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Chapter 11 Review

Chapter 11 did a great job of introducing and informing me of the different factors that affect truth when it comes to the media. In the world of media the job is to get out stories as quickly as possible and make it the most captivating. The problem that can come with that is not having the right amount of time to get the actual truth. Of course all cases are different and the circumstances can differ in a great number of ways. However in some situations, arriving at the truth can be a lengthy process which goes against the timeline that media outlets have. With this, media outlets can leave out different information and push a story that brings in an audience rather than pushing the truth.

Chapter 11 provided us with a couple of different cases where we see the truth play out in media cases in different ways. The case I decided to go with was “Wal-Marting Across the Internet”. The case follows Laura and Jim, a couple that was traveling in a RV across the country to see their 3 kids. They wanted to park for free overnight in Walmart parking lots and reached out to get permission. Walmart saw this as an opportunity to promote themselves in a family friendly way. Walmart flew the couple out to Las Vegas and gave them a new RV with the logo “Working Families for Wal-Mart”. They were then sent on their way on a “Wal-Marting Across America” tour where their gas was paid for. At each stop they made, Laura was paid to make a blog and in those blogs she covered positive stories about Wal-Mart employees they had encountered on their trip.

Throughout the trip, the viewers that tuned into the blog started to wonder if the couple were actually on a trip or if it was sponsored. In one of the last blogs Laura cleared up the information and spoke about how the sponsorship came around. The main point that people were focused on was why wasn't the details on the sponsorship disclosed earlier. This led people to believe that Walmart was just doing a publicity stunt. Jim, who was actually a staff photographer at *The Washington Post*, said the *Post* had asked Jim to return the funds he received from Walmart and to remove the photos from the blog.

Walmart simply wanted to increase their positive image with the community. They saw the web and blogs as an opportunity to shine some light on different things that they contributed to in different communities. Especially to counter the negative messages that were posted about Wal-Mart on websites like WakeUpWalMart.com in 2005. Beside the campaign on the web, Wal-Mart also made contributions to victims of hurricane Katrina and the plan to build more Wal-Marts in economically challenged areas to help out local businesses.

Reading through this case and chapter, there was a lot of information to take in and break down. One of the things that we can establish is that corporations creating an image for themselves is not unethical. Also when they speak out on public issues it is legal and even ethical. I believe no one would have been against a campaign like that because it shed light on different people in different communities and was invoking a positive change. A sponsorship like that is not wrong and when done properly it can bring a lot of people aboard with it. However, when things or information are withheld when they don't need to be it leaves room for people to believe that there are other motives behind the act. If Wal-Mart had decided to release the details on the sponsorship from the beginning it most likely would have resonated with the audience more. Sponsorships aren't unheard of and people come across people being

sponsored in many different ways. When full information is disclosed, it makes it easier for the audience to believe the intentions of the corporations because everything is already out on the table.

The web is a place where things can be built up or torn down in a matter of seconds. When choosing to campaign on the internet you can expect that there will be some type of opposition. The best course of action is to disclose the most information you can so that it doesn't come across any other way. In a world where pieces of a story are constantly withheld from the public, we should aim to not hide information. If you truly aim to accomplish a goal, the information you disclose should be able to back that up. When information is hidden whether intentional or unintentional, it makes it seem as though that there is more to it. This can make corporations come across as untrustworthy because if you can hide information that doesn't need to be, there is a chance that you can be hiding information you don't want people to know. When the full truth is released instead of parts of it, there is nothing else for people to rely on because they have access to the full story.

What we can learn from this is to aim to be completely truthful. Those that help in the process of the sponsorship should also want to commit to find the proper balance of their commitment to their clients and to public truth telling. When you have the truth you can always rely on it. Not only is that the right thing to do ethically, but it can also build credibility and in turn create a positive image/reputation among the people.