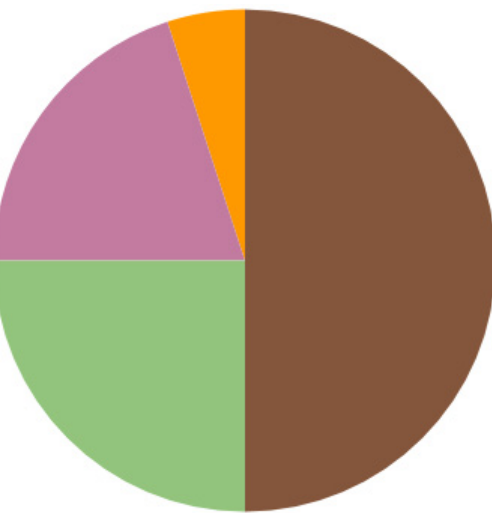


What's Your Opinion?

Last week we asked students for their favorite Halloween candy.

Out of 20 people who responded, here are the results:

- Chocolate (Reese's, Snickers, KitKat, M&Ms) - 10
- Sour Candy (Warheads, Nerds, Sour Patch Kids) - 5
- Fruity Candy (Skittles, Necco wafers, Smarties, Laffy Taffy) - 4
- Old Style (Candy corn, circus peanuts, wax coke bottles, Good & Plenty) - 1



- Chocolate
- Sour Candy
- Fruity Candy
- Old Style

Next Week's Poll:

Movie Moods

There are a large number of classic Halloween movie favorites, whether they be scary movies or just silly spooky flicks. What is your favorite movie to watch on Halloween?

Vote on The Herald's website (theherald.home.blog) to voice your opinion! Polls are also posted on The Herald's Instagram (@astateherald) on Mondays at 4 p.m. Results will be posted in next week's Herald.

Hong Kong: An Exercise in Futility

JOHN NORRIS

STAFF WRITER



John Norris is a senior English major from Sheridan.

In any discussion of Hong Kong, it is responsible to first warn readers of Hong Kong-itis. It is a disease that has become an epidemic over the past few months (most especially in America). Symptoms include coughing, sneezing, becoming an expert on the geopolitics of China and Hong Kong overnight,

and delusion.

Fortunately, I only have two of those symptoms, and therefore am in perfect health -- this clears me to confidently talk about the Hong Kong protests.

These protests, if you somehow haven't heard about them yet, have been going on for months now, and there is no end in sight (however, I see plenty of violence). What started out as opposition to an extradition bill has quickly morphed into the avatar of unrest.

For Beijing, this is about something far greater than blood or democracy: it is about money. While Hong Kong's economy is roughly 3% of mainland China's (down from 16% in 1997), Chinese banks held \$1.1 trillion in Hong Kong assets (as of 2018).

Capital flows like water in Hong Kong, and there are few international levees.

Furthermore, Hong Kong is the

preferred offshore center (and, therefore, point of access to foreign capital).

As China has a state capitalist system, an injury to the bottom line is a wound to the top brass. The U.S. sees this as a grand opportunity. Not to help, Hong Kong, of course, but to harm Beijing.

The proposed amendment to the 1992 Hong Kong Policy Act that would stop treating it as a separate customs area from the mainland would be a disaster.

Hong Kong's economy is not an independent entity as it might have once been; it is an incredibly efficient funnel for capital first and foremost. Hong Kong can not exist as it does without China or foreign capital. Both are necessary and neither seem sustainable.

Hong Kong, then, is in an impossible situation. It must either bite the hand that feeds it, roll over on its back to await a beating, or bite something that will bite back harder. Why, then, even

protest? Taking a step back, why even be inspired? Usually when the U.S. does something reckless to destabilize a situation, we label the ones affected as terrorists and secretly sell them weapons.

Still others are being more practically inspired by Hong Kong's exercise in futility. Indonesia, Catalonia, Chile, Lebanon, and Hati: these places are also experiencing mass protests -- some even explicitly stating their ties to Hong Kong.

While none of these have received as much coverage as Hong Kong (something I attribute to their lack of importance to the U.S.'s political interests), they are still happening, and people are still dying.

The fuel behind all of these movements is vague, perhaps purposefully so. Still, what they all seem to say is this: why live in futility when you can die in it?

"The Age of Suffocating Relatability"

ALITZA CABIBI-WILKIN

OPINION EDITOR



Alitza Cabibi-Wilkin is a sophomore music composition major from Hot Springs.

Advertising has been in every available medium since the dawn of business. When newspapers came about, businesses advertised there. When radios were invented, businesses came up with catchy jingles to capture the attention of consumers.

When television rose to popularity, businesses expanded to match the technology. And of course, with the growth of the internet, businesses have had a whole new platform through which to advertise.

There are the normal ads, of course, like the usual "play our game" or "buy our product" ads that appear as banner ads on websites or unskippable ads on YouTube. But in the past 10 years, brands have capitalized on the easiest and most insidious way to target consumers -- social media.

It started with Denny's and their official Tumblr account in the early 2010s. Tumblr has long been a haven for nonsensical, surrealist memes, but Denny's served up memes so strange they became a meme themselves.

Even upon opening their Tumblr page today, one can see imagery such as a bike with shock absorbers replaced with stalks of broccoli, a pair of pumps photoshopped to look like pumpkins, and a woman removing her human face to reveal a potato underneath.

Back then, branded social media mostly just meant throwing a brand name at any situation possible, like in 2014 when DiGiorno Pizza tried to capitalize on the attention given to the hashtag #WhyIStayed by tweeting "#WhyIStayed You had pizza."

Normally, this would just be annoying, but the hashtag was being exclusively used by survivors of domestic abuse to talk about their stories. DiGiorno did apologize for the blunder, but the amount of negative press was immediate and immense.

After Denny's, other brands quickly realized they could jump on the social media train and could bond with potential customers by pretending to be real people. KFC released several games, such as a creepy VR chicken-cooking tutorial and an over-the-top cutesy dating simulator.

Burger King and McDonald's got into a feud with Wendy's, who

recently released a tabletop game parodying "Dungeons and Dragons." SunnyD pretended to have depression, prompting other brands to express sympathy, and Little Debbie responded with a list of suicide prevention tips.

When it was just a few brands posting funny jokes, people laughed and joked about it. But when every brand tried to be Steve Buscemi in "30 Rock," carrying a skateboard and saying "How do you do, fellow teens?" people no longer felt engaged with, they just felt pandered to.

Consumers aren't unaware of the reality of branded marketing. Brand Twitter accounts aren't just interns with internet anymore; instead they

are backed by entire marketing teams. "It is straight up someone's job to make a sandwich shop seem more likeable. People used to be blacksmiths," Twitter user @BrandsSayingBae says. The idea that a board of people sat down and decided we needed a KFC dating simulator is not cute, or relatable, or in any way fun.

In the age of suffocating relatability, millennials have fought back with the only weapon we know how to use: memes (usually the one shown below). If brands want to dish out memes, they have to be willing to take them. But really, we'd rather if they just went silent.



Image courtesy of KnowYourMeme

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The Herald is printed every Wednesday during the semester, except during finals and holidays. Copies of The Herald are free.

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