Media Analysis Project

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**1. CLIENT BACKGROUND**

**Target Issue:** Uber Company Operations

**Client:** Uber Technologies Inc. The project will be submitted to Travis Kalanick, CEO.

**About Uber:** Uber Technologies, Inc (Uber) is an application (app) based transportation company that is disrupting the transportation industry across the world. Co-founded by CEO Travis Kalanick 2009, the San Francisco headquartered company currently operates in over 200 cities across the globe. The company offers "one tap to ride" transportation services that are cashless and convenient for riders. Uber drivers are aloud to make their own schedules and operate as independent contractors. The Uber website advertises three easy steps to becoming an Uber driver. However, issues with drivers, as well as Uber's operational platform that occasionally violates city or state taxi laws by not having specific certifications have attracted media attention. This is similar to the issues Airbnb has been experiencing by operating without required certifications in specific cities or states. Uber was recently sent a cease and desist order to stop operating in South Carolina until they obtain the required certification.

Six sources will be monitored on a daily basis and reviewed weekly with an over all evaluation of coverage. Monitoring is taking place to gain an understanding of the coverage on Uber. The sources have been chosen specifically for diversification of news coverage. Sources are from international, national, local and online news services to ensure a variety of services. It is essential to monitor international coverage for Uber, since they are a global company and are continuing to expand across the globe. All of the sources have been publishing consistent coverage on Uber in the past two weeks. This leads me to believe the salience of Uber in the news will continue for the next 6 weeks.

**2. COVERAGE SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS BY WEEK**

**Week 1 Sources:**

In the first week of content analysis concerning business operations from January 24 – 31, 2015, media coverage by the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, BBC, Reuters, San Francisco Chronicle and Tech Crunch showed 61 news stories.

The 61 stories broken down by news outlet are shown in the graph below.

After reading and analyzing the news coverage, the following topics were prevalent:

* New Delhi, India rape allegations
* New Delhi alleged rape victim sues Uber in the U.S.
* Uber Driver Employment Benefits and Opportunities
* Surge Pricing

Other less prevalent topics included:

* Uber in South Carolina cease and desist retracted
* Uber decreases drunk driving
* Uber’s business model

Uber has attracted a high amount of Media attention due to the start-up’s success in transforming the transportation industry. This week’s coverage was focused on the rape allegations and the recent development that Uber is getting sued in the United States. , The coverage on the rape allegations and associated legal situation is being monitored in New Delhi and the United States. The rape allegations contributed to a large portion of the news coverage this week and has produced an over all, negative tone this week. Uber is also struggling to define itself as either a tech company, a transportation company, or a bit of both. This definition is important because it defines their business and could determine what types of licensing is required in the cities it is operating in.

Recommendations for Uber include full cooperation with investigation of the alleged rape cases and installment of new protocols to minimize the possibility of recurrence in the future. This could include a stronger vetting process for contracted drivers and potentially installation of cameras in vehicles. Transparency in any crisis communication plan is key, but it is essential for Uber to help the young company regain its image and to help put this event in the past. It is also recommended that Uber work closely with local governments in the cities they are operating to ensure proper licensing is in place prior to operating. Uber should also work with non-profit organizations working to decrease drunk driving such as Mother Against Drunk Driving (M.A.D.D.) to leverage their ability to have an impact on road safety.

It is evident that the salience of Uber's company operations coverage will be strong enough to monitor for the six-week scope of this project. The researcher will monitor the salience over the next 5 weeks with weekly updates and will provide a comprehensive analysis at the end.

**Week 2 Sources February 1-7:**

During the second week (February 1- 7, 2015) of media analysis, media coverage by the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, BBC, Reuters, San Francisco Chronicle, and Tech Crunch yielded 54 news stories. Coverage is down from the previous week by seven stories.

The 54 stories broken down by news outlet is shown in the graph below.

After reading and analyzing the news coverage for this week, the following topics emerged as prevalent:

* Uber partners with Carnegie Mellon University to develop driverless cars putting Uber in competition with companies working on driverless cars such as Google
* Tightened security in India - Uber adds panic button
* Hard charging Uber tries peaceful approach
* South Korea being strict with Uber
* Google to launch ride hailing service

Other less prevalent topics include:

* Uber probed on driver benefits
* Jersey welcomes Uber
* Buffet wants to insure Uber drivers
* Washington state lawmakers consider legislation on ride sharing
* Uber working to improve data security
* New app based competition Valet Anywhere

A trend noticed this week was Uber being referenced in articles not written directly about the company. From the sample media, I noticed six stories that mentioned Uber, but lacked an Uber focus. Uber played an ancillary role in the following stories:

* Silicon Valley Tech Economy Booming
* $3 Tip on $4 Coffee
* Diesel Americans Play Hard to Get
* Golf Pro Saved By Uber
* Meet People on the Road
* Surge in Mobile Dating Apps

Uber’s success and recent media attention has made the company a great one to use for comparisons in other topics. For example, in the *Surge in Mobile Dating Apps* article a new app was likened to Uber. Since so many people know what Uber is it gives the reader a good since of what the new app is and becomes good press for Uber. It is recommended that Uber continue to fuel other press to continue to work towards becoming a household name.

Media attention has declined this week while still maintaining a significant amount of coverage. One reason for this is the decline in negative press surrounding the alleged Uber rape in India last week. The company successfully took action by installing a panic button on the app in India, which yielded coverage. In general, negative items receive more press and that could contribute to the 11.5 percent decrease in coverage.

In contrast to last week’s coverage this week had an over all positive tone. This week’s coverage focused on Uber’s partnership with Carnegie Melon to research and develop driverless cars. This is pitting Uber against Google in developing the future of transportation. It is possible that the two companies could partner for development and delivery of driverless cars. According to the Wall Street Journal, “In December, the head of Google’s self-driving car project, Chris Urmson, told The Wall Street Journal that the company is looking for auto-industry partners to bring the cars to market within the next five years,” stated *Uber Chases Google in Self-Driving Cars With Carnegie Mellon* by Dealby Rolfe Winkler and Douglas Macmillan.

The second largest news generating item was South Korea being strict with Uber, and

notoriously strict Uber trying out a safer approach. According to New York Times article

by Mike Isaac, “Travis Kalanick (Uber CEO) did not build Uber into a global force by

playing nice.” This is a different tactic for Uber and a good public relations strategic

move that could help improve relations not only with South Korea, but other nations that

are struggling with Uber’s disruptive, albeit successful, business tactics.

According to Reuters, “Buffett was joined by Tony Nicely, the chief executive of Berkshire-owned insurer Geico, for part of the interview. Nicely said Geico is working to roll out products linked to ride service Uber. ‘We want to insure Uber drivers,’ he added.” While this topic didn’t obtain as much coverage as other topics this week, it is certainly something that will continue to be in the news if Buffet and his empire choose to pursue providing insurance for independent contractor Uber drivers.

Recommendations for Uber include continuing to work on making the Uber experience safe in India and all other operational locations, while making sure to protect user data. Full cooperation on the alleged rape case is still advised. It is also important for Uber to get as much positive press as possible from the partnership with Carnegie Mellon University. The new partners should slowly continue to release new information and updates on the impact the partnership will have on community and the transportation industry. It is recommended that Uber continue to look for partnerships with non-profits to provide needed services and education on safe driving, as this will help Uber maintain a long term positive image.

The salience of Uber company operations coverage experienced an 11.5 percent decrease from last week, while the overall tone of coverage switched from a negative perception to a positive perception. Uber coverage will be monitored for the next four weeks and compared to the previous two weeks.

**Week 3 Sources February 8-14:**

During the third week of media analysis on Uber business operations from February 8 -14, 2015, media coverage by the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, BBC, Reuters, San Francisco Chronicle, and Tech Crunch yielded 32 news stories. Coverage is down from last week by about 40 percent.

The 32 stories broken down by news outlet are shown on the graph below.

After reading and analysis of the news coverage the following topics emerged as prevalent:

* Same day delivery of items by Uber and competitors
* Uber rivals launching new services
* Speculation on Apple’s self driving car developments
* Uberization of other verticals (On Demand Delivery Services)

Other less prevalent topics include:

* Tech Startups in Europe, Oceanic Divide in Funding
* Uber and Google’s Partnership
* India specific safety feature “SOS” button
* Cashless payments

Uber played an ancillary role in the following stories:

* Partying After the Grammys
* Urban Engins’ Map Captures Moving Things
* New York Today: Mothers Helpers

Local coverage by the San Francisco Chronicle mentioned an apartment listing that, in lieu of a parking space, was offering unlimited Uber rides. Uber benefits from these unique stories by getting their name out in a positive light. Lauren Parvizi described the listing, “Spanning a roomy 894 square feet, it has a new kitchen, hardwood floors, ample natural light, and lots of charm. But a parking spot is not one of its perks. Instead, the [Redfin listing](https://www.redfin.com/CA/San-Francisco/2701-Van-Ness-Ave-94109/unit-604/home/562207) offers prospective buyers a ‘Bonus Feature’ in the form of a year of unlimited Uber rides.”

This week the coverage shifted away from Uber’s partnership with Carnegie Melon and moved towards other startups and potential competition. There is a rumor that Apple is working on a driverless car, which would directly compete, with the Uber’s Carnegie Melon partnership research and development. There was a lot of talk of established and emerging rivals in terms of transportation and other on demand delivery services. Uber will not only be competing with known rivals like Lyft, Google and Apple, but new startups as well. Over all the coverage had a positive tone for Uber, but displayed some potential competition.

As of this writing, Uber is valued at $40 billion and other companies want a piece of the action. Uber currently has the advantage with market share and being a house hold name. Uber’s extensive network also gives them an advantage when looking to expand to other verticals. However, as coverage from week 1 displayed, Uber also has legal challenges to address.

Uber business tactics are being adapted to other verticals. Uber disrupted the transportation sector with on demand delivery of services; cashless payments and app based ordering. Jon Russle of Tech Crunch reported, “[GrabTaxi](http://grabtaxi.com/), the SoftBank-backed taxi-on-demand service in Southeast Asia, is preparing to introduce cashless payments to take it beyond cash-only fares and put it on par with Uber’s frictionless payment system.”

It is recommended that Uber make a strategic business announcement to yield coverage and continue momentum that it still has. The steep decline in media attention in Uber suggests that the salience is ending. A business announcement would help reframe this issue and increase the salience.

The salience of Uber company operations coverage experienced a 40 percent decrease from last week while the overall positive tone of coverage continued. The coverage of Uber. will be monitored for the next three weeks and compared to the previous three weeks.

**Week 4 Sources February 15-21:**

During the fourth week of media analysis on Uber business operations from February 15 -21, 2015, media coverage by the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, BBC, Reuters, San Francisco Chronicle, and Tech Crunch yielded 39 news stories. This is a 22 percent increase in coverage from last week. Coverage is positive and focused on Uber raising capital and expanding their business outside the current taxi like service they offer.

The 39 stories broken down by news outlet:

After reading and analysis of the news coverage the following topics emerged as prevalent:

* Uber expands funding
* Uber banned from Spain, turns to food delivery
* Uber faces fines in Paris
* Uber’s concerns in South Korea
* Self-driving vehicles: Apple Car v Uber Car

Other less prevalent topics include:

* Can driverless vehicles own themselves
* Uber launches carpooling in LA
* Breathometer now calls Uber for drunks

Uber played an ancillary role in the following stories:

* Tech investors/Valuation of tech startups
* NASDAQ highs
* Postmates Deliver Service
* Viv scores 12.5 million in funding for artificial intelligence
* Tracking delivery management is like playing SimCity

Both “Uber’s concerns in South Korea” and “Self-driving vehicles: Apple Car v Uber Car” received more press attention last week. This week it seems they have fallen off the media agenda and have been replaced by coverage on Uber’s next business moves including rising additional funding and moving towards another business vertical.

After the courts banned Uber’s traditional business model in Spain, Uber opened up a meal delivery service. According to Lisa Fleisher of the Wall Street Journal, “Uber on Thursday said it opened a type of food delivery service in Barcelona, similar to one it offers in California. Drivers’ cars are stocked up with prepared meals, which are sold for about €10 plus a €2.50 delivery fee ($14). The food service is one way for Uber to maintain a presence in Spain, after a judge in December [banned its taxi service](http://on.wsj.com/1y5IZHY).”

There was less discussion of competition with bigger companies like Apple, but more coverage on new start-ups as competition to Uber and how they can work with Uber. One company working to integrate itself with Uber that stood out this week was Viv, an artificial intelligence company that received $12.5 million in funding. According to Tech Crunch’s Sarah Perez, “Viv was described as being valuable to the service economy, ordering an Uber for you because you told the system “I’m drunk,” for example, or making all the arrangements for your Match.com date including the car, the reservations and even flowers.”

Uber should continue the momentum by continuing to support open use of its API. It could continue its partnership with M.A.D.D. and other safe driving non-profits to leverage coverage for the Breathometer storyline. It is also important that Uber recognize that a few weeks ago there was an excess of negative coverage and that the focus needs to be on continuing this positive coverage and discussing how Uber can contribute to the community. A partnership with M.A.D.D. or similar organizations would assist in combating the negativity from a few weeks ago.

Media attention increased 22 percent this week, with the number of stories from the oulets being monitored increasing from 32 to 39. This stops the trend in a decrease in coverage from the past few weeks. The salience of Uber company operations coverage experienced a slight bump in total number of stories. The overall positive media attention again this week makes for three consecutive weeks of positive perception. The coverage of Uber will be monitored for the next two weeks and compared to the previous weeks.

**Week 5 Sources February 22-28:**

During the fifth week of media analysis of Uber business operations from February 22 -28, 2015, media coverage by the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, BBC, Reuters, San Francisco Chronicle, and Tech Crunch yielded 40 news stories. Coverage had an over negative tone due to a security breach and critique of their public relations.

The 40 stories broken down by news outlet:

The New York Times has the most Uber coverage this week with 12 stories. Followed by Reuters with nine stories. The BBC had the least amount of coverage with one story on Uber.

Following review and analysis of the news coverage the following topics emerged as prevalent:

* Uber Breach Affected 50,000 Drivers
* SEC Alleges Scheme Targeting Pre-IPO Investors
* Uber and Lyft forcing Investors to Choose
* Uber Drivers Fined in Paris
* Uber Suspends Operation in Boise, Idaho
* Uber Makes UberX Free in Seoul
* Uber Partners With Starwood to Offer Hotel Points

Other less prevalent topics include:

* PR Advice for Uber
* Homeless Man Acquitted After Smashing Uber Prius with Skateboard
* Can’t Use Uber with Firefox OS

Uber played an ancillary role in the following stories:

* Tech Bubble
* The Sharing economy
* Theatre Listing “Rap Guide to Religion”
* Will Tech Allow Us To Escape Urban Commuting Hell
* Magic is a start up that brings you anything

Uber coverage continued discussing Uber’s business plan. When a company is disrupting an industry, like Uber is, the business plan is newsworthy. Every new and potentially disrupting business decision Uber makes hits headlines. The investing and company valuation in the tech industry in relation to Uber continued. The coverage of the self-driving car and partnership with Carnegie Mellon was less than expected.

This week, the overall coverage of Uber shifted from positive to negative with the security breach of driver information and a negative public relations review. It is recommended that Uber address the security breach to ensure that drivers and customers feel that their data is safe with Uber.

Uber should examine the public relations review and see if any of the feedback is merited. Uber would benefit from addressing this by possibly thanking the critique and incorporating some of the tactics into their public relations plan. In order to possibly turn it into a positive impression the company could look at offering the critique a consulting role with Uber.

According to tech Crunch, “Uber said in the post that it discovered a breach occurred in September 2014, and that it subsequently immediately changed its access protocols and began investigating. The company hasn’t specified why it waited this long to publicly disclose the breach or notify the drivers affected.”

It is a great first step that Uber is offering protection for those affected, but the time it took for Uber to release the data breach is unacceptable and will likely result in continued negative press.

Uber should also take steps to secure additional positive press in relation to their business plan immediately after addressing the security concern. Uber should offer statements, interviews and press releases about upcoming business plans as soon as possible to help drive coverage towards a positive tone. An interesting business move that has been discussed is integration with dating applications. “Uber has been talking to various dating apps with the hope to get a direct integration, and has already taken the step to hook up with Hinge as part of its API launch in August 2014. Uber continues to have discussions with dating apps, including Tinder, about offering an actionable “next step” in the online romantic process,” stated Tech Crunch.

Uber company operations coverage over the six monitored sources yielded 40 stories this week compared to 39 last weeks. The overall tone of the coverage was negative. Uber needs to take steps to address the security breach and ensure that drivers and customers feel safe trusting the company with their data. Once that is addressed, Uber need to focus on acquiring positive coverage. The coverage of Uber Technologies Inc. will be monitored next four week and compared to the previous five weeks.

**Week 6 Sources March 1 - 7:**

During the sixth and final week (March 1- 7, 2015) of media analysis on Uber business operations, media coverage by the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, BBC, Reuters, San Francisco Chronicle, and Tech Crunch yielded 46 news stories. Coverage seemed to come out neutral with a positive light cast on the new acquisition of deCarta and a negative light cast from the operational issues in cities across the globe.

Tech Crunch had the most Uber coverage this week, with 15 stories. BCC had the least amount of coverage with only one story on Uber. Wall Street Journal had four stories, New York Times had 12, Reuters had nine and the San Francisco Chronicle had five.

The 46 stories broken down by news outlet:

After reading and analysis of the news coverage the following topics emerged as prevalent:

* Uber Acquires deCarta, a Map Tech Start-Up.
* Self-driving cars
* Japan Suspending Uber’s Pilot Ride Sharing Service
* Brussels Cabbies Strike
* Uber Halts Operations in Oregon
* Uber Pulling Out of San Antonio

Other less prevalent topics include:

* Tax Filings Take a Back Seat to Uber
* Uber Goes Retro With Print Mag for Drivers
* Hackers get info on 50,000 Uber drivers
* Uber and Taxi Collide in SF, Cab goes into Bar
* Zombie Ridesharing Bill Comes Back to Life

There was a continuation of focus on the data breach for 50,000 drivers this week. The coverage on investing was down this week; replaced with a focus on operations. The company operations and lack there of, across the globe received high coverage this week.

Uber played an ancillary role in the following stories:

* Bill Gates Named Worlds richest Man Again

Uber did a good job of minimizing the impact of the data breach of 50,000 drivers. Coverage was successfully directed to other matters, allowing the company to work on moving forward. Over all media coverage for Uber increased by 15 percent from the previous week. This week yielded 46 stories on Uber. The coverage was focused on the acquisition of deCarta.

“Uber said it acquired deCarta, a small maker of mapping software, as the ridesharing giant aims to lessen its dependence on Google and Apple,” said Douglas MacMallian of the Washington Post.

The coverage also investigated Uber’s move to increase communication with the drivers, who are independent contractors. Uber took a unique and retro approach by launching a printed magazine.

The San Francisco Chronicle reported, “We are constantly looking for more ways to improve the partner experience,” said spokeswoman [Eva Behrend](http://www.sfgate.com/search/?action=search&channel=business&inlineLink=1&searchindex=gsa&query=%22Eva+Behrend%22), using Uber’s term for the independent contractors who provide paid rides through its platform. “Taking partner communications out of the digital space and into physical space recognizes that partners are absolutely crucial to the business.”

The salience of Uber company operations coverage experienced a 15 percent increase from the last week. The overall tone of coverage switched from a positive perception to a neutral perception.

**3. ANALYSIS OF PAST 6 WEEKS OF COVERAGE**

Over the past six weeks Uber Technologies Inc. news coverage was monitored and analyzed resulting in 272 stories form the following six outlets, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, BBC, Reuters, San Francisco Chronicle and Tech Crunch. New York Times offered Uber the most coverage with 93 stories had the most coverage overall. In contrast, BBC had the least coverage with 11 stories. It is interesting to note that every week New York Times had over 11 stories on Uber, the total number of stories from BBC.

This chart looks at the total number of stories each week by all of the outlets combined. Week one had the highest level of coverage at 61 stories, this coverage was focused on the alleged rape in New Delhi, India and it had a negative tone. Week three had the least amount of coverage with the majority of stories that week being focused on competition in the industry, specifically in the driverless car space area. Uber's main competitors were cited as Apple and Google. Looking at the salience in coverage, Uber experienced a decline from week one through week three. After week three the coverage began to steadily increase. If Uber follows the recommendations below they can work to continue to build on the upward momentum.

When examining the over all public perception for each week, it is clear that Uber has experienced more positive press than negative. Fifty percent of the monitored coverage was coded as positive (3 weeks). Thirty-three percent of coverage was coded as negative (2 weeks). 16.6 percent of coverage was coded as neutral (1 week). Uber needs to work on having its public relations department minimize negative coverage and maximize positive coverage. It is recommended that a crisis communication strategy be developed immediately.

**Outlet Coverage From January 24 – March 7**

After review and analysis of the news coverage for the past six weeks the following topics emerged as prevalent:

* The alleged rape in New Delhi, India
* Partnership announcement with Uber and Carnegie Mellon to build driverless cars
* Focus on competition mainly Google and Apple as well as emerging start-ups
* Uber raising capital and expanding on services offered
* Uber’s security breach that affected 50,000 drivers
* Uber's operations or lack there of across the globe

**Recommendations Based on Past Six Weeks of Coverage**

It is recommended that Uber continue to monitor the news coverage for the same outlets. It gives a good representation of international, national and local coverage for the company. It is essential to know what is being said about the company in order to respond correctly and guide coverage in a positive direction. Uber can position itself to receive more coverage by slowly releasing details of new developments. A good opportunity for this would have been the partnership with Carnegie Mellon and the development of driverless cars. If the partnership agreed on the strategy to slowly release more information it could help fuel the salience of positive coverage about the new partnership.

An internationally operating company has many different publics to answer to. This is especially important when carving out a new sector like Uber is. It is important to know how the different markets view Uber as a company and to position Uber as a partner or enhanced service when expanding into a new country. If Uber can contribute to the community they have a better chance of being well received. For this reason, I recommend that Uber monitor media coverage in areas they are looking at expanding in and work to form partnerships or provide enhanced services to those communities. This would potentially slow down the expansion process, but it would offer the benefit of having a successful expansion by using relationships to assist in decreasing the resistance to their business and or business model. Uber could use the Personal Influence Model to leverage employee’s relationships across the globe to help meet the business objectives.

**Specific Recommendations to News Coverage:**

* Uber include full cooperation with investigation on the alleged rape cases.
* Installment of new protocols to minimize the possibility of criminal activity occurring in the future. Transparency in any crisis communication plan is key.
* Uber should work closely with local governments in the cities they are operating to ensure proper licensing is achieved.
* Uber should partner with non-profit organizations working to decrease drunk driving to leverage their ability to have an impact on road safety.
* Ensuring that driver and customer data is properly protected.
* Offer continuing to support open use of its API.

**General Recommendations for Uber Strategy:**

* Have a fluid response strategy to address both positive and negative news coverage.
* Create (or update) a crisis communication plan as soon as possible.
* Appoint one person as the official spokesperson and conduct continual ongoing training to be prepared.
* Make business decisions that are aligned with cultivating and maintaining a positive long-term image for Uber.
* Continue to examine business partnerships and make announcements designed to maximize positive coverage.
* Position Uber as an asset to the communities it is currently operating in and plans to operate in.
* Uber could use the Personal Influence Model to leverage employee’s relationships across the globe to help meet the business objectives

The salience of Uber Technologies Inc. company operations coverage experienced a decrease in coverage during the six-week monitoring period. Currently, Uber is experiencing a steady increase in total news coverage and it has an overall positive public perception. Uber coverage shifted from overall negative perception to an overall positive perception. If Uber follows the above recommendations they can capitalize on maximizing their opportunities to provide information about Uber and assist in keeping positive Uber messages on the media’s agenda.