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Case Study

Sequential Tart: A Unique and Successful Web Zine

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May 2005

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Abstract:

Sequential Tart (sequentialtart.com) is 1). A web zine about the comics industry, published by an eclectic band of women. 2). A publication dedicated to providing exclusive interviews, in-depth articles and news, while working towards raising the awareness of women's influence in the comics industry and other realms.

Sequential Tart is a web zine that has been active and on the Internet for over six years. This paper will discuss aspects of this zine that make it both successful and unique. To do so, this paper will look at history, competition or lack thereof, purpose, management and staff, content, public outreach, and funding. The paper will also look at Sequential Tart's ties to the growth of the US manga (Japanese comics) industry and how that shows a success of the aforementioned purposes.

The history will include the switch from bimonthly to monthly, layout changes, the addition of anime and manga, awards, and competitors. One of the most unique features is the management and staff since the zine is all women making up an editorial board of 13 members, staff of 21 members, and contributors of 27 members. Content includes, comics, movies/TV, Japanese animation, and Japanese manga (comics). It is a nonprofit zine funded through donations, banners/ads, and the Café Press store. All of the women work as volunteers. The ties to the growth of manga in the US include having had a section solely devoted to the Japanese animations and comics and close work with various companies importing the titles. Manga in the US are being read by about 60% females, causing American comic companies to take another look at female readership as a possibility. Since Sequential Tart has been active in this, it shows another success with Sequential Tart's goals and purpose.

Introduction:

Sequential Tart is a monthly webzine created, written, and run entirely by women. It is dedicated raising and furthering the awareness of women's influence in the comics industry and other realms. In its exploration and presentation of the comics industry, they provide interviews with creators, artists, writers, and other important figures in the field worldwide, as well as in-depth articles and reviews from Indy to mainstream material. While their focus is mainly on comics, they also cover popular culture aspects such as television series, movies, and books. They also have dedicated coverage in the ever-increasing field of anime and manga from Japan. Women play an important role, both as creators and fans, and this zine is making those contributions visible.

As the Internet continues to expand and become increasingly prevalent in our society, and all technological societies, people are looking to find their interests online. It often seems like there is a web site for everything. However, not all of these web sites are well informed or provide good information, others are not well organized or easy to navigate, and most are not updated frequently enough. Many suffer from being too narrow or broad in their coverage, and most are nothing more than "fan sites" of a given topic of interest, providing a very biased and shallow perspective (though some can be quite informative).

One source of reliable information on the Internet is the webzine. A zine (a contraction of the word "magazine") is a relatively small circulating, non-commercial publication. Some of the first zines were the science fiction fanzines of the 1930s, and zines gained popularity again in the 1970s with the punk rock movement. A webzine refers to such a publication that exists on the Internet. While many print magazines have

recently begun online versions they are not considered true webzines as they are still associated with a widely-circulated, commercial, print magazine. Zines are continuing to grow in popularity with zines on practically every topic and issue of interest. Many zines (and web sites in general) are short-lived. Some have existed for several years but oftentimes cannot claim to have been active and growing for the entirety of that existence. If a site or zine does not fill an informational need or niche, update often enough that it is not forgotten, or does not have a good connection with its readers, it is highly probable that people will lose interest and/or find another site. Six plus years is a long time for anything to survive on the Internet, and Sequential Tart has done more than survive; it has grown and expanded, becoming a successful webzine that people around the world read and enjoy on a monthly basis. There is not, nor has there ever been, a guide on how to create a webzine nor is there an example or explanation of what makes some webzines successful while others fail. This case study will examine various aspects of Sequential Tart to determine what makes it a successful webzine with the hope that other zines can look to it as a standard.

Review of Literature:

History:

"The founding members of Sequential Tart all met via an all-female mailing list which Steff Osborne managed via her Garth Ennis [Estrogen Brigade]" (MacDonald). Created in 1997, the GEEB drew a variety of women with a common interest in comics (among other things), especially those by creators like Garth Ennis that were not considered to be of interest to women readers. One topic that was frequently discussed was the field of comic book journalism and their disappointment with its narrow

reporting. The Comics Journal appealed to some but was often too limited in its coverage; others read Wizard, but were finding it to be "increasingly childish and carelessly misogynist[ic]" (O'Shea, 2003). These and other sources also failed to cover a wide enough spectrum of books to appease these women. The coverage on the Internet at that time was not much better; it was largely made up of news-only sites or sites dedicated to a specific comic or publisher (O'Shea, 2003). Those on the GEEB would voice complaints about how they hated being pigeon-holed; they seemed to be in a lose-lose situation. No one, especially men, thought that women read comics, and the women that did (i.e. Friends of Lulu) were very vocal in their efforts to tell women what to read and what not to read (Atchison, 2004).

Encouraged by the group's frustration at the lack of anything about what they liked or from a woman's point of view, Osborne suggested they create their own publication. This appealed to many of the group and they added their active support despite not having any previous involvement in the comics industry professionally. The name Sequential Tart was suggested as a play on the words "sequential art" (a.k.a. comics) and "tart" (referring to the fact that it would be entirely created and run by women). At the 1998, San Diego Comic-Con (SDCC) a handful of women armed with T-shirts, a domain name, no presence or influence in the industry and a single tape recorder, "launched themselves at the unsuspecting convention" (Rigby, 2003). There, they gathered the material for the first issue of Sequential Tart, which included interviews with Garth Ennis, Steve Dillon, Mark Millar, and Steve Gerber. That issue was launched in September 1998 by Steff Osborne, Laura DePuy, Lee Atchison, Karon Flage, Marcia

Allass, Christy Kallies, Barb Lien, Lauren Vega-Rasner, Katherine Keller, and Gina Dare.

The first two issues, September 1998, and November 1998, were the only bi-monthly issues. Beginning in January 1999, with their third issue, Sequential Tart changed to a monthly schedule. Updating bimonthly was not often enough to keep readers coming back; they could read the issue in a day or two and then two months would pass by wherein the reader most likely forgot to return. At this time, the webzine had no PR push, just word of mouth and random hits as people surfed online. The fast-paced flow of information on the Internet made it a necessity to update more often. The third issue also featured the first cover artist, Jim Lee (Atchison, 2004). In October 1999, the zine was given a more professional look which remains the current look and basic layout that the zine has today. The visual aesthetics are more pleasing, and it is more user-friendly and easy to navigate. A header bar was added with links to the various sections which were also accessible from the main page. Also added were a site map, contact page, and a link to the Tartsville Message Boards where creators, industry big-wigs, fans, and Tarts could meet and discuss common interests and the content of the current issue. The left side of the page had a column as well that contained links to the editorial, the masthead, press releases, the gallery, and links to other pages of interest and relevance.

February 2000, was the first issue to feature the Atsukamashii Onna (AO) section which was devoted to the coverage of Japanese anime (animation) and manga (comics). Anime was increasing in popularity exponentially, and its counterpart manga was making its presence known. Both had been read and watch in the US for several decades prior to

this, but usually with heavy editing and without being promoted as such; they were simply more cartoons and comics for kids. With the popularity of anime like SailorMoon DragonBall Z, and later Pokémon, children, teens, and adults turned to the Internet in search of information on these series and others as well as information on anime and manga in general. A glossary of Japanese terms was also created to assist readers in understanding some of the unfamiliar terms used in reviews, articles, and interviews in AO. The glossary has been updated several times, with additions made by three women, as certain terms become more commonplace among fans and those writing the content and new terms appearing with the increasing influx of Japanese anime and manga.

Later in 2000, Sequential Tart received an Eagle Award for Favourite Fan-organised Comic Related Website. The Eagle Award, named after a much-loved British weekly comic, was created by Richard Burton and Michael Conroy for British comics fans in 1976. The award had many divisions both national and international recognizing many aspects in the comics industry (Hahn, Eagle, 2004). In 2001, Sequential Tart was nominated for a Lulu Award. The Friends of Lulu is an advocacy organization supporting comic books for women and women comic book creators. They began the Lulu Awards in 1997 and have awards for Female Cartoonists Hall of Fame, Lulu of the Year, Kimberly A. Yale Award for Best New Talent, and Women of Distinction Award (Hahn, Lulu, 2004). The Lulu Awards are intended to bring attention to female creators and to women and reader-friendly work in the comics industry from both past and present. In addition to this prestigious nomination, Sequential Tart was selected as a fanzine net link by Stewart Brower, About.com's guide to comic book collecting, saying "The best comic

'zine written entirely by women just happens to be one of the best comic 'zines period" (Media Kit).

Through much of 2001, and 2002, Sequential Tart hosted bi-weekly chats with readers, fans, and various special guests which helped to spread and strengthen Sequential Tart's readership and popularity. December 2003, saw the last issue with the AO section. In four years, anime and manga had become main-stream enough to incorporate the manga into the Features section with American comics and the anime into the Culture Vultures section. Sequential Tart has also had a booth at two major comic book conventions: Megacon in February 2002, and SDCC in August 2003. The booths were good publicity for the zine as well as a way for the women of Sequential Tart to reach out to men and women of all ages who may or may not have read comics. Today, the zine is doing better than ever, with an active message board, Tartsville, and a wide variety of articles, interviews, and reviews.

Sequential Tart does not have any direct competition. There is not another publication dedicated to providing interviews, articles, reviews, and news with regard to comics, anime, and pop culture while working towards raising the awareness of women's influence in the comics industry and other realms. Sequential Tart is an online magazine. Publications like Pulse, Newsarama, and CBR (Comic Book Resources) are strictly news sites; they have other features, but in comparison to Sequential Tart, they are "like the daily news" (Contino, 2004). They are also for profit whereas Sequential Tart is nonprofit. Sequential Tart is often compared to or mentioned with Friends of Lulu. Friends of Lulu is an advocacy organization not a publication. Both sites strive to further women in the comics industry, but Friends of Lulu focuses on comics specifically by and

for women while Sequential Tart covers comics by men and women for men and women, including children's comics as well as pornographic and homosexual subject matter, in an attempt to raise consciousness of women's influence in all aspects of comics.

Other zines that that could be compared include Ninth Art, Pop Image, the now-defunct Slush Factory, and the now-defunct Savant – all of which are/were also not for profit/business. Ninth Art is an online journal covering comics in a more academic sense and is updated every Monday. Pop Image is a zine covering comics and includes its own web based comic, Rust. The Slush Factory was an online magazine dedicated to all things pop culture including comics, and Savant was a weekly online magazine covering comics with an activist bent. None of these four zines can truly be compared to Sequential Tart. Even though they all covered comics, each has or had a different agenda and did not cover comics or the industry in the same way or with the same information. It is hard to say why Slush Factory and Savant became obsolete while the others, including Sequential Tart, still exist. Perhaps the sites became too expensive to maintain, perhaps there was a lack of writers and editors, perhaps there were technical difficulties, or perhaps they were covering too broad a scope and thus did not appeal to a specific audience that would continue to return for additional updates. The fact that Sequential Tart has a unique niche in the world of comics and publications (online or print) has most likely contributed to its success.

Purpose:

The primary purpose for Sequential Tart has always been "to provide a platform for women to talk about comics, and to provide a magazine that will have content to

appeal across as broad a spectrum of new or established comics readers as possible, regardless of age, gender, sexuality, or individual taste" (MacDonald, 2003). Sequential Tart tries to provide something for everyone without expecting everyone to read everything. They seek to provide a diversity of comics, creators, and pop culture coverage that will attract readers, provide them with the information they were seeking as well as new and/or unusual things that might peak their interest. For several years, even decades, there have been misapprehensions and misunderstandings about female comics readers, and Sequential Tart is striving to change those perceptions. Often, female readers are ignored, being thought not to exist at all, and when it is acknowledged that they exist, it is with rather unfounded or baffling stereotypes of what they would like, dislike, and read. The women of Sequential Tart want to inform the comics industry and the world that there is a female audience for comics that is diverse in their interests with a large disposable income, and while that audience may be smaller than the male audience, women do make up half the population so to ignore them or limit their selection is poor business sense in any industry including the comics industry (MacDonald, 2003).

Sequential Tart was not created expressly to promote female comics creators; that role is filled by Friends of Lulu in the US and Fanny in the UK. Sequential Tart was not created to cater solely to women readers, nor was it created to cater to a specific age group. Women do not read comics (or other media) that are only by women or about women. Women, like men, read and enjoy thrillers, action, romance, adventure, horror, historical fictions, pornography, science-fiction, and so forth. There is no limit on what women like, read, or create. Part of their mission is to "raise the awareness of women in comics", and "women in comics" is not restricted in its definition of what that

encompasses. Sequential Tart was created to "provide a forum for women who read comics to gather and discuss, and to be a vocal presence for female readers online" (Allass, 1999).

No other web zine, print magazine, or news source has this same goal. Sequential Tart's purpose alone makes it unique in the world. With this purpose in mind, the women of Sequential Tart create powerful issues, full of diversity.

Method:

This case study consists of information gathered from personal observations, personal interviews, and archival information. Having worked for Sequential Tart myself for a few years, I am a participant in the process under study here. I have stepped back from my involvement in it, in order to analyze the zine with as little bias as possible. In the fall of 2004, I approached the editors and head staff of Sequential Tart to explain my interest in examining their webzine. The first contacts and exchanges of information were made via e-mail. Marcia Allass (Editor-in-Chief/Assistant Columns Editor) provided links to much of the archived information I needed including interviews with herself and early Sequential Tart issues and editorials. I inquired about Sequential Tart's competitors, direct and indirect, whereupon Lee Atchison (Webmistress/Assistant Features Editor) and Jennifer Contino (Sales and Media Relations Manager) provided names of other zines, news sites, etc. and briefly explained that none of them were direct competition as well as how they related to Sequential Tart or each other. In response to my questions regarding funding, Karon Flage (Business Manager/Columns Editor) provided information that addressed cost, Café Press revenue, banner ads, and donations monetary and comics.

In November 2004, I conducted interviews with Atchison and Contino via AOL Instant Messenger. These interviews were scheduled and held at times convenient for them. The interviews addressed history of Sequential Tart, specific dates for changes to the zine, and particular sections within the zine. All of the information from the emails and interviews was recorded and saved for later use. Throughout the early part of the spring of 2005, I frequented the archival sites and interviews provided by Allass and searched for related information on the Internet. I kept notes on the information gathered from these sites, and later organized the information chronologically and topically.

Findings:

Management and Staff:

One of the most unique features of Sequential Tart is the management and staff. The zine began with ten enthusiastic women and has grown in quantity, and thus diversity, making for a better quality as well. It has also remained an all-female staff which has endeared it to many readers and to some creators and business connections that are interested in what this eclectic group of women has to say about their comics and the many aspects of the industry. Sequential Tart is also a safe haven for many women; a place where women, whether long-time comic fans, new readers, and new and veteran creators can come to voice their opinions and receive support without fear of being judged by their gender. Much of society is male-dominated (at least in the US), and the comics industry is an extreme example. There have been too many instances of a woman's point-of-view, reasoning, arguments, and so forth, being "invalidated" by men on some issue of gender, typically the fact that her gender is not male, that is suddenly if not randomly brought into the conversation. "I don't think our voice would be very

unique if more women were able to speak up about comics or in comic-related settings" (Atchison, 2000).

Currently, Sequential Tart has an editorial board of 13 members, 21 staff writers, and 27 contributors. Writers fall into staff and contributors with staff writers required to make an active contribution to the creation of each and every issue of the zine, while contributors are under no commitment to provide assistance for every issue and can contribute when and as they have time. Active contributions can be through providing content, in an editing/proofing capacity, or both. Writers are free to move between the two classifications so long as they keep head editors aware of their status so no one is waiting on expected help from them if they are currently a contributor only, and so editors know who is available for them to call upon. It also allows for breaks which are often necessary when other aspects of the writers' lives come into play like paying jobs, school, and family. Each section of the zine has an editor and an assistant editor. Their job is to manage that section by collecting content, editing and coding. Sequential Tart also has editorial-level staff including a webmistress, board administrators, a sales manager, image editor, and art director among other positions (MacDonald, 2003).

Any woman is eligible to write for Sequential Tart so long as she is a comics reader which includes every form of sequential art whether its comic strips, comic books, manga, bande dessinee (French comics), etc. No previous experience in the comics industry or with web sites or publications is necessary – after all, this was a zine begun by women with little to know professional experience in the industry. New writers are welcome and the contributors and staff writers are "always positively encouraged to step forward and speak their minds about comics" (MacDonald, 2003).

Since the web zine is still running strong more than six years after it began, it should be safe to assume that the best way to accomplish the goal of raising the awareness of women's influence in the comics industry to for women to be active and vocal. The women of Sequential Tart are constantly voicing their opinions and interests through their articles, reviews, and interview choices. The number and diversity of creators and companies that want Sequential Tart to cover their material has grown substantially over the years with some excellent working relationships developing. They attend cons nationwide in America, and those that live overseas attend cons in their countries like Britain and Japan. They are often there with press pass in hand, actively seeking interviews and unique aspects to bring Sequential Tart's readers and have twice manned a booth at a convention to spread Sequential Tart's name, suggest and hand out good reads, and further the awareness of women in the industry which is strengthened by their presence alone. They frequent their own Tartsville Message Boards to talk and discuss with fans, readers, and peers. They can be contacted via e-mail and are always ready to respond to questions, concerns, and comments either privately or publicly, if warranted, in their column "Going Postal". Each writer for Sequential Tart has her own voice, and even when they say different things they all come together to say "I am a woman in the comics industry", and they are also showing various comics companies they exist with the power of their wallet and the ability to buy or not buy certain titles regardless of whether or not they are aimed at women readers.

Content:

The specific subject matter varies from month to month, but the basic content backbone remains constant. It is this content that readers come to expect; it's what keeps

them coming back and what helps spread the word about this publication. Sequential Tart always provides interviews, articles, and reviews. Interviews cover a wide range including creators, artists, writers, and company representatives. Their articles and reviews are a mixture of past, present, and upcoming greats (and not-so-greats). In addition to comics, Sequential Tart provides coverage of popular culture aspects including books, movies, and television. Since 2000, there has also been plenty of coverage in the form of articles, interviews, and reviews in the field of anime and manga. The subject matter ranges from comics and media suitable for children to X-rated material. Since the writers for Sequential Tart are such an eclectic group, the content is very diverse. The reviews section gets special attention at Sequential Tart (as it does at many comics web sites) because that is their opportunity to broaden the horizons of their readers. A reader who agrees with a reviewer on the points they make in their review of a title the reader already knows and/or likes may be encouraged to try reading unfamiliar comics that the reviewer suggests. Sequential Tart tries to review a wide array of material in order to showcase things that may not make it to every retail store or into the general awareness of what's out there to read.

Each issue is a group effort, with each writer's preferences and interests being presented to the public as well as creators, series, and other subject matter previously unknown. The zine is updated on the first of every month, but to spread the word, and remind readers to check go back, takes a good public outreach system.

Public Outreach:

When Sequential Tart first started, there were not any big press release pushes. All they had was word of mouth - literally and over the Internet (Contino, 2004). Word of

mouth is still used, but now the magazine has a much more organized PR. Every month, after the new issue has gone live, a press release of the content is posted far and wide by Sequential Tart writers on e-mails, forums, blogs, and more. The readers, creators, company representatives, etc. also spread the word. When readers enjoy something on Sequential Tart, they tell their friends to check it out; when creators get good coverage they suggest Sequential Tart to their creator and other industry friends; and when companies get good coverage they often use quotes from Sequential Tart's reviews on their products which spreads to the consumer who may or may not know anything about online zines covering the things they like. According to Contino and the stats page kept by the zine, the number of page hits per month when Sequential Tart first started was very low – around 10,000 per month. Today, those numbers have risen to an incredible 200,000 (approximately) with around 10,000 per day (Contino, 2004). Page hits provide information about the number of visitors to each page; the more page hits, the more interest there is in that site. Compared to related news and comic sites on the Internet, 200,000 hits per month is very high – double or triple average sites. The numbers speak for themselves, illustrating how successful the PR push is.

To try and reach a larger audience, Sequential Tart has had a booth at two different comic book conventions. The women of Sequential Tart want to inform the comic book readers and the non-comic book readers alike of what is actually available in the medium of comics. It has been observed by several at Sequential Tart that there are always numerous people at conventions who only there because a loved one dragged them along and not because they have any standing interest in the subject matter of the given convention themselves. They are usually familiar with only the titles their loved

ones are interested in and are ignorant of the plethora of other titles to choose from. There are also those who attend to meet famous people and other pop culture elements.

Sequential Tart is reaching out to these people to show them that there is a remarkably large variety of material out there and that many pop culture interests have comic book counterparts. Sequential Tart used two main tools for outreach at these conventions. The first was the Recommended Reading Lists, compiled by genre (Romance, Action/Adventure, Fantasy etc.), and the second was by giving away free comic books that had been donated by creators. By using those tools, Sequential Tart was able to show existing readers new works and new readers good titles to start with (MacDonald).

Funding:

All basic operating costs of Sequential Tart are covered through the sale of Sequential Tart merchandise through their Café Press store and with what they make from banner ads. However, the costs are minimal. Lee Atchison, the webmistress, owns the server and the hosting company used by Sequential Tart, and the basic Internet operating costs are under \$200 a year. The only other large operating cost Sequential Tart has is the post office box they maintain for \$160 a year (Flage). The zine is not graphics intensive and does not host any large downloads so there is no need for a larger, more expensive Internet pipeline.

The Café Press store offers T-shirts, sweatshirts, mugs, mouse pads, lunchboxes, tote bags, BBQ aprons and more featuring the cover art of Sequential Tart's issues; it also offers the Sequential Tart logo on all of those options and more. Sequential Tart has kept their prices lower than some other Café Press stores and specialty shops, preferring to have people wear the covers and act as advertising than make money from them. The

store brings in a little over \$100 annually. Banner ads, on the other hand, vary but bring in roughly \$500 annually (Flage, 2005). Banners are placed at the bottom of every page so they are not distracting to the reader nor do they draw the initial attention to a page away from the content. They are the standard dimensions of 468 x 60, which is a common size used on the Internet. Banners may be static or animated but must not exceed a file size 20K, again relatively common online. If an ad's content conflicts with the mission of Sequential Tart, they reserve the right to refuse such an ad. For the most part, advertisers come to Sequential Tart wanting to put their banner ads on the zine. There have been occasions, especially early on, where Sequential Tart sought out advertisers and publicized the need for ads, but they have since had to limit the percentage of ads any one advertiser may buy per month (Flage, 2005). That is a testimonial to the success and popularity of the webzine that various advertisers compete to have their ads on Sequential Tart.

Donations are rarely asked for, but are always accepted. Donations were requested to fund the Sequential Tart booth at the 2003, SDCC. Donations consisted of money to cover the cost as well as comics to hand out. The most important thing Sequential Tart needs in order to function is time and dedicated from its staff. All of the workers from Editor-in Chief to the non-regular contributor work as volunteers; they are not paid or compensated for the time, energy, and effort they put into the zine every month. Sequential Tart uses its press status to get press passes to conventions and some creators and companies send free review copies to the zine, but other than that, the writers of Sequential Tart support it out of pocket. When they attend conventions or other events they pay for travel, lodging, entry fees, etc. themselves. Many of the comics,

anime, movies, etc. are bought by each individual reviewer for which there is no compensation. Since the work is done by volunteers, and other costs are a minimum and easily covered, Sequential Tart has not had to struggle financially to survive. Without that to worry about, they can focus on the success of their zine and goals.

Ties to Manga Growth:

One area that has recently grown is the manga industry. Since February 2002, Sequential Tart has been actively covering manga as a new medium for women readers. Sequential Tart's Atsukamashii Onna section, launched in February 2002, was devoted solely to Japanese anime and manga. They were quick to form good relations with the companies importing and translating the manga so that the zine could offer interviews with manga-ka (Japanese comic book creators) as well as more informed articles, news, and reviews. News articles, the manga companies themselves, and fan sites report that more than half the readers of manga in the US are female, and the sales of manga are increasing exponentially every year. This trend is hard to ignore; many American comic companies have re-evaluated their marketing tactics, art styles, and genres as they begin to seriously realize that women (who make up half the population), do indeed read comic books.

In December 2003, the AO section was dissolved because anime and manga had become so popular that they could be fully integrated into the zine's regular coverage of comics and pop culture. The manga covered by Sequential Tart range as vastly as American comics, from those suitable for children to X-rated. Manga also comes in a variety of genres which appeal to females specifically, whereas, until very recently (i.e. since the growth of manga), American comics did not. Sequential Tart was one of, if not

the first zine, news source, etc. to cover manga alongside American comics. Sequential Tart realized that women were enjoying and would enjoy reading manga, and that manga offered a large variety of subject matter, so the zine supported and promoted manga with force. Along with interviews, articles, and reviews, bi-weekly chats were hosted by Sequential Tart where fans could come and ask questions of those involved with manga and anime in the US. The influx of manga has not only increased women readership of sequential art, it has made American comic companies cater more to women, and Sequential Tart played an instrumental part.

While manga (and anime) is an off-shoot of sorts for Sequential Tart (often having news sites and publications dedicated solely to anime and/or manga) it is a form of sequential art, and, more importantly, it is a form that women are actively supporting and being vocal about. Manga have just as much diversity as American comics and since women are voraciously reading them, it makes sense for Sequential Tart to support manga and to reference it to American companies as a way to show them that there are indeed women comics readers and that they enjoy many different types of stories. Thus, it has widened Sequential Tart's influence and niche while keeping it unique, bringing Sequential Tart that much closer to their goal of raising the awareness of women in the industry.

Discussion and Conclusions:

This paper has dissected the history, purpose, management and staff, content, public outreach, funding, and manga relations of Sequential Tart in order to better understand why and how this web zine has been so successful. One of the main reasons for its success is that there is nothing else like it; it is truly unique in the world of comics,

zines, and news sources. Sequential Tart strives to raise the awareness of women in the comics' industry, and every month they succeed a little more when a new issue becomes live and they will continue to succeed due to their diversity, enthusiasm, and dedication as evidenced in this paper.

Many zines are short-lived, and few if any can claim both the longevity and the active and growing status of Sequential Tart. It is the goal of this case study to examine Sequential Tart, to learn why it has been so successful in this new and up-coming field of journalism. With no existing guide for online publications, it is hopeful that other zines and those looking to start their own zine can look to it as a reference for ways to become unique and to fill a specific niche. It is not the goal of this study to have others imitate Sequential Tart in its entirety, but to learn from the information presented here. Any zine or online site needs to be something of interest to its creator, its writers, and to a sizeable enough group of people in general and should be directed for a specific audience. It should have something about it that makes it unique – a reason to choose to read that publication rather than another. It should be well organized and staffed with a regular update schedule, and should above all be user-friendly.

Since webzines are becoming increasingly common, it would be interesting to someday study the historical connection to and evolution from print magazines and fanzines as well as competition between print zines and webzines. This case study is somewhat weak in addressing competition between Sequential Tart and other webzines and online publications, but that is mainly because of a lack of direct competition for the same audience; there is nothing to compare Sequential Tart to or to compare to Sequential Tart. Perhaps after a few more years there might be something closer than

anything presented in this study, but with Sequential Tart holding such a unique niche, it is doubtful that a direct comparison will ever be made. The study does show the determination and drive of the women that founded and manage Sequential Tart. Without those aspects, it would not be the success it is, even with its uniqueness in the world of comics and online publications.

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