also provides valuable insights into the motivations of ordinary people who use social media to tell stories, as well as the challenges that they encounter in terms of managing audience engagement and maintaining their levels of creativity and posting accountability.

Prior to this study, research into storytelling on social media focused heavily on branding and marketing and how storytelling is used to persuade consumers to engage or purchase (De Fina, 2016; Lim & Childs, 2020; Shahbaznezhad et al. 2020; Swani & Lebrecque, 2020). This research set out to investigate how Facebook community group members engage with creative storytelling by interviewing members of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group and analysing their posts. Ultimately it found that Facebook community group members were conscious of their power as storytellers, that they had a desire to identify as storytellers and that social media platforms enabled them to fulfil that desire. They used traditional storytelling elements such as seriality, character development and world-building to challenge the status quo in a non-provocative way and to communicate morals and values to the audience. This served to position themselves as experts and elevate their creative identities, and that positioning was then validated through the feedback loop intrinsic to social media. It also found that the participants evolved as storytellers over time. Their stories and posts became more creative and refined in response to their increased experience, the motivation to emulate other people's posts and level of skill, and to continue to receive positive audience feedback.

This study demonstrates the impact that the audience has on social media storytellers. The Dinovember story world and the characters' antics created an illusion of abdicated creative responsibility on the part of the creators, however the participants drove the moral messaging regardless of that. There was an agenda evident in the authorship and the creator's goal was to

persuade the audience. Yet they further abdicated responsibility by leaving it to the audience to interpret the messaging, despite leading them to decode in a particular manner through the text and images they chose to construct their posts. Nonetheless, the manipulation between creator and audience was reciprocated because the audience returned pressure through collaboration by demanding more posts, particular storylines, or an increased level of creative polish.

Additionally, the findings highlight the importance of group membership for strengthening the participants' creative identities and indicate that long-term membership increases the perceived pressure to create high-quality original content. In turn, that necessitates group member impression management which can lead to social media fatigue. The participants used the Dinovember Community Facebook Group to reinforce their personal identities as creative storytellers through its tribal (the group is populated with like-minded dinosaur-mad people), idea-sharing and support-offering aspects, however group participation both gave and took away creative energy, dependent on the participant's depth of involvement and engagement. The longer a participant was a member of the Facebook community group, the more confident they were in their creativity. However, their length of membership also correlated with their sense of social media fatigue, which has implications for social media groups and platforms alike. The more fatigued the group member was, the lower their group engagement, and the lower their engagement the less content they shared which, due to breaking the feedback loop, diminished their engagement further. This shows that Facebook community groups serve a purpose and members leave when that purpose is no longer met. To mitigate attrition, groups need to ensure that UGC and engagement remains at a level that retains members.

This study supports existing literature to do with social media use and engagement (Bar-Ilan et al., 2020; Hancock et al., 2022), in that the more actively the group members participated (by commenting and creating rather than simply looking and liking), the more engaged they were, and the more favourably they felt about identifying with the group. Consequently, the findings that participants had conflicting feelings towards the group and the social media platform is

notable. They felt that the Dinovember Facebook Community Group provided a supportive space in which to create and share content, but the mechanics of how Facebook delivers content to people counteracts its value to the user and raises concerns about privacy and algorithms. This opens the door to opportunities for social media platforms and group administrators to improve creative social media practices and increase long-term engagement in social-media community groups. It establishes some of the platform challenges and highlights the additional pressure of group membership that threatens the sustainability of community groups.

The findings from this work are useful for practice, teaching and research. Regarding practice, the study clearly confirms that seriality, play frame, character and world-building drives audience engagement and allows social media storytellers to communicate morals and values in a way that deters the ire of keyboard warriors. For those social media storytellers who wish to amplify their agenda, adopting those storytelling elements will help them to do so in a way that does not alienate detractors. The research also emphasises the importance of the audience feedback loop for both audience engagement and creator motivation, and it identifies the areas that creators should be aware of to guard themselves from social media fatigue. This could be of huge benefit for creators who make a living from their social media channels. Furthermore, it recommends collaboration as a way to foster on-going creativity and generate original ideas. In terms of social media group administration, this study establishes that creative group participation has a lifespan and that groups need to ensure that the UGC and audience engagement is serving the members in order to retain them.

For teachers and educators, the findings provide further evidence of which traditional elements of storytelling relate to social media stories so that communication and marketing students are better equipped to become effective, successful social media storytellers. Not only does this work show them which areas to develop and practise in their storytelling, but it also suggests adopting the creative advertising framework by which to analyse and evaluate social media stories; focusing on noticeability, originality, memorability, creative craft (writing and art

direction) and whether the post will connect with the intended audience (Barry, 2016; Hurman, 2011).

As previously identified, most research into social media storytelling has concentrated on branding and marketing stories. This research addresses the gaps identified (1.2) to do with how and why ordinary Facebook users in closed community groups tell stories, the opportunities storytelling offers group members in those spaces, and the challenges that storytellers face. While this study moves scholarship forward, future research could compare storytelling on creative social media groups with storytelling in brand and marketing groups to ascertain the correlations and differences, and to determine which learnings from this study can be applied to branding and marketing. Further opportunities for research include looking deeper into the fact that participants who created in a partnership took on roles similar to those of creative teams in advertising agencies and collaborated to come up with and refine ideas (Ahmad et al., 2017; Bilton, 2007; Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura, 2007, Elsbach, 2019). Can it be determined whether this is human nature, or merely teamwork making the task easier? And finally, there is potential to explore the extent to which the effectiveness of the AIDA persuasion model (attention, interest, desire, action) (Priyanka, 2013) is due to a lifetime of exposure to messages that follow that model, or due to the hypothesis that it taps into how humans are wired.

6.2 Limitations and recommendations

Despite every effort being taken to offset the limitations of this study, there are three areas to address that may have had an impact on the findings; time, scope and that the participants all live in Western countries. In terms of time, this thesis was constrained by the deadlines that come with completing a Master of Philosophy within the University's expectations. That timeframe had an impact on the scope of the research in that only one creative group was able to be studied. It would be interesting to see whether the same results eventuate from

participant interviews and social-media-post analysis of other creative Facebook community groups.

The nature of the group studied is such that it is only active for a few months each year (October to December, but predominantly in November). This may influence how long it takes for group members to evolve their creative style, or exhibit signs of social media fatigue. Members of groups that are active all year round may develop and refine their creative style over months rather than years. Therefore, this study could be replicated with both a similarly time-bound creative Facebook community group (such as Elf on the Shelf which is also a month-long annual tradition that requires storytelling), and a group that is active all year to see whether the findings are supported.

Additionally, this research only examined data collected from interviews and posted content. There is potential to measure audience engagement and the impact it has on the motivations of creative storytellers in Facebook community groups by also analysing the feedback through likes and comments on those posts. Reproducing the study with other social media platforms (such as Instagram, Threads or X) would also determine whether storytellers encode their stories differently, based on the strengths of the platform they use.

It must also be acknowledged that the participants for this research live in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States of America, and Australia, so represent people who have been exposed to Western advertising and persuasion techniques, and storytelling styles. It would be valuable to replicate the study with a focus on other cultures to determine the extent to which cultural inputs predispose people to engage with social media storytelling as both creators and audience.

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Appendix A – Ethics Approval

20 October 2022
Deepti Bhargava
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies
Dear Deepti

Re Ethics Application: **22/277 Teaching dinosaurs new tricks: Do parents who create the modern childhood tradition of Dinovember knowingly or unknowingly use advertising techniques to engage their children's imaginations?**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 20 October 2025.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Please provide confirmation that data will be stored with the applicant (not the student/primary researcher) in their office.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.
8. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)
The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
Cc: Jo.page@aut.ac.nz; Angelique Nairn

Appendix B Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:
06 September 2022

Project Title
Teaching dinosaurs new tricks: Do parents who create the modern childhood tradition of Dinovember knowingly or unknowingly use advertising techniques to engage their children's imaginations?

An Invitation
My name is Joanna Page and I am an advertising lecturer at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. I have also been a member of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group since May 2019 and have created Dinovember for my children since 2014.

I am embarking on my Master of Philosophy and my research looks at whether the parents and caregivers who create the Dinovember tradition for their children knowingly or unknowingly use certain advertising theories. What that involves is looking at and analysing the posts made to the group page during November 2022 and then interviewing the creators in the following months. I would dearly love you to be part of that research.

What is the purpose of this research?
My research investigates whether parent/caregivers knowingly or unknowingly use advertising techniques such as the Attention, Interest, Desire, Action (AIDA) model to persuade their children to buy in to the premise that toy dinosaurs come to life at night in the month of November. It positions you as the influencer and message creator and will look at the techniques you naturally use to overcome your children's scepticism and keep their belief alive.

The aim of the study, as well as being key to my Master of Philosophy, is to address a gap in advertising research. If you are a gatekeeper of knowledge for your children and you have a strong degree of influence over them, I want to find out whether you knowingly or unknowingly use the AIDA model to convince your children that Dinovember is real.
The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?
You are receiving this information sheet because you replied to my post on the Dinovember Community Facebook Group asking for people to indicate if they would like to participate in this research.

To be included in the study you must be a member of the Dinovember Community Facebook Group who will post content to the group page during your active Dinovember period (e.g. November or December).

If you work in, or have worked in advertising, or if you are studying or have studied advertising you will be unable to participate. That's because I anticipate that you would knowingly use advertising techniques to engage your children, and that would skew the results.

How do I agree to participate in this research?
If you would like to take part in the research, please complete both consent forms included in this email and return them to me within 10 working days.

One consent form allows me to analyse your posts and the other gives your consent for me to interview you via Zoom. Please note that the video interviews will be recorded and transcribed (you will be sent a copy), however you will not be named in the research. Only I and my supervisor will see the video recordings and transcripts.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?
This research has two stages.

Stage one is a thematic analysis of your posts to the Dinovember Community Facebook Group page during November/December 2022. Should you give consent, I will be looking at your posts for key advertising techniques. I will take screen shots which will be saved securely and only I and my supervisor will have access to that data. Please note I will only be looking at the photos and accompanying text that you post, not at the comments other members make on your posts, or any comments you make on other members' posts. I will only look at posts of your Dinovember set ups. Any photographs that include people will not be analysed.

At no point will your name or Facebook handle be connected to the posts; you will be referred to in the material and final output as Participant A, B, C, etc. Only I and my supervisor will know which posts are yours and that information will be stored securely on an external hard drive in my locked office.

To determine whether advertising techniques are evident in your posts I will analyse the posts looking at the elements the way an advertisement is analysed, for example how engaging the image is, how the text relates to the image, and what story-telling techniques can be identified.

Stage two is a video-call semi-structured interview with you. During that interview (which will take less than an hour of your time) we'll chat about how and why you create your Dinovember set-ups and how your children respond to them. I'll let you know about the advertising techniques I identified in your Facebook posts, and we'll talk about whether you used them deliberately, or whether they were unintended.

Following that, I will send you a link to the interview recording and a copy of the transcript. You will be asked to confirm that the transcript is accurate, and at this stage you are able to make corrections. Should there be amendments I shall make those and send you a copy of the updated transcript for confirmation. Once I receive your confirmation, I will continue to study your interview responses to lead to my findings.

Should you wish to receive a summary of the finding, I'd be delighted to send them to you.

The data I collect will be used for my master's thesis and may also be used for journal articles and conference presentations. Please be aware that you will never be identified in those research outputs.

What are the discomforts and risks?
You will experience no discomforts or risks.

What are the benefits?
As a participant the benefits for you include helping you to reflect on the techniques you use to engage your children in the world of creativity. You will gain a better understanding of your role as a creator and persuader and have a greater understanding of your unconscious knowledge of advertising techniques. Your insights may equip you to guide your children through the world of social media.

The benefits for me include the successful completion of my Master of Philosophy degree. It will also equip me to write articles for publication in academic journals. And it will give me a better understanding of how much advertising knowledge people gain from exposure to ads throughout their lives, which will inform my role as an advertising lecturer.

From the point of view of scholarship, this research will add to the body of knowledge about advertising theory by exploring the extent to which people who have no advertising training learn to be persuasive.

It will also indicate to the wider community how much they're influenced by advertising beyond being called to buy something.

How will my privacy be protected?
Your name, town of residence and any identifying features will not be published anywhere. Anything that will identify you (for example your Facebook username, your contact details and the recordings of our interviews) will be securely stored on a password-protected external hard drive in a locked cabinet in my office at Auckland University of Technology. Only I and my supervisor will know your identity.

What are the costs of participating in this research?
The cost of participating in the research is an hour of your time.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?
Please take your time to consider this invitation. I would appreciate your response within a month.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?
Yes! I would love to share my findings with you. Once the research is complete, I will send you a summary of the findings via email.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?
Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Deepti Bhargava, deepti.bhargava@aut.ac.nz, +64 21 139 0261

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, *ethics@aut.ac.nz*, (
+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?
Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference.

You are also able to contact the research team as follows:
Researcher Contact Details:
Joanna Page, jo.page@aut.ac.nz, (+64) 21 342 422

Project Supervisor Contact Details:
Deepti Bhargava, deepti.bhargava@aut.ac.nz, +64 21 139 0261

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *20 October 2022*, AUTEC Reference number *22/227*.

Appendix C Consent Forms

Consent Form Social Media Posts

Project Title: Teaching dinosaurs new tricks: Do parents who create the modern childhood tradition of Dinovember knowingly or unknowingly use advertising techniques to engage their children's imaginations?

Supervisor: Deepti Bhargava

Researcher: Joanna Page

- ○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 06 September 2022.
- ○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ○ I do not work in, nor have I ever worked in advertising.
- ○ I am not studying, nor have I ever studied advertising.
- ○ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ○ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ○ I permit the researcher to analyse my posts in the Dinovember Community Facebook Group (posted during November 2022) including the photographs and text, either complete or in part.
- ○ I understand that any identifiable information will be removed from any published material and pseudonyms will be used to protect my identity.
- ○ I understand that no photographs depicting people will be used for this research.
- ○ I understand that the photographs and post text will be used for academic purposes only and will not be published in any form outside of this project without my written permission.
- ○ I agree to take part in this research.

Participant's signature: .....

Participant's name:

.....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

……

……

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 20 October 2022 AUTEC Reference number 22/277

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Consent Form Interview

Project Title: Teaching dinosaurs new tricks: Do parents who create the modern childhood tradition of Dinovember knowingly or unknowingly use advertising techniques to engage their children's imaginations?

Supervisor: Deepti Bhargava

Researcher: Joanna Page

- ○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 06 September 2022.
- ○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ○ I do not work in, nor have I ever worked in advertising.
- ○ I am not studying, nor have I ever studied advertising.
- ○ I understand that notes will be taken during the interview and that they will also be video-recorded and the audio will be transcribed.
- ○ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ○ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ○ I understand that any identifiable information will be removed from any published material and pseudonyms will be used to protect my identity.
- ○ I understand that no photographs depicting people will be used for this research.
- ○ I understand that the photographs and post text will be used for academic purposes only and will not be published in any form outside of this project without my written permission.
- ○ I agree to take part in this research.

Participant's signature: .....

Participant's name: .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

.....

.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 20 October 2022
AUTEC Reference number 22/277

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix D Indicative interview questions

Date Information Sheet Produced: 06 September 2022

Project Title Teaching dinosaurs new tricks.

What is the purpose of this research?

My research investigates whether parent/caregivers knowingly or unknowingly use advertising techniques such as the Attention, Interest, Desire, Action (AIDA) model to persuade their children to buy in to the premise that toy dinosaurs come to life at night in the month of November. It positions parents as the influencer and message creator and looks at the techniques they naturally use to overcome their children's scepticism and keep their belief alive.

Proposed interview questions

How long have you been creating Dinovember?

What was your inspiration for starting it? What motivates you to keep participating

in the group? What sort of build-up or anticipation do you have before Dinovember

starts?

What do you typically do in Dinovember and how do you prepare for it?

In what ways do you get the attention of your

child(ren)?

How do you keep their interest for the whole month?

What happens if they say they don't believe the dinosaurs are doing everything? Or what do you say when your child(ren) say they think it's you doing it?

How do you create your social media posts?

Why do you share Dinovember on social media?

Are you aware of the AIDA advertising model? If yes, can you explain it?

Do you think you use that model to engage your child(ren) in Dinovember? If yes, how? Tell me what you do.

Do you think that is evident in your social media posts? If so, which elements of your post grab attention? Which keep the viewer's interest? What creates desire? And what action do you want viewers to take?

Will you do things differently in future?

Is there anything you would like to add?

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *20 October 2022*, AUTEC Reference number *22/227*

Appendix E – Facebook Group Research Invitation Post

Project Title

Teaching dinosaurs new tricks.

Wording for Dinovember Community Group Facebook Post

Hi Wonderful Dinovember Creators!

My name is Jo Page and this will be my ninth year of Dinovember. As well as being a member of this fantastic group, I'm also an advertising lecturer and working on my Master of Philosophy degree.

Naturally I want to investigate something that really interests me, so I'm combining my two passions to research whether we parents and caregivers use advertising techniques to get our children to buy into the joy of Dinovember every year. The thing is, most of us won't realise that's what we're doing – which is why I'd love to find out more about it.

I'm looking for 15 members of this awesome community to participate in my research, and I really hope you can help me.

What it entails is allowing me to look at your Facebook posts during November, and then having a video interview on Zoom or MS Teams to talk about what you do and why you do it. It would take not more than an hour of your time. Your name and identifying details won't be published at all.

If you're interested in finding out more about what I'm doing, what I'd ask of you and what you'll get out of it, please send me an email to jo.page@aut.ac.nz. I'll reply with an information sheet and consent forms for you and answer any questions you may have.

Diplodocus-sized thanks for your help!

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
on *20 October 2022*, AUTEC
Reference number *22/227*