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## **The Curated Chronicles of the American Family: An Ideological Analysis of the Love Taza Blog**

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The Curated Chronicles of the American Family: An Ideological Analysis of  
the *Love Taza* Blog

by

Elizabeth Radley

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Graduate School,  
the College of Arts and Letters  
and the School of Mass Communication and Journalism  
at The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

Named one of the top ten influencers of parenting by *Forbes*, Naomi Davis of the family-lifestyle Blog, *Love Taza* has transformed her family chronicles into a successful Internet business with an extensive following ("Top Influencers of 2017: Parenting"). This thesis examines the content of *Love Taza* to understand what messages Naomi communicates to her readers and how her readers may be receiving those messages. Using a sample of 600 posts from 2012-2017, a quantitative analysis was conducted to determine the type of content being presented. According to the findings, the majority of the posts included sponsored content and the most common theme was *marriage and family*. Posts were positive in tone, and most included images of the Davis children. Comparative data was examined between sponsorship and theme, engagement, and inclusion of children's images. Statistically significant relationships were found between sponsorship and all variables, indicating sponsorships play an integral role in content selection.

Expanding on the quantitative data, Stuart Hall's (1980) method of textual analysis was used to further analyze content. The preferred reading indicates the Davis Family is an ideal reflection of the dominant ideology. The negotiated reading agrees, but considers the influence of capitalism, manifest in the large number of sponsored posts. An oppositional reading acknowledged how corporate sponsorships perpetuate hegemony and surmises that the family portrayed on the blog is not a reflection of reality, but a curated version of the elite's ideas of perfection. This analysis demonstrates the potential influence of the blogging medium in American society.

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband Keith. Thank you for encouraging me to step out of my comfort zone to pursue a master's degree. You have been always been an example of hard work and dedication in everything you pursue. You never pressured me to be perfect, but encouraged me to do my best. Thank you for babysitting while I went to class or finished assignments, providing the necessary financial support for pursuing my degree, and offering advice and constructive feedback when asked. I love you and couldn't have done this without you!

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## CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Ordinary citizens are no longer passive receptors of mass media, they are active participants and creators of written and visual content. The Internet has allowed users to reach worldwide audiences instantaneously through email, social media platforms, web forums, and blogging. Many individuals use the Internet as an outlet of self-expression and reflection. One of these outlets, blogging, has grown from being merely a communication platform, to a commercial platform. Due to the public nature of blogging, some writers have developed a significant following of Internet users from across the world and have become influencers of culture, fashion, music, and more. Because blogs are self-published, bloggers can bypass the gatekeepers of traditional media by sharing unfettered content directly with the public (Park & Jeong, 2011). No matter the topic, bloggers have a vehicle for sharing their ideas without the constraints of corporate oversight. While blogging may appear autonomous, the popularity and influence of many blogs has opened the door to increased commercialization and careful curation of content.

Because blogging is for everyone (at least those with internet access), blogging is not only used by individuals, but is also a common communication tactic of corporations and traditional media. This medium allows them to reach new audiences in niche markets and to stay competitive and relevant in an ever-changing digital marketplace. Despite the professionalism and legitimacy of corporate blogs, advertisers often look to “mommy blogs” and “family blogs” for partnerships. This commercialization of the mommy blog has catapulted some bloggers from humble online journal writers, to become major influencers and trend-setters. For example, in 2017, *Forbes* named family-lifestyle blogger, Naomi Davis of the popular family-lifestyle blog, *Lova Taza*, as one of the top

10 influencers of parenting ("Top Influencers of 2017: Parenting"). Her blog has become increasingly popular since its beginnings in 2007 and Naomi Davis and her family are sought-after influencers and trend-setters. Major brands like Amazon, Gap, Polaroid, Kate Spade, Bandaid, Target, Kenneth Cole, Ralph Lauren, and more, have sponsored content on *Love Taza*, capitalizing on Naomi Davis' far-reaching influence. In 2016, U.S. First Lady, Michelle Obama invited Naomi and several other bloggers to spend the day at The White House to promote Mrs. Obama's *Let's Move!* initiative (Davis, 2016a). These partnerships demonstrate the enormous notoriety of family-lifestyle blogs in American culture. Just as traditional media, advertising, and social media analyzed to understand their influence in society, family-lifestyle blogs should be duly studied.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the blog, *Love Taza*, to explore what type of blog content is most frequently posted, how much of the blog contains commercialized content, and the social and cultural implications of the blog's commercialization and influence. This blog was selected because of its longevity, consistency, reputation, following, and extensive corporate partnerships. A content analysis will be conducted to examine common themes, tone, sponsored content, images of children, affiliate links, and reader engagement. To understand the social and cultural implications of the content, Stuart Hall's method of textual analysis will be applied to determine the preferred, negotiated and oppositional readings of the content (Hall, 1980). This research is significant because of the increasing popularity and commercialization of family-lifestyle blogs. With this analysis, researchers can better understand what type of blog content resonates with consumers and advertisers, and how content influences readers and society.

## CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

### Defining Blogging

Like many online forms of communication, it is difficult to determine exactly when blogging began. It is generally accepted that the first “weblogs” were published online in the mid 1990’s as a way of sharing information (Miller & Shepherd, 2004). Since then, blogs have become a significant part of the World Wide Web, with Nielsen indicating over 181 million blogs had been published as of 2011 (“Buzz in the Blogosphere: Millions More Bloggers and Blog Readers”, 2012). Undoubtedly, that number has increased. However, no comprehensive studies have been conducted in recent years to determine the total number of current blogs. This may be because new “micro-blogging” websites such as Tumblr and Twitter have altered the definition of a traditional blog, making the total number of current blogs difficult, if not impossible, to quantify. Although blogs have evolved since their first appearance over 20 years ago, the basic concept of a blog has remained the same. Essentially, a blog is a chronologically organized collection of articles called “posts” that are published online and updated regularly (Chen, 2013; Blood, 2002; Miller & Shepherd, 2004). Writers of blogs are often called “bloggers” or some variation of the term, i.e. “mommy blogger” (Chen, 2013). Blogs are meant to be “of the moment” as bloggers write posts similar to journal entries using personal thoughts, chronicling daily occurrences or current events (Reed, 2005).

Most blogs conform to specific genres and are thus considered niche markets. Such niche marketing, as described by Jhally and Livant (1986), involves fragmenting a broad audience and providing content for “concentrated viewing” (p.133). Essentially, niche marketing reduces superfluous and unrelated information so consumers are only

viewing content which relates to them. Many bloggers use this marketing strategy to build a loyal audience of readers, known in the blogging world as “followers.” Common blogging genres include mommy blogs (Chen, 2013; Friedman, 2010; Thompson, 2007; Morrison, 2010), filter blogs (Wei, 2009), personal blogs (Wei, 2009), knowledge-sharing blogs (Hsu & Lin, 2008), professional blogs (Bar-Ilan, 2005), and more. Orihuela (2012) explained, “niche-blogging and expert blogs are the natural expansion of traditional media experts columnism, with the advantage of freedom from agendas different from one’s own in relation with themes and frequency” (p.128). Such freedom from traditional media norms and gatekeepers gives bloggers a sense of empowerment (Chen, 2013; Duffy, 2010; Friedman, 2010; Newsom & Lengel, 2003). This empowerment can be as simple as freedom of literary style. For example, in a genre analysis of blogs conducted by Wall (2005), the researcher found that bloggers used a much more personal style than traditional, detached journalists, even when talking about current news topics. Furthermore, Wall found that bloggers also formed relationships with their readers through interactive online communication. Thus, while blogging is a form of mass communication, its unique characteristics qualifies the genre to be defined differently.

### Blogging as New Media

With an endless variety of topics, and a mixture of self-published and corporately employed writers, blogs are a difficult form of media to categorize and research. However, the digital format of blogs, along with issues of autonomy, monetization, and interactivity qualify blogs to be considered and studied as new media. Lister (2009) describes the characteristics of new media as “digital, interactive, hypertextual, virtual,

networked, and simulated” (p. 13). Blogging clearly fits within each of these categories and has duly been studied as new media by many scholars (Bivens, 2008; Kahn & Kellner, 2001; Taylor, 2011). The interactive quality of blogging, i.e., commenting, connecting to other blogs through hyperlinks, collaborating, and more, is especially compelling. As Wei (2009) explains, “Blogging is conversational and participatory in nature” (p.537). Thus, blogs should be analyzed not just from the writers’ perspective, but also from the readers’ perspective. In a study about the business of mommy blogging, Peterson (2014) interviewed many current bloggers who claimed to have close connection to their readers, allowing them to communicate more effectively. Peterson also noted, “Many who blog claim to have finally found a community of people who think like they do, who care about the same issues they care about, and who connect with what they have written” (p. 282). Abadin argues that the connection between blogger and readers is a “‘commercial intimacy’ that thinly veils the consumerist exchange between blogger and reader” (2013, p.3).

#### *Love Taza* and the Family Lifestyle Blog

*Love Taza* (lovetaza.com) is a family/lifestyle blog with a large following. The author, Naomi Davis, lives in New York City with her husband and three children. Her blog began in 2007 under the name “Rockstar Diaries” and chronicled the life of two newlyweds in New York City. Soon, Naomi began using the blog to sell homemade items from her Etsy shop (an online marketplace for users to buy and sell goods). As the blog began to grow and increase in followers, Naomi began monetizing through sponsored posts and advertising which eventually led product collaborations. The genre of the blog also evolved from a personal journal to a blog about family and lifestyle, specifically

about living in New York City. No longer a blog about just Naomi and Josh, *Love Taza* (Taza is Josh's nickname for Naomi) now also features their soon to be five children: Eleanor (6), Samson (4) and Conrad (2) and twins on the way. The blog's welcome page is linked from the home page and includes a brief introduction about the family and the blog, which Naomi describes as a space "where I share bits and pieces of my family's adventures in New York City" (Davis, n.d.). As a family/lifestyle blog, posts on *Love Taza* range from recipes and family outings, to tips for traveling with toddlers and family-friendly product promotions. The blog includes a wide variety of content, but all of it is carefully curated and centered around the family. Naomi also states her reasons for blogging on the "about" page of her blog: "I choose to keep blogging because I believe it is a source for good...because I believe there aren't many channels left in today's world of media that celebrate motherhood and family and the good things in life" (Davis, n.d.). Peterson (2014) found that many of the bloggers interviewed in her study similarly felt a sense of social responsibility.

Financially, *Love Taza* is extremely profitable, as both Naomi and Josh pursue the blog full-time. Josh left a lucrative career in finance to work on the blog with Naomi from home. The Davis family lives on the Upper-West side of Manhattan where real estate is notoriously expensive. Furthermore, the lifestyle portrayed by the family is not for the bargain hunters. Vacations are frequent, they wear brand name clothing, and Naomi even admits in a few posts that they send out laundry through a wash and fold service. However, it should be noted that because of the blog's popularity, many of the families' clothes, vacations, toys, and more are "sponsored" by various companies.

Taylor (2011) argues that such privilege is common among bloggers. In her study of single female bloggers, she noted that “these blogs are primarily produced in the US, and their authors are presumably privileged in terms of the time, resources and cultural capital required for their production and maintenance” (p. 94).

### Monetizing the Blog

Though the total number of followers is not explicitly stated on the *Love Taza* blog, @LoveTaza has over 429,000 followers on Instagram and over 16,000 subscribers on YouTube. This extensive following, along with Naomi’s trendsetting style and carefully curated content, has caused *Love Taza* to become more than a blog; it is a brand. Many major companies have chosen to collaborate with *Love Taza* and to capitalize on the niche market of its followers. This large, captive audience and plethora of corporate collaborators all constitute a prodigious amount of influence. Wei refers to this concept as “social power” which he defines as “a blogger’s capacity to influence as many people as possible” (2009, p.540). Significantly, the social power of *Love Taza* and similar blogs goes beyond influencing trends and preferences, these blogs also have tremendous economic influence as readers are persuaded to buy (Alsaleh, 2017; Shroeder, 2014). For example, Hsu, Chuan-Chuan Lin, & Chiang (2032) conducted a study to determine bloggers’ influence over consumer’s purchasing decisions. The researchers concluded that bloggers influence multiple stages of the purchasing process and can persuade consumers to purchase specific products based on their reviews and recommendations. For example, Rachel Parcell, a popular fashion blogger (pinkpeonies.com), pushed over \$1 million dollars in sales to Nordstrom in 2016, through product promotions and links through her blog (Blalock, 2016). However, research has shown that bloggers can only

influence readers to buy if they consider the blogger to be a reputable, reliable source (Alsaleh, 2017). Thus, a blogger's perceived credibility is crucial in determining his or her commercial success as an influencer. Similarly, in a quantitative analysis of fashion blogs, Cheng & Fang (2015) found that the perceived trust and fashion involvement of the blogger influenced readers to not only revisit the blog, but to also adopt the blogger's ideas.

How do bloggers establish trust and credibility? In a 2017 interview with *Forbes*, Parcell described the importance of carefully curating content:

[Bloggers] need to be extremely picky, test products and find brands [they] love and think [their] readers will love before [they] say "yes" to partnering with on sponsored posts. I don't ever want to lose the trust of my readers and I don't think people understand how often bloggers say "no" to keep that trust (Gross, 2017).

Similarly, Naomi Davis from *Love Taza* mentions her intention to be selective with advertisers on the blog,

It's important to us that Love Taza is authentic and transparent, so we are incredibly selective about our partnerships and only partner with or share brands we believe in and use. we are often pitched things, from book deals and inquiries to do TV shows to endless products to test or promote. while the inquiries might be frequent, I hope my readers know we turn down far more than we ever say yes to (probably 99.9%) (Davis, n.d.).

Bloggers like Rachel Parcell and Naomi Davis may turn down the majority of sponsorship requests; however, their blogs are still filled with affiliate links, banner ads, and sponsored content. Naomi's estimate of turning down 99.9% of all sponsorship

inquiries merely demonstrates the enormous demand for the niche-market advertising provided by well-reputed family-lifestyle blogs. Notably, although blog readers are aware of advertising and sponsorships (Naomi explicitly notes all sponsored posts, partnerships, and gifts), this does not deter them from reading. Like sitting through an advertisement during a television program, consumers have become so accustomed to being solicited to, they seldom object – especially when they receive valuable content or entertainment in exchange. Jhally and Livant (1986) call this phenomenon “the work of watching” and it is especially effective in niche marketing where advertising is customized for consumers and is therefore less off-putting. Furthermore, blog advertising allows readers (consumers) to comment on what they see, which makes the advertising experience seem more conversational. Many scholars like Jhally and Livant have studied the effects of extensive advertising in traditional media settings such as magazines (Ha, 1996; Frith & Shaw, 2005; Pieters & Wedel, 2004) and television (Moschis & Moore, 1982; Myers & Biocca, 1992; Olney, Holbrook & Batra, 1991). However, despite increasing popularity and commercialization, limited research exists about the effects of advertising and sponsored content on blogs.

With monetization of family-lifestyle blogs comes the controversy of exploiting children for financial gain. Unlike traditional media, blogs are not regulated and are thus not expected to conform to rules which might serve to protect individuals and minors in particular (Thomas, 2016). Many bloggers choose to take steps to protect themselves and their children. Fullwood, et al (2015) found that bloggers generally choose to be identifiable through use of their partial or full name, and by posting a photograph of themselves, but protect the identity of their children by using pseudonyms and/or

omitting identifiable photos (Morrison, 2011). Like all aspects of blogging, there are no formal rules for privacy. Bloggers choose how to represent themselves and their families based on their personal values and brand identity. To study this field, Morrison (2010) created an 8-point axis of private vs public blogs, 1, being the most private, and 8 being the least. Based on his scale, *Love Taza* would fall under the description of the fifth point on the privacy scale, which includes “publicly-accessible personal blogs trying to maximize an audience of strangers (non-reciprocal; aims to capture a larger share of ‘market’ to better sell advertising...)” (n.p.). Examining how often *Naomi Davis* chooses to post identifiable photographs and information about her children provides insight into the marketability and commercialization of “real-life” children in the digital age.

#### Stuart Hall’s Method of Textual Analysis

One approach to understand the effects of media content is Stuart Hall’s method of textual analysis. Hall offers various techniques for analysis from both a consumer and a producer’s perspective, by viewing mass media through the encoding and decoding process (Hall, 1980). In this research, Hall theorized that all media goes through a process of changed meaning as the messenger crafts the message and the receiver receives the message. Through this process, the original message intent may be skewed one way or another due to conscious or unconscious encoding and decoding. Put another way, the writer of a blog, in this case, Naomi, may intend a post to be read one way, but the reader may take it an entirely different way, whether it’s due to bias, cultural background, personal experience, or perhaps the way the message/blog post was crafted (encoded) in the first place. Although many meanings can be derived from media during

this process, Hall focuses on three: the preferred reading, the negotiated reading, and the oppositional reading.

### *Preferred Reading*

In this reading, the receiver decodes the message as intended by the sender. Hall calls this “the dominant-hegemonic position,” as it operates within a dominant code, or a universally accepted language of understanding (p.137). Communication from the sender to the receiver is transparent and unaltered by the encoding/decoding process. John Fiske explains that this is because the receiver “accepts “the dominant ideology and the subjectivity that it produces” (p.292). In a preferred reading, the message intended by the sender, and the message received by the recipient are the same.

### *Negotiated Reading*

Here, the receiver can put the message into a larger context, allowing them to see the message from various perspectives. For example, in Christopher Campbell’s analysis of the 2002 Budweiser Superbowl Commercial, he offers a negotiated reading, which places the feel-good commercial (preferred reading) into the context of the post 9-11 advertising environment, suggesting that while the commercial certainly evokes warm and fuzzy emotions, it is still a commercial to sell beer. In this regard, Budweiser’s parent company, Anheuser Busch, could be viewed as capitalizing on a national tragedy (Campbell, 2003). The receiver is encoding the message through the lenses of cultural context and “dominant ideology” (Hall, p.137). This meaning can only be understood once one recognizes that the messenger cannot impose any meaning upon the receiver. Fiske explains that the meanings are merely preferred (Fiske, 1992). He further explains, “Readers whose social situations lead them to reject all or some constructions of the

dominant ideology will necessarily bring this social orientation to their reading” (p.292-93).

### *Oppositional Reading*

The third reading offered by Hall is an oppositional reading, in which the viewer deconstructs the preferred meaning of the message and reconstructs an entirely new intent. Receivers not only acknowledge the dominant ideology; they openly oppose it. This meaning can only be understood once one recognizes that the messenger cannot impose any meaning upon the receiver. Fiske explains that the meanings are merely preferred, or in this case, opposed (Fiske, 1992). He further explains, “Readers whose social situations lead them to reject all or some constructions of the dominant ideology will necessarily bring this social orientation to their reading” (p.292-93).

### Summary

Despite the increasing popularity of blogs, limited research exists to understand the potential societal effects of family-lifestyle blogs in America. This study aims to determine how one of the most popular American bloggers, Naomi Davis, communicates to her readers through determining what types of messages she is sharing, and how her readers may be receiving those messages.

### Research Questions

With the literature in mind, the following research questions were proposed to explore the social and cultural implications of *Love Taza*:

**RQ1:** What are the most common topics featured in *Love Taza*?

**RQ2:** What is the overall tone of the blog?

**RQ3:** How much of the blog content is sponsored and/or includes affiliate links?

**RQ4:** Is there a relationship between posts including the Davis children and sponsored content?

**RQ5:** Is there a relationship between the topic of the post and whether the post includes sponsored content or affiliate links?

**RQ6:** Is there a relationship between sponsored content or affiliate links and reader engagement?

## CHAPTER III - QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

I conducted a quantitative analysis to determine what type of content *Love Taza* contains, and a qualitative content analysis to understand how the content may affect readers and society. The quantitative analysis was conducted first to answer the proposed research questions.

### Sampling

The dataset for this analysis was selected from blog posts available online through the *Love Taza* archives (lovetaza.com), which is arranged chronologically and includes every post in its entirety, dating back to 2007. Naomi generally posts content three times per week, meaning there are roughly 1,500+ total archived posts. To select a relevant sample which would fit within the time constraints of the thesis, ten randomly selected posts from each month between 2012-2017 were analyzed ( $n=600$ ). These years were selected because they represent the most recent (and therefore the most relevant) content. Examining five years of data also provided a comprehensive view of the blog content over time. Posts were randomly selected using an online random number generator to determine a starting point within the month. The ten subsequent posts were then included in the sample. Randomly selecting the starting point allowed for an unbiased, comprehensive sample. If the last post in the month was reached before ten posts had been selected, I returned to the beginning of the month until ten posts had been analyzed. Three of the 60 months examined had fewer than ten posts, in these cases, additional posts were pulled from adjacent months. All archived posts included a date stamp, comments section, and a “Like” button.

## Coding Categories

Prior to coding, categories were developed for all values to ensure accuracy. Operational definitions for categories and values were included in the codebook (Appendix A) and accompanying definitions sheet (Appendix B). Values included in the codebook were exhaustive, independent, and clearly defined to alleviate bias and confusion. These categories and values were selected based on previous research (as examined in the literature review) and the research questions. The following is an explanation of each value and its corresponding variables.

### *Sponsorship*

This value was included in the quantitative analysis in reference to RQs 4, 5, and 6. Variables within this category included yes and no. Posts including implicitly sponsored content were coded as yes. Sponsorship is defined in the codebook as the backing, supporting, or financing of an outside organization in exchange for publicity or other benefits. This is often manifest in the blog through text or photos that include specific products available in the marketplace (either in text or photos), or links to external websites for the purposes of promotion. While Naomi claims to disclose all sponsorships, some posts may be coded as sponsored based on this definition even if a sponsorship is not explicitly disclosed. Giveaways and contests were also considered sponsored posts. It is also important to note that while banner advertisements exist within the framework of the website (either at the bottom of the page, or along the side column), such advertisements were not considered part of the individual posts and therefore were not included in the sample. These ads remain stagnant and do not change as the user navigates through the archives. Therefore, readers only have access to the current ads and

cannot see ads that were included at the original time of a previous post. Analyzing these ads over time would require a longitudinal study, rather than a content analysis.

### *Primary Topic*

This variable was coded in reference to RQs 1 and 5, and provided insight into the dominant messages of the blog. Primary topic is defined in the codebook as the dominant theme of the post based on the text and photos and/or videos. Variables within this category were coded as marriage and family if the primary topic was marital relationships, family relationships, family milestones, life events, date nights, or family activities; home decor if the primary topic of the post was home decorating or apartment living; family travel if the primary topic of the post was vacationing or day trips to destinations outside of New York City, this also included posts where travel tips were given; advertisement if the primary purpose of the post was to advertise for an organization, or promote a cause, product, or person; fashion and beauty if the primary topic was fashion or beauty related, including posts about makeup, hair, or clothing; Dining out or cooking if the primary topic of the post was food or cuisine, including recipes, home cooking, or eating out; city living if the primary topic of the post was about living in Washington, D.C. or New York City, including posts with tips or tricks, city recommendations, or general comments about living in New York City or Washington, D.C; friendship if the primary topic was about friendships outside of family relationships, including girls' night, travel with friends, or visiting friends; contest or giveaway if the primary of the topic was a contest or giveaway for readers; other if the primary topics of the post did not clearly align with any one variable.

### *Tone*

The dominant tone of the blog posts was assessed through examining word choice, subject matter, and photos or videos. This variable was considered in reference to RQ2. Tone was coded as positive if the text, topic, and photos or videos within the post appeared to be happy, upbeat, or optimistic and the images may have included people smiling or laughing. Tone was coded as negative if the text, topic and photos or videos of the post appeared to be sad, angry, or pessimistic, and the images may have included people frowning or crying. Tone was coded as neutral if the post appeared to be neither positive nor negative.

### *Images of Children*

Because the literature often referenced the issue of child exploitation in the “mommy blog” and “family blog” genres, I coded whether or not posts included images of the Davis children. This is in reference to RQ4, which asks whether a relationship exists between sponsored content and images of children. Posts were coded as yes if they included at least one photo and/or video of one or more of the Davis’ children. Posts which did not include any photos or videos of the Davis children were coded as no.

### *Engagement*

I calculated total reader engagement by adding the total number of comments on the posts to the total number of “likes.” This variable was included in reference to RQ6. Knowing whether sponsorship affects reader engagement demonstrates the influence of sponsorship on readership. Both numbers are listed at the bottom of each blog post.

### *Links*

This variable was in reference to RQ3 Posts which included one or more links to an external website, I coded as yes. This did not include internal links, which redirect the

user to a previous blog post or to another page within the Love Taza website. I coded posts which did not include external links as no.

### Coding

I manually coded all data. Intercoder reliability was tested in a pretest using an independent coder. I gave coder the codebook and a brief overview of all categories and operational definitions prior to coding. The independent coder and I both coded the first 10% of the data set ( $n=60$ ). As questions arose, I offered clarity and adjusted the codebook slightly, if needed. The results of the pretest yielded an average intercoder reliability rate of 92% across all categories, with all categories having at least 89% agreement between the two coders. With reliability confirmed, I proceeded to code the remaining 540 blog posts within the sample independently.

### Results

First, I conducted a frequency analysis for the categories of topic, tone, images of children, sponsorship, and links. For RQ1, I was concerned with the most common topics on the blog. According to the data, the most common topic featured in the blog was marriage and family (33%), followed by family travel (17%), city living (15%), advertisement (13%), fashion and beauty (6%), dining out or cooking (5%), contest or giveaway (5%), home décor (3%), friendship (2%), and other (1%). These three topics made up 65% of the sampled content.

Table 1

*Frequency Analysis*

Variable	Value	Frequency	Percent
Sponsorship	Yes	173	28.8%
	No	427	71.2%
Topic	Marriage and family	197	32.8%
	Home décor	16	2.7%
	Travel	104	17.3%
	Advertisement	77	12.8%
	Fashion and beauty	38	6.3%
	Dining out or cooking	32	5.3%
	City Living	89	14.8%
	Friendship	11	1.8%
	Contest or Giveaway	28	4.7%
	Other	8	1.3%
Tone	Positive	498	83.0%
	Neutral	94	15.7%
	Negative	8	1.3%
Images of Children	Yes	450	75.0%
	No	150	25.0%
Links	Yes	442	73.7%
	No	158	26.3%

Because Love Taza is a family-lifestyle blog, it is unsurprising that the primary topic was marriage and family and family travel. Understanding which topics were most frequently featured also provided insight into the type of content deemed valuable and marketable by Naomi, and how she chooses to represent herself and her family to readers. This will be further explored in the qualitative analysis.

For RQ2, I was concerned with tone of the posts, which was found to be overwhelmingly positive (83%) with some neutral posts (13%) and few negative posts (2%). While some researchers find blogs to be an opportunity for mothers to publicly air

grievances (Pettigrew, Archer, and Harrigan, 2016; Morrison, 2010), the positive tone of Love Taza indicates that Naomi is more concerned with providing positive information and entertainment, rather than complaining or seeking sympathy. The sizeable number of positive posts is also indicative of the curated-nature of blogging, whereby writers pick and choose which parts of their lives to publicly share. According to the data, Naomi is choosing to show only positive aspects of her family, as this is likely the most marketable and reader-friendly approach.

The purpose of RQ3 was to determine how much content on Love Taza was sponsored. The data indicates that 71% of the sampled blog posts contained sponsored content and 74% of posts included links to external websites. The plethora of sponsored content indicates that Love Taza is much more than an online journal or travelogue; it is also a business. When compared to the topic frequency data, it is apparent that sponsored posts are not necessarily overt advertisements (which made up 13% of the content). Rather, sponsorships are embedded throughout the blog in many different types of posts. Naomi has successfully monetized the content of her blog while maintaining an overall theme of family and positivity. This will be further explored in the qualitative analysis portion of the study.

For RQ4, 5, and 6, I conducted a chi-square test of independence to determine whether a significant relationship exists between categories, using SPSS. After analysis, I determined there was a significant relationship between sponsorship and topic ( $\chi^2$  (9), 325.470,  $p = .000$ ), sponsorship and images of children ( $\chi^2$  (1), 22.420,  $p = .000$ ), and sponsorship and reader engagement ( $\chi^2$  (5), 26.827,  $p = .000$ ). In each of these pairings, I found a statistically significant relationship.

Table 2

*Chi Square Test For Independence*

Variable	$\chi^2$	df*	<i>p</i>
Topic	325.470	9	.000
Images of children	22.42	1	.000
Engagement	26.827	5	.000

\*df, degree of freedom

This indicates that Naomi is either producing content which aligns with sponsors, or she is choosing sponsorships which align with her content. In any case, the success of the blog indicates that despite the plethora of sponsored content, readers are remaining engaged.

### Discussion

The quantitative findings provide an overview of what and how Naomi Davis chooses to communicate through her blog. However, they do not provide insight into how that communication is received. Most posts are about marriage and family. However, the overwhelmingly positive tone and significant amount of sponsored content indicates this is much more than an online chronicle of a family’s every-day life. There are larger societal factors at play such as media ownership, corporate oversight, and hegemony. These influences affect how viewers may interpret *Love Taza* and thus provide greater insight into the descriptive statistical findings. Because blogs are a form of new media and are social in nature, it is essential to understand both the writer’s and the readers’ perspectives to gain a full understanding of the potential societal impact of this genre.

Therefore, I also conducted a qualitative analysis to further explore the quantitative findings.

## CHAPTER IV QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

With the quantitative data in mind, I also conducted a qualitative analysis to understand the potential social and cultural implications of the blog. Following Hall's method of textual analysis, I considered the preferred, negotiated, and oppositional readings of the sampled content. Collectively, these methods provide a comprehensive overview of the family-lifestyle blog and give insight into the potential influence of the blogging medium in society.

### Preferred Reading

A preferred reading of *Love Taza* involved looking at topic and tone to determine how Naomi prefers for *Love Taza* to be read. The data provided insight into the type of content deemed valuable and marketable by Naomi and Josh Davis, and how they choose to represent themselves and their children to readers. *Marriage and family* was the most frequently featured topic (33%), followed by *family travel* (17%) and *city living* (15%). The tone was overall positive (83%). Naomi provides insight into how she would prefer her blog to be read in the "Frequently Asked Questions" section of the blog under the heading "why do I blog?" She writes,

I believe life, marriage, motherhood and all those little tasks that fill your day are a gift and I'm thankful for this little space on the big internet to share those things I love and to be a part of a community of bloggers doing the same...I hope when you read this blog, over anything else you'll take away a message of finding the joy in what is around you, in your own family and friends, in good food and good

places, in having hope, in learning and growing, and in your own surroundings  
(Davis, n.d.).

This statement closely reflects the data, with marriage and family comprising the core of Naomi's message. Her intended tone is positive as she refers to "finding joy" and "having hope." Through upbeat writing, Naomi presents her family life as the American dream. Yes, there are occasional mentions of minor tantrums and setbacks. But ultimately, The Davis Family lives a life devoid of drama and full of love, laughter and joy. When unfortunate events take place, they are usually minor and are laughed off as a brief diversion in an otherwise perfect day, such as getting caught in a snowstorm without the proper winter clothing. Color plays a subtle yet important role in reiterating the bright and happy lifestyle of the blog. Many of the images are candid, editorial-style shots, which look like they belong on the glossy pages of a lifestyle magazine rather than a blog. The Davis' Upper-West Side apartment (they moved to a larger apartment in 2017), is often featured and is nicely finished with multicolored walls and funky furniture. Even their living spaces appear to be straight out of a catalogue.

This seemingly perfect depiction of a family living the American dream is no different from the *Leave it to Beaver* mentality of early television viewing; it reinforces dominant archetypes which do not necessarily reflect reality. As the content producer, Naomi selects which themes and stories to tell her audience within a specific context for a specific audience. Hall (1973) refers to the relationship between "production elites" and their audiences as "systematically distorted communication." In a preferred reading, the audience does not recognize the communication is distorted because they subscribe to the

dominant culture. This concept is commonly called *false consciousness*, and it effects not only the audience's ability to recognize the message as skewed, it also serves to reinforce hegemony by keeping the lower class in place through their own socially constructed ignorance. Such criticism is common in analyzing television and arguably, the same concept can be applied to blogging as another type of "cultural artifact" (Hall, 1973). Reader comments provide insight into how the preferred message is received. Many comments indicate a yearning for the type of lifestyle Naomi exhibits.

Your outfits are amazing! You two look stunning! All your post [sic] make me want to jump on a plane and go to New York. Everything looks so beautiful"  
(Kellyn Rivera, Posted September 24, 2016)

Naomi I read your blog on a daily basis as I am so in love with New York and it's people that I am so envious of your lifestyle there. You give me the constant yearning to come back and play for months in this gorgeous town. I miss it, I miss it even when I am there – there's something special about it. So I thank you and your family for giving me my fix everyday and I hope you continue sharing your wonderful journey with us all" (Carolyne, Posted October 28, 2016).

Ya'll are seriously adorable!!! It's awesome how close you all are – I really wish my family was the same" (Kellie, Posted October 26, 2016).

Not only are readers accepting the lifestyle presented to them as true, they are also idealizing it. As previously mentioned, Hall's preferred reading refers to the dominant-hegemonic position" (1980, p.137).

Throughout the blog, Naomi places herself in a position of authority. She offers advice and tips for raising children, organizing and de-cluttering the home, shaping eyebrows, and more. Naomi is what Wei refers to as a "knowledge producer" (2009, p. 536). The "Frequently Asked Questions" page provides insight into how Naomi shares knowledge with her readers, reinforcing her position as an authority figure, or "production elite." Some of the questions are, "Do you have any tips for making my blog more successful?" "Can you share tips for making a successful marriage?" "I'm coming to NYC for the weekend! What should I do?" and "What color is that lipstick you're wearing?" Clearly, readers view Naomi as an influencer, trendsetter, and an example of success. Because these questions are posted and answered, Naomi is evidently comfortable with the position of power her blog has placed her in. Furthermore, Josh and Naomi began a "vlog" (video blog posts) to answer reader's questions more in-depth and on camera. In these posts, Naomi and Josh look directly into the camera and at each other as they discuss topics such as how they met and their philosophies on child-rearing. Hsu and Lin observed that bloggers generally share knowledge because they enjoy helping others (2008). The purpose of this analysis is not to understand why specific messages are shared, but rather how the messages are shared and what the potential effect may be. Thus, the reasons behind sharing tips and knowledge is not as relevant as the outcome, which is a reinforcement of the Davis family's place as influencers in society through perpetuating hegemony. When Naomi demonstrates how to apply the perfect shade of red

lipstick, it is not the lipstick itself, or even the process of putting it on that is significant, it is what the lipstick represents: a way for readers to conform to the dominant culture...and Naomi can show them how.

In summary, a preferred reading of *Love Taza* indicates a fun, positive lifestyle blog documenting a young families' adventures in New York City. These concepts are not only reflected in Naomi's own words, they are also reflected in the data, which indicates a positive, family-centered narrative. Readers accept this notion because they subscribe to the same cultural norms and ideals as the Davises.

#### Negotiated Reading

A negotiated reading of *Love Taza* must acknowledge the commercialization of the blog and the *Love Taza* brand. White refers to the commercial message as “the lynchpin between television as an information-entertainment and television as an industry, with the viewer as the place where these meanings or forces converge” (1994, p.172). The same can be said for blogging. Commercialization, which is manifest in *Love Taza* through advertisements and sponsorships, transforms the blog from a story-telling platform to a money-making business. RQ4, RQ5, and RQ6 provide a foundation for this negotiated reading, as these questions relate to frequency of sponsored content, and whether sponsorship is related to *topic, images of children, and engagement*.

Determining the frequency of sponsored posts provides insight into how much of the blog content is commercialized. Even if a sponsorship is not explicitly stated, if a post appears to be pushing readers to purchase a certain product or to consider a specific brand, commercialized content exists and thus the post was coded as sponsored. In total, 71% of the sampled posts contained implicitly or explicitly sponsored content.

Much of the sponsored content was in the form of explicitly sponsored posts, like product reviews with links to purchase, contests, or paid giveaways. However, *Love Taza* also partners with companies for product placement within posts. This practice is often referred to as *native advertising*, whereby a product or brand is so subtly placed within the context of the narrative, the viewer considers the product part of the natural environment, instead of an overt advertisement. For example, in a post titled “Our Little Mover,” Naomi writes about how their youngest child, Conrad, has become much more mobile (Davis, 2015). The accompanying candid photographs show Conrad and Naomi smiling and playing together around the apartment. Nine-month-old Conrad is wearing a T-Shirt and a diaper. The first two paragraphs of the post give an update on life with a mobile baby. The text is charming and relatable, as Naomi mentions the mixed-feelings of fatigue and joy from having a baby at home. About halfway through the second paragraph, Naomi mentions that the post is in partnership with Huggies. She then describes how Huggies “Little Movers” diapers have benefitted their family during this stage of life. This post is not merely about a family milestone, it is a paid partnership with a major American brand. Like television programming, Naomi doesn’t shy away from the commercialization of the post, she openly acknowledges it as part of the business of blogging, a business which has lucratively supported a family of four (soon to be six) in one of the most expensive zip codes in America.

In addition to paid partnerships and sponsorships, Naomi uses many links to connect her readers to outside sources. According to the data, 74% of posts within the sample included links to external websites. Often, *Love Taza* makes a “small commission from sales” purchased through the links (Davis, n.d.). Furthermore, links literally and

figuratively connect the *Love Taza* brand to outside brands and products. Although money, sponsors, and advertising are not mentioned in Naomi's introductory section of the blog (which was referenced earlier), according to the quantitative data, product placements and advertisements make up a significant portion of content on *Love Taza*. Thus, while the intention of the blog may be to communicate and share information about a family's lifestyle, the influence of the blog goes well beyond information-sharing and entertainment.

The data indicates a significant relationship exists between sponsorship and topic ( $n = .000$ ), sponsorship and images of children ( $n = .000$ ), sponsorship and external links ( $n = .000$ ), and sponsorship and engagement ( $n = .000$ ) This correlation indicates that certain types of content are more marketable than others. Because of the success of the blog and the quality of its sponsors, Naomi has clearly found a winning formula for gaining and maintaining sponsorships. She understands how to tailor content to maximize profitability.

Despite a plethora of advertising throughout the blog, Naomi insists she is "incredibly selective" about their partnerships and selects sponsorships based on the preferences of her readers. Nardi et al. observed that bloggers often tailor content based on audience feedback (2004). The social aspect of blogging gives these content producers a unique advantage of receiving direct, instantaneous feedback from their audience. While television relies on companies like Nielsen to compile feedback data and ratings, bloggers have instantaneous access to quantitative (web analytics) and qualitative (comments) data about their audience. This audience feedback can aid bloggers in strategically selecting advertisers and in gauging how much advertising is too much.

Notably, readers not only offer feedback about the blog, they are also commenting on the brands being advertised – which means the partnering company is also receiving qualitative on their brand and product. For example, in a post titled “Three Ways I’m Simplifying Life,” Naomi partners with Amazon Prime Pantry to promote their new delivery service for every-day essentials. She expertly weaves the product placement into a list of other tips and includes photos of her most recent Amazon delivery, describing the service and why she finds it useful. The end of the post includes a link to Amazon Prime Pantry and an acknowledgement that Amazon sponsored the post. Of the 30 comments left on the post, only one comment was negative:

Whereas I like the rest of your blog, and particularly the way you always try to see the sunny side of things, I can’t agree with promoting Amazon, who treats its employees unacceptably, and contributes to destroying local shops. With all the life choices you made, eating organic food, buying ethical clothing, etc., I’m surprised you endorse Amazon practices” (Lou, October 28, 2016).

The reader, Lou, claims to understand the *Love Taza* brand and finds the partnership with Amazon to be inconsistent with Naomi’s lifestyle. This comment is an example of a negotiated reading of the text. Lou recognizes the preferred message of the blog, but considers other social and environmental factors when decoding the message. In addition to providing Naomi feedback, Lou also expressed his/her concerns about Amazon’s corporate practices. This demonstrates how audience feedback benefits the blog writer *and* the sponsoring party, as they gain valuable, unsolicited feedback from the

public. Many companies like Amazon are using bloggers to promote products. This correlates with the growing trend of what Duffy describes as “consumer empowerment,” where advertisers use consumers as “creative laborers” to promote their products through harnessing creativity (2010, p.28). With the growing popularity of blogs, many advertisers take on an “if you can’t beat them, join them” type of mentality, choosing to partner, rather than compete. Furthermore, companies can gain authentic, audience-specific advertising and product placement for a fraction of the cost of traditional advertising avenues. (Huang, et al., 2007, Zwick et al., 2008; Thompson, 2007). As Lou’s comment demonstrates, these partnerships do not come without risks. Some readers may object or even reject sponsored content if they do not agree with the values of the partnering company.

Naomi must consider her readers, the broader social and cultural environment, and the needs of advertisers to be successful. These needs dictate the type of content which will be accepted by most readers, and is therefore marketable. As indicated by the statistically significant relationship between sponsorship and topic, images of children, and engagement, Naomi crafts her content for maximum marketability. A grungy-looking, family wearing second-hand clothing is far less appealing than the perfectly put together Davis family (who are sponsored by high-end brands like JCrew, Kate Spade, and Ralph Lauren). Furthermore, no one wants to read about diaper explosions and sibling fights or marriage problems. Hence, 83% of the sampled posts were coded as being positive in tone. Presenting a happy, colorful, conflict-free family encourages readership, which in turn, encourages sponsorships. The Davis children also play an important role in appealing to readers and sponsors. Their images were included in 75%

of the studied posts. Including these images appeals to a broad market of family and child-specific brands like Huggies, BandAid, and Fisher Price, all of which have sponsored *Love Taza*. Audiences who read the blog from a negotiated standpoint recognize these broader societal and capitalistic influences.

### Oppositional Reading

Most readers of *Love Taza* will interpret the blog through a preferred or negotiated lens. However, some may have a more cynical or oppositional view based on their personal experiences and values. This involves recognizing the preferred reading as a reflection of the dominant hegemony and rejecting it to form an “alternate framework message” (Hall, 1980, p.173). Two oppositional readings for *Love Taza* include a rejection of the notion that the Davises are the ideal American family, and opposition to using children for commercial gain.

With considerable commercialized content, it becomes difficult to decipher just how genuine Naomi is and whether the family portrayed online exists in reality. Fullwood, et al. (2013) refer to the notion of an “optimized presentation of the self” whereby the user selects content that is most useful for their overall purpose (p.345). Although Naomi attempts to present her family as “normal” by sharing small anecdotes about little squabbles or spills, the blog is not a direct reflection of a real family. This is confirmed by the data, which shows 98% of the content as having a positive or neutral tone, a clear indication that the blog displays the Davis’ best moments, not all moments. A preferred reading assumes all content (regardless of tone), is a genuine reflection of Naomi’s thoughts, feelings, and family life. A negotiated analysis assesses that Naomi caters her content to her readers, appealing to a broad audience to gain sponsors and

partners. An oppositional reading rejects the premise of the ideal and instead submits that *Love Taza* is not real at all, it is a strategically curated image of the dominant ideology, dictated by the owners of the corporations who sponsor it.

Ownership is a common theme in media criticism and it is an important aspect of understanding how hegemony is reinforced across society (Bagdikian, 1990; Gamson, et al., 1992). Unlike traditional media, blogging appears to be free from the control of the elite (media conglomerations) because the content is self-published and therefore not subject to corporate oversight. Blogging is a democratic medium, where content producers can publish what they want, how they want. However, an oppositional reading of *Love Taza* argues that while corporations do not own these family-lifestyle blogs, they do exercise control over the content through financial backing. Naomi can publish whatever she wants, but it is in her family's financial interest to publish what her sponsors want. Consequently, she is prone to conform the same dominant ideology as traditional media.

With this corporate overreach in mind, *Love Taza* appears to be a real-life version of the popular film, *The Truman Show* (Weir, 1998). In the movie, an entire city is artificially created for a reality television program, in which all the characters (except one) are actors, and everything is for sale. Like *Love Taza*, the made-for-T.V. world of the *Truman Show* is overwhelmingly positive with perfectly-groomed characters who smile too much and live in a picturesque setting. The reality show makes viewers yearn for a life as perfect as they see on television. The irony, of course, if such a life does not exist. It is manufactured for the commercial gain of a media corporation. While *The Truman Show* is an extreme example of creating an artificial reality for commercial gain,

it provides striking similarities to *Love Taza*. In the film, Truman Burbank, played by Jim Carrey, is born into reality TV. He is literally adopted by a media corporation and raised on live television in an alternate, simulated world. Everyone in his life is an actor. In the film, opponents of the television program argue that Truman is being exploited by the media owners and seek to set him free.

Like the actors who live alongside Truman, Josh and Naomi are willing participants in the artificial world they have created. Like Truman's fictitious wife, who is often asked by producers to spout rehearsed lines promoting household products, Naomi uses every opportunity for product placement, even family milestones like learning to walk (i.e. the previously mentioned Huggies partnership). The Davis children are like Truman, unsuspecting bystanders in a manufactured world. Josh and Naomi are respectful when writing about their children (they don't share embarrassing stories or any type of nudity or partial nudity); however, the identities and daily activities of their children have been explicitly shared with the online community from conception.

According to the data, 75% of the blog content includes images of the Davis children. An oppositional reading objects to the inclusion of images of children due to issues of exploitation, privacy, and corporate overreach. The online privacy of minors has been debated in many spheres especially with the rise of social media. As mentioned in the literature review, Morrison's 8-point axis of private vs. public blogs puts *Love Taza* in the least private category. Readers not only know the real names of each family member, they also know where they live, work, dine, and play. Dates of family milestones and birthdays are also openly shared. With online predators, identity thieves, child pornographers and more, what would motivate a well-educated, privileged family to

share their children's life in such a public way? Children sell. They are cute, funny, relatable, and unpredictable. As mentioned in the negotiated reading, children unlock an entire genre of marketing and advertising opportunities through toys, clothing, and other child-friendly products. The Davis' four children are a central focus of the blog. Without them, *Love Taza* would not be as successful, because it would not be as marketable. Thus, blogging has allowed for the commodification of the family.

In addition to exploiting minors for financial gain, *Love Taza* also serves, like many forms of mass media, to reemphasize the hegemonic ideals of white, male-dominated society. Like the *Truman Show*, this ideal family is white and financially successful (though the Davises are obviously much more wealthy than the Trumans), and follows the traditional family convention of being led by a mother and father in a heterosexual, monogamous relationship. For *Love Taza*, this conventional portrayal of the family meshes well with the blogging audience. Many have criticized blogging for not being an equal access form of communication. The "digital divide" keeps those without Internet access from viewing information and entertainment available online (Friedman, 2010; Eastin & LaRose, 2000). The digital divide also serves to reinforce the dominant ideology (hegemony), as those without access are mostly low-income minorities. Thus, there is a limited market for diversity in blogging, as both the writers and the readership are predominantly white. Pew research found that 60% of bloggers were white, reflecting overall internet usage trends which indicate that 70% of internet users are white (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). *Love Taza* is overwhelmingly white, despite the family living in one of the most diverse cities in the U.S. Naomi and her family are under no obligation to show diversity on their blog. However, the notion of the Davises being the "ideal family" says

something about the American dream – it is almost always white. Furthermore, if the Davises represent the ideal family, then it is also conventional (two heterosexual parents with children) and Christian. While many American families fall into these three categories (white, conventional, Christian), setting this family-type as the ideal standard reflects how this blog reinforces the dominant ideology still present in American culture.

## CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

### Limitations

While this thesis does provide an in-depth analysis of one family-lifestyle blog, the results cannot be generalized to all blogs within the genre. For a comprehensive analysis across the genre, multiple blogs would need to be studied. A similar quantitative framework to this analysis could easily be used for such a study. Time restrictions limited me to studying only the last five years of the blog. Further analysis could be conducted for earlier years with added questions about how content has changed over time.

### Future Research

This study has added to the collective research on blogging and new media by exploring a relatively unstudied genre. Furthermore, this thesis represents the continued impact and relevance of ideological criticism in understanding all types of media, especially new media. Based on the vast number of readers and followers and quality and quantity of corporate sponsors, more research should be conducted to determine how family lifestyle blogs affect readers' views about themselves and society.

### Conclusion

This quantitative analysis of the *Love Taza* blog has provided insight into what the blog contains, while the quantitative analysis explores the possible interpretations of the content by putting it in societal context. Generally, posts on *Love Taza* are about marriage and family, have a positive tone, include pictures of the children, and are sponsored, and/or contain affiliate links. Sponsored content is significantly related to topic, images of children, and reader engagement, indicating that nearly all aspects of the blog have been tailored to making a profit. A preferred reading of *Love Taza* assumes the

reader accepts the message as intended and views the Davis family as an ideal representation of American values and lifestyle. A negotiated reading considers the broader societal influences at play, and acknowledges the commercialization of the blog and the influence of hegemony. An oppositional reading rejects the notion that the Davis family is ideal and instead surmises that the family portrayed within the blog does not exist, but is merely a manifestation of corporate America's idea of the perfect family. These findings correlate with Hunter's (2016) analysis of mommy blogs. She found that readers often compared blogs to "television or other forms of fictional entertainment (p. 1316). Indicating not all readers are buying into the notion of authenticity. Furthermore, an oppositional reading considers the exploitation of the Davis children in pursuit of popularity and financial gain. This conclusion also aligns with Hunter's (2016) finding that bloggers are often found by their readers to be exploiting their children for monetary gain.

*Love Taza's* reach and potential societal influence should not be overlooked. Just as television, magazines, and even video games are studied to determine viewer effects, so should blogging be studied. While family-lifestyle blogs may seem like harmless online journals, the immense readership and plethora of corporate partnerships allows the writers of these platforms to reinforce hegemony and perpetuate the capitalistic ideals of society.

APPENDIX A - Codebook

<b>Variable Name</b>	<b>Variable Label</b>	<b>Values</b>
<b>ID</b>	Individual blog posts from sample, numbered chronologically	
<b>Year</b>	Year of post	1= 2013 2= 2014 3= 2015 4= 2016 5= 2017
<b>Sponsorship</b>	Post includes implicitly or explicitly sponsored content	0 = No 1 = Yes
<b>Topic</b>	The primary topic of the post	1 = marriage and family 2 = home decor 3 = family travel 4 = advertisement 5 = fashion and beauty 6 = dining out or cooking 7 = city living 8 = friendship 9 = contest or giveaway 10 = other
<b>Tone</b>	The tone of the post (assessed through word choice, topic and photos)	1 = positive 2 = neutral 3 = negative
<b>Images of Children</b>	Post includes photo/video of at least one of the Davis children.	0 = no 1 = yes
<b>Reader Engagement</b>	The total number of reader comments and likes on the post.	1 = 0-200 2 = 201-400 3 = 401-600 4 = 601- 800 5 = 801-1,000 6 = 1,001+
<b>Links</b>	Inclusion of links to affiliate website(s)	0 = no 1 = yes

## APPENDIX B Definitions for Coding

**Sponsorship:** The backing, supporting, or financing of an outside organization in exchange for publicity or other benefits. Sponsored posts will be coded as none, implicit, explicit. Sponsorship is defined as

0. *Not Sponsored:* Posts with content that is neither implicitly or explicitly sponsored by an outside organization
1. *Sponsored:* Posts with content that is clearly sponsored by an outside organization and the author has disclosed the sponsorship openly, and posts with content that appears to be sponsored by an outside organization due to persuasiveness to purchase a specific product or to support a specific cause, or due to the inclusion of links to another website(s), even if the author has not disclosed a sponsorship openly.

**Topic:** The dominant theme of the post based on the text and photos and/or videos. The primary topic in each post will be coded as follows:

1. *Marriage and family:* Posts where the primary topic is about marital relationships, family relationships, marriage and family milestones, life events, date nights, or family activities
2. *Home:* Posts where the primary topic is about apartment living or home décor
3. *Family Travel:* Posts about family vacations or day trips to destinations outside of New York City
4. *Advertisement:* Posts where the primary purpose is to advertise for an organization, or promote a cause, product, or person
5. *Fashion and beauty:* Posts where the primary topic is fashion or beauty related. These posts are primarily about makeup, hair, or clothing, etc.
6. *Food:* Posts where the primary topic is food or cuisine including recipes, home cooking, or eating out
7. *City living:* Posts where the primary topic is about living in New York City. This includes posts with tips or tricks, city recommendations, or general comments about living in New York City
8. *Friendship:* Posts where the primary topic is about friendships outside of family relationships. This includes girls' night, travel with friends, visiting friends, etc.
9. *Contest or giveaway:* Posts where the primary topic is a contest or giveaway for readers
10. *Other:* Explain in column

**Images of Children:** The photos and/or videos of the post include one or more of the Davis children. Images of Children will be coded as follows:

1. *Yes:* post includes photo/video of at least one of the Davis children
2. *No:* post does not include photo/video of at least one of the Davis children

## APPENDIX B (continued)

**Engagement:** Enter the total number of comments and likes on the post. Both numbers are included at the bottom of each post before the comments section. Add the number of comments to the number of “likes” to determine the final total.

1. *0-200* total comments and likes
2. *201-400* total comments and likes
3. *401-600* total comments and likes
4. *601-800* total comments and likes
5. *801-1,000* total comments and likes
6. *over 1,001* total comments and likes

**Links:** Links, also known as hyperlinks, redirect the viewer to another web page. The links category will be coded as follows:

1. *Yes:* post includes one or more links to an external website. This does not include internal links, which redirect the user to a previous blog post or to another page within the *Love Taza* website.
2. *No:* post does not include links to an external website.

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