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A Hot Wheeler's Heaven or Hell? A Rhetorical Analysis of the Hot Wheels Red Line Club Online Forums and How They Compare to Other Online Mediums

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Recommended Citation

Richens, Samuel, "A Hot Wheeler's Heaven or Hell? A Rhetorical Analysis of the Hot Wheels Red Line Club Online Forums and How They Compare to Other Online Mediums" (2021). *Fall Student Research Symposium 2021*. 26.

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A Hot Wheeler’s Heaven or Hell? A Rhetorical Analysis of the Hot Wheels Red Line Club Online Forums and How They Compare to Other Online Mediums

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Introduction

Hot Wheels is the #1 selling toy in history, and yet very little is known about its most popular club—an online discussion forum behind a paywall—and the people who are part of it.

What do Hot Wheels Red Line Club members think of the decision to make the club less exclusive?

These forums, despite being locked behind the exclusivity of a paywall, are similar in many ways to popular mainstream forums.



Methods

Ethnography: the researcher is a participant-observer of the Hot Wheels Red Line Club online forums.

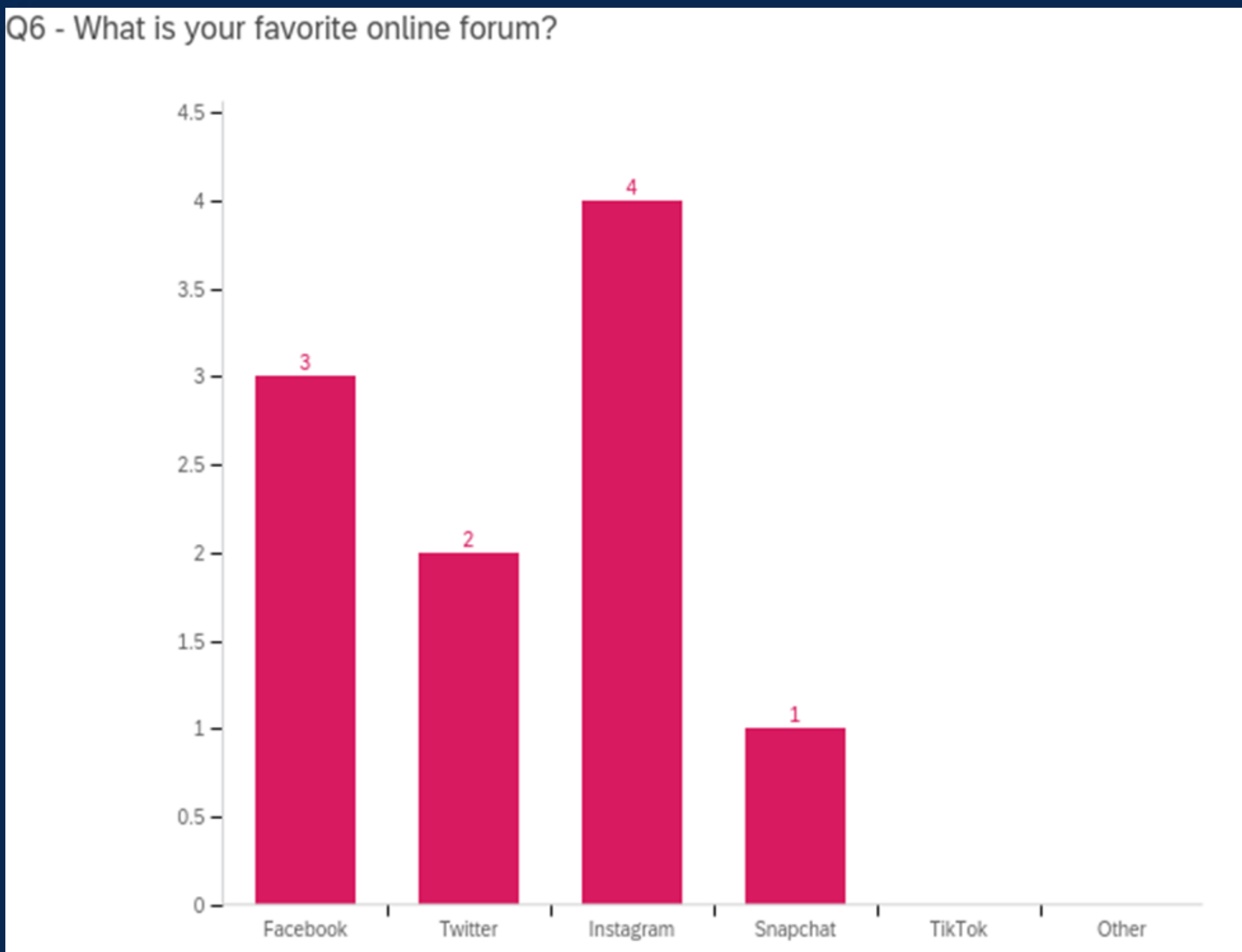
- ❖ Ethnographic observations revealed:
 - How the RLC members on the forums interact with each other
 - What they think of the unlimited membership change
 - The kinds of rhetoric that take place on the forums
- ❖ Qualtrics survey asked English majors about their experiences with online forums
- ❖ An interview was conducted with an expert in online forums.

Figure 1 – ‘69 Chevrolet Camaro SS



This exact model was up for sale on the day I made my ethnographic observations (field notes) for this project. A whopping 30,000 were made available to members to help accommodate the unlimited membership change.

Figure 2 – What are students’ favorite online forums?



This question was meant to ascertain students’ favorite online forums to frequent. Instagram is in the lead with Snapchat in last place.

Results

- The Red Line Club is very similar to other online forums
- Members are usually very respectful and enthusiastic
- Rhetoric and debate is somewhat limited to certain threads where it is viewed as acceptable by the admins
- All online forums have implied rules and are policed by the members as well as the admins
- Expert perspective: the barrier between the physical and digital world is becoming more permeable

Conclusion

- The club is very divided on the topic of the unlimited membership change.
- Red Line Club online forums have evolved in similar fashion to Reddit and Twitter.
- People on the RLC forums follow the same kinds of implied rules.
- These implied rules have seared themselves into our brains and manifest themselves in a conscious or subconscious manner.
- Perhaps the RLC forums are not so different as we once thought?

