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COLLEGE STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

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Abstract

This research investigated brand-consumer relationships on social media sites, Facebook and Twitter, among U.S. college students. Understanding how college students perceive social media marketing and how they interact with brands' social media pages allowed the development of suggestions for using social media as a marketing tool.

A mixed methodological approach involving the use of qualitative (focus groups) and quantitative (survey questionnaire) techniques was used. The initial exploratory focus group research informed the development of the survey questionnaire administered to 209 students at a large northeastern university. The results show significant managerial implications for brand marketing strategies. Findings include differences between use of Facebook and Twitter as brand communication platforms in terms of benefits for users and for brands, and their respective predictors.

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Introduction

I. The Emergence of the Major Social Media Sites

In 2000, social media sites emerged as a new method of online communication. Social media sites are “forms of electronic communication (as websites for social networking and blogging) through which users create their own online profiles to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content” (Edosomwan 1). The term “social networking” goes hand-in-hand with the term “social media,” as social media sites provide platforms where people can network with friends, family and peers online, making it easier to share information and keep in touch. Social media sites also allow individuals to connect with companies, brands and celebrities. In 2001, websites like Wikipedia and Friendster were introduced, but it was not until 2003 and 2004, when websites like Facebook surfaced, that social media started to gain mass popularity.

Facebook

Facebook was created in 2004 as a social networking site for college students, but has since grown to be a site for anyone over the age of 13. After registering for a Facebook account, users can create personal profiles, add users as “friends,” join groups, send instant messages, post pictures and videos, and write on users’ “walls.” Initially, most users belonged to a young demographic, but since then it has expanded to target an older audience as well as companies, organizations, celebrities and brands. As of 2010, Facebook had 500 million users (Edosomwan 82). As of 2009, 57 percent of the top 500 retailers had a presence on Facebook (Kunz 3).

Twitter

When Twitter was created in 2006, it opened new doors for social media with its innovative microblogging format. By creating a Twitter account, users can type small status entries of up to 140 characters that can be read by all users and replied to by anyone who “follows” them. Users can also

read millions of tweets from other users and “follow” those that they like. With microblogging, users can also condense and post pictures, videos and other websites to their tweets. Users range from popular brands, Fortune-500 companies and nonprofit agencies, to students, parents and celebrities. After creating a Twitter profile, users can “follow” friends, celebrities, and companies and read tweets that they post. Celebrities, brands and citizens gravitated towards Twitter, and it has become a cultural phenomenon. In 2009, 19 percent of U.S. Internet users used Twitter and it has only increased since then.

Current uses of Facebook and Twitter diverged from solely acting as a platform to connect with friends to influencing other areas of life. Facebook and Twitter have changed the practice of media relations, allowed for faster and easier communication between people, created alternative news outlets, helped update communities in times of disaster, acted as an emergency communication method, provided a platform for civic and political engagement, and led to a new method of brand marketing and communication.

II. Social Media as a Platform for Increased Communication

Social media also provides new opportunities for communication between individuals and between groups. Groups can be formed online for personal and professional discussion, and people all over the world can be located online. Social media offers tools to communicate with people despite constraints of geography, time and cost (Anderson 1). Social media sites enable online communication and “lower the barriers of face-to-face interaction,” allowing users to communicate more frequently, more easily and without limitations (DeAndrea 1). Social media platforms provide a whole new dynamic to human interaction.

III. Social Media as a Platform for Media Relations

Social media is now used for more than socializing, networking and sharing information with peers. Social media provides new, and sometimes more efficient, opportunities for journalists to interact with public relations and marketing professionals. According to Waters, “traditional media relations strategies are shifting to practices that are more relevant to a social media environment” (Waters 241). Analysis found that journalists are no longer “passively receiving news releases and media kits from practitioners wanting to get publicity for their organization. Instead, journalists are throwing their own needs at practitioners through social media outlets” (260).

In 2006, a new form of news release developed based on the popularity of social media. Instead of using traditional media strategies such as news releases and media kit distribution, many companies are using social media to spread information to a larger audience in a shorter amount of time. Many communications professionals are using social media sites to publish news releases embedded with photos, audio clips, videos, and links to microblog and blog posts. “The social media news release is a vehicle to increase the discovery rates of the media release via search engines, and to gain traction with bloggers and other social media outlets who want quick, compressed details and information from organization” (Waters 247). This new style of news release allows users to receive information quickly and interact with content presented by companies.

IV. Social Media as a News Dissemination Environment

Social media has also become an effective way to educate people about the latest news. Previously, most people used television, newspapers and news sites on the Internet to get updates on local and national events. But, with the rise of social media, individuals and organizations can constantly update citizens on the latest news. U.S. citizens now look to their social media accounts to

learn what is important in the world (How 11). Because of the constant updates on social media sites, users can learn what is going on instantaneously.

V. Social Media as a Platform for Seeking Emergency Help

Since Hurricane Katrina in 2005, social media has been unintentionally used as a new outlet for people to seek out help during emergencies. According to Gail McGovern, president and CEO of the American Red Cross, “When phone lines are down or the 911 system is overwhelmed, we know that people will be persistent in their quest for help and use social media for that purpose” (Americans 1). Macon Phillips, special assistant to the President and director of new media for the White House, saw how distressed victims resorted to social media during Hurricane Katrina to seek help for themselves and for their families (American Red Cross 1).

According to a survey of 1058 adults conducted by the American Red Cross, one in five adults said they would try to contact responders through digital means such as social media (1). Furthermore, “44 percent said they would ask other people in their social network to contact authorities, 35 percent said they would request for help directly on a response agency’s Facebook page, and 28 percent said they would send direct Twitter messages to responders” (1).

Wendy Harman, social media director for the American Red Cross, recently commented: “I didn’t realize these tools were going to be used for this. All of these major events keep happening, as will happen, and I think just more and more we’re seeing people using social media for practical, life-saving purposes” (Schiller 1).

VI. Social Media as a Tool to Provide Disaster Updates

Social media has also affected the way the public is notified about disasters. Tucker says that

Twitter and Facebook “have become the latest tools in the public health and disaster preparedness fields, in part because they allow officials to reach a large number of people quickly with important information” (Tucker 1). These techniques were used during January 2010’s earthquake in Haiti, when rescue workers and survivors used social media websites to communicate (FEMA 1). According to a recent study, “Followed by television and local radio, the internet is the third most popular way for people to gather emergency information with 18 percent of both the general and online population specially using Facebook for that purpose” (More 1). The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) plans to largely implement social media in their disaster response strategy by sharing data on their social media sites. Social media is becoming important in organizations’ abilities to momentarily update the world on rapidly changing information, such as death tolls.

VII. Social Media as a Platform for Civic and Political Engagement

Social media has also had an effect on Americans’ civic engagement and interest in politics. According to a study from the Pew Research Center, 35 percent of all social networking users took to these sites during the 2010 election season to get involved or get information on the campaign, and 21 percent of all online adults used social networking sites to get updates on the 2010 election (Smith 3). Social media can help users discover which candidates their friends voted for, get candidate and campaign information, post content related to the campaign, sign up as a friend of a candidate or group involved in the campaign, and take part in political groups or causes.

VIII. Social Media as a Tool for Brand and Corporate Communication

In the 21st century, where the rapid transferring of information is the norm and people are constantly interacting with others on their social media outlets, brands must keep up with the most

current public relations and marketing techniques in order to stay relevant and in the forefront of consumers' minds. Brands must constantly adapt to new technologies to continue advertising to their target publics. In the past decade, social media has emerged as a crucial platform for companies to use in their public relations and marketing strategies (Brands 2011; Kunz 2011; Lewis 2010; Stelzner 2010).

Social media has had a tremendous impact on the world of marketing, advertising and public relations. Social media outlets have made different areas of communications such as advertising, marketing, public relations, and promotions become much more integrated. A 2010 survey showed that 91 percent of businesses said they were using social media for marketing practices (Stelzner). Furthermore, approximately three-fourths of the Top 500 retailers had a presence on at least one social network by early April 2009 (Kunz 3).

Brands are using social media to accomplish objectives that would have previously been costly, such as promoting a new product to a large audience, which often reallocates their overall spending. It is predicted that "advertising dollars will be steadily shifting away from traditional advertising to social media" (Lewis 3). Companies use social media as an innovative platform to connect with consumers in a way that is not available in traditional marketing techniques. These businesses attributed a rise in search engine rankings, greater brand exposure and reduced marketing expenses to their social media marketing (Stelzner).

Since the development of social media marketing, a large percentage of young consumers have deflected their attention away from traditional advertising, forcing companies to integrate social media campaigns into their typical marketing schemes. These outlets are successful because they act as "virtual worlds" where consumers can use their profiles to connect with their favorite companies and brands. According to Lewis, "the consumer is now creating his/her own sales experience" (Lewis 5).

Social media is important for brands because it allows consumers to feel a more personal and

intimate connection with the brand. This drives more consumers to purchase products, creates more buzz and consumer interest about the brand, and sparks an interactive relationship. According to Lewis, “The interactive nature of these tools has transformed media messages from one-way communication to facilitating a dialogue” (1). This access to interactive dialogue allows brands to gain a presence on social media, reach a wide consumer base, and connect with consumers in a more personal way in which they have never been able to do before. Allowing consumers to “join the conversation” replaces typical advertising strategies of delivering one-way messages and encourages consumers to interact with companies.

Social media users are increasingly uploading content and interacting with brands on social media sites (Harris 24). This newfound relationship between consumers and brands founded on social media sites is referred to as “sustained engagement” (1). Lewis said, “engagement with customers and ‘joining the conversation’ has replaced former objectives of exposure and delivering one-way messages” (Lewis 5). According to a recent study, “customers respond more favorably to marketing when they have control. Consumers are happier being a part of community, rather than the target of a marketing campaign” (Kunz 1). This new goal of creating an ongoing, mutually beneficial interaction with consumers redirects the objectives of many brands’ advertising, public relations and marketing departments.

Popular companies such as L’Oreal created an online presence by reaching out to their target demographic on a variety of social media platforms. “It became clear that social media was something needed to expand to a priority if we wanted to reach younger audiences who we had problems bringing to our website” said Rachael Johnson, assistant vice president of Web, CRM and e-commerce for L’Oreal Paris (Brands 1). L’Oreal implemented a social media campaign with the goal of sparking consumer interest and driving consumers to the online and retail stores. They created a blog and

published beauty videos that connected to their Facebook and Twitter accounts, reached out to beauty experts and consumers on all online communities, and integrated their Web site activity with their traditional marketing and social media to give the user a more “holistic” experience (2). L’Oreal shares reviews, question-and-answer sessions, backstage videos, polls, beauty diagnostics, and special offers on its social media sites, contributing to a growing relationship between the company and its customers that cannot be achieved through traditional advertising. Since implementing and promoting their social media strategy, L’Oreal’s views on Facebook and Twitter have increased.

Kate Foster, vice president of global marketing and communications at Juicy Couture said, “Our customer wants to participate in our brands. She wants to interact with the brand, and she’ll go that extra mile to share her experiences with others” (1). Foster explained that brands use social media to “spark consumer interest by telling compelling stories” (1). Brands can use social media to drive consumers to their websites and online stores. Interactive campaigns like this are effective when targeted to young people who are technologically savvy and absorbed in social media. “It’s about creating a universe of branded conversation across every consumer touch point” (1). Ultimately, social media acts as a platform for ongoing conversation between consumers and brands.

IX. Social Media as a Tool for Targeting the Young Demographic

Studies show that the age group that is most involved in social media is young adults 18-24, also known as adults of the Millennial generation. According to researchers from the Pew Research Center’s Internet and The American Life Project, “experts and stakeholders said the Millennial generation will lead society into a new world of personal disclosure and information-sharing using new media” (Anderson 2). These experts said the communications patterns that ““digital natives’ have already embraced through their use of social networking technology and other social technology tools will carry

forward even as Millennials age” (2). Additionally, data showed that young adults use social networking sites over 20 percent more than all other adults” (Main Report 3).

More specifically, college students are extremely active on social media (Lewis 1). 86 percent of college students use social networking sites (Smith 2). College students, ages 18-22, are heavily reliant on social media websites in their everyday lives, using Facebook and Twitter for networking with friends and family, gathering news and information, and accessing entertainment. According to Lewis, college students are “among the first to adopt and utilize these easily accessible tools” and “it is assumed that they are also among the most knowledgeable about how to employ these tools” (1).

Research Questions

There have been many studies attempting to find out how social media marketing increases sales, positive brand perception, and the drive to brand websites (Brands 2011; Kunz 2011; Lewis 2010; Stelzner 2010). Most of the literature on social media focuses on how and why brands use social media as a marketing tool, but there is very little information on why consumers interact with or follow their favorite brands on social media and how it affects them. There is also limited literature on the best methods to use social media to forward brand marketing goals.

An effective method to understanding the most beneficial strategies of social media marketing is to approach it from a different angle than already seen in the existing literature. This thesis aims to analyze how college students, an important demographic of consumers, interact with brands on social media, investigate students' approach to brands' social media sites, and observe the role online brand relationships play in their lives. By focusing on the consumer's point of view of social media marketing, this thesis will help develop recommendations on how to advance brand marketing.

The questions addressed by this research are:

- Are there significant differences between Facebook and Twitter with regard to any of the variables mentioned above?
- In general, what is the extent of Facebook and Twitter usage among the research participants?
- How do research participants interact with brands on Facebook and Twitter?
- What aspects about social media marketing do users believe is beneficial for brands and for themselves?
- How can U.S. college students' patterns of social media use dictate the best brand marketing strategies on social media?

Method: Focus Groups

Focus groups were created to get a better understanding of how and why college students interact with or do not interact with brands on Facebook and Twitter.

Focus groups were chosen as the first step of research because they allow the researcher to acquire in-depth, qualitative information needed in the beginning stages of research. Focus groups are a popular research technique because they allow the researcher to gain a preliminary understanding of the target demographic and their opinions on the central topic. According to Davis, “focus groups are appropriate when informational needs require deep insights into individuals’ thoughts and attitudes and direction for understanding how these thoughts and attitudes influence behavior” (Davis 219).

Participants

The Pennsylvania State University Institutional Review Board approved all study procedures, screening questionnaires and focus group guides before participants were contacted about the study.

Participants of the focus groups were Penn State University students recruited in their College of Communications classes: Comm. 420, Research Methods in Advertising and Public Relations and Comm. 422, Advertising Media Planning. In the recruiting process, the principle investigator explained the purpose of the focus groups, gave out consent forms and told potential participants that they would be given extra credit incentive in their respective classes in reward for participation. Students emailed the researcher, implying their consent to participate. Out of the two classes, 29 students expressed interest in participating. The 29 students were then sent a preliminary screening questionnaire that assessed their interests in and involvement with brands on Facebook and Twitter. (See Appendix pg. 48.) Based on the screening questionnaire, it was clear that some participants were active with brands on their Facebook account (often “liking” a brand page, frequently posting about a brand and writing on a

brand's wall) and active with brands on their Twitter account ("following" a brand, tweeting to a brand, and reading brand tweets). Some participants, however, were not active with brands on Facebook and Twitter, and some did not have a Twitter account at all. The screening questionnaires revealed there were two groups of social media users: those who follow brands on Facebook and/or Twitter, and those who do not follow brands at all. Participants who follow brands on Facebook and/or Twitter were placed into Focus Group 1, and participants who use Facebook and/or Twitter but do not follow brands were placed into Focus Group 2. The purpose of using a group of non-brand followers was to discover insights about what might prevent users from following brands. All participants were notified of their group number, focus group time and focus group location through email. Focus Group 1 consisted of nine participants: eight females and one male. Focus Group 2 consisted of ten participants: five females and five males. All participants were college students ages 18-22.

Procedure

The focus group protocol approved by the IRB was followed. The facilitator followed the typical procedure for running a focus group including introducing herself by name, explaining her role in keeping the discussion moving along and helping to bring out opinions, as well as more specifics about the topic of the focus group, characteristics of the focus group including how it will be recorded, and rules for how the focus group will be reported. Group members shared their names, majors and class standing at Penn State.

Themes and questions varied slightly for each group. A discussion guide (See appendix pg. 50) was used to guide the conversation. Questions for Focus Group 1 included: Why do you mostly use Facebook for? What do you mostly use Twitter for? What brands do you follow on both social media sites? What makes you interact with a brand on Facebook or Twitter? How often do you participate in

promotions on Facebook and Twitter? Questions for Focus Group 2 included: Why don't you follow brands on Facebook and Twitter? Do you pay attention to typical advertisement methods? For those of you who only use Facebook or only Twitter, what are the differences? Why? Have you actively chosen not to follow brands on Facebook and Twitter or were/are you not aware? Follow-up questions ensued whenever necessary. Both focus groups were recorded using two digital voice recorders. Only the researcher and supervisor had access to the recordings. Within one week of completion of both focus groups, the researcher transcribed the recordings and analyzed the data.

Focus Group 1 Results

Focus Group 1 consisted of participants who follow brands on Facebook and/or Twitter. Six central themes emerged from Focus Group 1 that gave insight on followers of brands. Participants of Focus Group 1 are labeled with the name "Participant" followed by letters A through I, to ensure confidentiality.

1. Clear differences in why and how participants use Facebook and Twitter emerged. Facebook is used for communicating with friends and acquaintances, and looking at friends' pictures and videos. Twitter is used for receiving quick and timely news, and following brands and celebrities.

The following sub-themes emerged:

A. All participants agreed that they primarily use Facebook to connect with friends and peers.

Facebook allows users to look at pictures that their friends post, instant message their friends and see what events their friends attend, all features that Twitter does not provide. Despite the updates Facebook has created including promoting games and not-for-profit organizations, participants said that

they still use Facebook for communication. Participants also pointed out that Facebook is an effective way to communicate with groups, rather than via email. Multiple participants also said they use Facebook as an easy way to talk and share information with organizations or groups on campus.

Quotes from participants:

- “For me, it is a way to keep in touch with friends from home or communicate with people if you have a group project. It’s just easy to talk to anybody that you need to talk to, instead of calling somebody up.” (Participant A).
- “For me, the primary focus is still to communicate with friends and see what people are up to.” (Participant B).

B. Participants agreed that they use Twitter to receive updates on news, brands and celebrities.

Students agreed that Twitter acts as a “personalized news filter.” All participants said that they use Twitter as one of their primary news sources because they can get a variety of information quickly. Because Twitter has such frequent updates, participants said they would be more inclined to follow a brand on Twitter than on Facebook.

Quotes from participants:

- “For me Twitter has become a news source. It’s like a personalized feed of the news that I care about.” (Participant B).
- “On Twitter there is always something new. Twitter is very to the point and may have updates that the website may not have.” (Participant C).

C. Participants said they are more likely to follow brands on Twitter than on Facebook. The primary reason is because they believe that a brand’s Twitter is updated much more frequently and concisely than a brand’s Facebook. With Twitter’s microblogging format, brands can publish quick news about a

product or promotion that will go straight to the users' news feed. Even if a user does not follow a particular brand, it is possible for him or her to view the brand's tweets because the news feed filters in tweets from brands that are not already followed. Participants agreed that the format of Twitter is better for brands to catch users' attention than Facebook.

Quotes from participants:

- “If I want to creep on people, it's Facebook, if I want up-to-date information about news and brands, it's Twitter. I know with everything that happened at Penn State I would just go on to Twitter and everything would pop up and be there for me, rather than having to filter through the fluff on Facebook,” (Participant E).
- “They serve different purposes. Facebook would be more to connect with friends. I have a message thread with friends from home and we crack jokes and keep in touch. It's like a closed network, your own personal network. For me, Twitter is more to get news and updates,” (Participant B).

2. Users post more about their interests, rather than about brands.

Participants who are active on Facebook and Twitter said they mostly make posts and comments about their interests such as sports, movies, television and music, not about brands. They typically do not make posts about brands or interact with brands unless they are passionate about it.

Quotes from participants:

- “I almost never post about a brand, unless it's amazing. I can only think of one time when I got a pair of Nikes that I loved, so I posted a picture on Facebook and Twitter.” (Participant C).

3. Participants rarely “seek out” brands on social media; instead, they let brands come to them.

The following subthemes emerged:

A. Participants usually “like” or “follow” a brand after seeing it come up on their news feed or another user’s profile. Participants agreed that the most common way they come across brands they want to follow is by seeing what comes up in their news feed based on recent popularity or trending topics.

Quotes from participants:

- “I wouldn’t actually type in Nike or something, I would just “like” them if I saw them randomly on my news feed, so from then on I would then see their posts in my feed,” (Participant B).
- “If I see a brand come up on my news feed that one of my friends “liked,” it will bring it to my attention because I probably wouldn’t seek it out otherwise” (Participant D).
- “I kind of follow what Twitter does itself. Like if it’s a trending topic or something I’ve never heard of, I’ll click on it and see what it is,” (Participant A).

B. Participants all agreed that they rarely actively look for a brand on Facebook or Twitter, unless it was one of their favorite brands.

Quotes from participants:

- “For me to follow a brand, it would have to be something that I’m really interested in, because otherwise it would be a waste of my time,” (Participant C).

4. Participants would be more inclined to follow a brand on Facebook if there were contests or promotions relevant to their immediate interests that are easy to participate in.

Participants noted that they follow more brands on Twitter than they do on Facebook, but they agreed that they would be more inclined to follow a brand on Facebook as well if there were contests or promotions that did not require a lot of effort. Participants agree that it is exciting to have the opportunity to win exclusive prizes, but not if they have to go through numerous, tedious steps to

participate. Participants commented that for them to participate in a contest, it depends on how easy it is. Participants also pointed out that contests and promotions must be relevant to their immediate interests, because they would only stop and read about how to participate in contests or promotions run by their favorite brands.

Quotes from participants:

- “It’s all how much effort you have to make, as lazy as that sounds,” (Participant A).
- “I saw that Victoria Secret was having a deal on Facebook where you could win a \$100 voucher. I was about to do it but then I saw that I had to invite 15 friends,” (Participant E).

5. Participants value Facebook and Twitter as a platform to provide and receive customer feedback about brands, companies and customer service.

The following subthemes emerged:

A. Participants use social media to let companies, friends and anonymous users know about a good or bad experience they had with a brand. Participants said that when brands respond to posts it made them feel much closer to the brand. Participants pointed out that they can read what other users have to say about a brand, which gives them valuable advice. Instead of taking the word of the brand, users can read what their peers have to say before purchasing a product.

B. Participants used the terms “keyboard courage” and “social media muscles” to describe how they feel much more comfortable posting feedback to or about a brand on social media sites than other platforms. Participants said that it is easier for them to post a review or make a comment about a brand on a social media forum, rather than directly to another person on the phone or in a store.

Quotes from participants:

- “I think Facebook and Twitter are replacing customer service. If I had a bad experience at Dunkin’ Donuts, I might post and say, ‘I went there, the coffee was cold, there was no cream.’ And if they’re active with their social media accounts, they will reach out to me and say, ‘Hey, what’s your mailing address?’ It’s easier than looking up customer service and waiting 20 minutes to talk to someone. All you have to do is write on the wall, “Hey, I had a horrible experience. Please contact me,”
(Participant B).

5. Participants described specific benefits of social media marketing compared to traditional marketing.

The following subthemes emerged:

- A. *Participants brought up that social media marketing is more engaging and interactive than traditional marketing, such as billboards or television commercials.*** All participants agreed that they are more interested in social media advertising than traditional advertising, because social media marketing has more advantages for users.

Quotes from participants:

- “I can’t even remember the last time I have seen a billboard. But if I did, I can’t really say it would change my mind. But, if a company tweets at me or says click on this and you can win something free, I’d say sweet! You can’t click on a billboard and win something!” (Participant A).
- “I don’t even look at commercials anymore at this point” (Participant A).

- B. *Participants acknowledged that social media allows them to have a more personalized experience by tailoring information to individual users and providing a new platform for communication between the brand and the user.***

Quotes from participants:

- “Regular advertisements are so much more general than Facebook advertisements. Facebook advertisements they take past posts you’ve looked at and relate it to your interests,” (Participant B).

C. Participants also said that social media marketing allows for timely interactions, so that brands can instantly and constantly update their followers. Participants agreed that if they wanted to learn about tickets and updates on campus, they would go on Twitter rather than the Penn State website.

Quotes from participants:

- “You don’t have to wait until the next day for a newspaper or a magazine to come out. News is right there, right now. I work at *The Daily Collegian* and it’s hard to get advertisers to buy ads when they can tweet or post an ad online.” (Participant E).
- “On Twitter, people know tickets are going on sale on campus before *The Daily Collegian* can write about it. So, if you don’t have Twitter you won’t know about it.” (Participant A).

In summary, Focus Group 1 revealed how U.S. college students use Facebook and Twitter in general and in terms of brand interaction. Furthermore, results highlighted patterns of behavior on social media sites and showed the aspects participants value on a brand’s Facebook and Twitter. It also showed the researcher how active users believe they can benefit from engaging with brands on social media.

Focus Group 2 Results

The purpose of Focus Group 2 was to identify why some participants do not use social media to follow brands and how they perceive Facebook and Twitter. Focus Group 2 consisted of participants who do not follow brands on Facebook and Twitter. Everyone in the group had a Facebook account while only six out of the ten participants had a Twitter account. The six participants without a Twitter

were minimally active and not involved with brands on Facebook. Five central themes emerged from Focus Group 2 that gave insight on users who do not follow brands. Participants of Focus Group 2 are labeled with the name “Participant,” followed by numbers 1 through 10, to ensure confidentiality.

1. Participants believed Twitter is a nuisance for personal use at this time in their lives, but they still recognized and appreciated its importance in media world and in their future careers.

The following subthemes emerged:

A. Many participants do not use Twitter because they believe that it is too distracting and does not provide anything they do not already get elsewhere. Participants explained that they can already follow friends and companies on Facebook, and they already receive news and information about the celebrities or brands they like through websites or word of mouth. Almost all participants agreed that it is too much of a distraction in their everyday college life, especially since Facebook already takes up a lot of time.

Quotes from participants:

- “I think that it is too much of a distraction. I think that’s what is holding me back the most. Plus, I hear so much from my friends I don’t need to be on it too. Anytime I’m with my friends I feel like they’re talking about something or showing me something, so I’m basically in the Twitter world without being in the Twitter world,” (Participant 1).
- “I deleted my Twitter because I couldn’t keep up with both Facebook and Twitter at the same time. I didn’t even know how to use it. It was just too much,” (Participant 5).
- “I just didn’t need another distraction and I feel like that’s what it is. Facebook is a constant distraction all the time and I find myself always on it. I don’t need another one,” (Participant 8).

- “I don’t really see what Twitter has to offer. I just see so many people waste time tweeting line after line in front of me in class and then retweeting it. It just seems like a waste of time,” (Participant 2).

B. Despite not having a Twitter account, participants still believed that companies should continue to use social media as a marketing tool. Participants agreed that social media is an important tool for low-budget companies to build their brands without using the money necessary for more expensive marketing. All focus group members believed that social media marketing on Twitter and Facebook is important and effective for the current generation.

Quotes from participants:

- “I will definitely use Twitter once I have a job, but I don’t want it for my personal college life,” (Participant 8).
- “I just don’t see the appeal. I mean, as an advertising major, if there are millions of college-aged people who are going to plug themselves into a constant stream of advertising, I’ll take advantage of that once I’m in the workplace and run someone else’s Twitter. But, I don’t want that constant feed now especially since Facebook already takes up so much time to manage,” (Participant 2).

C. Participants acknowledged that Facebook and Twitter are useful platforms to provide and receive customer opinions, feedback about brands and companies, and customer service.

Quotes from participants:

- “Facebook can be used as a forum to criticize or comment on products, so I think if you’re looking for feedback it’s good to go to Facebook or Twitter. But, if you just want to see a product it’s better to go to the website,” (Participant 1).
- “Social media pages would probably be more updated with reviews, so if I wanted to find out about a new product I’d probably go to social media,” (Participant 6).

2. Focus Group 2 participants perceived Facebook as a way to connect with friends and Twitter as a to learn quick information about news, celebrities and brands.

The following subthemes emerged:

A. All participants believed that Facebook is used primarily for socializing and communicating with friends. No one in the focus group interacts with brands on Facebook and, in fact, the majority of participants do not follow any brands at all.

Quotes from participants:

- “I set up a Facebook account in high school to communicate with friends and keep up to date with what’s was going on.” (Participant 1).
- “I initially used to it chat with friends after school but now, since coming to college, I use it to talk to friends who are far away and go to different schools.” (Participant 5).

B. On the other hand, participants perceive Twitter as a source for quick information on news, celebrities and brands, because of its microblogging format and constant updates.

Quotes from participants:

- “Twitter is not as much about picture sharing or group messaging, but more about reading ‘one-liners’ of what is going on” (Participant 3).
- “ I think Twitter is more built for companies and brands, while Facebook is more for friends and family. So, I think brands are better off using Twitter.” (Participant 1).

In summary, Focus Group 2 uncovered the perceptions non-users and users who do not follow brands have about Facebook and Twitter. It provided fresh insight into reasons why college students do not create a Twitter account or follow brands on Facebook and Twitter.

Research Method: Survey

A cross-sectional survey was created based on information gathered from the focus groups in order to gain extensive feedback from the target audience of U.S. college students ages 18 to 22. The use of a survey allowed the researcher to identify trends within the target audience and gain quantitative information, which the focus groups did not provide.

Participants

209 college students participated in the survey. The average age of the participants was 21 years old. 9.1 percent of the participants were freshmen in college, 11.9 percent were sophomores, 14.4 percent were juniors and 52.2 percent were seniors.

Procedure

The survey was created using Qualtrics based on information from research and focus group results. Nineteen questions were created about Twitter and 19 of the same questions were created in a block about Facebook. These questions assessed similar ideas discussed in the focus groups such as: How long have you had a Twitter/Facebook account? What brands do you follow on Twitter/Facebook? What do you believe are the advantages for a brand to use Twitter/Facebook for marketing? At the end of each section, a scale from *The Marketing Scales Handbook: A Compilation of Multi-Item Measures*, entitled “Attitude toward the Product/Brand (Utilitarian)” was used to assess participants’ views about Facebook and about Twitter. Skip logic dictated which questions participants had to answer in the survey. After the two blocks on Facebook and Twitter, Qualtrics took participants to a third block consisting of nine questions about personal information such as age and class standing in college. The third block also contained questions that assessed self-monitoring, opinion leadership and brand loyalty using 7-point agreement scales. Self-monitoring scales were used to assess the way participants view

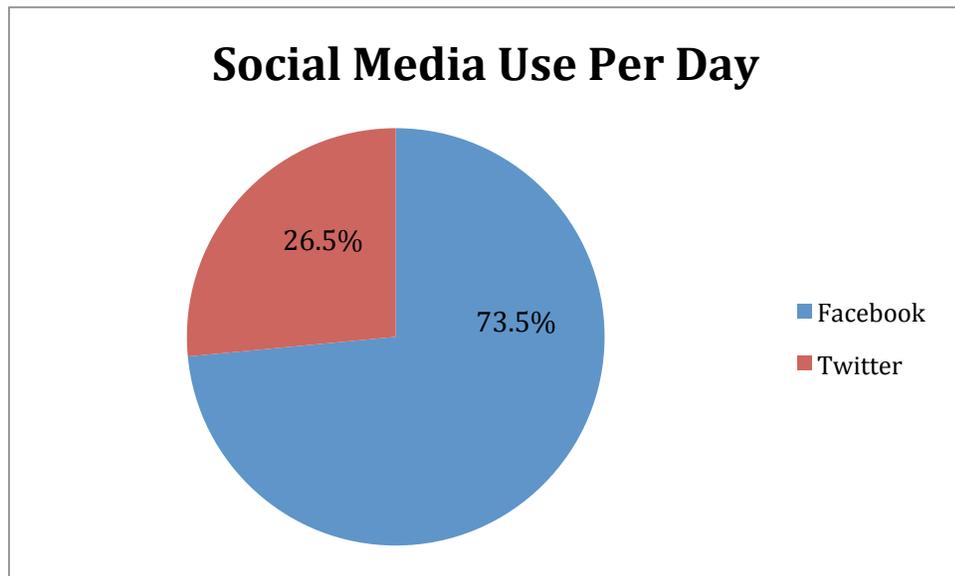
themselves and their relationship with brands. “The Loyalty Proneness Scale”, also from *The Marketing Scales Handbook*, was used to assess a participants’ tendency for loyalty to a brand.

Once the survey was created, a snowball sampling method was used to recruit participants. The survey was advertised on the Principle Investigator’s Facebook page and Twitter account, and sent to College of Communications classmates via email. All scales are listed as part of the survey questionnaire. (See appendix pg. 53.) Data was analyzed using SPSS.

Survey Results

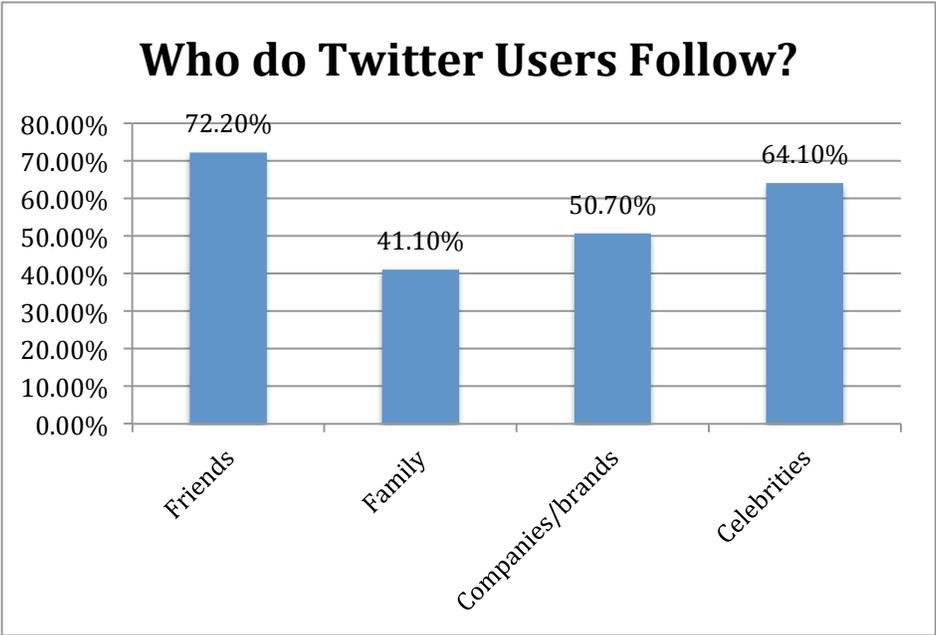
Descriptive Statistics:

1. 75.6% of participants have a Twitter account, while 100% of participants have a Facebook account.
2. On average, participants have had a Twitter account for 13 months and a Facebook account for 64 months.
3. On average, participants spend 30 minutes on Twitter a day, and 83 minutes on Facebook a day.

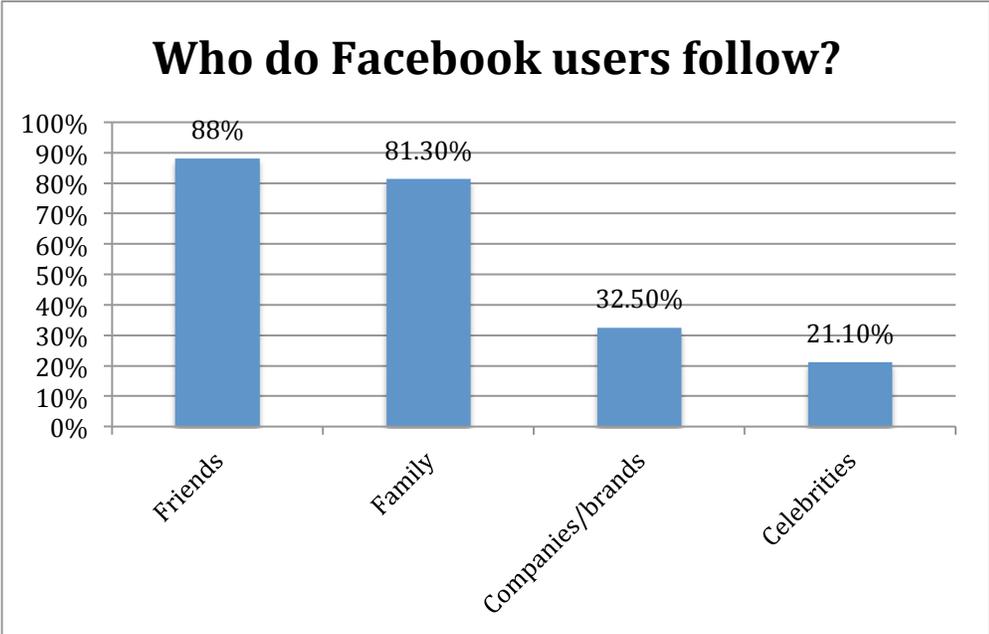


4. 88.4% of participants who use Twitter have a smart phone and 80% of participants who use Facebook have a smart phone. The average participant has had a smart phone for 32 months.
5. Most social media interaction happens on a computer. The average participant spends 30% of their time on Facebook and Twitter on the phone, and 70% of their time on Facebook and Twitter on the computer.

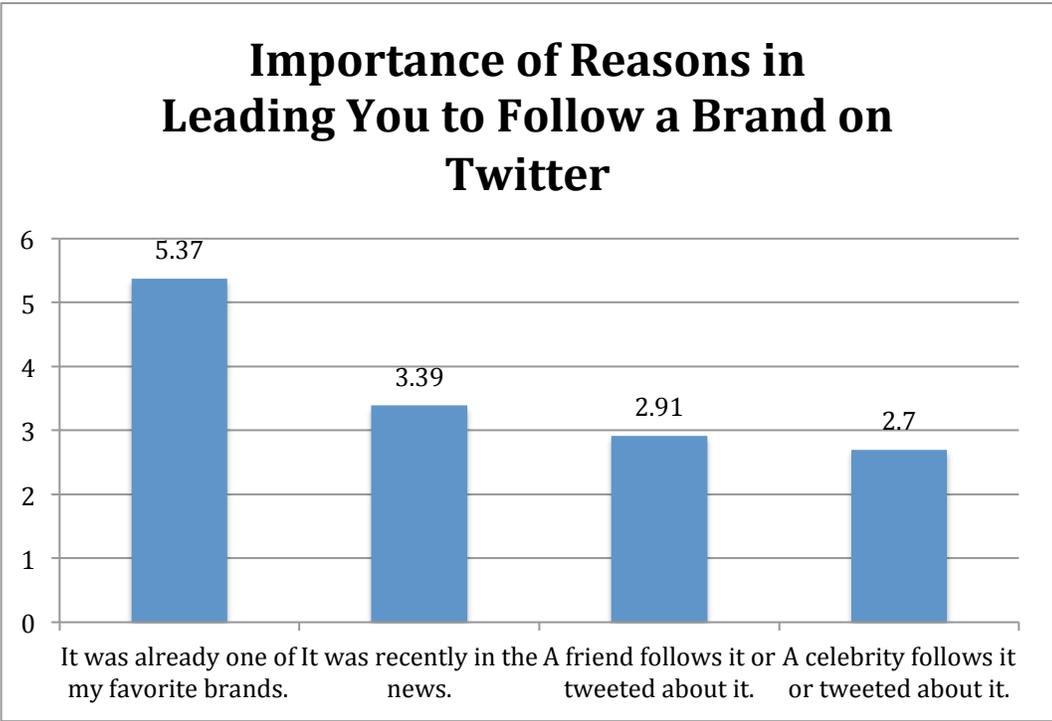
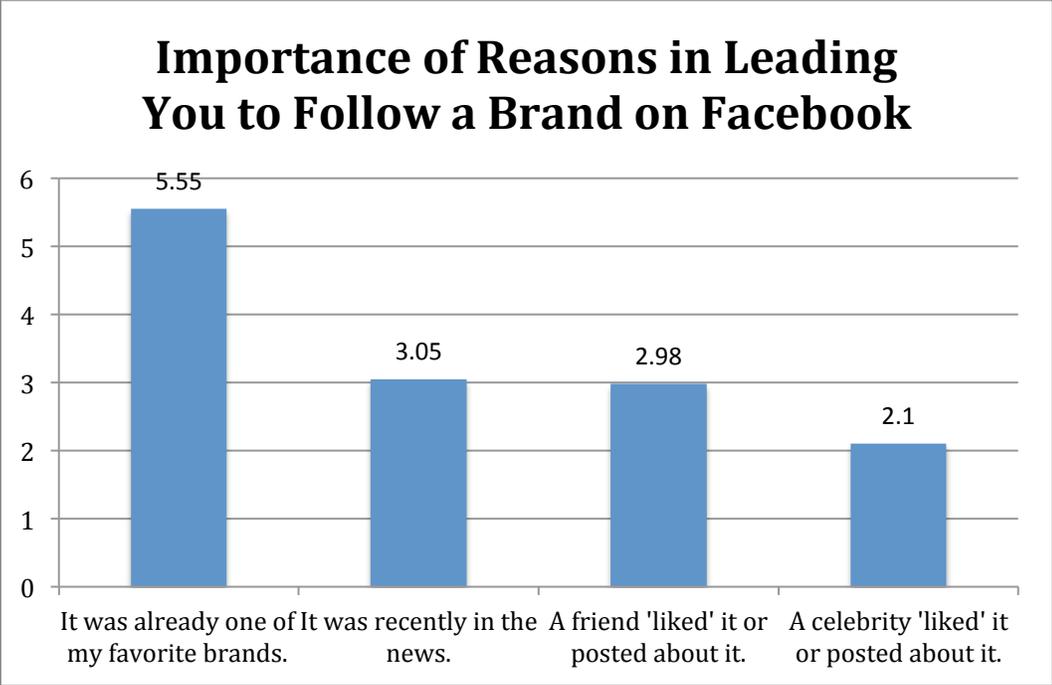
6. Participants who use Twitter ranked companies/brands as the third most common user they follow among other important users including friends, family and celebrities.



Participants who use Facebook also ranked companies/brands as the third most common user they follow among friends, family and celebrities. However, 18.2% more users follow brands on Twitter than on Facebook.

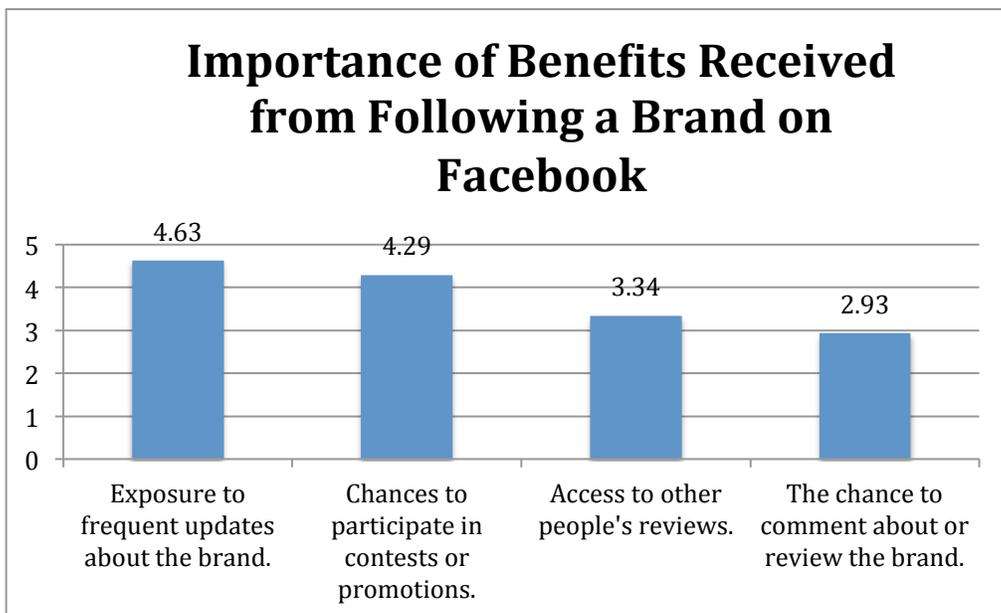
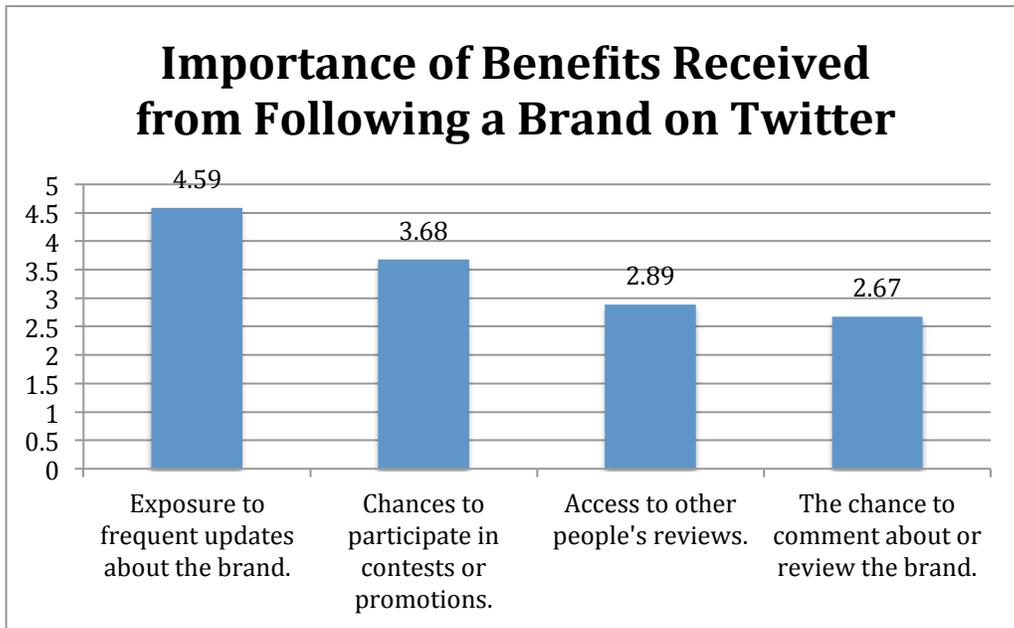


7. The main reason a participant follows a brand on Facebook and on Twitter is because it was already one of their favorite brands. Participants ranked the importance of the following reasons out of a 1 to 7 importance scale, where 1 = Not important and 7 = Extremely important.



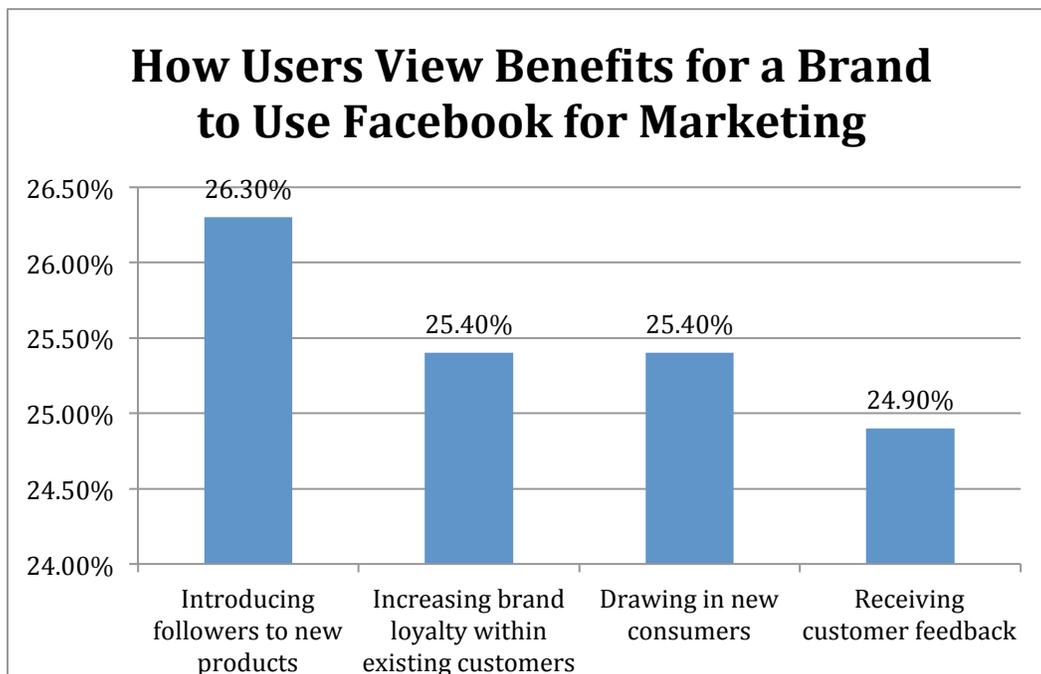
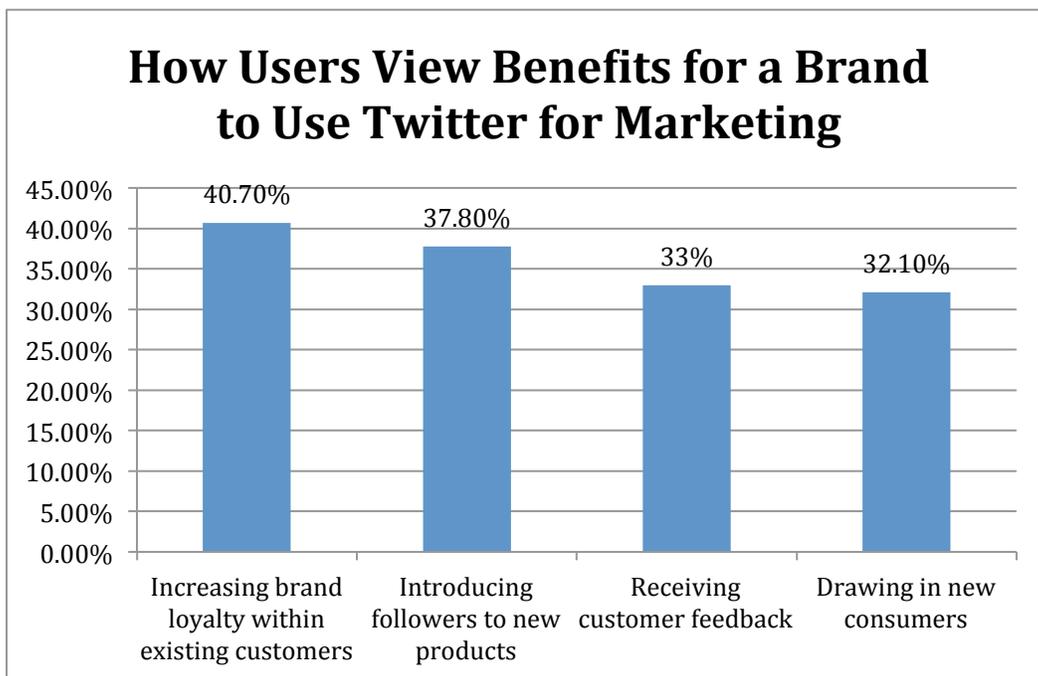
8. Facebook and Twitter users value the same benefits they receive from following a brand. Exposure to frequent updates is the main reason why users look up a brand on both Facebook and Twitter.

Participants ranked the importance of the following benefits out of a 1 to 7 importance scale, where 1 = Not important and 7 = Extremely important.



9. The average Twitter user visits a brand’s website after viewing its Twitter page 3 times a month. The average Facebook user visits a brand’s website after viewing its Facebook page 3 times a month.

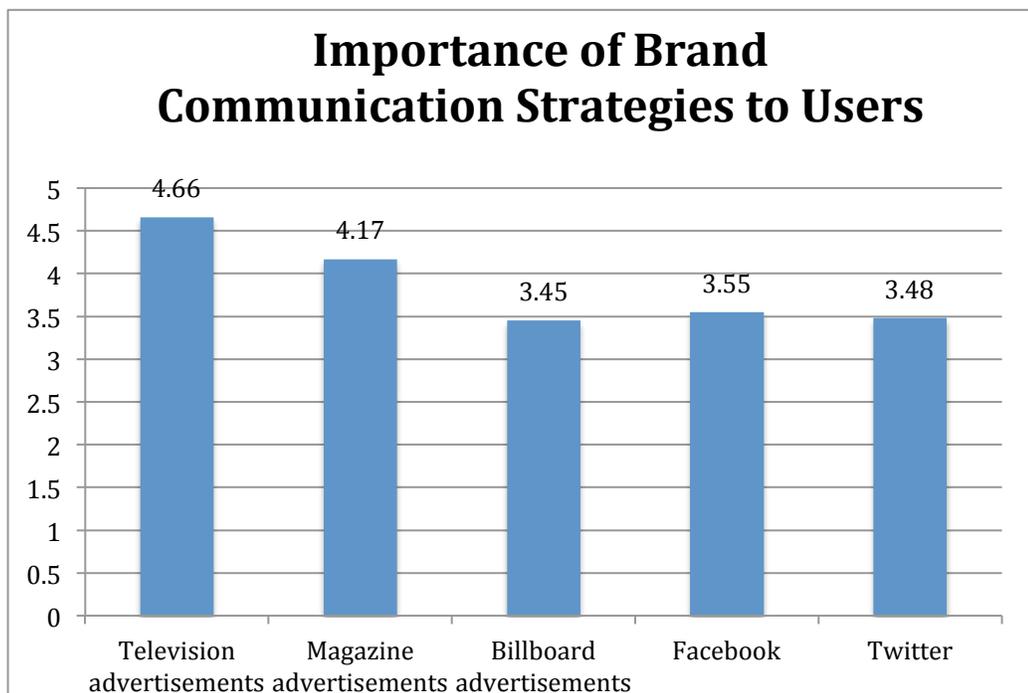
10. Participants did not discriminate between different aspects proposed as advantages brands can gain from using social media for marketing and did not believe them to be significant advantages for brands; however, they did not offer other explanations for advantages despite observing brands’ increasingly large presence on social media.



11. Despite not being very active with brands on Facebook and Twitter, users agree that Twitter is useful, beneficial, high quality, and valuable. Participants rated the characteristics of Twitter in a range from 4.96 out of 6 , out of a 1 to 7 agreement scale, where 1 = Strongly disagree and 7 = Strongly agree. Similarly, users agree that Facebook is useful, beneficial, high quality and valuable, and rate the characteristics of Facebook in a range from 5.19 to 5.58, out of a 1 to 7 agreement scale, where 1 = Strongly disagree and 7 = Strongly agree.

12. Twitter and Facebook users believe advertisements for promotions, contests or deals is the most important element in making them pay attention to a brand on Facebook or Twitter, followed by captivating visual elements such as pictures or videos. The average user ranks this aspect as 5 out of 7. Twitter users rank visual elements as a 4.17 and Facebook users rank this aspect as a 4.85. Participants ranked the importance of the elements out of a 1 to 7 importance scale, where 1 = Not important and 7 = Extremely important.

13. The average participant rates television advertisements as the most important brand communication strategy in affecting the way they think about a brand, followed by magazine advertisements, Facebook, Twitter and billboard advertisements. Participants ranked the importance of the following benefits out of a 1 to 7 importance scale, where 1 = Not important and 7 = Extremely important.



Correlations

Significant correlations were discovered that show how college students interact with brands on Facebook and Twitter and what brands can do to improve their social media marketing strategies.

1. Predictors of Users' Active Engagement with Brands on Social Media

A. Length of Use

Specific findings include:

The longer someone has had a Twitter account:

- The more positively they view it as an important tool for brand communication strategy.
- The more useful, beneficial, high-quality and valuable they view Twitter as a whole.
- The more they interact with brands on Twitter.

(Correlations range from .177 to .303 and significance levels range from .000 to .037.)

Implications for Brands

Not all participants have a Twitter account. However, the data shows that those who do have a Twitter account become increasingly active on Twitter in general and with brands as their time on Twitter increases. This means that previously they may not have been aware of the benefits Twitter has to offer until they use it. Brands can take advantage of this fact by advertising their Twitter accounts more and more so that college students will be influenced to join Twitter. When companies increase their advertising and campaign promotions pushing consumers to Twitter, college students will recognize the benefits they can receive by creating an account. Furthermore, brands should take into account the fact that over time, Twitter has the potential to become more popular among the 18-22 demographic. As more young adults join Twitter, the more there are potential consumers brands can reach. Brands should continue to implement Twitter into their marketing strategies.

(The same pattern was not evident among users of Facebook.)

B. Perceived Importance

Twitter: The more important users believe Twitter is in general, the more likely they are to recognize its importance for themselves and for brands, and the more likely they are to be active with brands.

Specific findings include:

The more important users believe Twitter is:

- The more a user believes that Twitter plays an important role in managing consumer relationships and in brand communication strategy.
- The more time they spend on Twitter a day.
- The more interactive they are with brands on Twitter by posting to and about brands in response to other's tweets and also out of their own initiative.
- The more they recognize the benefits brands receive from use Twitter as a marketing tool such as: drawing in new consumers, increasing brand loyalty, receiving customer feedback and introducing followers to new products.
- The more they recognize benefits they receive from following a brand on Twitter such as: chances to participate in contests or promotions, access to read other people's reviews, the chances to make their own comments or reviews about brands, and exposure to frequent updates brands.

(Correlations range from .230 to .391 and all significance levels range from .000 to .033.)

Facebook: The same pattern is evident for Facebook users. The more important they believe Facebook is in general, the more they recognize its importance for themselves and for brands, and the more likely they are to be actively engaged with brands.

Specific findings include:

The more important users believe Facebook is:

- The more a user believes that Facebook plays an important role in managing consumer relationships and in brand communication strategy.
 - The more time they spend on Facebook a day.
 - The more interactive they are with brands on Facebook by posting to and about brands in response to posts and also out of their own initiative.
 - The more they recognize the benefits for brands to use Facebook as a marketing tool such as: drawing in new consumers, increasing brand loyalty, receiving customer feedback and introducing followers to new products.
 - The more they recognize the benefits they receive from following a brand on Facebook such as: chances to participate in contests or promotions, access to read other people's reviews, the chances to make their own comments or reviews about brands, and exposure to frequent updates brands.
- (Correlations range from .159 to .523 and all significance levels range from .000 to .035.)

Implications for Brands

An important managerial implication is that attitudes towards Twitter and Facebook can be used to predict engagement with brands on social media. These statistics also highlight the fact that there is a cluster of people who appreciate all the benefits of social media and do not discriminate between certain benefits. This group is heavily involved on Facebook and Twitter, and uses it for multiple aspects in their lives. In addition, this shows that U.S. college students are willing to engage with Facebook and Twitter if they are shown that they can benefit. The more they believe so, the more will actively engage with brands. Brands can use this information to their advantage by understanding that people are interested in their social media advertising if something is beneficial to them. If they feel that they are getting worthwhile information from brands' social media sites, they will recognize its importance and become more active. Brands should continue to post relevant, newsworthy and entertaining updates on their social media channels whether it is directly related to a current marketing campaign or simply used for general brand promotion.

2. Personality Traits and Interaction with Brands on Social Media

A. Extroversion

The higher a participant ranks themselves as an extrovert, the more actively they use Twitter and the more involved they are with brands on Twitter. (Correlations range from .244 to .273 and significance levels range from .011 to .022.

Users deemed as “extroverted” rated themselves high on the following statement:

- I am an extrovert.

Specific findings include:

The more extroverted a user is:

- The more they tweet to a brand out of their own initiative.
- The more they tweet to a brand in response to the brand’s tweet.
- The more they value the benefits they receive from following brands on Twitter.

(The same pattern was not evident among users of Facebook.)

Implications for Brands

There is a clear and significant difference in the way extroverted and introverted college students use social media. The users who believe that they are extroverted tend to interact with brands on Twitter frequently and actively, while the users who believe they are introverted are more limited and more passive users of Twitter. The active users tweet about and to brands, retweet more frequently, and initiate interactions with brands and celebrities that they like. The passive users employ Twitter more as a news source by reading status updates, but they will rarely tweet to or about a brand. About half of users are introverted and about half are extroverted. This not only gives brands a better idea about how to relate to their target audience, but also shows that there is room to influence a large percentage of

users to get more involved. In campaigns, brands should include interactive components, such as competitions and contests, and valuable informational components that do not involve a lot of user interaction, so they can market to both audiences.

B. Brand Loyalty

The more brand loyal a user is, the more they interact with brands they like on Twitter.

Users deemed as “brand loyal” rated themselves high on the following statements:

- I have favorite brands I buy over and over.
- I go to the same stores each time I shop.
- Once I find a product I like, I stick with it.

(Gordon, Brand Loyalty Scale)

Specific findings include:

The more brand loyal a user is:

- The more they value updates about their favorite brands.
- The more they will follow a brand if it was already one of their favorites.
- The more they go to a brand’s website after viewing its Twitter account.
- The more important they value the following benefits for users:
 - Chances to participate in contests or promotions.
 - Chances to make comments or reviews about the brand.
 - Exposure to frequent updates about the brand.

(Correlations range from .218 to .364, and all significance levels range from .001 to .045.)

Importantly, the same pattern was not evident among users of Facebook.

Implications for Brands

Brand loyalty predicts engagement on Twitter but not on Facebook. Users who engage with brands on Twitter by reading tweets, retweeting, or clicking on links are typically people who are very brand loyal and very interested in the brand, which provides many opportunities for brands to increase and empower their consumer base. In order to keep those consumers interested in the brand and also draw in new followers, brands should promote high customer interaction. Brands can do this by posting surveys, comments and questions directed towards fans, and also by following consumers in return. Brands should also strive to spark an emotional connection between the brand and the users in their campaigns in order to inspire continual brand loyalty.

Twitter also fosters the opportunity for new consumers to become brand loyal. When a user interacts with a brand on Twitter, the news feed automatically begins to filter in more tweets from that particular brand. Brands should capitalize on this opportunity to create more brand loyal users by posting tweets that will catch their attention. This means promoting exclusive opportunities or sales that only Twitter users can participate in and tweeting about entertaining topics that the young demographic will be interested in.

Importantly, Facebook does not lead to the same benefits in terms of brand loyalty. Therefore, brands should use Facebook as a method of general communication and focus on Twitter more for brand loyals and opinion leaders. General brand campaigns should be used on Facebook and loyalty campaigns, including rewards and discounts, should be used on Twitter.

C. Technologically Savvy

The more technologically savvy a participant is, the more actively engaged they are with brands on social media.

Users deemed “technologically savvy” rated themselves high on the following statement:

- I am technologically savvy.

The higher users rate themselves as technologically savvy:

- The longer they have had a Twitter account.
- The more useful and valuable they believe Twitter to be.

(Correlations range from .196 to .312 and significance levels range from .000 to .024.)

Implications for Brands

Brands can capitalize on the fact that their primary audience and circle of interactive consumers on Twitter is made up of young adults with technological “know-how.” These adults are typically active on all their social media sites and up-to-date with the most recent technologies. In order to target this audience while simultaneously reaching consumers who may not be active on Twitter, brands should create convergent marketing plans that employ the collaboration of a number of social media outlets, technologies and traditional marketing techniques. Brands should give young adults the opportunity to get involved with interactive campaigns through various outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and television to increase participation, create more buzz about the brand and influence young adults to engage with more than one media outlet.

D. Opinion Leadership

The more a user is an opinion leader, the more active they are with brands on Facebook.

Users deemed as “opinion leaders” ranked themselves high on the following statements:

- My friends come to me for advice when it comes to shopping.

- Compared to other people in my circle of friends, I am less likely to be asked about new products or brands.
(Gordon, Opinion Leadership Scale)

Specific findings include:

The more a user is an opinion leader:

- The higher they perceive the value of Facebook for their own benefit including chances to participate in contests or promotions, chances to comment about or review brands and exposure to frequent updates about brands.
- The more they actively engage with brands out of their own initiative.
- In contrast, those who rated themselves low as opinion leaders did not recognize these benefits.
(Correlations ranged from .273 to .387, and significance levels ranged from .002 to .037.)

A similar pattern was found for Twitter.

The higher users rank themselves as opinion leaders:

- The more they see chances to participate in contests or promotions as a benefit for them.
- The more beneficial and high-quality they believe Twitter to be.
- The more important they believe Twitter is as a brand communication strategy.
(Correlations range from .236 to .277 and levels from .001 to .021.)

Implications for Brands

This data shows that opinion leaders recognize the increasing importance and popularity of social media in our culture. Opinion leaders can easily be identified using network analysis software, which provides a snapshot of the most important nodes in a brand's network of followers. With the use of this software, opinion leaders can be targeted with specific programs and promotions in order to gain their

loyalty and attract them as followers. The group of college students who strive to find the newest fad and stay among the first to discover new trends are an important demographic that brands should target on social media. Brands should utilize the latest technology and capitalize on the newest trends in their social media campaigns in order to entice opinion leaders to pay attention. By targeting opinion leaders who tend to influence their peers, brands can stay current and relevant.

3. Significant Positive Correlations Between Active Engagement with Brands on Twitter and Active Engagement with Brands on Facebook

Specific findings include:

- The more involved a user is with brands on Facebook, the more involved they are with brands on Twitter.
- The more important a user believes the benefits they receive from following a brand on Facebook are, the more important they believe the benefits from following a brand on Twitter are.
- The more time a user spends on Twitter per day, the more time they spend on Facebook per day.
- The more important a user thinks chances to participate in contests or promotions, access to other people's reviews, chances to comment about a brand, and exposure to frequent updates about brands are as a benefits from following a brand on Facebook, the more they value these aspects on Twitter.
- The more a user posts to and about brands Facebook, the more they post to and about brands on Twitter.

(Correlations range from .312 to .842, and all significances range from .000 to .002.)

Implications for Brands

This data shows that there is a group of people that are heavily involved in the majority of new social media and technology. Those who are heavy users of Facebook also tend to be heavy users of

Twitter. Those who are interested in networking and reading about brands on social media do so actively on Facebook and Twitter. Furthermore, those who reach out to brands tend to use both social media platforms. This data also shows that a valuable marketing technique would be to create more convergent marketing campaigns between Facebook and Twitter. By doing so, they would extend their consumer touch points by converting active Twitter followers to also be active Facebook followers and vice versa. This data shows the benefits of integrated social media marketing campaigns.

4. Celebrity Endorsements on Social Media

The older a user is, the less they value celebrity endorsements in making them pay attention to the brand or follow a brand on Facebook. The correlation was $-.279$ and the level of significance was $.031$.

(This correlation was not found on Twitter.)

Furthermore, 64.1% of participants follow celebrities on Twitter, while only 21.1% of participants follow celebrities on Facebook.

Implications for Brands

Brands should focus on celebrity endorsements on Twitter, because using celebrity endorsements is not as effective on Facebook. With Twitter's concise microblogging format, users are more likely to read a celebrity tweet than seek out a celebrity's Facebook. Additionally, if a celebrity tweets about a brand a user is more likely to see it because it will appear on their central news feed. This allows both active and passive users of Twitter to see a celebrity endorsing a brand, rather than having to go on Facebook and search for a celebrity's page.

Discussion

Results revealed significant differences in how U.S. college students interact with brands on Facebook and Twitter in terms of 1) perceived benefits for users, 2) perceived benefits for brands, 3) the existence of two different clusters of users, and 3) personality traits that predict Facebook and Twitter brand interactions. The results have actionable managerial implications for using social media as a brand marketing tool.

In terms of general involvement with Facebook and Twitter, differences in why and how participants use Facebook and Twitter emerged throughout the research. Facebook is used for communicating and networking with friends and peers, while Twitter is used as a “personalized news filter,” providing users with concise, up-to-date information about celebrities, news, and brands.

Although Facebook is more popular in terms of general usage, data shows that Twitter is actually a more effective tool for brand marketing. Despite the fact that more participants have a Facebook and more time is spent on Facebook, 50.7 percent of users follow brands on Twitter while only 32.5 percent of users follow brands on Facebook. Users also indicated that they receive more benefits from following a brand on Twitter than on Facebook. This demonstrates that it is important for brands to use Twitter for brand marketing, but also to converge Facebook and Twitter in their campaigns.

Both Twitter and Facebook users ranked companies/brands as the third most common user they follow among other users including friends, family and celebrities. Facebook and Twitter users also will only actively seek out a brand on social media if it is one of their favorite brands. only actively seek out a brand on social media if it is one of their favorite brands. This shows that brands can enrich the quality and extent of interaction with their users by attracting loyal customers to Facebook and Twitter.

Data also showed a distinction between general users and non-users of social media based on behaviors and perceptions. Non-users believe that Twitter is not necessary, and sometimes bothersome, for personal use in college. However, they still identified and appreciated its importance in marketing and advertising. In fact, research participants all agreed that they value social media as a tool in their future professional careers. Based on data from the survey, participants did not discriminate between different benefits brands derive from using social media and did not believe brands benefit in any significant way.

Users of social media who follow brands can also be further broken down into two groups. There is one group that interacts with brands on Twitter and Facebook frequently, and another group that only follows brands on social media in a passive manner. The passive group is made up of users who may have both a Twitter and a Facebook and follow brands on both platforms, but who do not recognize the benefits of social media for themselves or for brands. Brands should take this into account when determining how to relate to their target audience by including both informational elements and interactive elements in social media campaigns.

Additionally, Twitter and Facebook users appreciate the personalized brand experience they receive from social media, but still value the importance of traditional marketing techniques. Research participants believe television advertisements and magazine advertisements to be more important communications techniques than Facebook and Twitter. These facts justify the heavy emphasis on traditional advertising by media planners that remains, despite the social media explosion. Brands should still use traditional advertising while tying in their social media platforms by creating convergent marketing plans that employ the collaboration of a number of social media outlets along with traditional advertising.

The present research also showed that most social media users value captivating elements such as pictures and videos, and advertisements for rewarding and interactive promotions as the most important reasons they follow a brand. They also believe exposure to frequent updates is the most important benefit users receive from following brands on both Facebook and Twitter. These elements increase brand-consumer engagement and brand loyalty.

Data revealed two significant drivers of student engagement with brands on social media. First, participants who have had a Twitter account for longer use Twitter more extensively to interact with brands and value the benefits they receive from following brands. Brands can take advantage of this fact by advertising their Twitter accounts on traditional marketing materials. Companies should increase their campaign promotions pushing consumers to Twitter so more college students will recognize the benefits they can receive by creating an account.

Second, participants who believe that Twitter and Facebook play important roles in managing consumer relationships show increased use and increased interaction with brands on both sites, and have a more positive image of social media marketing as a whole. This demonstrates that college students will engage more on social media if they are shown that they can benefit. It also suggests that Twitter can be used to attract users to a brand's Facebook account and vice versa.

Additionally, survey results showed that personality traits are major predictors of involvement with brands on social media. Extroversion is an indicator for the way a college student will interact with brands on social media. Users who are extroverted also interact with brands more on Twitter, while the users who are introverted will use Twitter in a more passive manner. The more active users tweet about brands/favorite topics and are more likely to initiate interactions with brands/celebrities/companies that they like. In contrast, passive users employ Twitter more as a brand news source by reading brand tweets. This shows that there is room to influence more users to get more involved.

Another personality trait, brand loyalty, predicts engagement on Twitter, but not on Facebook. Users who engage with brands on Twitter are brand loyal, which shows that there are many opportunities to increase followers and empower their fan base. Brands should promote high customer interaction by posting surveys and questions directed towards followers. Brands should also be aware that Twitter has the power to foster new brand loyalty. A user's news feed automatically filters in tweets from brands and topics that relate to their interests based on what they have previously looked at. Once a brand has attracted a new user in this way, they should advertise exclusive opportunities that only their followers can participate in so these users are inspired to get follow them and get involved. Interestingly, this pattern of brand loyalty and high Twitter use was not seen among Facebook users. This implies that brands should use Facebook for general brand campaigns and use Twitter for loyalty campaigns.

Another predictor of interaction with brands on social media is the level of technological savviness. Technologically savvy adults are more involved on social media as a whole. Data also shows that opinion leaders are active on Twitter and Facebook. Brands should update campaigns with the latest technology and capitalize on the newest trends in order to entice this audience to pay attention. By targeting technologically savvy users and opinion leaders who tend to influence their peers, brands can stay current.

Findings also indicated that celebrity endorsements work better as a marketing tool on Twitter than on Facebook. Not only do more college students follow celebrities on Twitter than on Facebook, but Facebook users also show a decreasing attraction to celebrity endorsements as they get older. Brands should focus on celebrity endorsements on Twitter.

All findings reflect that convergent and integrated marketing campaigns involving Facebook and Twitter will be the most successful in targeting U.S. college students. It is effective for a brand to

advertise updates and campaigns with interactive promotions on social media while simultaneously using traditional marketing techniques to draw them to social media sites.

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Appendix

Implied Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: College Students' Engagement in Social Media Marketing

Principal Investigator: Lane Borgida, undergraduate student, public relations
College of Communications, Penn State University
Local address: 141 S Garner Street, State College, PA 16801
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Advisor: George Anghelcev, PhD., Assistant Professor, Advertising & PR
College of Communications, Penn State University
Mailing address: 115 Carnegie Building, University Park, PA 16802
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1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of how college students interact with brands' social media outlets, specifically Facebook and Twitter.

2. Procedures to be followed: You will be asked to participate in a focus group where we will discuss Facebook and Twitter usage.

3. Duration/Time: The focus group will take 1.5 hours or less.

4. Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. No identifiable personal data other than your names will be collected, and there will be no way to link your answers to your identity. The session will be recorded on a tape-recorder, stored and secured on the Principle Investigator's computer, which will be password protected. Recordings will be destroyed one year after the session. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from this research, no personally identifiable information will be shared – your individual responses will be reported under fake names (pseudonyms). Only the Principle Investigator listed on this form will have access to the data.

5. Right to Ask Questions: Please contact Lane Borgida at (301) 802-0867 or lborgida@gmail.com with questions or concerns about this study.

6. Payment for participation: You may earn extra credit worth up to 1% of your final grade. If you choose not to participate, an alternate extra credit option will be provided consisting of writing a critique of a journal article.

7. Voluntary Participation: Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Emailing the Principle Investigator indicating interest in participating in the study implies you have read all the information and are giving consent. Please keep this form for your records or future reference.

Focus Groups Screening Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions about Twitter and Facebook to the best of your ability.

TWITTER

Please answer the following questions about Twitter. If you do not have a Twitter, skip to questions about Facebook.

1. How long have you had a Twitter account? (Please list approximate number of months/years. (EX) 18 months or 1.5 years.)

2. On average, how many minutes/hours a day do you spend on Twitter per week? (Please list approximate minutes/days. (EX) 90 minutes or 1.5 hours.)

3. Who do you mostly follow on Twitter? Rank 1 to 5.
____ Friends
____ Family
____ Companies/brands
____ Celebrities
____ Strangers

4. List the brands you follow on Twitter. (E.g. Urban Outfitters or Nike.)

5. How many times a day do you look at a brand's Twitter? (Write approximate number of times in numbers only. (EX) 4 or 0.)

6. How many times a day do you tweet about a brand? (Write approximate number of times in numbers only. (EX) 4 or 0.)

7. How many times a day do you tweet *to* a brand? (Write approximate number of times in numbers only. (EX) 4 or 0.)

8. Do you have a Twitter application on your smart phone?
 - a. Yes

- b. No
- c. I don't have a smart phone.

FACEBOOK

Please answer the following questions about Facebook. If you do not have a Facebook, only answer the previous questions about Twitter.

1. How long have you had a Facebook account? (Please list approximate number of months/years. (EX) 18 months or 1.5 years.)

2. On average, how many minutes/hours a day do you spend on Facebook per week? (Please list approximate minutes/days. (EX) 90 minutes or 1.5 hours.)

3. Who do you mostly follow on Facebook? Rank 1 to 5.
____ Friends
____ Family
____ Companies/brands
____ Celebrities
____ Strangers
4. List the brands you follow on Facebook. (E.g. Urban Outfitters or Nike.)
5. How many times a day do you look at a brand's Facebook? (Write approximate number of times in numbers only. (EX) 4 or 0.)

6. How many times a day do you "like" a brand or brand post on Facebook? (Write approximate number of times in numbers only. (EX) 4 or 0.)

7. How many times a day do you make a post about a brand on Facebook? (Write approximate number of times in numbers only. (EX) 4 or 0.)

8. Do you have a Facebook application on your smart phone?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I don't have a smart phone.

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Group 1: Heavy followers of brands will discuss and answer the following questions:

- What do you mostly use Facebook for? What do you mostly use Twitter for?
- What types of brands do you follow on Facebook? What brands on Twitter? What brands specifically?
- Why do you follow brands on Facebook? Why do you follow brands on Twitter? Is there a difference? What makes you follow the brands you do?
- When do you interact with brands on Facebook i.e. posting about them? How often?
- If you are interested in a brand do you go to their Facebook or Twitter?
- Do you ever participate in brand events on Facebook such as surveys or contests? Why or why not? How often? What about Twitter?
- If you follow a brand on Facebook, are you more likely to go to the website to make purchases? What about Twitter?
- What have you found are the differences in the way brands use Facebook to advertise in comparison to standard advertising methods?
- Would you be more or less persuaded by marketing on a brand's Facebook page over standard advertising methods? Why or why not?
- Why do you like following brands on Facebook over Twitter? Do you think you use them for different purposes?
- For those of you who only use Facebook or only use Twitter, what are the differences? Why?

- If you see a marketing campaign that directs you to Facebook or Twitter to get involved, how likely are you to participate?
- Do you feel you have more control and are more closely related to marketing on social media than traditional advertisements? Do you feel it is more personalized or not?
- Some argue that it allows for “sustained engagement.” Do you agree or disagree?
- According to researchers from Morehead State University, “customers respond more favorably to marketing when they have control. Consumers are happier being a part of community, rather than the target of a marketing campaign” (Kunz 1). Do you agree or disagree?
- How do you interact with brands in other aspects of life? Are you a big consumer?
- How would you interact with brands on Facebook and on Twitter? Does it drive you to further your relationship with the brand?
- What would make you post about a brand? What would make you tweet about a brand? What would make you retweet a brand post? What would make you like a brand post on Facebook?
- What do you think are the benefits of interacting with brands on social media? What are the disadvantages? What could be improved?
- Do you think it’s worthwhile for companies to limit money for traditional advertising and marketing dollars and focus on social media? Would it target our generation better or worse?

Group 2: Users of Facebook and Twitter who do not follow brands:

- What do you primarily use Facebook and Twitter for?
- Why don’t you follow brands on Facebook and Twitter?
- Do you pay attention to typical advertisement methods?
- For those of you who only use Facebook or only Twitter, what are the differences? Why?

- Have you actively chosen not to follow brands on Facebook and Twitter or were/are you not aware? Explain.
- How do you interact with brands in other aspects of life? Are you a big consumer?
- Does having a smart phone affect whether or not you use Twitter/Facebook frequently? Or with brands?
- If you see a marketing campaign that directs you to Facebook or Twitter to get involved, how likely are you to participate?
- Do you think it's worthwhile for companies to limit money for traditional advertising and marketing dollars and focus on social media? Would it target our generation better/worse?
- What do you think are the benefits of interacting with brands on social media? What are the disadvantages? What could be improved?
- Do you feel you have more control and are more closely related to marketing on social media than traditional advertisements? Do you feel it is more personalized or not?
- Some argue that it allows for "sustained engagement." Do you agree or disagree?
- What have you found are the differences in the way brands use Facebook to advertise in comparison to standard advertising methods?
- Why do you follow brands on Facebook? Why do you follow brands on Twitter? Is there a difference? What makes you follow the brands you do? Why not?

Survey Questionnaire

*Skip logic was used on Qualtrics to take users appropriately through the survey, depending on their answers to various questions.

Twitter

1. Do you have a Twitter account?

- a. Yes
- b. No

2. How long have you had a Twitter account? (Please write approximate number of months in numbers only. Ex: 18 or 35)

3. On average, how much time do you spend on Twitter per day? (Please write approximate minutes in numbers only. EX: 90 or 30)

4. Do you have a smart phone with a Twitter application?

- a. Yes
- b. No

5. What percent of your Twitter use is on the computer and what percent is on the phone?

Computer: _____

Phone: _____

_____ 100%

6. How long have you owned a smart phone? (Please write number of months in numbers only. EX: 16 or 5.)

7. Who do you follow on Twitter? Check all that apply.

_____ Friends

_____ Family

- _____ Companies/brands
- _____ Organizations
- _____ Celebrities
- _____ Others

8. List the brands you follow on Twitter (EX: Urban Outfitters or Nike) If none, type “none.”

Brand 1: _____

Brand 2: _____

Brand 3: _____

9. How important is each reason in leading you to follow a brand on Twitter? Please drag the slider. (Participants ranked the importance of the elements out of a 1 to 7 importance scale, where 1 = Not important and 7 = Extremely important.)

- a. A friend follows it or tweeted about it.
- b. A celebrity follows it or tweeted about it.
- c. It was already one of MY favorite brands.
- d. It was recently in the news.
- e. Other: _____

10. How many times a week do you look at the Twitter of Brand 1? (Please write approximate number of times in numbers only. EX: 4 or 0)

11. On average, how many times a week do you tweet about a brand out of your own initiative? (Please write approximate number of times in numbers only. EX: 4 or 0.)

12. On average, how many times a week do you tweet about a brand in response to someone else’s tweet about a brand? (Please write approximate number of times in numbers only. EX: 4 or 0.)

13. On average, how many times a week do you tweet to a brand out of your initiative? (Please write approximate number of times in numbers only. EX: 4 or 0.)

14. On average, how many times a week do you tweet in response to the brand’s tweet? (Please write approximate number of times in numbers only. EX: 4 or 0.)

15. How important is each of the following benefits you receive from following a brand on Twitter? (Participants ranked the importance of the elements out of a 1 to 7 importance scale, where 1 = Not important and 7 = Extremely important.)

- a. Chances to participate in contests or promotions

- b. Access to other people's reviews
- c. The chance to comment about or review the brand
- d. Exposure to frequent updates about the brand
- e. Other: _____

16. On average, how many times a month do you go to a brand website after viewing its Twitter account? (Please write approximate number of times in numbers only. EX: 4 or 0.)

17. What do you believe are the advantages for a brand to use Twitter for marketing? Check all that apply.

- a. Drawing in new consumers
- b. Increasing brand loyalty with existing customers
- c. Receiving customer feedback
- d. Introducing followers to new products
- e. Other: _____

18. How important would each element be in making you pay attention to a brand on Twitter? (Participants ranked the importance of the elements out of a 1 to 7 importance scale, where 1 = Not important and 7 = Extremely important.)

- a. Captivating visual elements such as pictures or videos
- b. Advertisements for promotions, contests or deals
- c. If a friend follows the brand or tweeted about it.
- d. If a celebrity follows it or tweeted about it.
- e. If it is already one of your favorite brands.
- f. Other: _____

19. Which aspects would you agree describe Twitter? (Participants ranked the importance of the elements out of a 1 to 7 importance scale, where 1 = Not important and 7 = Extremely important.)

- a. Useful
- b. Beneficial
- c. High-quality
- d. Valuable

Facebook

1. Do you have a Facebook account?

- a. Yes
- b. No

2. How long have you had a Facebook account? (Please write approximate number of months in numbers only. Ex: 18 or 35)

3. On average, how much time do you spend on Facebook per day? (Please write approximate minutes in numbers only. EX: 90 or 30)

4. Do you have a smart phone with a Facebook application?

- a. Yes
- b. No

5. What percent of your Twitter use is on the computer and what percent is on the phone?

Computer: _____

Phone: _____

_____ 100%

6. How long have you owned a smart phone? (Please write number of months in numbers only. EX: 16 or 5.)

7. Who do you follow on Facebook? Check all that apply.

- _____ Friends
- _____ Family
- _____ Companies/brands
- _____ Organizations
- _____ Celebrities
- _____ Others

8. List the brands you follow on Facebook (EX: Urban Outfitters or Nike) If none, type “none.”

Brand 1: _____

Brand 2: _____

Brand 3: _____

9. How important is each reason in leading you to follow a brand on Facebook? (Participants ranked the importance of the elements out of a 1 to 7 importance scale, where 1 = Not important and 7 = Extremely important.)

- a. A friend “liked” it or posted about it.
- b. A celebrity “liked” it or posted about it.
- c. It was already one of MY favorite brands.
- d. It was recently in the news.
- e. Other: _____

10. How many times a week do you look at the Facebook of brand 1? (Please write approximate number of times in numbers only. EX: 4 or 0)

11. On average, how many times a week do you post about a brand out of your own initiative? (Please write approximate number of times in numbers only. EX: 4 or 0.)

12. On average, how many times a week do you post about a brand in response to someone else's post about a brand? (Please write approximate number of times in numbers only. EX: 4 or 0.)

13. On average, how many times a week do you post to a brand out of your initiative? (Please write approximate number of times in numbers only. EX: 4 or 0.)

14. On average, how many times a week do you post in response to the brand's post? (Please write approximate number of times in numbers only. EX: 4 or 0.)

15. How important is each of the following benefits you receive from following a brand on Facebook? (Participants ranked the importance of the elements out of a 1 to 7 importance scale, where 1 = Not important and 7 = Extremely important.)

- a. Chances to participate in contests or promotions
- b. Access to other people's reviews
- c. The chance to comment about or review the brand
- d. Exposure to frequent updates about the brand
- e. Other: _____

16. On average, how many times a month do you go to a brand website after viewing its Facebook account? (Please write approximate number of times in numbers only. EX: 4 or 0.)

17. What do you believe are the advantages for a brand to use Facebook for marketing? Check all that apply.

- a. Drawing in new consumers
- b. Increasing brand loyalty with existing customers
- c. Receiving customer feedback
- d. Introducing followers to new products
- e. Other: _____

18. How important would each element be in making you pay attention to a brand on Facebook? (Participants ranked the importance of the elements out of a 1 to 7 importance scale, where 1 = Not important and 7 = Extremely important.)

- a. Captivating visual elements such as pictures of videos
- b. Advertisements for promotions, contests or deals
- c. If a friend follows the brand or tweeted about it.
- d. If a celebrity follows it or tweeted about it.
- e. If it is already one of your favorite brands.
- f. Other: _____

19. Which aspects would you agree describe Facebook? (Participants ranked their agreement of the aspects out of a 1 to 7 agreement scale, where 1 = Strongly disagree and 7 = Strongly agree.)

- a. Useful
- b. Beneficial
- c. High quality
- d. Valuable

Demographic and Self-Monitoring Questions

1. How important is each brand communication strategy in affecting the way you think about a brand? (Participants ranked the importance of the elements out of a 1 to 7 importance scale, where 1 = Not important and 7 = Extremely important.)

- a. Facebook
- b. Twitter
- c. Television advertisements
- d. Magazine advertisements
- e. Billboard advertisements

2. How old are you?

3. What is your year of education?

- a. Freshman
- b. Sophomore

- c. Junior
- d. Senior

4. Please rate yourself on the following statements. (Participants ranked their agreement of the aspects out of a 1 to 7 agreement scale, where 1 = Strongly disagree and 7 = Strongly agree.)

I am an extrovert.

I am an introvert.

5. Please rate yourself on the following statements. (Participants ranked their agreement of the aspects out of a 1 to 7 agreement scale, where 1 = Strongly disagree and 7 = Strongly agree.)

When I am in public, I pay attention to other people's reactions to what I say or do.

I generally speak my mind and say what I feel regardless of what others may think.

6. Please rate yourself on the following statements. (Participants ranked their agreement of the aspects out of a 1 to 7 agreement scale, where 1 = Strongly disagree and 7 = Strongly agree.)

My friends come to me for advice when it comes to shopping.

Compared to other people in my circle of friends, I am less likely to be asked about new products or brands.

7. Please rate yourself on the following statements. (Participants ranked their agreement of the aspects out of a 1 to 7 agreement scale, where 1 = Strongly disagree and 7 = Strongly agree.)

I am technologically savvy.

8. Please rate yourself on the following statements. (Participants ranked their agreement of the aspects out of a 1 to 7 agreement scale, where 1 = Strongly disagree and 7 = Strongly agree.)

I have favorite brands I buy over and over.

Once I find a product or brand I like, I stick with it.

I go to the same stores each time I shop.

I change brands I buy regularly.

ACADEMIC VITA OF LANE BORGIDA

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Education:

Bachelor of Arts Degrees in Public Relations and International Studies, Minor in Spanish
The Pennsylvania State University, Schreyer Honors College
College of Communications and College of Liberal Arts
Honors in Public Relations
Thesis Title: COLLEGE STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Thesis Supervisor: George Anghelcev
Honors Advisor: Susan Strohm

Awards:

Dean's List: Fall 2008, Fall 2009, Spring 2010, Fall 2010, Spring 2011, Fall 2011

Scholarships:

Schreyer Honors College Scholarship (2008-2012)
Shellie M. Roth Honors Scholarship in the College of Communications (2010- 2011)
Donald E. Allen Memorial Scholarship in the College of Communications (2009-2010, 2011-2012)
Lawrence G. and Ellen M. Foster Scholarship in the College of Communications (2008-2009)
The Washington D.C. Alumni Scholarship (2008-2009)

International Education:

CEA Global Education Study Abroad in Sevilla, Spain, Spring 2011

Related Professional Experience:

MTV Networks, Integrated Marketing Intern. Summer 2011, New York City
College Fashionista, Columnist. Spring 2011, Seville, Spain
American Cancer Society, Public Relations and Marketing Intern, Summer 2010, Washington, DC
Bethesda Urban Partnership, Public Relations Intern, Summer 2010, Washington, DC
Happy Valley Communications, Account Associate. 2009-2012, State College, PA