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**CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF THE EFFICACY OF SOCIAL MEDIA BRANDING BY
NON-PROFIT AND FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

**By
Melissa C. Novak**

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Public Relations & Advertising
College of Communication
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Masters of Arts
at
Rowan University

Thesis Chair: Suzanne FitzGerald, Ph.D.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my grandfather, Peter Dikun, Jr.

I love you, Grandpa.

February 10, 1925 – April 1, 2012

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and express my appreciation to all the people who helped and encouraged me through graduate school and writing my thesis:

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To my big brother, James, for being my number one fan and my best friend.

Also to my grandmother, Helen Dikun, for her constant encouragement, love, and nightly prayers.

And to my fellow classmates, Emel Crawford and Justine Spack.

Abstract

Melissa C. Novak

CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF THE EFFICACY OF SOCIAL MEDIA BRANDING BY NON-PROFIT AND FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

2011/2012

Suzanne FitzGerald, Ph.D.

Master of Arts in Public Relations

The purposes of this exploratory investigation were to (a) examine if organizations using social media maintain relationships with their loyal consumers, and do not direct their marketing toward new consumers, and (b) determine if non-profit organizations use social media more effectively and issue stronger call to actions than for-profit organizations.

This study includes a survey of 234 participants, a content analysis of ten organizations, and interviews with eight professionals in the marketing and public relations field who work with social media on a daily basis.

This study shows that although industry professionals enjoy the vast reach of social media and the potential for content to go viral, the majority still writes content catered to their loyal consumers. This shows that non-loyal or potential consumers receive messages meant for another audience, and thus aren't as receptive.

This study also shows that although both non-profit and for-profit organizations use social media fairly effectively and strive for user-engagement, non-profit organizations are more successful with positive engagement than for-profit organizations. While non-profit organizations use social media mainly to raise awareness, for-profit organizations spend more time servicing their customers than engaging in discussion.

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Chapter 1: An Introduction to the Research Study

Introduction

Marketers have three purposes in their messages to consumers: to inform, to persuade, or to act. This leads to brand awareness, brand trial, or brand adoption. The call to action usually encourages a consumer to experience a brand, and a regular user may develop brand loyalty – the ultimate goal of marketers.

Through these messages, brands build relationships with existing and potential consumers. If there is a strong, trusting relationship between the brand and consumer, then the consumer will likely want to buy and use that brand's products more often or exclusively – thus, more opportunity for sales and growth.

To achieve this growth, organizations must use marketing, advertising, and public relations strategies and tactics to reach consumers. To advertise its brands, companies use print ads, billboards, and other tangible methods to spread awareness through visible means. Radio broadcasts allow users listen to information about the brand. Television reaches millions of viewers at once, and uses emotional queues through sight and sound to relate to the consumer. In recent years, the Internet has also made great strides in targeting consumers with online ads and search engine optimization. A good marketing mix contains Internet, print, and broadcast, and tries to reach as many consumers with as high a frequency as possible.

To provide information and create good will about products, services, brands or the organizations themselves, public relations practitioners work to connect with consumers. For decades, public relations practitioners have communicated with the public through newsletters, flyers, brochures, direct mail campaigns, and news releases; they are mass communication techniques to reach a mass audience. “In the old days, traditional, non-targeted advertising via newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and direct mail was the only way to go. But these media make targeting specific buyers with individualized messages very difficult,” (Scott, 2011).

The goal is to create two-way symmetric communication between the brand and consumer – the brand shares information with the consumer, and then listens to what the consumer really wants or needs from the brand. In the past, this was not always the easiest task, as receiving feedback was usually a slow and expensive process.

However, a new medium has emerged in the last decade: social media. Before the web came along, there were only three ways to get noticed: buy expensive advertising, beg mainstream media to tell your story for you, or hire a huge sales staff to bug people one at a time about your products. Now we have a better option: publishing content on the web that your buyers *want* to consume (Scott, 2011, p. 21).

Social media changes how the brand can interact with consumers to foster a two-way symmetric relationship. Though it does not replace any previously stated medium, social media has allowed advertising, marketing, and public relations to evolve from a one-way communication module and attempted two-

way communication model into a true two-way communication loop between brand and consumer. Scott (2011) encourages the idea that social media is supplementary to current marketing strategies; however, it is important to open an organization up to new opportunities. “If your organization isn’t present and engaged in the places and at the times that your buyers are, then you’re losing out on potential business – no matter how successful your off-line marketing program is,” (Scott, 2011).

Social media requires targeted messages to even more targeted consumers. “For years, PR professionals have been using PR as a means to create ‘messages’ for ‘audiences,’ not realizing that, by default, they were often shooting over the heads of the very people they were trying to reach,” (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009). These new, digital communication tools have allowed for niches to be more clearly defined and for target markets to be more easily reached.

The idea of “messages” has evolved into dialogue – part of the transition to a true two-way communication loop. Social media provides a variety of features and resources to both brand and consumer. There are blogs, micro-blogs, wikis, video sharing, photo sharing, social bookmarking, virtual worlds, podcasts, video conferencing, and presence applications – all which can be manipulated by marketers to create interactions between brand and consumer, allowing for real-time interaction.

This real-time interaction allows consumers to have the capability to constantly be in touch and up-to-date with their favorite brands – and vice versa. Social media provides the opportunity to create dialog without the help of journalists or promotional methods. Solis and Breakenridge (2009) refer to this new use of web and social media as PR 2.0. They see it as the web’s evolution in communication. “PR 2.0 is the realization that PR now has an unprecedented opportunity to not only work with traditional journalists, but also engage directly with a new set of accidental influencers. We can now talk with customers directly,” (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009,).

The ability to reach such a large number of people interactively is an exciting prospect for marketers and public relations practitioners interested in constant feedback on what the consumer is thinking and feeling. Consumer feedback helps shape a brand’s campaign and determines how a message is communicated to the consumers. Solis and Breakenridge (2009) see this benefit of social media as “the reinvention of PR,” and embracing it will improve the profession for “the new age of communications.”

Social media sites offer an opportunity for public relations practitioners who use them properly. Besides being free to use, information also has the potential of becoming viral and spreading quickly among users. The platform is flexible enough for users to represent their image through personal profiles, widgets, and other applications. These personal features give brands an identity and a personality, which are key to building a relationship and trust. Solis and

Breakenridge (2009) point out that this form of public relations is “about sociology and the cultivation of relationships,” and not just about blasting messages to the key audiences.

PR starts to look less like a typical broadcast machine and more like a living, breathing entity capable of also participating in conversations with publics. These conversations (through direct-to-consumer communication) contribute to more meaningful engagement and brand visibility, and help people make purchasing decisions. These conversations also represent an opportunity to foster brand loyalty (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009, p. 32).

Having a personality and online presence gives brands the opportunities to become part of online groups, instead of simply trying to advertise to them. “Move away from “mass” and begin to think “niche.” The concept of “mass media” is waning. It means that practioners will continually need to adopt fresh communication management skills and be prepared to discard others (Phillips, 2008).

Problem Statement

In the past five years, digital communication has changed drastically. There must be a constant effort on behalf of the public relations, advertising, and marketing departments that use this medium to be current, responsive, and comprehensive. Falling behind in the technology or not keeping up with the constant, real-time conversation can be detrimental to a brand. Scott (2011) discusses how companies that excel in one creative strategy, like TV ads, want to transfer this set of skills to the web; however, Scott firmly stands against using outdated rules for the new techniques of marketing. “The web has changed the rules. Today, organizations are communicating directly with buyers,” instead of only the media (Scott, 2011).

Be current.

The need to be current is also an opportunity for a brand to show off its expertise or gain credibility. “Organizations gain credibility and loyalty with buyers through content, and smart marketers now think and act like publishers in order to create and deliver content targeted directly at their audience,” (Scott, 2011). To be current, an organization must provide content that shows that it knows what’s going on in its industry, national news, and even world news. By understanding how external issues can affect it positively and negatively the organization shows that it plans ahead and has forward thinking. This proactive thinking can help an organization turn problems into opportunities, and give it a step up against its competitors who are not looking ahead.

If an organization actively researches and plans, it is important to share this activity with its consumers. Social media has made this easy and effective through online news releases, blogs, news archives on websites, or a combination of these tactics. This transparency allows consumers to see that an organization stays on top of industry news and advancements, making them credible and knowledgeable.

An organization that does not stay up to date with its consumers, either because it does not want to or does not know it needs to, is potentially hurting its brands. Before social media, it would have been extremely costly to keep every consumer and potential consumer up to date with what the organization does. It was also a perceived notion that it was none of the consumer's business.

Digital communication has changed this – transparency and openness is encouraged and even expected by consumers. Also, it is virtually free to share information with consumers through social media. By not adapting new communication strategies and utilizing the available technologies, an organization is allowing itself to fall behind those who are actively communicating and sharing information with consumers.

Be responsive.

Responsiveness in digital communication is both an action and a strategy. As an action, it means responding quickly and effectively. According to Solis and Breakenridge (2009), brands are now embraceable and approachable, and they

have quickly become the topic of many online conversations. For a brand to effectively communicate in real time with its consumers, it must be ready to respond at any moment, around the clock. This allows the organization to answer questions, calm concerns, and stamp out a potential crisis. Constant, real time conversations allow an organization to see smoke before a fire, and address concerns that may have otherwise blown up into a crisis. This responsive attitude also allows consumers to feel like their thoughts matter, and someone quickly addressing their needs encourages a relationship between the brand and consumer.

As a strategy, responsiveness is the actual willingness to listen, and it is important that it is a policy the organization upholds. Being responsive allows the organization to listen to what its consumers say and to react or respond as needed – and to not ignore or delete their comments. This allows an organization to make positive changes that will ultimately help both brand and consumer. “People do business with people they respect. Brands today must show their human side by participating directly with the people they want to reach in the networks where they’re active,” (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009).

The problem with responsiveness is that by being open with consumers, they will be open with your organization. Not every consumer is going to have something nice or positive to say. “This might take some getting used to, especially for a traditional PR department that likes to control messaging,” (Scott, 2011). A responsive strategy would not be to delete or ignore a negative comment.

That would be avoiding a problem that needs to be addressed and would become a missed opportunity to connect with a disgruntled consumer. Comments showcase varying viewpoints from your original comments and can actually help your blog; “they add credibility to your viewpoint by showing two sides of an issue and by highlighting that your readership is passionate enough to want to contribute to a debate on *your blog*,” (Scott, 2011).

Many organizations are not yet comfortable with the idea of consumers potentially badmouthing them. This idea is like living in a bubble – it seems nice, but in reality it is an extremely fragile environment. An organization can become stronger by knowing what is said about it and dealing with a problem head on. By not taking the step to be responsive and turning negative experiences into a positive, an organization misses a key benefit of a digital communication plan.

Be comprehensive.

A comprehensive digital communications plan makes an attempt to use several forms of social media and to cover all potential needs and wants of the consumer. Though providing links to connect different social media pages helps with ease of navigation, this process can be intimidating to any organization.

Our current world allows everyone to access information quickly. If a consumer cannot find his or her answer with the organization, he or she will resort to a third-party source for information (which may or may not be correct). To avoid this, organizations must streamline the navigation process – know what

is important to your consumers and make particular links and pages readily available.

According to Solis and Breakenridge (2009), “The current mantra driving the Social Media revolution is this: If the news is important, it will find me. It’s an arrogant statement, but it isn’t incorrect.” This is due to the blogs, feeds and alerts that are set up in the Internet – information directly targets these users, usually before these users actively search it on their own. This means that websites, blogs, and new media sites constantly compete for users’ attention, directly and indirectly. An organization must actively compete for this attention, as well as provide information for the searcher – it wants to be the consumer’s first choice for more information.

Multiple social media pages working together assist this concept – they complement one another and encourage user interaction and engagement. An organization that uses each individually (or not at all) is not using the technology to its full potential. “Social Media also forces PR to see things differently. No longer can one set of messages to one audience serve a purpose,” (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009). A comprehensive digital communication plan will play on the strengths of each social media site (i.e., pictures, videos, or text) and appeal to different target groups.

The combined problem.

These three components are necessary in any digital communication campaign, but the problem lies in the misuse or avoidance of social media by organizations.

Some organizations have great needs for it while others have yet to see it for its potential. Some organizations have used social media since its early development because of its cost-free platform, while others now test the waters for the first time.

This researcher seeks to discover which kind of organizations use digital communication techniques to their advantage or are ahead of the curve, and which kinds of organization do not; which marketers use social media effectively and which marketers do not. Are organizations with big advertising budgets or non-profits with smaller budgets more equipped to handle the fast-paced media of digital communication and social media? And, ultimately, are the consumers receptive to these online tactics?

Purpose

This study is significant to the public relations, marketing, and digital communication industries because the researcher will examine the components and messages of ten organizations' digital communication efforts and discover to what extent they are perceived and used effectively.

In addition, this researcher seeks to discover what type of consumer the organizations' marketing messages are directed toward: a loyal consumer, a potential consumer, or both. The researcher will evaluate the type of marketing messages sent and what type of consumers these organizations try to reach. In return, the research will also examine how receptive consumers are to those messages.

According to Solis and Breakenridge (2009), current public relations techniques incorporate collaboration – pitching and blasting news releases are no longer acceptable. It is now important for public relations professionals to understand what they send and to whom, and they call it the “art and science of marketing without marketing.”

It is possible that what the consumer expects and what organizations provide may not be the same thing. By examining the organization's webpages and social media pages, this researcher will compare the elements they have to the actual wants and needs of the users. As the needs of each consumer vary depending on his or her relationship with the brand or stage in the buying

process, it is important to address which needs are met and which are not. For example, a page that only encourages a relationship to loyal consumers versus a page that appeals to many consumers, such as trial consumers and brand loyal consumers.

This researcher also seeks to discover which organizations, profit or non-profit, successfully use social media and digital communication techniques while still meeting the needs of their consumers. By investigating exactly how organizations use online marketing via social media, this researcher will evaluate if the organization stays current and up-to-date with information, responsive to its audience, and comprehensive in its approach. This includes the ease of navigation, the ease of communication, the effectiveness of the two-way communication loop, and the types of social media, widgets, or applications used.

Now is the time for companies to learn how to use the Internet for marketing and PR campaigns that spread useful information: more substance, less hype. These times could indeed represent a new golden age of PR, when PR professionals are once again considered strategic partners. We are at a new dawning, with PR 2.0 and new and powerful Social Media applications at our fingertips. The tools people use to share content online are the same tools we can use to reach them (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009, p. 31).

As nonprofit organizations were early adopters of social media because of its virtually cost-free platform, it is assumed that they will have a better understanding of the use and application of social media. However, for-profit organizations have bigger budgets and the ability to pull more resources. It will be interesting to discover if profit and non-profit organizations rank equally in

their use of social media, or if one struggles compared to the other. This study will help uncover which organizations need to examine and improve their digital communication campaigns.

At a superficial level we know that this stuff is not going away. But when we look more deeply, we see a future where it becomes integral, not just to our habits and convenience, but to satisfying our more basic human needs and desires,” (Phillips, 2008, p. 85).

Hypotheses

H1: It is expected that organizations using social media maintain relationships with their loyal consumers, and do not direct their marketing toward new consumers.

- “More than half of social networking users have become fans or followers of a brand online – and users are more likely to say something positive about a brand than something negative,” (Chordas, 2009).
- “The question is not whether to blog or Tweet, but what objectives need to be achieved and which set of tools with their corresponding metrics can best achieve them,” (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010)
- For many businesses, especially small ones, Twitter is not a numbers game - small, active followings are preferable to large, passive ones. Quality over quantity, (Klara, 2010).

H2: It is expected that nonprofit organizations use social media more effectively and issue a stronger call to action than for-profit organizations.

- “Nonprofit organizations have typically been early adopters of new technology – the Internet played an enormous role in terms of enabling charities and volunteer-based groups to expand their grassroots mobilization and advocacy efforts throughout the 1990s,” (Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009).

- “Nonprofits have not incorporated the vast majority of the Facebook applications available to them into their social networking presence,” (Waters, Birnmett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009, p. 106). Roughly three to four years ago, many for-profit organizations were not using social media and non-profit organizations were not using them to their fullest potential.

Procedure

For this study, the researcher will perform quantitative and qualitative research techniques via content analysis, surveys, and interviews. These organizations are highly recognized brand names by consumers.

The sample for this study will include five non-profit organizations and five for-profit organizations. These organizations were chosen because of their high recognition to the public and their effective use of electronic media marketing, specifically their websites and social media use through Facebook and Twitter. The five for-profit organizations chosen were selected randomly from a list of recognizable organizations that sell consumer goods (not just services) from the 2011 Fortune 500 list. The non-profit organizations were chosen from a list of the top 100 most popular nonprofits in the country. Each organization was chosen randomly and all qualifying organizations had an equal opportunity to be selected. As stated, all organizations needed to have both a Twitter and Facebook page to qualify.

Table 1: Organizations Chosen for Content Analysis

For-Profit Organizations	Non-Profit Organizations
Apple	Feed the Children
Staples	The Red Cross
Nike	Wildlife Conservation Society
GameStop	National Public Radio
Bed Bath & Beyond	American Museum of Natural History

The study will consist of content analyses, surveys, and in-depth interviews to intake both qualitative and quantitative data. This researcher will conduct a content analysis of the organizations' websites, Facebook, and Twitter pages. The surveys will be sent out electronically with the intentions of a snowball effect. This survey will be used to interpret consumers' use of social media and their perception of brands that use social media to send marketing messages. The in-depth interviews will be with employees in charge of social media (or similar position) to discover the tactics and marketing strategies that benefit their organization.

Limitations

- This researcher will not examine more than ten organizations (five non-profit and five for-profit) even though other organizations may also fit the criteria.
- This researcher will not study all forms of social media sites. Facebook and Twitter were chosen due to their high popularity and use by both users and brands.

Summary

Traditional marketing techniques have evolved to include social media marketing. Organizations have recognized the need to adapt over the past decade to meet the needs and demands of their consumers. However, with the social media platform changing every few months, organizations must constantly work to catch up and stay updated.

This researcher wants to examine the effectiveness of these social media campaigns – are they successful in reaching beyond a loyal consumer base, and is there a significant difference between a non-profit and a for-profit organizations' social media use and marketing efforts? What elements do these organizations see as standard and which organizations reach out to and engage with all kinds of consumers? This study will also allow this researcher to uncover the effectiveness of these online, digital communication campaigns and determine the relationships between the brands and the consumers.

Glossary of Terms

- *Blog* – a personal website or webpage on which an individual records opinions (editorial in style) and shares information, digital media, and links on a regular basis with tools such as WordPress and eBlogger by Google.
- *Brand Loyalty* – considered to be one of the ultimate goals of marketing: a consumers' commitment to consistent repurchasing of a brand, (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009).
- *Brand-relevant Experience* –an experience that is appropriate to the brand's personality and values to a target audience that will make it memorable to the consumer, hopefully facilitating brand loyalty and brand advocacy, (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009).
- *Brand* – the personality that identifies a product, service, or company (name, term, sign, symbol, design, or a combination of them) and how it related to the consumer.
- *Branding* – the act of marketing, public relations, or advertising efforts to promote an organization's brand
- *Digital Communication* – marketing, public relations, or advertising efforts made through online platforms, such as websites, social media, or applications; differs from traditional marketing techniques (broadcast, print, signage, etc.)
- *Facebook* – social networking website launched in 2004 which allows users to create a personal profile, add other users as friends, and join common-interest groups or pages

- *Flickr* – an image and video hosting website and online community created in 2004
- *FourSquare* – location-based social networking website for mobile devices; allows users to “check in” at locations and encourages brand loyalty at stores and other venues
- *Hashtag* – on Twitter, by using the number tag symbol (#) before a word or small phrase users can comment on trending topics. The combination of the number sign and word create a form of metadata tag to identify these trends, and can be users-made to support a brand, team, person, or current event, or they may be sponsored by a brand for marketing purposes.
- *Instagram* – photo sharing application launched in 2010 for easy photo sharing and use on social media sites; allows for easy digital enhancements
- *Microblog* – the posting of very short entries or updates on a blog or social networking site, often times with help of a cellular phone; a popular social media microblog is Twitter
- *MySpace* – social networking site launched in 2003 and allows users to create an individually-styled profile page, but has faced steady decline since Facebook; big supporter of Indie artists’ music sharing and promotion
- *Retweet* – on Twitter, the ability to share another user’s Tweet while crediting that user as the original content provider
- *Social Media* – websites and applications used for social networking, blogging, microblogging, etc. Allow users to communicate and share media-rich information.

- *Social Media Branding / Social Media Marketing* - the act of marketing, public relations, or advertising efforts to promote an organizations' brand through digital communication efforts, such as Facebook fan pages and Twitter feeds.
- *Social Networking* – the use of dedicated websites and applications to communicate informally with other users, or to find people with similar interests to oneself. Popular social networking sites include Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn.
- *TwitPic* – website that allows users to easily post pictures to the their Twitter microblog via a tiny URL link.
- *Twitter* – an online social networking and microblogging service that allows users to send text-based posts of 140-character or less; created in 2006.
- *Two-way Communication* – live brand experience that allows the consumer to interact with the brand and develop a relationship with the brand, hopefully stimulating brand loyalty and brand advocacy. Two-way interaction also allows the brand to understand what its target audience is thinking about and expecting of the brand, (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009).
- *YouTube* – video-sharing website launched in 2005; allows registered users to upload their own videos and create playlists (sharing and viewing feature available to all)

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Early Adoption of Social Media

Public relations practitioners have a very methodical way of working – press releases, media kits, managing good relations with journalists, and constantly standing by for the next big opportunity to showcase their brand and promote their organization. As digital communication developed and advanced, public relations practitioners needed to quickly adapt. Many knew it was something that they should be a part of – that they needed to be a part of – but only a fraction understood its true potential and how to successfully harness its true power.

According to Eyrich, Padman, and Sweetser (2008), public relations professionals were, for a long time, considered laggards when it came to communication technology, and only recently public relations professionals have jumped ahead. The industry caught up when it realized the potential and power of social media's reach and influence. "The World Wide Web can be considered the first public relations mass medium in that it allows managed communication to flow directly between organizations and mass audiences without the gatekeeping function of the media," (Sweetser, 2010). As digital technology advanced, communication became easier and faster – circulation increased and reached broader audiences. For the first time, public relations professionals weren't waiting for an opportunity to make their brand known, they had the ability to create their own opportunities.

Research by Eyrich, Padman, and Sweetser (2008) indicated the uses and perceptions of these new, industry-wide communication tools. They questioned respondents about blogs, intranets, podcasts, video sharing, photo sharing, social networks, wikis, gaming, virtual worlds, micro-blogging/presence applications, text messaging, videoconferencing, PDAs, instant message chat, social event/calendar systems, social bookmarking, news aggregation/RSS feeds, and email. Eyrich et al. (2008) described the study as one of the first academic studies showing a snapshot of social media adoption. The results found that some of the lesser used tools were social networks (24 percent), photo sharing (19 percent), and micro-blogging/presence applications were rarely used at all (1.7 percent).

According to technology editor Claudine Beaumont (2010), Twitter had roughly 5,000 Tweets sent per day in 2007, the year it launched. In 2008 that increased to an average of 300,000 messages per day and by 2010 averaged 35 million Tweets per day. This shows that the snapshot of the Eyrich et al. (2008) study indicating micro-blogging tools were rarely used in 2007 was already obsolete within a year or two. As public relations practitioners learned the effectiveness of this mass, free communication tool and its vast audience reach, they were quick to take part.

Tools such as social networking and text messaging have the strongest correlations between use and perceived adoption, suggesting that more advanced users of social media (i.e., those using more specialized tools) have a greater feeling that social media has been integrated widely into the industry than those who are using more common tools (Eyrich et al., 2008, p. 414).

This is an interesting point made by Eyrich et al. Simply because one public relations professional actively and effectively uses social media, doesn't mean another practitioner is. Four years after this study, social media has made enormous growth in its users and effectiveness; however, it would still be inappropriate to assume everyone is at the same experience level and understanding with the medium.

Despite this potential inequality among users, many have seen the true benefits of the open conversation the social media outlets provide. They are not used as another television commercial or billboard to promote advertisements – they are used as a word-of-mouth tool that shares recommendations and ratings with peers.

Social Media: Becoming A Branding Tool

Judy Schriener (2009) noted an Internet study by the Society for Marketing Professional Services foundation that examined tools to find the top use of social network sites. SMPS surveyed 576 members in foundation and discovered that the vast majority of firms used social media for branding individuals (62 percent) and marketing firms (50 percent). Only 7 percent of firms used social networking for retention, and only 20 percent for recruiting. This study is significant because it demonstrated that social network was first and foremost a branding tool for organizations, and few saw its potential for recruitment or even retention at that time.

The largest factor preventing AEC firms from using social media is lack of understanding of what it is and how it works, the study says. Still, understanding and use are soaring as current users spread the word and sites get more coverage by the media (Schriener, 2009, p. 15).

L. D. (2010) writes how social media is now a main tool in branding and promotion, as well as retention and recruitment. He discusses romance writers and publishers and shares how the director of digital content and social media at Harlequin holds biweekly virtual training sessions for authors. This helps them create and use their blogs, Facebook pages, Twitter, and even promotional videos. He recognizes that these digital tools allow for instant communication between author (brand) and reader (consumer). In addition, they contain viral qualities and can be shared quickly and easily among readers. Effective, real-time promotion is key to help support a brand, and in this case: authors.

In addition to promotion for a single author, publishers began to link authors together. Fans of a particular book, author, or genre would tend to follow certain authors or editors on Twitter and ask for recommendations. Who better than the authors' editor to make recommendations about books? An editor could very simply promote another author who writes for the same genre. (D., 2010) This is a mutually beneficial relationship – the reader is introduced to new material that he or she enjoys and the editor gets to promote an entire genre of authors. Everyone benefits.

L. D. (2010) points out that this simply isn't a Twitter strategy – it is a digital communication strategy. The recommendation technique is used by many websites, with Amazon as a prominent example. After you view or purchase an item, you can see what others have bought or recommend relating to the item you are interested in.

Though Twitter is a great example of reaching a potential market and communicating with it, if a public relations, marketing, or advertising professional uses it to blast only promotional links and talk about the organization, the conversation will be lost and so will the followers. It's important to remember brand personality – there is more involved in a digital communication campaign than talking about products and sending blasts; it is about connecting the brand and the consumers with their common interests.

Mike Shields (2008) monitored the beginning of Facebook's interaction with brands and examines how the public relations and marketing industry has adapted to using social media for branding purposes. In his article "Facebook Friends Brands," he discusses how online advertising flounders when it uses old tactics with social media. It simply does not work. The ads need to adapt and interact with the consumer in ways the different components on a website do. This was the beginning of Facebook encouraging its users to like pages and advertisements, so other users can see which friends like what they do. This helps to create a subgroup of culture – a group of friends who all have a shared experience with a brand.

The Marketing Society, an influential marketing publication in the UK, hosts the Marketing Society Forum. One forum topic was “Can established brands work on social networking sites?” (2008), based on published research suggesting that youth audiences are receptive to brand activity on social networks. Dan Copley, Nick Blunden, and Alex Marks participated in the forum.

According to Dan Copley, director of marketing for Google UK, there should not be a broad marketing approach to social networking sites. Each site has a unique purpose and serves a consumer’s particular need, such as entertainment or awareness. Marketing efforts must match the site’s offerings in order for a consumer to be more receptive or embrace the message. A consumer participating in a serious academic blog is more likely to be bothered by a fun, engaging ad than a consumer who is already on a site for entertainment purposes (2008).

The second contributor, Alex Marks, head of UK marketing of Microsoft Advertising, agrees with Copley, stating there is more to social networking than giving your brand its own page. The organization must engage the consumers and create relevant and intelligent information that is of interest to the consumer and related to the brand. The idea of positioning the product to the right audience through the right medium doesn’t change just because more people have access to the information online. It is extremely important to remember your target consumer, but maintain interest to everyone (2008).

In the same article, Nick Blunden, managing director at Profero, believes that the trust built from branding on social networks depends on how well the organization can handle criticism about its brand. Since social networking involves real-time open forums, an organization must realize that not everyone is going to have something positive to say. However, the importance of these forums is the feedback that can be gained (positive and negative). The qualitative information gathered can be more effective and provide quicker responses than an average survey or focus group (2008).

Blunden makes a good point in the Marketing Society forum – positive and negative feedback are equally important and should not be ignored (2008). As with any action performed by human beings, nothing is perfect and there is bound to be error. For many, this is what prevents them from participating in social media conversations. According to Justin Pearse (2010), amateur or misinformed personnel can cause a social media blunder. However, this is represented as mismanagement between brand and consumer, not the individual who made the mistake, and can distract from the real promise represented by the brand. Ignoring negative comments or dismissing responses from consumers is not how an organization wants to appear, but misusing social media may make it appear so.

Such incidents are bound to occur at some point, but it is important to remember that there is a lot of good, interesting work being done in social media and to not take every negative comment or mistake to heart. Correct mistakes

and learn from them; be honest and transparent and it will allow your consumers to see you as real (Pearse, 2010). Social activity, or discussion of the brand online, pushes a brand up in search rankings – good or bad. Social networking sites benefits can outweigh a potential blunder.

While some industries still worry about the possible negative effects that may emerge from engaging in real-time conversations through social media, other industries are completely immersed in it. In a study by Mary Kirby (2010), American and Canadian airlines worldwide adopt social media strategies to connect with their passengers. Their ultimate goal with digital communication was to create brand ambassadors, or loyal customers who would promote the brand via word-of-mouth and share their positive opinions through various social media platforms. Through sharing links and Retweeting, the airlines were able to disseminate information to an infinite number of potential viewers.

According to Kirby's (2010) findings, Twitter and Facebook provided interactivity at a level which traditional methods did not provide - and for free. In addition, as the airlines posted their own information onto social networking sites, journalists could use this information and recognize it as a trusted source. This was extremely important when TSA enforced security changes; the airline was able to answer questions to flyers through these sites and engage in real-time conversation. Those flyers then passed along what they had learned and shared links or Retweeted the information to others.

Kirby (2010) found that these airlines automatically included social media into their communication plans. There wasn't a thought process that decided there must be a Facebook page and Twitter stream for it – it was simply understood. They had reached a level of confidence with the medium that using it in a campaign was no longer “new” – it simply was. What once were fun sites for socializing are new instrumental tools for marketing and public relations.

Marketing is no longer one-way communication; it is now a conversation. Even if your brand has nothing to do with social media or technology, your consumers still use it (Kirby, 2010). It is now imperative to take advantage of the conversation and the relationship-building potential that the medium has to offer.

Kirby (2010) cites Southwest Airlines as an example because of its use of many tools: Twitter, Facebook, a blog – all allow a consumer to link back to the main site. These marketing efforts give employees a face and a personality – for example, Southwest Airlines' commercials feature pilots. This effort doesn't stop simply because the Internet lacks a face – give it one. According to Kirby (2010), your site should still have a personality that represents the brand. Real employees of the organization have the conversation with the customers, so a brand personality is still visible. This “personality” conversing with the customers and providing up-to-date, accurate information and encouraging dialog *engages* the customers. By receiving relevant and factual information customers can grow to trust and respect the brand.

Kirby's (2010) research references the ROI, or return on investment, that these conversations provide. Though some measurable data exists, it is compared to the ROI of a telephone on your desk. It may not be measurable, but it certainly is necessary.

Social Media Effectiveness – ROI & Buying Power

In 2009, Honda started a Facebook page called “Everybody Knows Somebody Who Loves A Honda” to recruit fans of the brand – the loyal consumers. Owners were encouraged to upload photos and link with other Honda lovers. Minor advertising within Facebook increased the fan base, but when Honda's advertising team took the idea and turned it into 15- and 30-second TV spots the page fan base exploded (Halliday, 2009).

Though this social media page was doing well, it flourished with the assistance of the television airtime. The senior manager of national advertising noted that TV wasn't dead, and they should still use it (Halliday, 2009). In this campaign, television became the crucial advertising point to link people to the Facebook page. It became a *complementary* piece to the overall marketing plan. In addition, word of mouth was still deemed “the oldest and arguably the most potent advertising you can do,” (Halliday, 2009).

This campaign only had loyal fans seek out the brand. Many people owned Hondas, but didn't see the need to search for the Facebook page – or maybe they found it and decided they didn't want to join. It wasn't until a television

advertisement aired (during NFL games and popular prime-time programming) that the Facebook page become more popular. Further still, the advertising manager firmly believes that word of mouth (both through Facebook sharing and real-life communication) is still a top contender in advertising success.

The biggest question remains: was this just a way to boost brand loyalty and brand awareness or was the campaign effective in selling cars? Honda tried a similar strategy in 2004, but without the social media sites. The campaign wasn't nearly as developed or as successful. This shows that social media really is a successful, complementary tool to any communication plan. Social media, combined with traditional communication techniques, allowed the 2009 Honda campaign to reach its full potential.

Many organizations do not have a history of running a campaign twice and having social media greatly improve one to realize the success that social media can bring. These organizations worry about the return on investment of the work and resources it puts into social media platforms. However, Hoffman and Fodor (2010) suggest that the ROI isn't what the organization gains, but what customers gain from the experience.

Instead of emphasizing their own marketing investments and calculating the returns in terms of customer response, managers should begin by considering consumer motivations to use social media and then measure the social media investments customers make as they engage with the marketers' brands (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010, p. 42).

According to Hoffman and Fodor (2010), these consumer investments include why they visit (for example, to learn about new products) and how they engage with the brand once they are on the site (for example, post a comment or review). These activities are time investments and “can be used to measure key marketing outcomes such as changes in awareness levels or word-of-mouth increases over time,” (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). The consumer controls his or her own online experience, so the time they spend with an organizations’ site and interacting with its brand is already a return on investment – over time, these interactions will form a brand relationship. “The question is not whether to blog or Tweet, but what objectives need to be achieved and which set of tools with their corresponding metrics can best achieve them,” (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). If the consumer takes the time to interact with a brand, he or she is more likely to be considered a loyal consumer, and thus, a brand loyal one.

Brand Engagement

Social media has the ability to enhance brand engagement with many positive effects. “Highly engaging social media campaigns involving user-generated content likely generate commitment on the part of the consumer, reinforcing loyalty to the brand and making the customer more likely to commit additional effort to support the brand in the future,” (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). These committed efforts also encourage word-of-mouth – as they are engaged, they are more likely to encourage others.

According to Chordas (2009) states that social media has become a proven brand mechanism. More than half of social networking users are fans or followers of brand social media pages, and users are more likely to be positive and compliment the brand than say something negative or unsatisfactory.

This researcher wants to further examine Chordas' claims that fans and followers of a brand are more likely to say something positive by examining what type of followers they are. If these followers are indeed "fans," then they may be considered brand loyal consumers and thus would be more likely to say positive things about the brand over negative. This researcher wants to examine the non-brand loyal consumer who follows a brand, and what motives have encouraged this online relationship to take place. This researcher also wants to discover if these social media pages only target their loyal fan-base or if they want to expand their consumer-base.

Chordas (2009) states that 82 percent of brand marketers planned to use social media to promote their brands in 2009, but 37 percent of brands did not know where to begin. This second percentage is at risk if they do not become involved because "nonparticipation allows a brand to be defined by outside audiences and hinders the company in working with policy holders and agents in shaping how that brand is portrayed," (Chordas, 2009). This researcher agrees with Chordas, and through this study hopes to discover if non-profit and for-profit organizations have effectively used social media to shape their brand personality and marketing effectiveness.

Brands now recognize that social media allows them to communicate directly with their consumers and use it to supplement their traditional marketing strategies. These channels have the potential to redirect consumers to the website or other links with more information without even referencing traditional advertising methods (Chordas, 2009).

Social Media: Big Branding for a Small Business

As discussed, social networking can be a highly useful marketing tool with big brand names. Whether its reach is large or small, it can be effective if it is reaching the right consumers. In Robert Klara's article, "For Smaller, Independent Brands, How Tweet It Is," (2010) he discusses that size does not matter. His example: greeting cards. Hallmark has been in business for roughly a century and employs 14,000 people. It had around 2,000 followers on Twitter. Someecards, a free online e-cards service launched in 2007, has been in business only a few years and has five full-time members of the staff. Its Twitter following is over 1.7 million (Klara, 2010). According to Klara (2010), big businesses with the most resources are less able to compete with indie (independent) brands.

These small businesses have a significantly lower advertising budget and have learned to adapt their marketing to meet the requirements of their budget. They also are more in touch with their entrepreneurial personalities. According to Klara (2010), this leads them to convey mood and tone more easily through social networking forums, like Twitter. As effective as a PR department might be, its employees are more detached from the true personality of the brand. In other

words, it is more difficult for a few employees to convey a personality of a big business than that of a small organization. As Twitter is an opt-in medium, only interested parties participate in the conversation. This allows small businesses the opportunity to get personal (very personal, for example, by using casual jargon and slang) with their followers, where as big businesses must maintain a sense of prestige on a level that is associated with their status.

For many businesses, especially small ones, Twitter is not a numbers game - small, active followings are preferable to large, passive ones (Klara, 2010). It is the quality of the conversation, not the quantity of followers. These small brands will Tweet what they know will interest or engage their followers, and hope for Retweets or leads that encourage visitation to their website. Twitter's quick, easy, targeted, and free forum allows the "little guy" business to make its presence known.

Non-Profit Organizations Using Social Media

Greenberg and MacAulay (2009) share a story about Australian actor Hugh Jackman who started a Twitter contest offering money to a non-profit organization that could prove why they needed the donation in 140 characters. In 2007, YouTube offered non-profit organizations the ability to use the premium channel for free and add a donate button that could link potential donors to the means to support the non-profit organization. According to Greenberg & MacAulay, "Although this is believed to be the first time that a philanthropic

intuitive was sparked using a micro-blogging site, it was not the first instance of a nonprofit organization using social media to advance its cause,” (2009).

“Nonprofit organizations have typically been early adopters of new technology – the Internet played an enormous role in terms of enabling charities and volunteer-based groups to expand their grassroots mobilization and advocacy efforts throughout the 1990s,” (Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009). Today, these social media sites allow organizations to directly engage with their supporters or consumers (Greenberg & MacAulay, 2009) enthuses that engaging promotes new opportunities to share, collaborate, and mobilize collective action.

For nonprofit organizations the prospect of lowering the transaction costs of organizing and delivering service, and of helping enable the emergence of new social patterns, is highly appealing” and they are “seeing new opportunities borne from web-based social technologies to push for changes in public policy and build meaningful relationships with their constituencies (Greenberg, 2009, p. 65).

Waters, Burnett, Lamm, and Lucas (2009) analyzed how non-profit organizations on Facebook implemented disclosure, informational dissemination, and involvement into their social network site profiles, and found that disclosure was the most often used strategy. “Nonprofits have not incorporated the vast majority of the Facebook applications available to them into their social networking presence,” (Waters, Birmett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009, p. 106). The results of their study indicate that nonprofit organizations used Facebook to be open and transparent by disclosing key information, like who maintained the site, what they sought to accomplish, and other basic

information; however, according to Waters et al. (2009) most non-profits failed to use the interactive applications and take advantage of the benefits that social media offers over a regular website.

There was a trend in the information that non-profits posted on Facebook. Links were provided to external news stories, but not their own. Multi-media files, press releases, and campaign information were rarely posted, but contact information to the organization was always included. In addition, it was usually a student intern who took care of the site, as they had more experience with social media than the practitioners who worked for the nonprofit.

This researcher believes that, at the time, non-profits realized they needed to use social media, but were still unsure how to do so effectively. They hired interns who had experience with the sites to manage them; however, these students only had personal experience with the sites – not professional. They knew how to share information, but not utilize multi-media and applications to bolster the page, and they did not encourage dialog with site visitors. This researcher recognizes that social media has changed since Waters et al. (2009) conducted their study, and hopes that this current study can re-evaluate some of the points analyzed by Waters et al. (2009).

A New Look Into Social Media's Effectiveness

This researcher will examine the dynamic relationship between consumer and brand. After drawing upon these articles, it is important to examine what

digital communication tools are used, what messages are sent, and if a brand is current, responsive, and comprehensive in its communication approach. In addition, this researcher wants to examine the consumers, as their take on social media branding has yet to be studied. It will be important to discover if social media branding is only effective with brand-loyal consumers, or if it has the potential to effectively attract other consumer groups.

Upon reviewing secondary research, this researcher also wants to examine any potential differences in digital communication marketing between non-profit and for-profit organizations. Examined articles show different rates of adoption, different uses for the platform, and evolving uses for social media. Over the past few years, organizations adjusted and adapted their strategies to encompass social media marketing techniques, but not all of these organizations have an equal success rate. What significant differences can be seen between non-profit and for-profit organizations? Is one type of organization better equipped to handle social media rather than another?

This researcher hopes to uncover the true effectiveness of a digital communication plan, both for the brand and the consumer.

Chapter 3: Methodology & Study Design

Data Needed

For the first hypothesis (it is expected that organizations using social media maintain relationships with their loyal consumers, and do not direct their marketing toward new consumers), this researcher hopes to examine which types of consumers interact with brand's social media pages. As the nature of social media encourages users to seek out social groups they want to be affiliated with, it is expected that they will choose to interact with a brand page they are comfortable with or loyal to. The data gathered in the survey will determine users' attitudes toward social media and uncover what these users really think of these pages, and if there is a difference in participation between loyal and non-loyal fan bases.

For the second hypothesis (it is expected that nonprofit organizations use social media more effectively and issue stronger call to actions than for-profit organizations), this researcher will seek to discover which organizations seek to interact the most with their consumers – for-profit or non-profit organizations. As one group of organizations typically seeks to raise awareness to make money and the other seeks to raise awareness to encourage service, it is important to uncover if their digital communication techniques and social media branding techniques differ and if one can issue a stronger call to action over the other. The data needed from the content analysis is an in-depth overview of the ten selected organizations and their branding efforts.

The data collected through interviews will also provide insight to marketers' behaviors and why they choose to use social media and what they hope to achieve. This will serve as a supplement to both the survey and the content analysis.

Research Methods

Quantitative research.

Content analysis.

The content analysis will be used to document which online tools and techniques are used by organizations. The organizations were chosen at random using a random number generator and include five for-profit and five non-profit organizations. The for-profit organization sample was randomly selected from the 2011 list of Fortune 500 companies by *Forbes* magazine. The non-profit organization sample was randomly selected from a list of top non-profit organizations found online.

The organizations are part of various industries and have a wide range of brands and products. This avoids comparing similar, competing brands, which may purposely use similar marketing techniques to gain an advantage. The organizations chosen have recognizable brand names and products, as well as a presence in social media (specifically Facebook and Twitter). As these organizations differ in their business and consumer base, the content analysis

will provide an overall snapshot of their digital communication and online marketing efforts.

For-profit organizations.

- Apple – electronics, software
- Staples – office supplies
- Nike – apparel, footwear
- GameStop – gaming electronics, games
- Bed, Bath, & Beyond – home supply and furnishings

Non-profit organizations.

- Feed the Children – food provisions and care to children
- The Red Cross – human safety, immediate response
- Wildlife Conservation Society – nature protection
- National Public Radio – media, communications
- American Museum of Natural History – art, culture

Survey.

In this study, the snowball survey will be conducted online and the link will be shared with a potentially exponential number of people over the age of 18. The researcher will share the survey link with different groups of individuals through key communicators in hopes that a broad spectrum of individuals will participate. This will allow observation of users' behavior and interaction with

social media brand pages. The survey hopes to collect 200 or more participants' responses.

Qualitative research.

Interview.

This study has a second component to analyze H1 – follow up interviews with social media marketing and public relations professionals. Two associates of this researcher will send out LinkedIn invitations that will recruit individuals and create the sample pool for these interviews. This will be done to avoid any direct links with the participants when possible. Of those who express interest in participating in the study, a date and time will be set up to conduct a phone interview. The only requirement for these individuals is that they work in public relations or a related field and have direct experience using social media to help their organization or clients on a constant basis.

After the survey results have been reviewed, this researcher will determine what users expect in terms of social media branding. These results will then be shaped into questions and addressed to the selected social media marketers. Interviewing social media marketers will give this researcher a deeper understanding of what their short-term and long-term goals are and how they work to achieve them.

Data Analysis

The data for the quantitative research instruments (survey and content analysis) will be examined using Microsoft Excel. Using this program, this researcher will be able to analyze means, modes, and perform cross tabulations if necessary. In addition, the online survey will use SurveyMonkey.com to both collect and analyze the data.

The data for the qualitative research will be examined for trends and answer patterns of the interviewees. These trends will allow the researcher to compare interview responses with the survey results.

Through these three research techniques, this researcher hopes get a well-rounded sense of what both the consumer and the brand feel about their experiences through social media marketing and the effectiveness of these efforts.

Chapter 4: Research Results

This researcher used SurveyMonkey.com to collect survey responses from March 1, 2012, through March 21, 2012. During this three-week time, the survey collected 250 responses. Of these, 234 were completed surveys that this researcher could analyze as part of this study.

Interviews were also conducted April 19, 2012, through April 23, 2012. Requests were sent out via LinkedIn and this researcher's extended network. Twenty-five potential participants registered for interviews, eight of who completed the interview process.

The final research instrument, a content analysis of five non-profit and five for-profit organizations, was conducted April 7, 2012. An intercoder analyzed the websites in the month of April. The content analysis reviewed the organizations' website, Facebook, and Twitter pages and their participation in different online activities.

General Findings

Survey.

The demographic portion of the survey shows that of the 234 completed surveys, 69 percent of respondents were female and 31 percent were male. The 18-24-years old age range represented half of the sample, as shown in Figure 1.

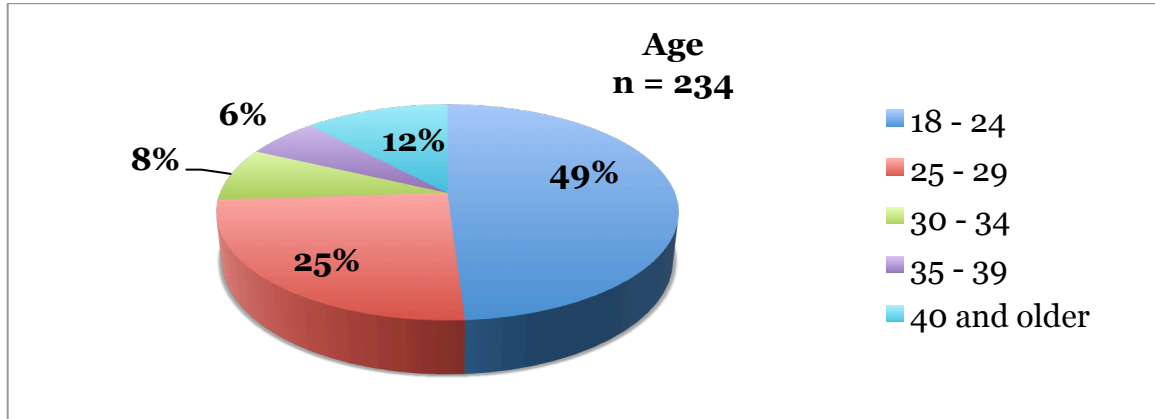


Figure 1: Age

The survey responses show that the majority of participants are highly-educated individuals. Roughly three-quarters (72 percent) of participants earned at least a Bachelor's degree, as shown in Figure 2. Nearly 40 percent of these participants went on to pursue or earned a graduate degree.

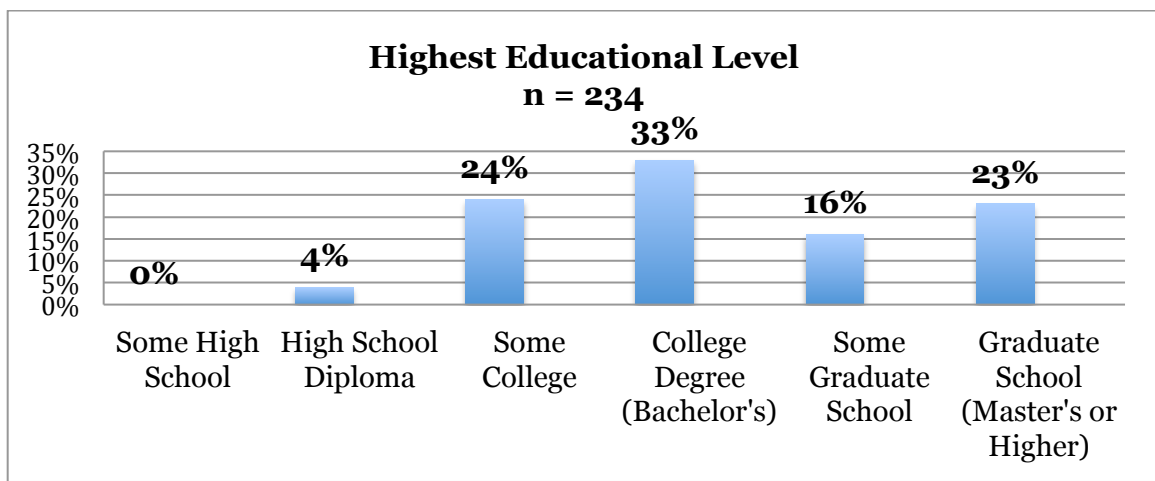


Figure 2: Education

Most participants (54 percent) are currently non-students and work at a full-time job (53 percent).

Of the 234 surveyed individuals, almost half are fully independent when it comes to making purchasing decisions in their household, as indicated in Figure 3. This is significant to the study because it is necessary that the participants are also active buyers.

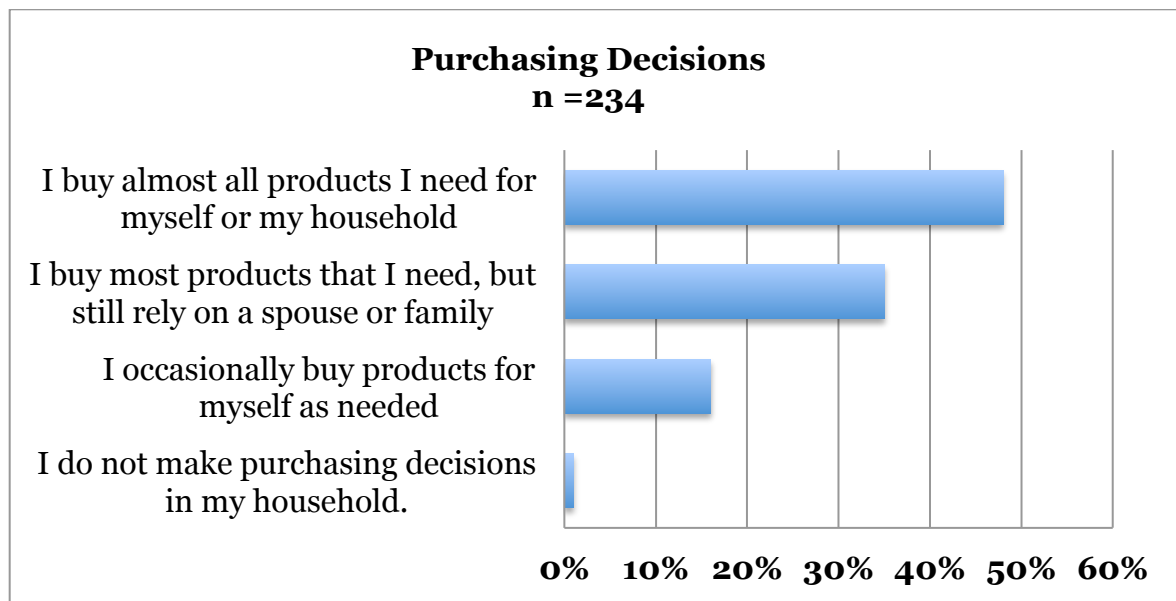


Figure 3: *Purchasing Decisions*

Participants were asked to select the electronic systems they own that are capable of connecting to the Internet. It is important to note that almost the entire sample (99 percent) has access to the Internet via a desktop or laptop computer. Over three-quarters are also able to access the Internet on their phones. With these capabilities, the participants of this study are able to access the Internet at any time they desire, as shown in Table 1.

Table 2: Electronic Systems Owned by the Population

Response	Response Percent	Response Count	Total Response Percent
Computer	99%	232	37%
Smartphone	77%	180	29%
Wireless Gaming System	43%	100	16%
Reading Tablet	25%	59	9%
Tablet	24%	55	9%
Total		626	100%

With these devices, nearly three-quarters of the participants access the Internet more than ten times a day. As Figure 4 shows, nearly 90 percent of the participants access the internet at least six times a day, show that the participant are highly connected individuals.

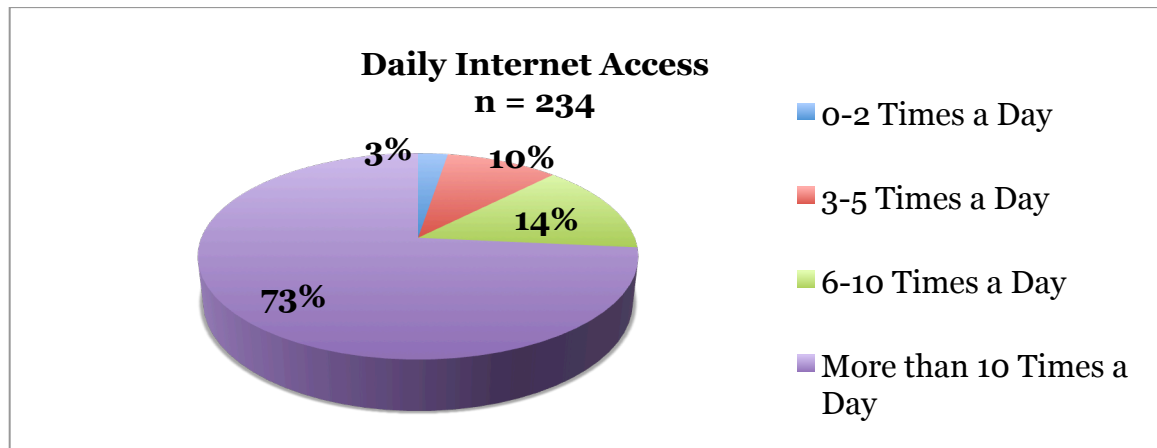


Figure 4: Daily Internet Access

Participants were also asked to select their reasons for accessing the Internet. As Table 2 shows, nearly all participants use email (work or personal) and social media sites (connecting with friends, picture/video sharing, etc.). Over three-quarters also use social media for research (homework, learning, reading, etc.) or pleasure (games, movies, music, etc.).

In the “other” category, responses that couldn’t be categorized into a subgroup included “paying bills and checking my bank account” and “maps, directions, and service times.” The other responses provided by participants could be categorized under “Pleasure” or “Research,” including reading the news, performing a search, and visiting travel and entertainment sites. One participant responded, “Everything is on the Internet...this is a silly question.” Though the participant makes a valid point that many resources are available on the Internet, this researcher was looking to find the percentage of participants using social media (96 percent) in relation to the Internet’s other uses.

Table 3: Reasons for Accessing the Internet

Response	Response Percent	Response Count	Total Response Percent
Email	99%	232	24%
Social Media Sites	96%	225	23%
Research	78%	182	18%
Pleasure	75%	176	18%
Online Shopping	61%	143	15%
Other	9%	22	2%
Total		980	100%

Interviews.

This researcher interviewed eight individuals in public relations, marketing, or a similar communication field. These individuals all have significant experience working with social media marketing and public relations campaigns, either through corporate, non-profit, or agency work. Each interview involved the same set of questions and took no more than thirty minutes.

Table 4: Interview Participants

Participant	Position / Title	Organization / Agency
Harry Bosk	Director of Communication	UMD Center of Integrated Medicine
Stephanie Colao	Marketing Communication Coordinator	Father Martin's Ashley
Jennifer Curran	Marketing Representative	C-SPAN Networks
Michael Gross	Senior VP of PR	HornerCom
Shanna Liberman	Account Executive	Ketchum
Sedonia Martin	PR Manager	Towson Arts & Culture
Annie Sullivan	Manager of Corporate PR	MedImmune
Michelle Vroom	Account Executive	TonicLife Communications

The first question asked the interviewees to explain their digital communication techniques. Though all use social media, Facebook and Twitter are used as the main social media tools. One participant explained their “social PR” strategy, which involves incorporating bloggers into their digital communications campaign. Two participants also mentioned Pinterest, TwitPic, and Twitter to promote their organizations via pictures sharing, and two participants mentioned using FourSquare when promoting events or locations. Three participants also claimed to use email blasts and two participants use Constant Contact to stay connected. As Gross stated, “It will vary by client or industry. We do not use tools ‘x,’ ‘y,’ or ‘z’ all the time...not every campaign requires every entity.”

Each interview participant made it clear that social media communications are a daily activity, often multiple times a day. As Gross stated, “Sometimes we create a schedule, but that is half the battle. We always need to monitor and respond.”

The interviewees' response of using Facebook and Twitter, and using it daily, is important to this research study because it shows they are actively engaging with users through online content. Due to this social media marketing or public relations experience, these questions show that the participants have knowledge about social media and its practical uses in a communication campaign.

Content analysis.

Through a content analysis, this researcher examined the digital communication efforts of ten organizations – five for-profits and five non-profits. For general findings, each organization had a website, Facebook page, and Twitter feed as part of their digital communication strategy. However, their strategies and efforts varied, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Hypothesis 1 Findings

Survey.

This survey sought to support this researcher's first hypothesis: *it is expected that organizations using social media maintain relationships with their loyal consumers, and do not direct their marketing toward new consumers.* To examine this, the following survey questions prompted exploration in how participants use social media and what motivates them to engage in brand's social media pages.

Earlier, this researcher asked how many times a day users accessed the Internet. Figure 5 shows how many times users access social media sites. As the data shows, these participants log on to social media fairly often. Roughly 34 percent log on 3-5 times a day, and would be classified as a moderate user, and over 50 percent log on more than five times a day, and would be classified as “heavy users.”

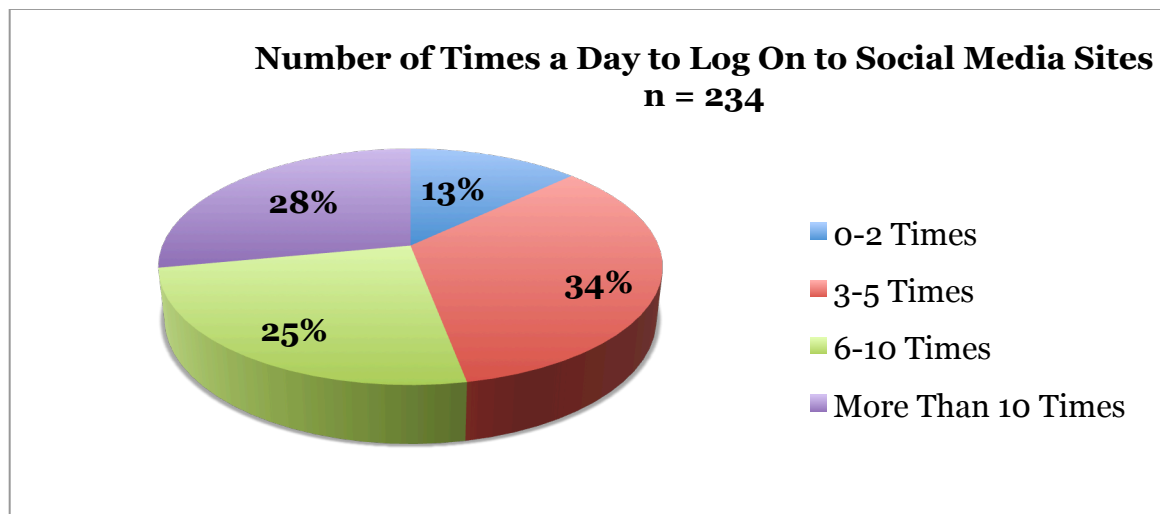


Figure 5: Number of Times a Day to Log On to Social Media Sites

Next, this researcher broke down social media into different categories to determine which kinds of social media were most prominent among users.

Social networking (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) is the most popular type of social media with 96 percent of participants actively using it. As Table 3 indicates, 50 percent or more of the participants use video sharing (YouTube, etc.) and microblogging (Twitter, etc.). As this researcher seeks to determine users’ relationships with brands using Facebook and Twitter, this data supports these social media choices.

Table 5: Reasons for Using Social Media

Response	Response Percent	Response Count	Total Response Percent
Networking	96%	224	27%
Video Sharing	69%	161	19%
Microblogging	50%	117	14%
Bookmarking	36%	84	10%
Photo Sharing	33%	77	9%
Blogging	31%	72	9%
Rating	22%	51	6%
Location	14%	33	4%
Other	4%	9	1%
None	1%	3	.9%
Total		831	100%

After establishing which social media sites are most popular, this researcher sought to examine the participants’ motives behind using the chosen social media sites. According to Figure 6, a third of participants use social media to network and communicate. Another third of participants use social media simply because they have access to it twenty-four hours a day, thanks to technology like portable laptops, smart phones, and tablets. Only two percent actively use social media to get information from brands. Under “other,” respondents replied with choices related to work practices.

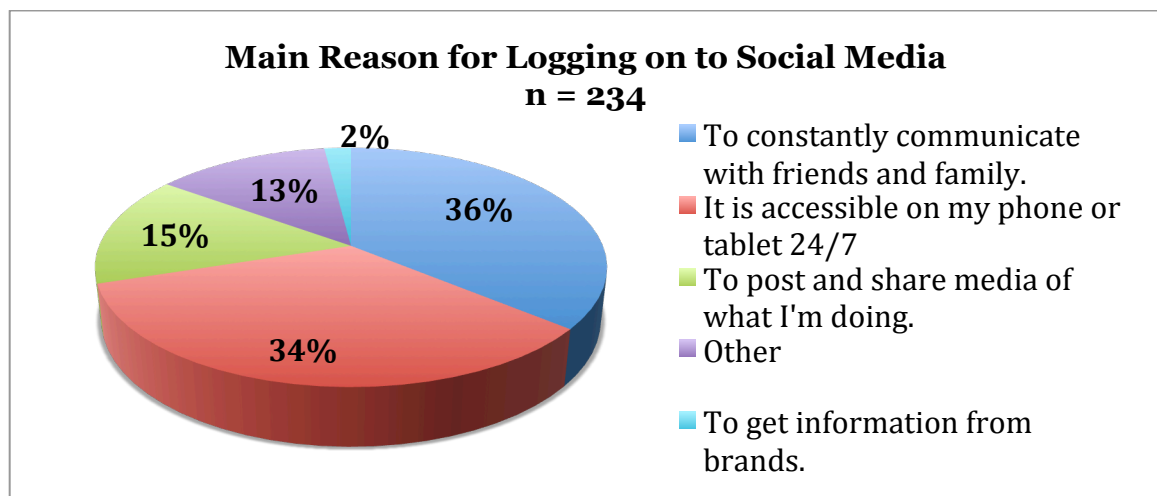


Figure 6: Main Reason for Logging on to Social Media

This researcher used a Likert scale to determine to what degree a participant agreed or disagreed with statements made about branding efforts made through social media. According to Figures 7, 8, and 9, this research shows that participants find social media branding efforts to be “interactive,” “new,” and “responsive.” This shows an overall positive view on their interactions. However, according to Figures 13, 14, and 15, participants rated “trustworthy,” “honest,” and “worthwhile” with the lowest average rating scores.

This is significant, showing that though they may enjoy social media branding, they do not trust it. “Beneficial,” “exciting,” and “fun” averaged in the middle; see Figures 10, 11, and 12.

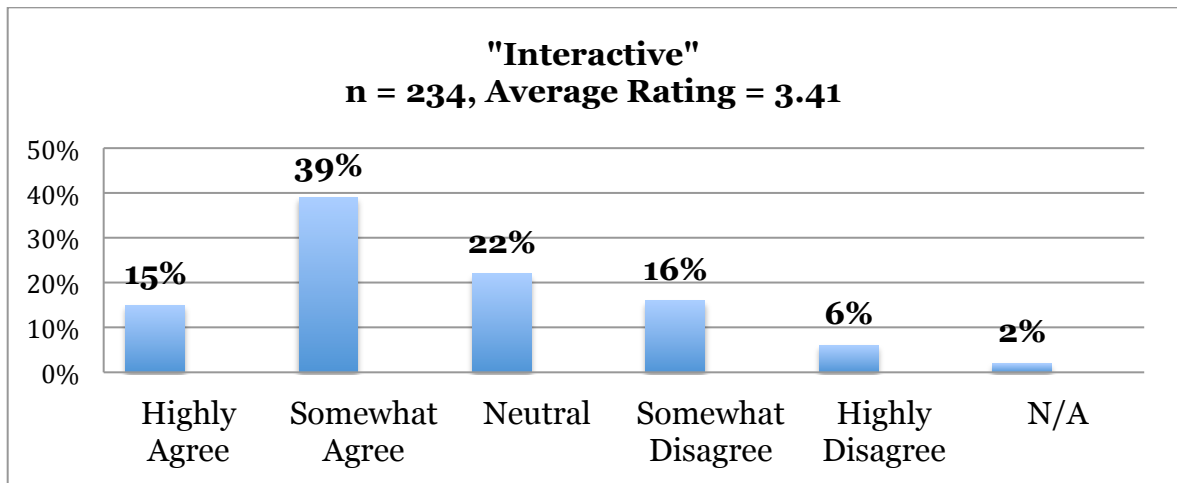


Figure 7: Social Media Branding Efforts – Interactive

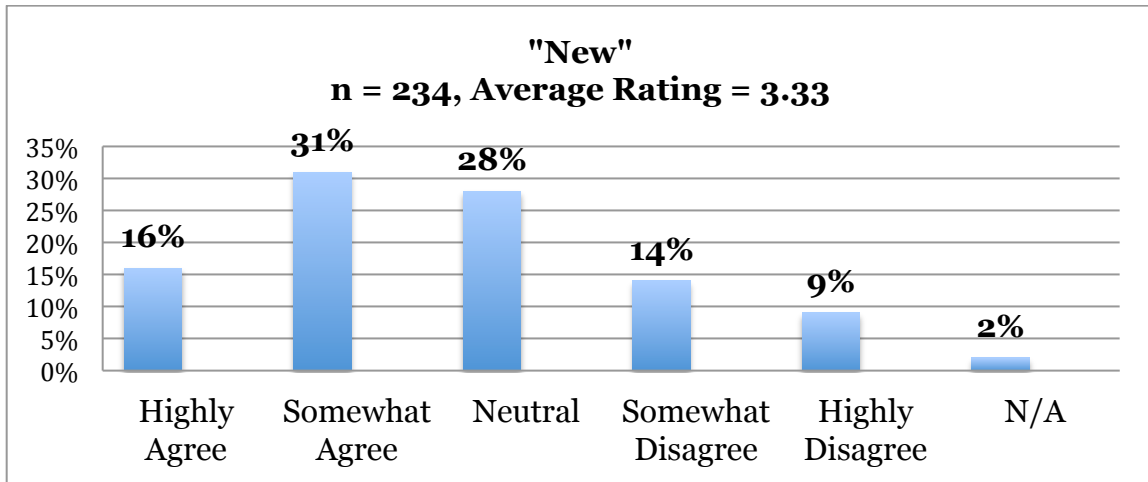


Figure 8: Social Media Branding Efforts – New

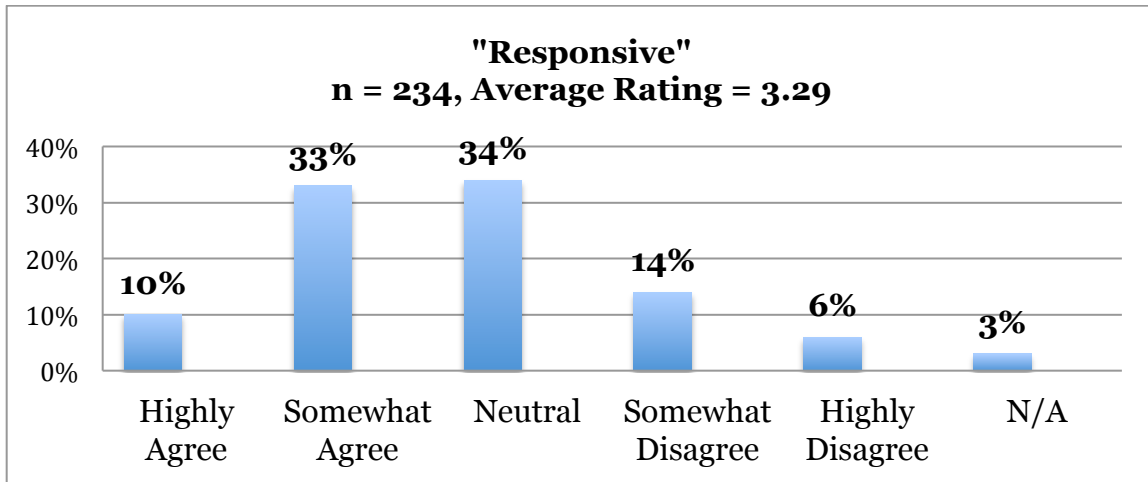


Figure 9: Social Media Branding Efforts - Responsive

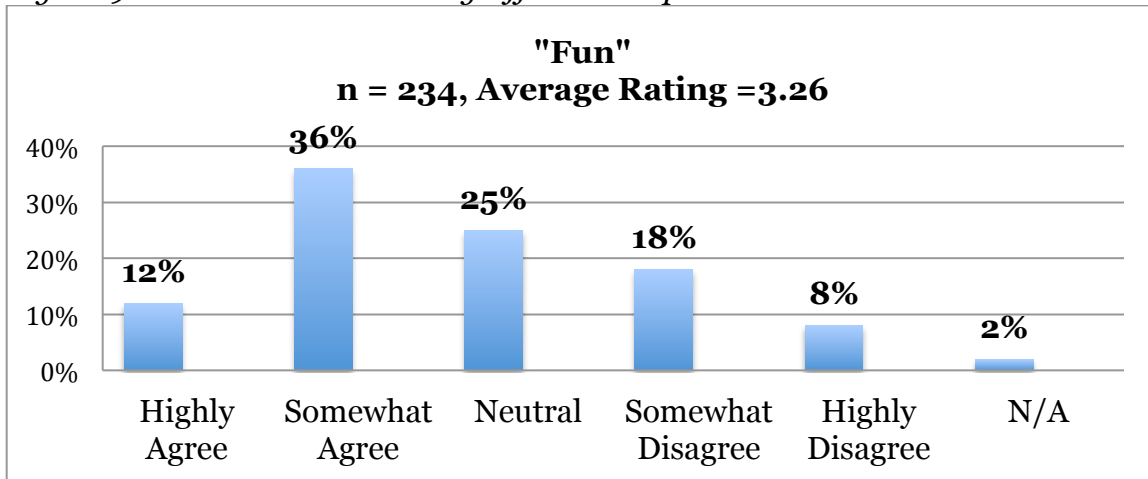


Figure 10: Social Media Branding Efforts – Fun

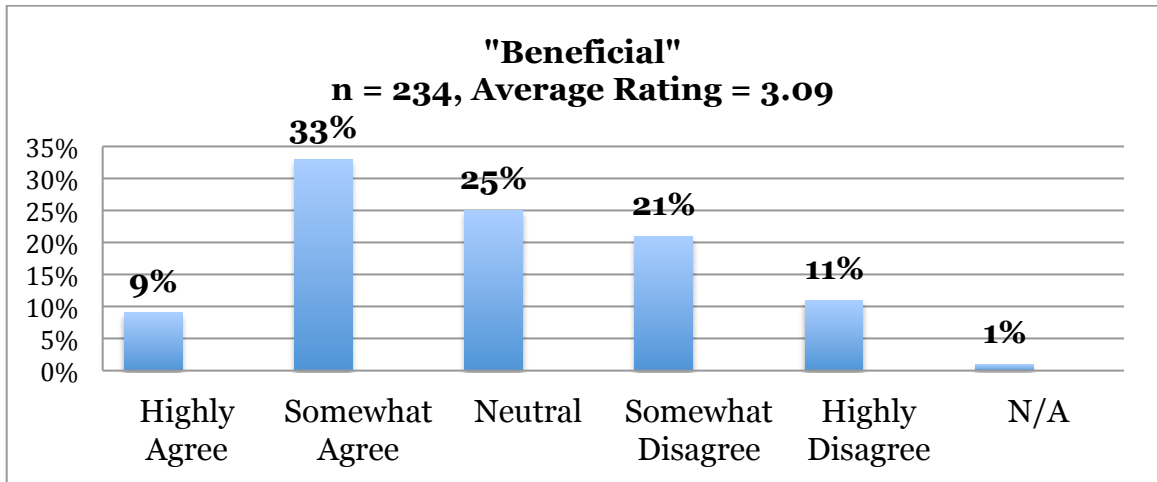


Figure 11: Social Media Branding Efforts – Beneficial

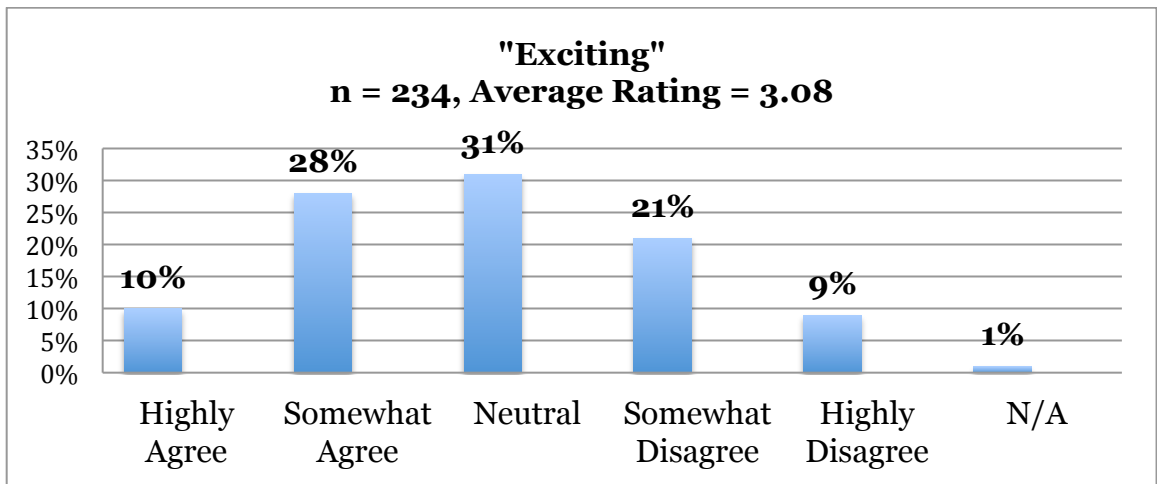


Figure 12: Social Media Branding Efforts – Exciting

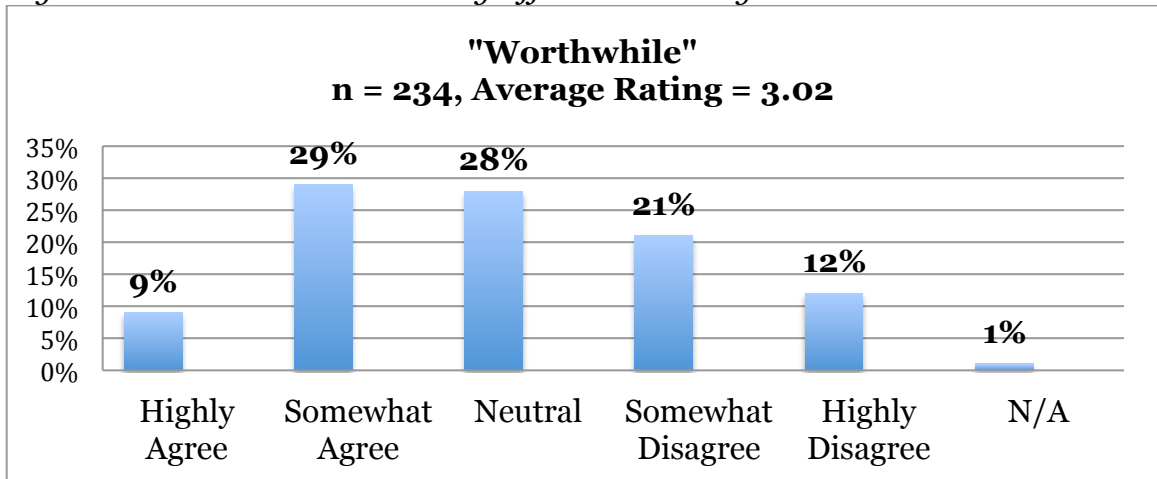


Figure 13: Social Media Branding Efforts – Worthwhile

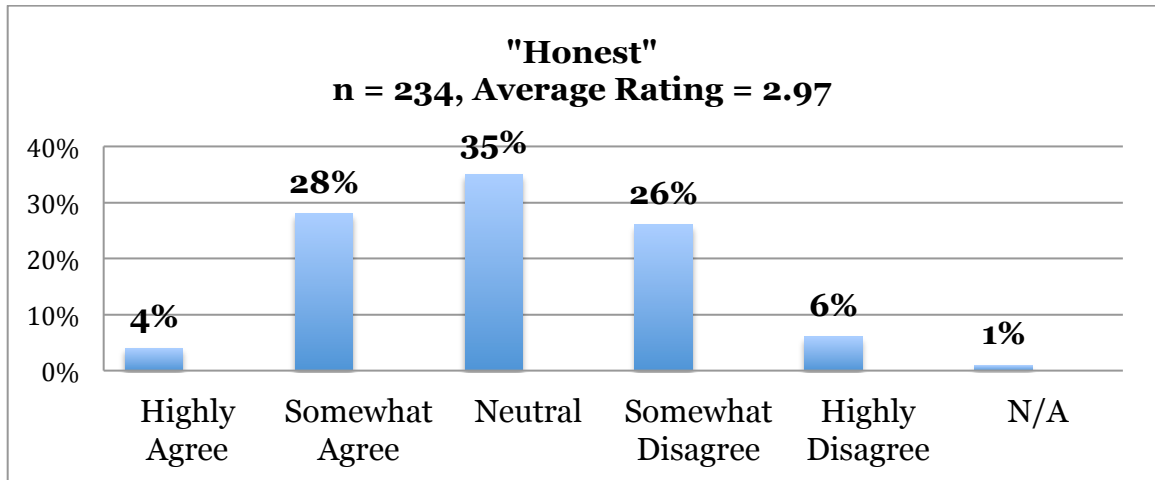


Figure 14: Social Media Branding Efforts – Honest

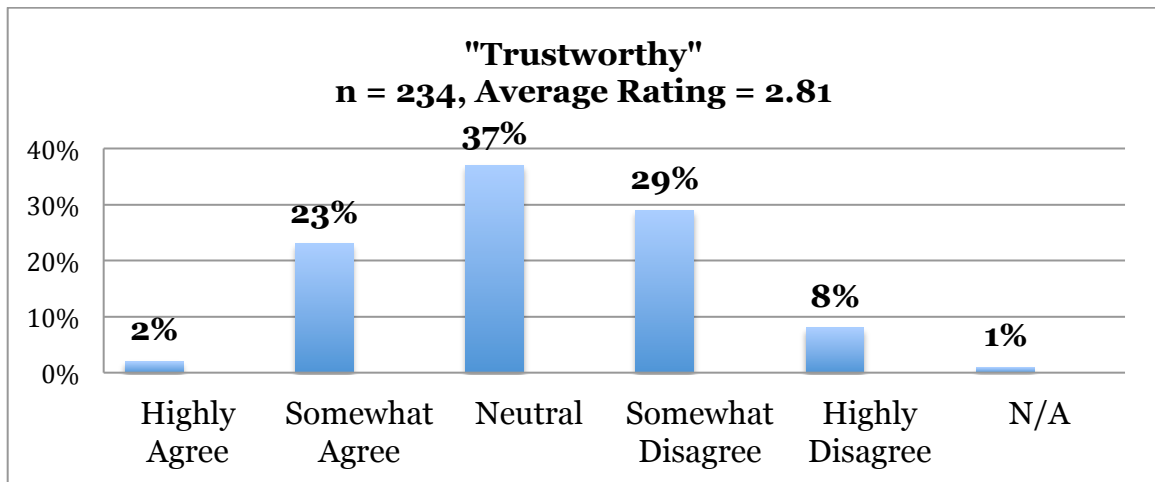


Figure 15 – Social Media Branding Efforts – Trustworthy

After analyzing their Internet and social media use, this researcher wanted to know more about the participants' Facebook use and their perception of and relationship with branding messages through Facebook.

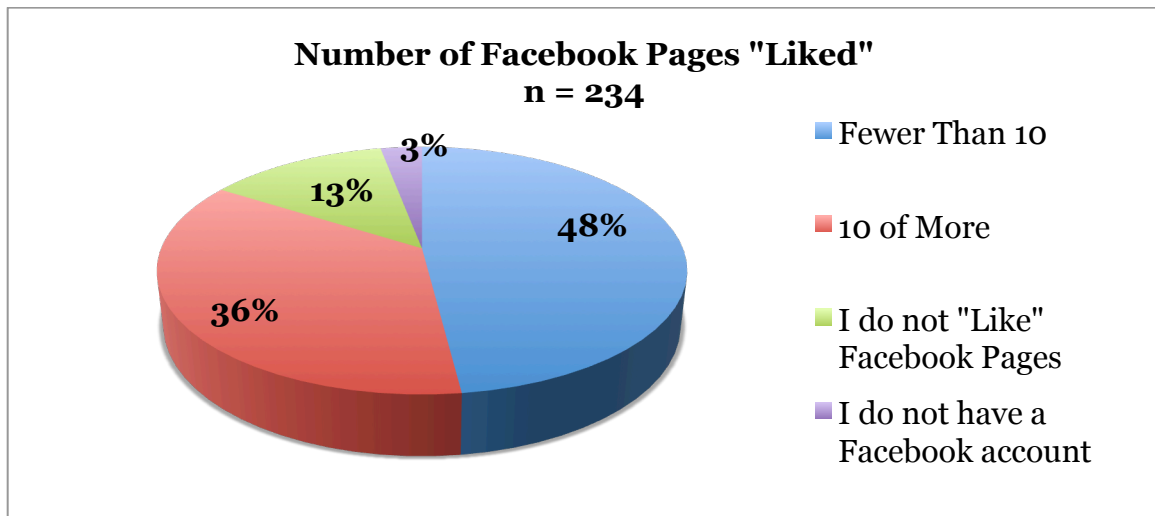


Figure 16: "Liked" Facebook Pages

According to Figure 16, 16 percent of participants do not actively take part in Facebook or Facebook Pages. The remaining sample does actively participate in Facebook Pages, with 36 percent of the sample "Liking" more than ten Facebook brand pages. When asked why they choose to "Like" these Facebook Pages, the most highly rated answer indicated that participants liked to stay connected and receive updates, according to Figures 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21. They were significantly less interested in conversing with other users and discussing products, but did seem to agree that they liked being able to communicate with the brand, receiving coupons or participating in sweepstakes, and gaining information on the brand.

This is significant because the data shows that the connection with the brand and receiving updates is important to them – a sign of a loyal consumer. Sweepstakes and contests were ranked fourth highest; however, less important than staying connected. Sweepstakes and contests are a way to draw in trial

consumers. The data shows that loyal consumers are more active with Facebook brand pages than non-loyal consumers.

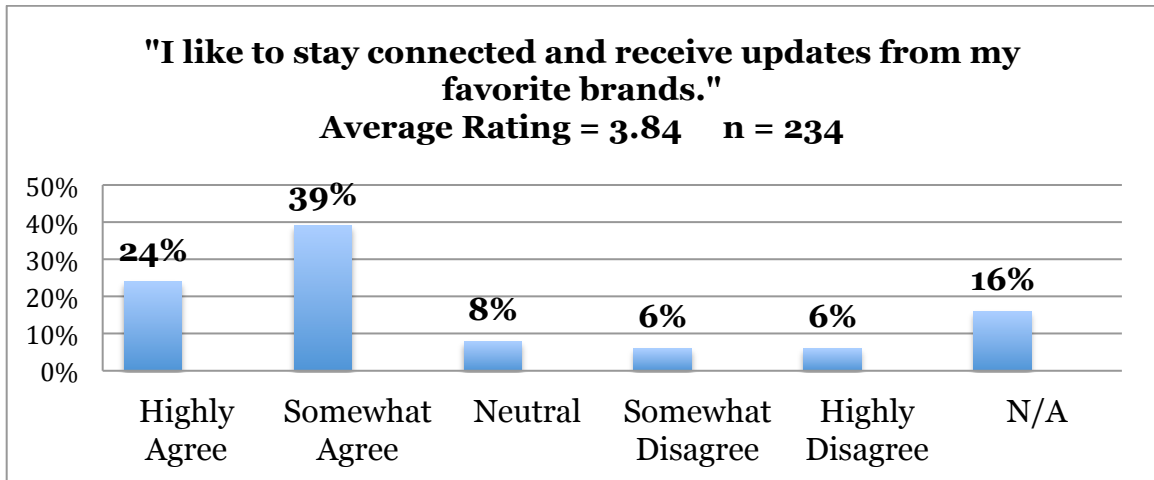


Figure 17: Main Reason for Liking a Facebook Page – Stay Connected

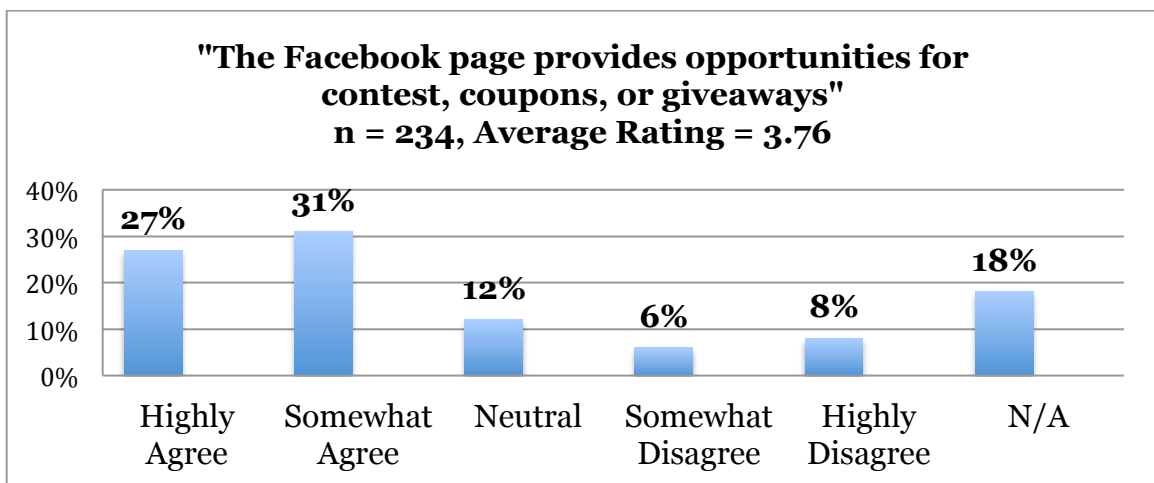


Figure 18: Main Reason for Liking a Facebook Page – Incentives

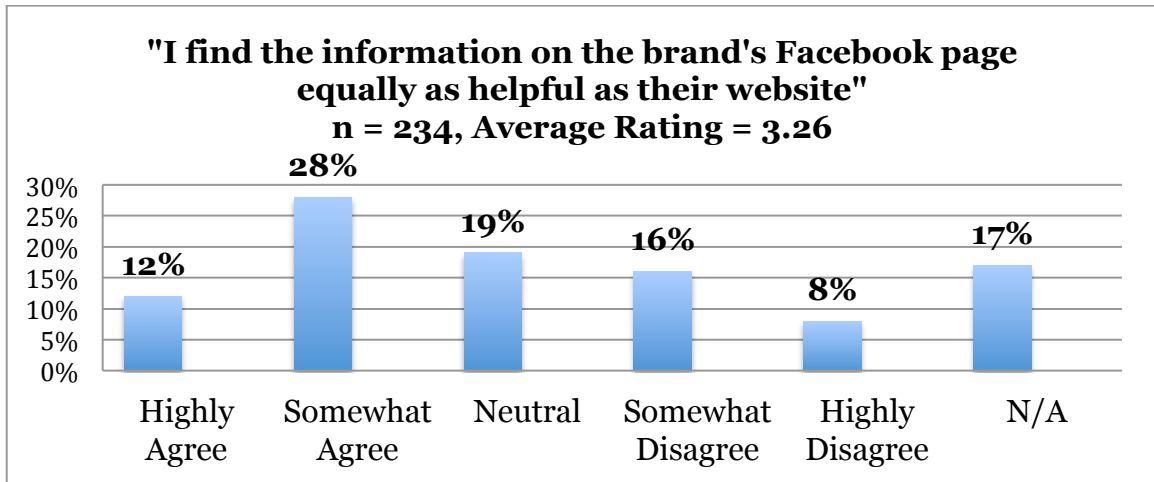


Figure 19: Main Reason for Liking a Facebook Page – Information

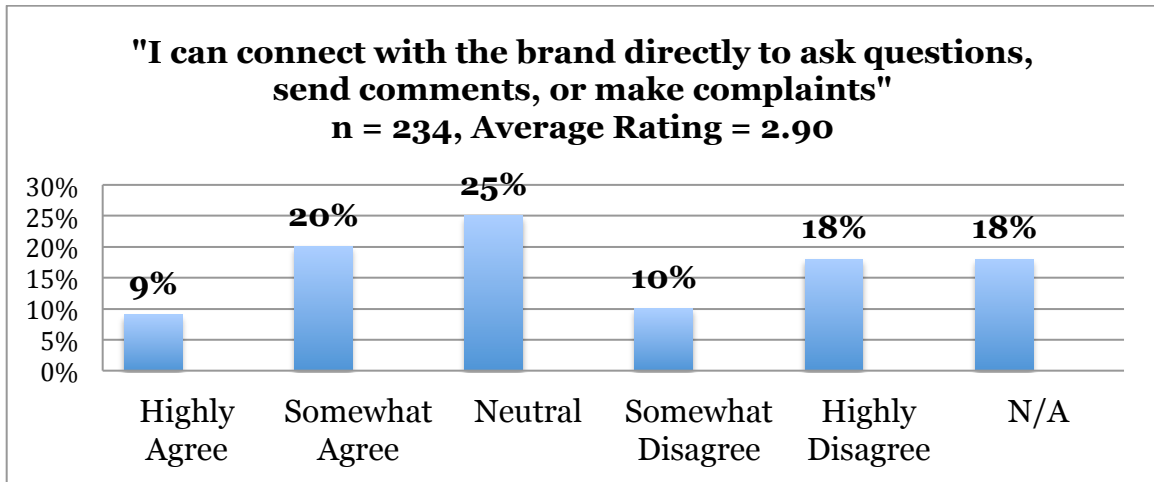


Figure 20: Main Reason for Liking a Facebook Page – Comment

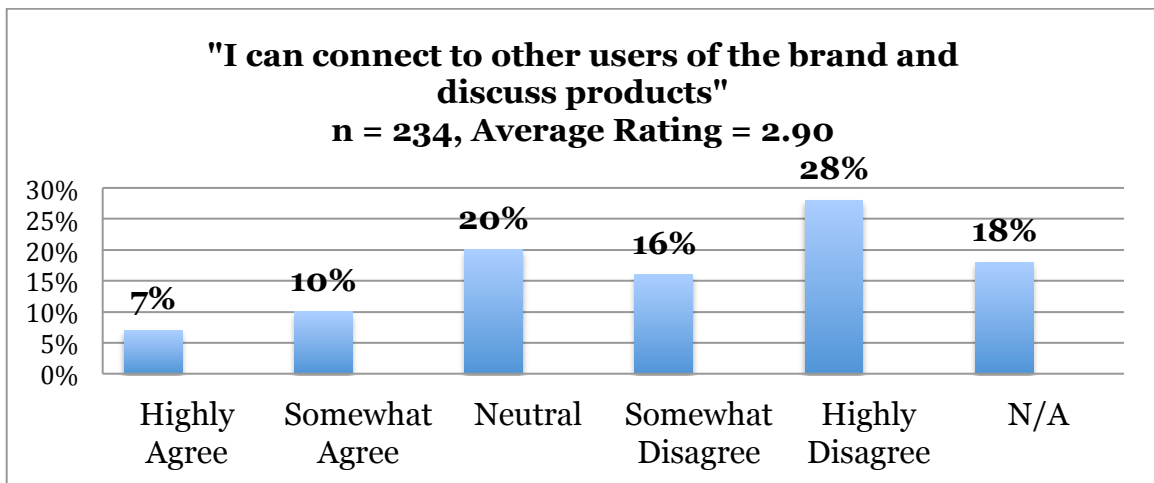


Figure 21: Main Reason for Liking a Facebook Page – User Discussion

After analyzing the participants' experience with Facebook, this researcher wanted to learn more about their experiences with Twitter. The results in Figure 22 show that Twitter is less popular than Facebook, with 56 percent of the sample not actively participating in Twitter or Following brand's Twitter feeds. This is important to note as it lowers the average rating scores for the rest of the data as many participants chose "not applicable."

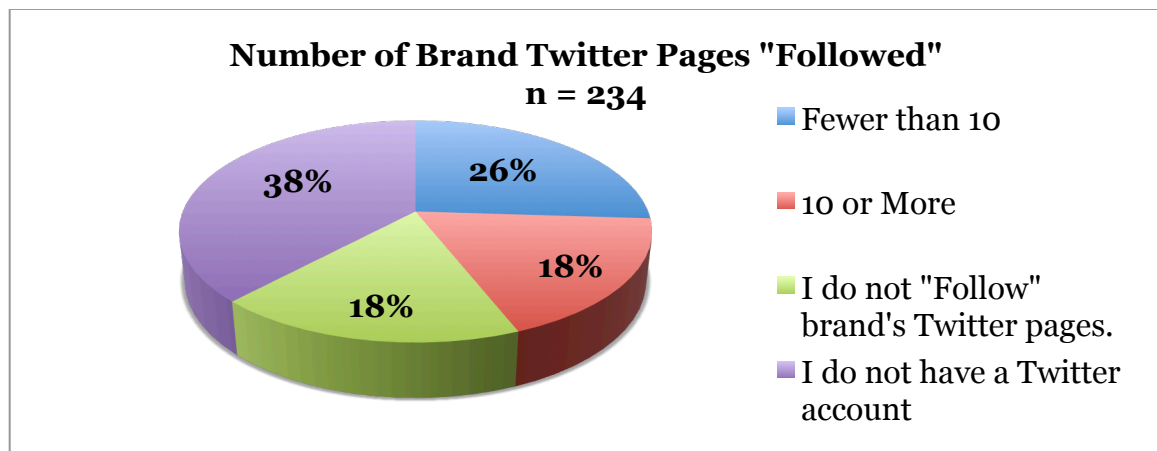


Figure 22: Twitter Pages "Followed"

Next, respondents indicated why they chose to follow brands' Twitter feeds. The participants were asked these same questions about their involvement with Facebook. The most highly rated answer was that participants liked "staying connected" and "receiving updates," according to Figure 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27. The average rating score for each question ranked the same as the Facebook questions. Again, this data suggests that activities of loyal consumers are more prominent than those of non-loyal consumers.

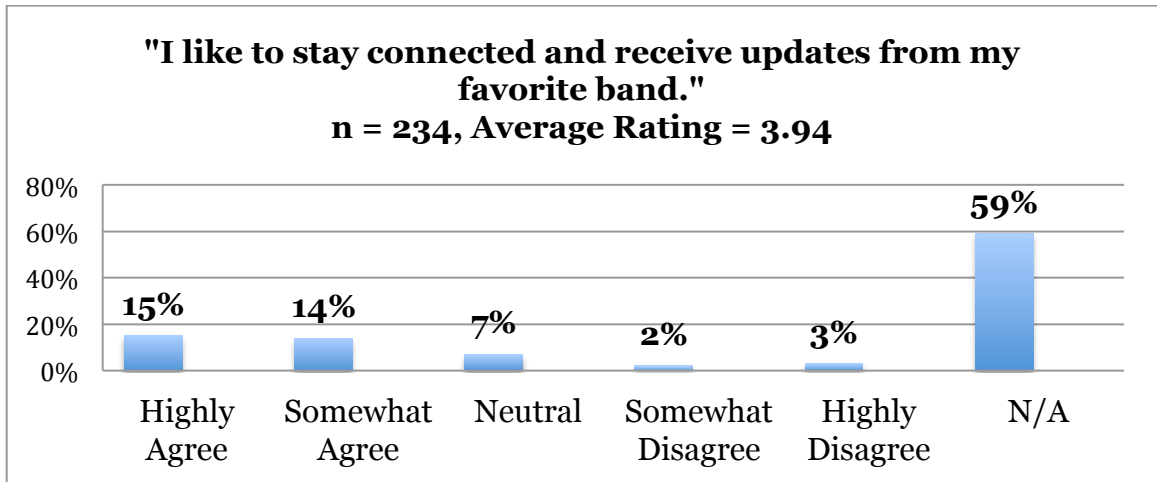


Figure 23: Main Reason for "Following" a Brand's Twitter Page – Stay Connected

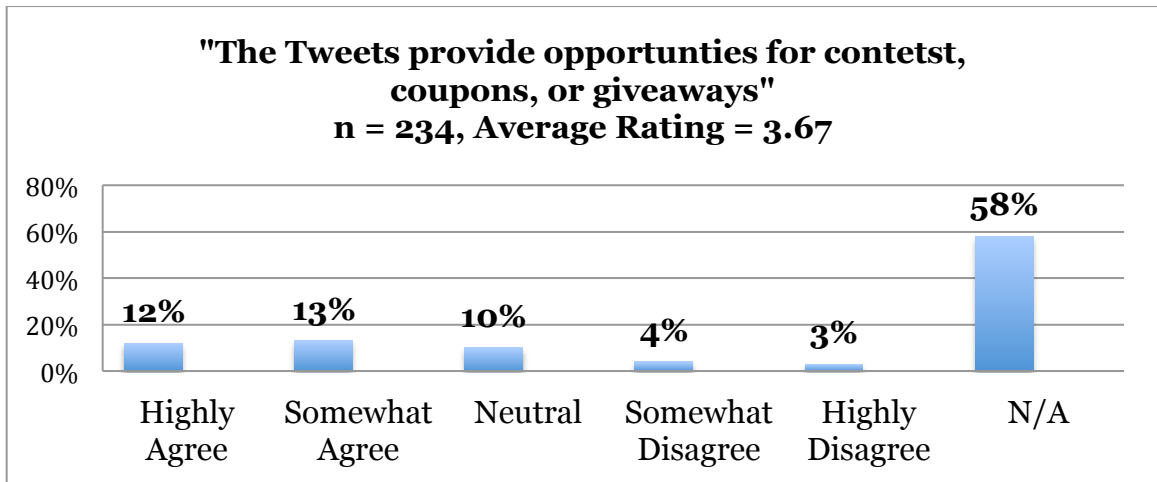


Figure 24: Main Reason for "Following" a Brand's Twitter Page – Incentives

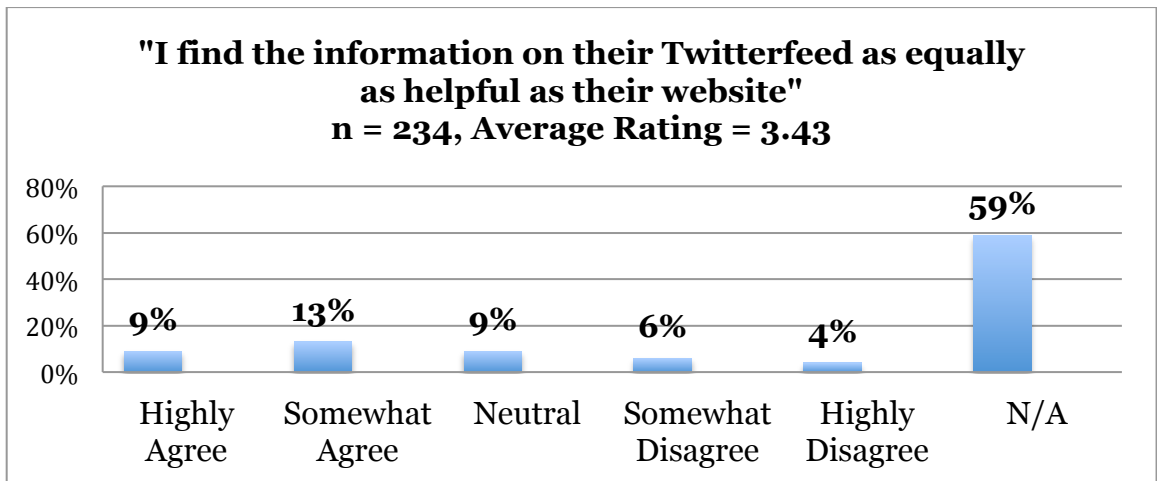


Figure 25: Main Reason for "Following" a Twitter Page - Information

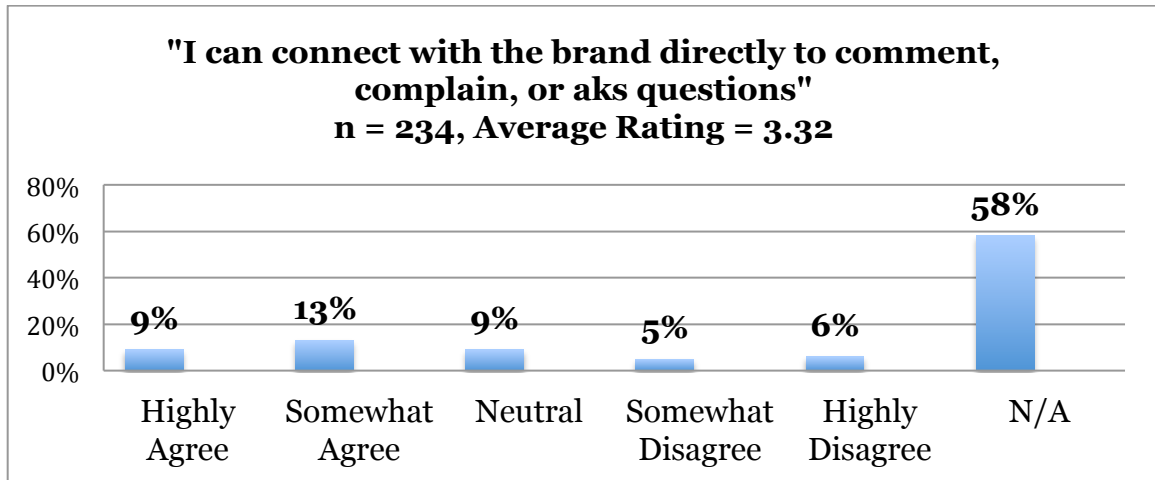


Figure 26: Main Reason for “Following” a Twitter Page – Comment

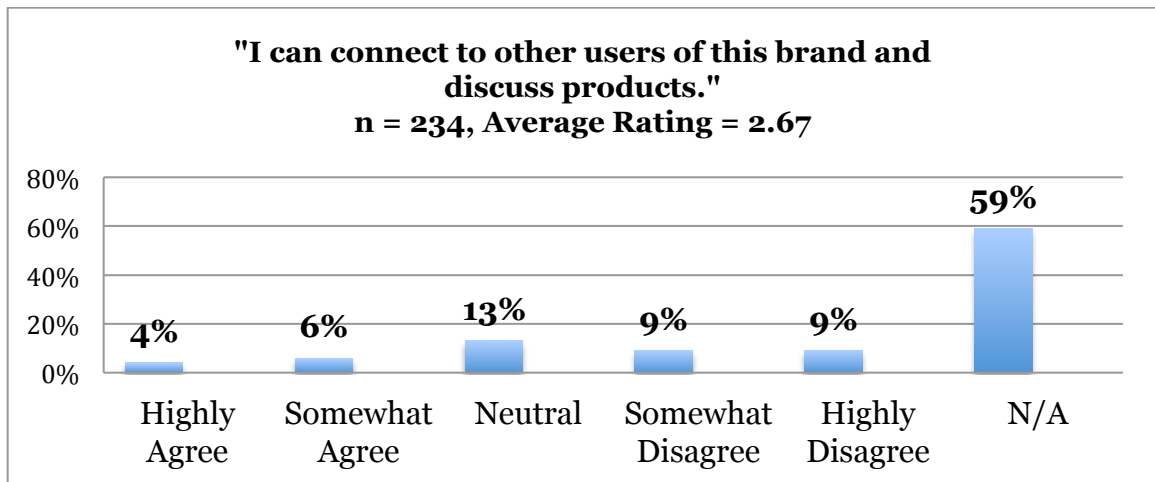


Figure 27: Main Reason for “Following” a Twitter Page - User Discussion

Again, the large number of “not applicable” responses can be attributed to the fact that 56 percent of respondents previously stated they do not have a Twitter account or do not “Follow” brands’ Twitter pages.

The next aim of the survey was to examine the users’ attentiveness to the brand social media pages that they follow.

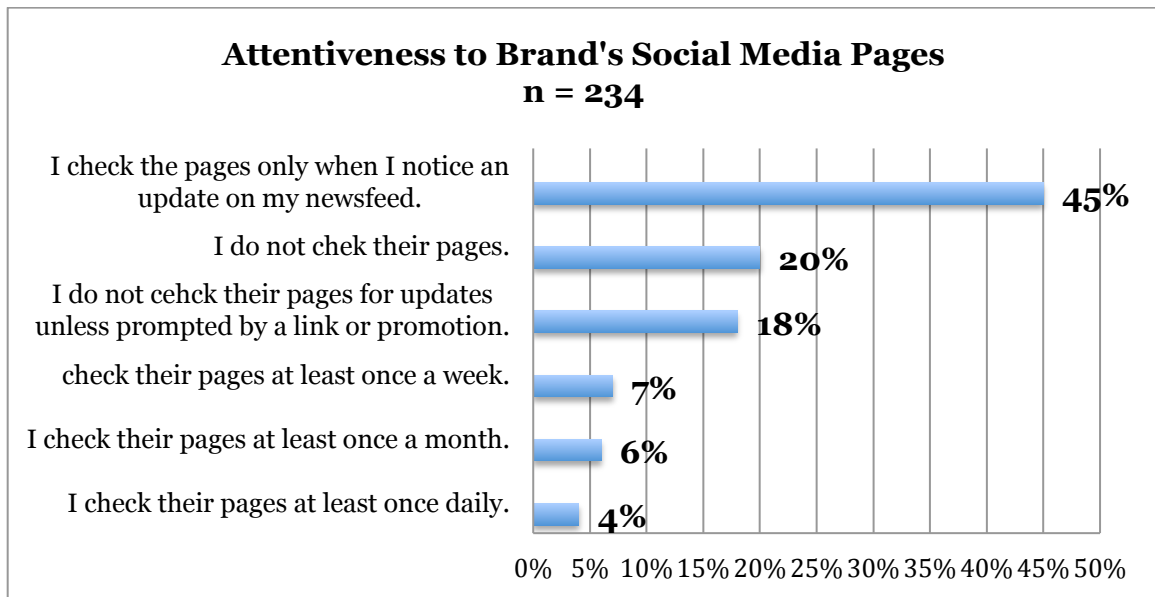


Figure 28: Attentiveness to Brands' Social Media Pages

According to Figure 28, nearly half of the respondents admitted to only checking the page if they saw an update on their newsfeed. A fifth of these respondents admitted to not checking at all, and another fifth only checked the pages if there was an incentive for them to participate. The minority of participants actively checked a brand's social media pages a few times a month.

According to Figure 29, roughly half of the participants make the decision to "Follow" or "Like" a particular brand's social media page based on their need or want for information and updates on a product or brand they like. This is a sign of a loyal consumer. Roughly a fifth choose to "Follow" or "Like" a particular brand's social media page based on incentives, and another fifth wants to showcase their affiliation with the brand. Overall, answers leaned more toward loyal-consumer actions, with nearly 70 percent of the sample wanting to know more or have affiliation with the brand.

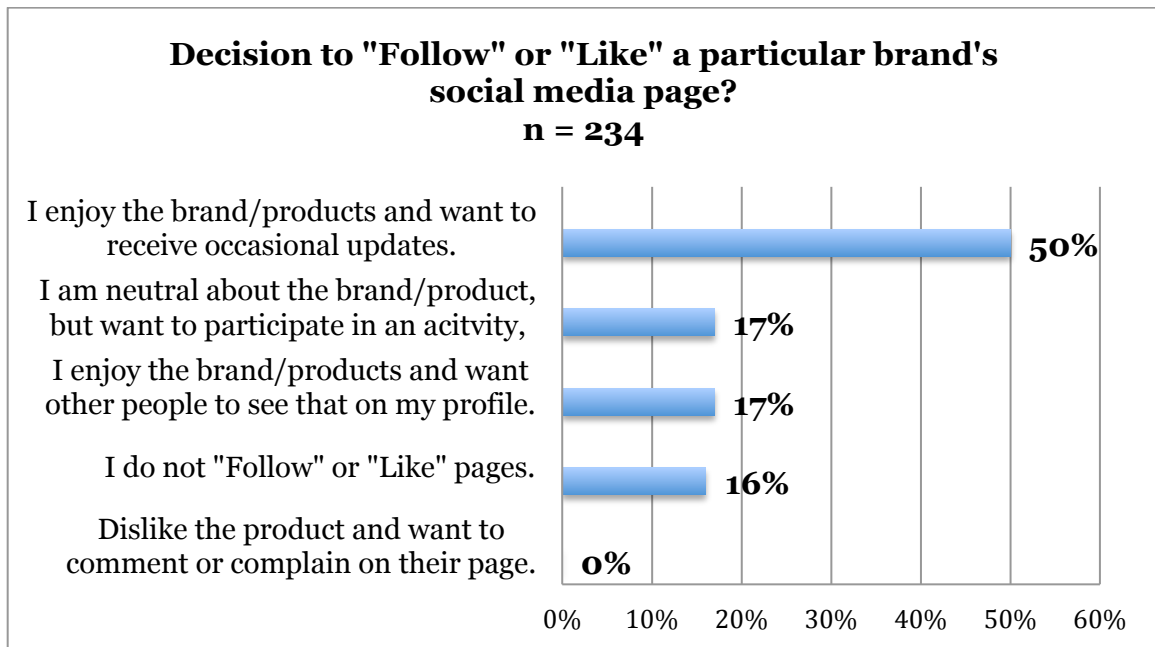


Figure 29: Decision to "Follow"/ "Like" a Particular's Brand's Social Media Page

According to Figure 30, nearly 60 percent would not be willing to "Follow" or "Like" a brand's social media page if they weren't a consumer of its products. This shows that non-loyal consumers are not interested in participating in brand's social media pages. Only 20 percent of the sample agrees they would follow the pages because they may like the products even if they do not own them. Of the participants who responded "other," most said they would "Follow" or "Like" a page if they knew the person behind the brand or product personally, or if they wanted to network with them.

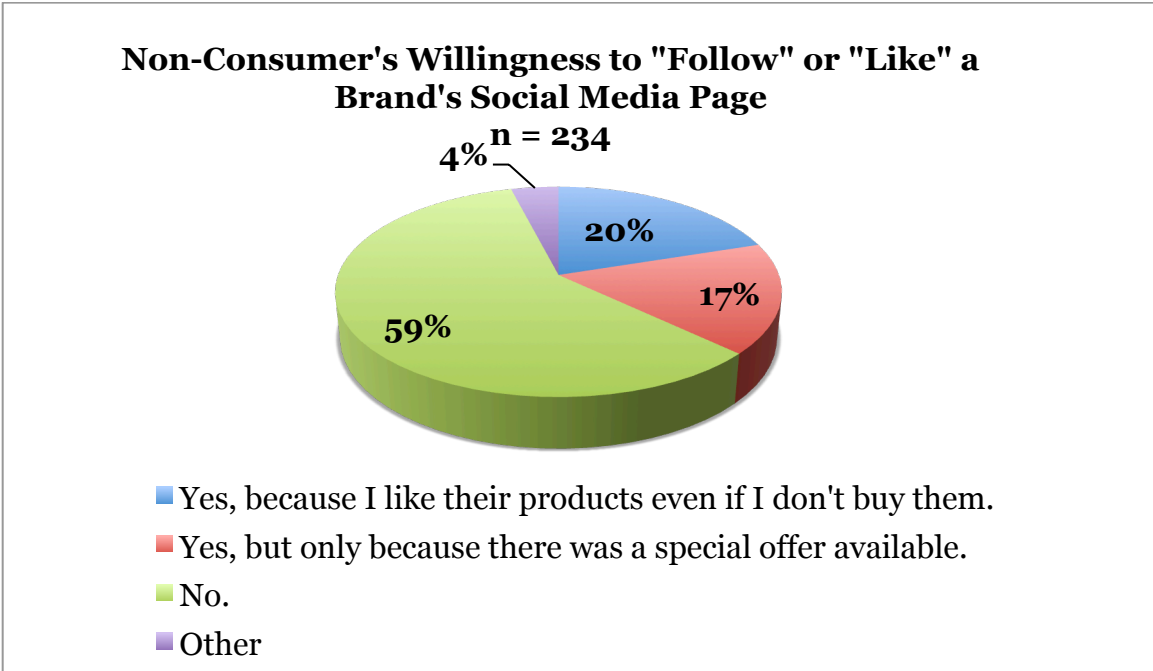


Figure 30: Non-Consumers' Willingness to Follow

The final question on the survey asked if the participants ever "Followed" or "Liked" a brand's social media page for a special offer (contents, sweepstakes, etc.), do they remove their affiliation after the promotional period ends.

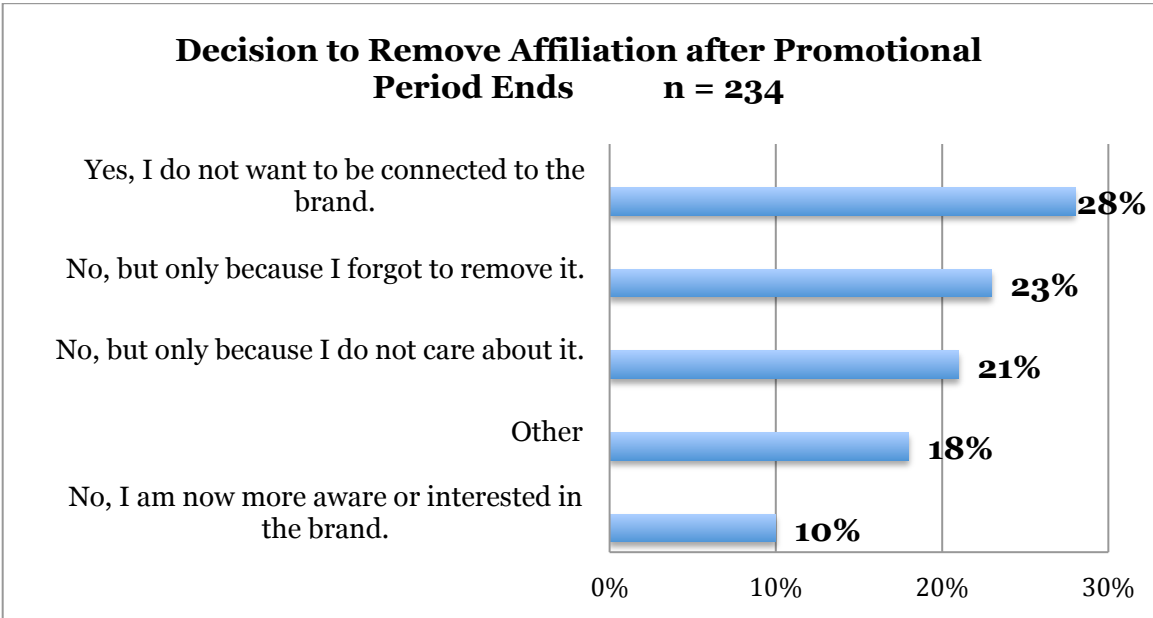


Figure 31: Users' Willingness to Remove Affiliation

According to Figure 31, after a promotional period ends, nearly 30 percent choose to remove their affiliation with the brand and did not want to be connected with it. Roughly 44 percent of participants who didn't remove their affiliation either forgot to or didn't care enough to, but had little interest in the brand outside of the promotion. However, 10 percent kept their affiliation because they were now interested in the brand. The "other" responses were majority "not applicable" answers for those who do not use either Facebook or Twitter or if they chose not to be involved in social media pages. A few other responses included, "I remove affiliation if the messages become annoying" and "occasionally I go through all my pages and delete the ones I am no longer interested in."

Interviews

After establishing that each interview participant actively uses social media as part of their digital communication plan, this researcher sought to discover how they use it and who it is directed toward.

When asked how they use social media to engage loyal consumers versus potential consumers, this research received many different answers. Stephanie Colao, Harry Bosk, Michael Gross, Michelle Vroom and Shanna Liberman stated that a loyal consumer and a potential consumer receive the same social media campaign strategy. Through their responses it can be concluded that they use these efforts in trial and error, and that they hope it'll reach potential consumers as well as their loyal ones.

According to Annie Sullivan, Facebook is more personal (as the users seek out the brand) and provides an easier time reaching loyal consumers. Twitter provides an easier platform for connecting with people you don't know, with the help of trending hashtag comments and Retweets. She has found that a consumer is more like to follow a brand on Twitter than Facebook due to the fair amount of anonymity a user has. Meanwhile, Jennifer Curran disagrees, saying that Facebook is an excellent tool for reaching potential consumers. Her organization uses Facebook and YouTube to create shareable online videos. Sedonia Martin differs completely from this group, stating that the "old techniques" of printed communication and traditional outreach incentives are used over social media to reach a potential target.

Arguably, one of the most beneficial features of social media is the ability for a brand to engage with consumers. Each interview participant was asked about their engagement strategy through social media, and if they use Facebook or Twitter to do so. The overall census of the group is that social media is part promotion and part engagement. The interviewed participants all stated that they wanted to provide content that users would interact with and, hopefully, share with their own peers on their own pages. Many post questions with an accompanying article or video; some do polls. Sedonia Martin stated that she lets her interns create a social media strategy and doesn't get too involved; however, as she uses college interns to communicate with the college student target group, their online engagement is pretty active and very positive.

When asked how they integrated the different types of social media into one integrated campaign, most were quick to point out that not every social media platform needs to be used, and sometimes integration is not needed. “It’s important to know what your consumers say about your brand before you start all these social media pages. Only integrate what you need and what you can use. You can’t delete it, or the comments, later if you don’t like what’s going on,” says Sullivan.

Messaging is also an important part of integration, though sometimes the meaning of the message is more important than the actual message. “We just started using twitter, so it’s not as cohesive as we’d like it to be, but the messaging is always consistent – what we say is what we practice; our philosophy and our values,” says Bosk. Gross agreed that content remains important, but sometimes integration is simply reposting the same information. “Realistically, a lot of the information is reposted on multiple platforms because there is only so much time in a day.”

Of the interviewed participants, six said that their organization or agency had a small team to deal with social media, one said she was entirely responsible for it (she worked in a non-profit organization), and one stated that she and her interns would work together. The general census was everyone who worked in a public relations or marketing agency had experience with social media, but they

were usually sub grouped by industry or client, varying the number of individuals working on a campaign.

As with any medium, there are perks and risk, benefits and drawbacks – social media is not excluded. Almost everyone agreed that social media’s ability to engage with a potentially infinite number of people, for free, in real-time was its greatest benefit. “People can get a different view of the organization, and put a face to it...[you can] build trust and loyalty with more natural dialogue,” says Vroom. As Bosk states it, “You’re not dependent on someone else to deliver your message. You have complete control.” He also adds that it has the potential to go viral.

Most agree that there are drawbacks to social media, but have heard about it from other organizations and not from personal experience. Most claimed that their biggest problem was coming up with creative, engaging content. “When you’re working with a team, sometimes people post something you wouldn’t post or something you’d say differently. You have to shrug it off and just accept that we each are going to say something slightly differently,” says Bosk. Liberman stated that deciding what content to use was the biggest problem of social media. “Most clients don’t take our advice so their communication plans aren’t effective as they could have been. Or sometimes we simply implement something that didn’t work the way we planned and we have to tweak.” Liberman says. Gross agreed with Liberman, stating, “Something we thought was a positive, feel-good

piece had a negative reaction from the comments. We were surprised and had to make changes in our approach.”

Two interviewees work in the healthcare industry, and are required to follow certain government regulations and restrictions. This limits online conversations, such as posting and sharing abilities. They claimed that the biggest problem they faced involved coming up with creative ways to use social media through trial and error. Vroom advises that every organization should create a social media policy for users and employees who interact with the organization’s social media pages

All eight interviewed participants felt strongly that consumers are positively receptive toward their social media efforts. “Social media is so open and honest; you will know instantly what people think because they will tell you,” says Liberman. Bosk was able to hear first hand from individuals who read, “Like,” and share his content. “We have a big group of nurses who follow us, and they have told us that enjoy our page and our content in person.” Martin agrees that the response is positive, but isn’t sure of its long lasting effects. “We do a lot of sweepstakes and our main target is college students. They are exciting to win things,” Martin says. “You can debate would they be generally interested without the prizes, but as we are for the students and we’re on campus, we do get a lot more attention and recognition this way.”

When this researcher interviewed participants about their experience with ROI, return on investment, or measuring the effectiveness of their social media efforts, most didn't have established measurement techniques. The main measurement tool was analytics, and counting how many viewers visited, commented, or shared a page. "The impression of their experience...we don't have any way of recording because we are not in their head. It is hard to calculate that kind of psychological experience. The analytics gives us numbers but not an emotional experience. We definitely can not determine their loyalty or emotional connection to us," says Martin. Bosk, however, found that real-life events had the greatest effect on his real-time social media conversations. "We just had a conference, and we immediately got a lot of new people following us. After that, we've had a strong, steady incline...everyone is sharing our information and more and more people are learning about us." Gross claims that the real ROI comes from the real-time conversation, "whether you have 400 or 40,000 consumers, it doesn't matter if you're not interacting with or learning from these consumers," he says.

These questions are important to this researcher because they define the public relations and marketing professionals' direct experience with engaging consumers. They explore the engagement process and evaluation efforts, as well as drawing out stories and examples from personal experiences.

The eight interviewed professionals all had similar approaches for loyal consumers; however, everyone's potential consumers received varying approaches or were neglected completely.

Hypothesis 1 Conclusion

Survey results and interview responses support H1, that organizations using social media maintain relationships with their loyal consumers, and do not direct their marketing toward new consumers.

Hypothesis 2 Findings

Content analysis.

This researcher gathered the following results after comparing and analyzing the five non-profit organizations reported in the content analysis. In this content analysis, one point is earned for every feature or attribute the organization has. They do not earn any points if they do not have that feature or attribute. If this researcher and inter-coder have a discrepancy on a question, then the organization earns half of a point. This content analysis has three sections: website, Facebook page, and Twitter page; with 36 questions total.

Table 6: Content Analysis – Non-Profit Website

	AMoNH	FtC	NPR	TRC	WCS
Social media links on homepage	1	1	1	1	1
Social media links on contact page	1	1	0	1	0
Social media content page	0	0	1	1	0
Online media newsroom	0	1	1	1	1
Engages in Facebook (from website)	1	1	1	1	1
Engages in Twitter (from website)	1	1	1	1	0
Engages in photo sharing (from website)	1	0	1	1	0
Engages in video sharing (from website)	1	1	1	1	1
Engages in location social media (from website)	0	0	0	0	0

First, this researcher will explain the results of the non-profit organizations. As seen in Table 6, the organizations have websites that integrate social media into their communication strategies. Each organization engages in Facebook, Twitter, and at least one other form of social media, such as picture or video sharing. All of these organizations promote their social media links on the home page, and three promote them on their contact page as well. Two

organizations have a social media contact page and four organizations make use of an online newsroom.

Table 7: Content Analysis – Non-Profit Facebook Pages

	AMoNH	FtC	NPR	TRC	WCS
Link to main website	1	1	1	1	1
Link to other social media pages	0	1	0	0	0
Brand posts to its own wall	1	.5	1	1	1
Brand uses event page	1	.5	1	0	0
Brand uploads pictures	1	.5	1	1	1
Brand uploads videos	1	1	0	1	1
Posting/Sharing rules are available	0	0	0	0	0
Displays where/how to download phone apps	0	0	0	0	0
Displays store locations	1	.5	1	1	1
Displays feature products	1	1	0	1	0
Promotes contests/sweepstakes	0	0	0	0	0
Shares coupons/discounts	0	0	0	0	0
Engages with users (positive experience)	1	1	0	0	0
Engages with users (negative experience)	0	0	0	0	0

The organizations all have Facebook pages, but each organization has a varying approach to how they use it, as indicated in Table 7. Though they all linked to the main website, but only Feed the Children linked to other social media pages. However, this researcher found a link to their FourSquare account while the inter-coder did not, so it lost half a point due to its lack of organization and navigation. Though almost every organization shared videos, pictures, or both, and posted their locations, there was very little engagement with users. Only the American Museum of Natural History and Feed the Children were recorded interacting positively with users. None of the organizations engaged with consumers' negative comments (though this could be attributed to being a non-profit organization with few external threats) or offered an incentive strategy

for engagement, such as sweepstakes, coupons/discounts, or even a poll, survey, or question.

This shows that overall the non-profit organizations use their Facebook page as a mini-website – they provide useful content and some rich media (i.e. photos, videos) to inform a user. There is not an engagement strategy in place to engage users’ experiences.

Table 8: Content Analysis – Non-Profit Twitter Pages

	AMoNH	FtC	NPR	TRC	WCS
Link to main website	1	1	1	1	1
Background represents the brand	1	1	1	1	1
User pic represents the brand	1	1	1	1	1
At least 5 Tweets/Week (roughly 1/Day)	1	1	1	1	1
At least 15 Tweets/Month (3-5/Week)	.5	1	1	.5	0
Tweets include hashtags (posts, not replies)	0	1	0	0	0
Brands retweets followers	1	1	0	1	1
Brand replies to followers	1	1	0	1	1
Has more following than followers	0	0	0	0	0
Follows users (non-promotional, celebs.)	1	1	1	1	1
Tweets topics unrelated to themselves / non-promotional	1	1	0	1	1
Engages with users (positive experience)	1	1	0	1	0
Engages with users (negative experience)	0	0	0	1	.5

As shown in Figure 8, the organizations all have Twitter feeds, and use a brand supportive profile picture and background theme. They all link to the website and have roughly five Tweets a week, but few have over 15 Tweets a month. Only Feed the Children used hashtags to encourage trending topics; however, each non-profit took the time to Retweet and reply to users, excluding National Public Radio, which exclusively uses their Twitter feed to post news.

Overall engagement (including positive and negative interactions with users) was fairly low, and only the National Public Radio Tweeted topics unrelated to it.

This data shows that overall non-profit organizations use Twitter to spread information about themselves. There is some attempt to engage with users, but outreach is low. These organizations spend more time promoting than engaging in Retweets or replies to users, and only one of the organizations use hash tags. The content analysis indicates that each organization uses Twitter to share information and promote itself, but its overall engagement strategy is low.

Next, this researcher will explain the results of the for-profit organizations. This researcher gathered the following results after comparing and analyzing the five for-profit organizations reported in the content analysis.

Table 9: Content Analysis – For-Profit Website

	Apple	Staples	Nike	Game Stop	B B & B
Social media links on homepage	0	0	1	1	1
Social media links on contact page	0	1	1	0	1
Social media content page	0	0	1	0	0
Online media newsroom	1	1	0	1	0
Engages in Facebook (from website)	0	0	0	1	1
Engages in Twitter (from website)	0	1	0	1	1
Engages in photo sharing (from website)	0	0	1	0	0
Engages in video sharing (from website)	0	0	0	1	0
Engages in location social media (from website)	0	0	0	0	0

Each of the for-profit organizations responded differently to the website section of the content analysis, as indicated in Table 9. Apple had an online media newsroom, but did not list any social media outlets on its site, nor did they indicate if it participated in any. Staples listed social media links on its contact page, indicating that it participated in Twitter, and had an online media newsroom. Nike prominently displayed social media links on their homepage and contact page, and also had a whole page of their website devoted to social media which showcases their participation in Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. GameStop showcases their social media links on their home page, indicating they engage in Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and have an online media newsroom as well. Bed, Bath, and Beyond showcases their use of Twitter and Facebook on both their homepage and contact page.

Table 10: Content Analysis – For-Profit Facebook Pages

	Apple	Staples	Nike	Game Stop	B B & B
Link to main website	0	1	1	1	1
Link to other social media pages	0	1	1	1	0
Brand posts to its own wall	0	1	1	1	1
Brand uses event page	0	0	1	1	1
Brand uploads pictures	0	1	1	1	1
Brand uploads videos	0	1	1	1	1
Posting/Sharing rules are available	0	0	0	0	0
Displays where/how to download phone apps	0	1	0	0	0
Displays store locations	0	1	0	1	1
Displays feature products	0	1	1	1	1
Promotes contests/sweepstakes	0	1	1	0	0
Shares coupons/discounts	0	1	0	0	1
Engages with users (positive experience)	0	1	1	0	1
Engages with users (negative experience)	0	.5	1	1	1

Each for-profit organization had a Facebook page; however, Apple is not in charge of its Facebook page as its creator is a user of the brand. Due to this, they scored no for each question of this section and earned zero points. Staples promoted the most engaging, user-friendly page by including multiple links, adding videos and pictures, adding different highlights to their page (featured products, location, discounts, etc.), and engaging with users' positive and negative experiences. Similarly, Nike and Bed, Bath, and Beyond also had a very active Facebook page. Nike promoted multiple Facebook pages for its different lines and campaigns and Bed, Bath, and Beyond promoted discounts on featured products. Both Facebook pages encouraged engagement and interacted with their users positive and negative experiences. GameStop's page had many features to encourage engagement, like uploading media and promoting locations and products; however, most of the engagement on their page was helping users solve their problems and resolve issues.

Table 11: Content Analysis – For-Profit Twitter Pages

	Apple	Staples	Nike	Game Stop	B B & B
Link to main website	1	1	1	1	1
Background represents the brand	1	1	1	1	1
User pic represents the brand	1	1	1	1	1
At least 5 Tweets/Week (roughly 1/Day)	1	.5	1	1	1
At least 15 Tweets/Month (3-5/Week)	1	1	1	1	1
Tweets include hashtags	0	0	1	1	1
Brands Retweets followers	0	0	0	0	0
Brand replies to followers	0	1	1	1	1
Has more following than followers	0	0	0	0	0
Follows users (nonpromotional/celebs.)	0	1	0	0	1
Tweets topics unrelated to themselves / non-promotional	0	0	0	0	1
Engages with users (positive experience)	0	1	1	0	1
Engages with users (negative experience)	0	1	1	.5	1

Upon examining these five for-profit organizations' Twitter pages, it is apparent each has a different level of engagement, viewable in Table 11. Apple has a few Twitter accounts for its different products (such as iTunes and the App Store), but does not have a main Twitter feed. These information feeds only post Apple updates and do not engage with users. The other four brands do engage with users on Twitter – both positive and negative experiences. The brands also take the time to respond to followers, though none seem to Retweet their followers. Only Staples and Bed, Bath, and Beyond follow users that aren't celebrities or other brands, demonstrating their willingness to engage with users of the brand and not just "endorsers." Of the five organizations, only Bed, Bath, and Beyond Tweeted non-promotional or unrelated topics to its feed, encouraging real-time conversation and displaying a more personable online image. All of these organizations use profile pictures and themes than promote their brands. Each organization also has at least 15 Tweets a month.

After analyzing these ten organizations, it can be seen that non-profit organizations scored higher in the website and Twitter categories; however, it is important to note the Apple served as an outlier and skewed the results for the for-profit organizations. For example, in the Facebook category, the four organizations' mean score is 72 percent, but it drops to 58 percent when Apple's score of zero is added. For Twitter, the four organizations' mean score is 69, but it drops to 63 percent when Apple's score of 38 percent is added. Most significantly, the four organizations' total mean score is 66 percent, 7 points

higher than the non-profits' total mean score; however, it drops to 56 percent once Apple's low total score of 17 percent is added.

The total figures can be seen in Table 12 and Table 13.

Table 12: Content Analysis – Non-Profit Scores

	Website		Facebook		Twitter		Total	
AMoNH	6/9	67%	8/14	57%	9.5/13	73%	23.5/36	65%
FtC	6/9	67%	7/14	50%	10.5/13	81%	23.5/36	65%
NPR	7/9	78%	5/14	36%	6/13	46%	18/36	50%
TRC	8/9	89%	6/14	43%	10.5/13	81%	24.5/36	68%
WCS	4/9	45%	5/14	36%	8.5/13	65%	17.5/36	49%
Total		69%		44%		69%		59%

Figure 13: Content Analysis – For-Profit Scores

	Website		Facebook		Twitter		Total	
Apple	1/9	11%	0/14	0%	5/13	38%	6/36	17%
Staples	3/9	33%	11.5/14	82%	8.5/13	65%	23/36	64%
Nike	6/9	67%	10/14	71%	9/13	69%	25/36	70%
GameStop	5/9	56%	9/14	64%	7.5/13	58%	21.5/36	60%
BB&B	4/9	44%	10/14	71%	11/13	85%	25/36	70%
Total		42%		58%		63%		56%

This is significant because Apple's scores in the content analysis changed the potential outcome of this quantitative analysis.

Hypothesis 2 Conclusion

The content analysis' results support H2, that nonprofit organizations use social media more effectively and issue a stronger call to action than for-profit organizations.

Chapter 5: Summary and Interpretation

Evaluation & Interpretation

This study aimed to determine if organizations using social media maintain relationships with their loyal customers more than marketing toward new consumers, and to uncover if non-profit organizations use social media more effectively and issue a stronger call to action than for-profit organizations.

To discover if organizations use social media to maintain relationships with their loyal consumers, and do not direct their marketing efforts toward new consumers, this researcher conducted a survey of the general population and conducted interviews with industry professionals who use social media.

Calculated from 234 respondents, the survey results yielded significant findings. The survey supports that the majority of consumers are active social media users who log on more than five times a day. These users access the Internet via computer or laptop and Smartphones, giving them the ability to get online twenty-four hours a day.

These users are less likely to find social media branding trustworthy or honest, but find it to be interactive and responsive. These users enjoy “Following” or “Liking” a brand’s social media page to receive updates, and are less likely to do so because of a coupon, prize, or sweepstakes incentive. However, they are more likely to participate to receive an incentive than to interact with a page to

engage with the brand or other users. Most users who follow a page for an incentive purpose are not likely to continue being a fan of that page post-promotion.

This researcher interviewed eight industry professionals who work with social media to uncover the organizations' side of social media branding. These interviewees had various strategies based on the needs of their organization or clients, but all agree that they used social media daily. These individuals hoped to achieve more followers during promotional periods, and would attempt to engage consumers by providing incentive, polls or questions, interactive media, and clickable links.

Each interviewed participant suggested that the organization's social media accounts were to engage loyal consumers, but hoped that through sharing and web presence they could achieve a viral effect with their online content. Though all agreed that they were most excited about the potential reach of social media efforts, most of them did not have an engagement strategy for non-loyal brand consumers.

To uncover which organizations used social media more effectively, this researcher completed a content analysis to code multiple facets of websites, Facebook pages, and Twitter pages. This research determined which online tactics these organizations use to provide consumers with a well-rounded online experience, such as engagement tools and navigation methods.

This content analysis showed that non-profit organizations use social media more effectively than for-profit organizations. However, though the results indicated that these organizations have similar social media strategies, their engagement tactics still vary. For-profit organizations use their social media for a dual purpose: engagement and problem solving. By using social media as a customer service tool, for-profit organizations can quickly and effectively provide detailed information and instant responses to unhappy consumers. These organizations have the opportunity to form strong relationships with consumers. Non-profit organizations have less opportunity to engage as users comment less often; however, their overall engagement strategy still provided an informative and interactive experience for their users.

Conclusion

This researcher supported the hypothesis that organizations use social media to maintain relationships with loyal consumers and do not direct their marketing toward new consumers. This researcher found that though consumers with high buying power actively and constantly use social media, only loyal consumers engage with the brands online. This breaks down to the understanding that brands need to seek out the consumers who do not come to them.

Social media platforms require the users to establish their own profile and seek out the groups they want to join or follow. Because of this, loyal fans

naturally gravitate toward particular brands' pages, giving these brands the opportunity to engage with their loyal users. This engagement is a great way to provide interactive content and customer support to this targeted group.

However, marketers who work with social media claim to like social media's reach. The greatest benefit lies with its potential for viral content and the ability to reach a massive audience in real-time communication. Despite this overwhelming fact, marketers are writing target-specific content. They write audience-specific content while potentially reaching a mass audience. Foundations of public relations and marketing communication methods teach that messages need to be sent through the proper channels to reach the right audience. Yet, somewhere along the communication process, social media blurred the lines of "audience."

This researcher discovered that the communication efforts and messages sent through social media are not reaching a mass audience, nor are they reaching a targeted, non-loyal consumer audience. These messages are designed strictly for loyal consumers, disregarding their potential audience reach.

This researcher also found that non-profit organizations use social media pages more effectively and bring about a stronger call to action than for-profit organizations. Both for-profit and non-profit organizations use social media fairly effectively to promote their organizations and engage with their users on a daily basis.

However, due to the nature of the organizations, more users visit social media pages of for-profit brand pages for help or customer service. As they buy products or use services from that brand, they see social media's instant communication feature as a customer service tool. The real-time conversation allows them to seek immediate help when they have a problem. Some organizations respond to these issues quicker or more efficiently than others.

Non-profit organizations are not selling a product and rarely have these trouble-shooting issues. Because of this, engagement on their social media pages isn't as high; however, it is nearly all positive conversation. All of their websites link to their social media pages and they are more eager to provide media rich content to their pages, link pictures, videos, and links. Also, as they do not provide coupons and discounts, and rarely provide sweepstake-like promotions, these organizations have had to use other methods to engage with users and encourage site visits.

Though the non-profit and for-profit organizations score very closely in the content analysis evaluation, non-profit organizations are proving to have cohesive communication strategies and positive engagement strategies more often than for-profit organizations.

Contribution & Practical Influence on the Field

This study has provided a significant contribution to the field. By uncovering the discrepancy between the message content and the audience in mind, professionals in the public relations, advertising, and marketing fields can more effectively write copy that will appeal to a broader audience or multiple niche audience groups. From this study, professionals can learn to reach forgotten target groups through their social media messages; thus, encouraging more information sharing and increasing viral outputs.

This study also provided significant data regarding non-profit and for-profit organizations. Despite varying goals, missions, and communication techniques, these organizations can learn to adapt their online engagement strategies. By focusing less on being a service outlet and focusing more on being a brand personality, users can gain more from a social media page than customer service support. This is not to say immediate feedback and real-time communication should suffer in any way, as consumers greatly appreciate and rely on support they gain through social media. However, by incorporating more engagement opportunities, for-profit organizations can be seen as more credible, interactive, and fun. Non-profit organizations aren't out to "sell" or "make money" and prove to be more trustworthy; therefore, for-profit organizations need to adopt a similar mentality to become more trustworthy in the eyes of their social media users. Providing a "personality" that the consumers can trust and relate to will encourage more positive communication.

Further Research

This researcher randomly selected five non-profit and five for-profit organizations. Another study could analyze a different set of five randomly selected organizations. Without the constraints of time or cost, it would be possible to study more organizations. A list larger than five would provide a more comprehensive representation of these organizations' digital communication efforts.

In addition, for further research this researcher suggests analyzing corporate organizations against small businesses. Small businesses have more potential for a more unique, niche audience or a smaller consumer population compared to big, nation-wide businesses. A study comparing these organizations' use of social media could produce influential results.

Another suggestion for further research would be a larger survey sample. Due to time restraints, this researcher recruited only 250 participants. More time would allow for a more successful snowball survey, and a larger sample would provide an even more detailed representation of the population.

A final suggestion would be to acquire interviews from public relations or marketing professionals who work for the organizations being studied in the content analysis. This overlap could provide more insight on how they conduct their digital communication campaigns, and discover how one organization stands up to another based on their internal strategies and goals.

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APPENDIX A

Branding Through Online Communication – Graduate Thesis Survey

Hello,

I am a graduate student at Rowan University studying corporate public relations. I am doing my master's thesis on consumer views of social media branding efforts. The survey is 23 questions long and should take 5-10 minutes to complete.

All answers will remain completely anonymous, and you will not be connected to your answers in any way.

Participants need to be at least 18 years of age to qualify.

All participants who completely finish the survey are eligible to submit their name and email address for Amazon gift card prize drawing. Winners will be notified via email by the end of April if they have won.

Upon completion, please use this link >>
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/brandingthesis> << and pass along this survey to friends and family. You can help your friends win Amazon gift cards, and it would greatly help me with my master's thesis.

Thank you so much for your participation!

Page 1: Personal Information

(1) Please select your gender:

- a. Male
- b. Female

(2) Please select your age range:

- a. 18 – 24
- b. 25 – 29
- c. 30 – 34
- d. 35 – 39
- e. 40 or older

(3) Please select your highest educational level:

- a. Some high school
- b. High school diploma
- c. Some college
- d. College degree (Bachelor's)
- e. Some graduate school
- f. Graduate school (Master's or higher)

- (4) Please select your current educational status:
- Full-time student
 - Part-time Student
 - Not a student
- (5) Please select your current career status:
- Full-time job
 - Part-time job
 - Currently seeking employment
 - Unemployed
- (6) Who makes purchasing decisions in your home?
- I buy almost all products I need for myself or my household.
 - I buy most products that I need, but still rely on a spouse or family member to make purchasing decisions for myself and household.
 - I occasionally buy products for myself as needed.
 - I do not make purchasing decisions in my household.

Page 2: Electronics & Social Media Use

- (1) Please select the electronic systems you own that connect to the internet:
(*Select All That Apply*)
- Computer (laptop, desktop)
 - Smart Phone (Droid, iPhone, etc.)
 - Wireless Gaming System (Wii, PS3, Xbox360, etc.)
 - Tablet (iPad, Sony Tablet, etc.)
 - Reading Tablet (Nook, Kindle, etc.)
- (2) How many times a day do you access the internet:
- 0-2 times a day
 - 3-5 times a day
 - 6-10 times a day
 - More than 10 times a day
- (3) What are your reasons for accessing the internet (select all that apply)
- Social media Sites – connecting with friends, picture/video sharing, etc.
 - E-mail – work/personal
 - Online Shopping
 - Pleasure – games, movies, music
 - Research – homework, learning, reading
 - Other, please specify
- (4) How many times a day do you log on to social media sites
- 0-2 times a day
 - 3-5 times a day
 - 6-10 times a day
 - More than 10 times a day

(5) Which type of social media sites do you use: *(Select All That Apply)*

- a. Blogging (WordPress, eBlogger, etc.)
- b. Microblogging (Twitter, etc.)
- c. Photo sharing (Shutterfly, Flickr, etc.)
- d. Video sharing (YouTube, etc.)
- e. Bookmarking (StumbleUpon, DiggIt, Pinterest, etc.)
- f. Networking (Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, etc.)
- g. Location (FourSquare, etc.)
- h. Rating (Yelp!, Flickster, etc.)
- i. None – I do not use social media sites
- j. Other, please specify

(6) What is your main reason for logging on to social media sites as often as you do?

- a. It is accessible on my phone or tablet 24/7
- b. To constantly communicate with friends and family
- c. To post and share media (pictures, videos, posts) of what I’m doing
- d. To get information from brands
- e. Other, please specify

(7) Please list the top five social media sites you use:

Page 3: Branding Through Social Media

(1) I find branding through social media to be:

	Highly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Highly Disagree	Not Applicable
Honest						
Trustworthy						
Exciting						
Fun						
New						
Worthwhile						
Beneficial						
Interactive						
Responsive						

(2) Please select the number of Facebook brand fan pages you have “Liked”

- a. Fewer than 10
- b. 10 or more
- c. I do not “Like” Facebook pages of brands
- d. I do not have a Facebook account

(3) What is your main reason for “Liking” a brand’s Facebook page?

	Highly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Highly Disagree	Not Applicable
I like to stay connected and receive updates from my favorite brand.						
I find the information on the brand’s Facebook page equally as helpful as their website.						
The Facebook page provides opportunities for contests, coupons, or giveaways.						
I can connect to other users of the brand and discuss products.						
I can connect with the brand directly to ask questions, send comments, or make complaints.						

(4) Please select the number of Twitter brand fan pages you “Follow”

- a. Fewer than 10
- b. 10 or more
- c. I do not “Follow” Twitter pages of brands
- d. I do not have a Twitter account

(5) What is your main reason for “Following” a brand’s Twitter page?

	Highly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Highly Disagree	Not Applicable
I like to stay connected and receive updates from my favorite brand.						
I find the information on the brand’s Twitter feed equally as helpful as their website.						
The Tweets provide opportunities for contests, coupons, or giveaways.						
I can connect to other users of the brand and discuss products.						
I can connect with the brand directly to ask questions, send comments, or make complaints.						

(6) Please select your attentiveness to the brand social media pages you follow:

- a. I will check their pages at least once daily
- b. I will check their pages at least once a week
- c. I will check their pages at least once a month
- d. I check their pages only when I notice an update on my news feed
- e. I do not check their pages for updates unless prompted by a call to action
- f. I do not check their pages

(7) Why do you decide to “Follow” or “Like” a particular brand’s social media page?

- a. I enjoy the brand/products and wanted other people to see that on my profile
- b. I enjoy the brand/products and wanted to receive occasional updates.
- c. I am neutral about the brand/product, but wanted to participate in an activity, receive a coupon, or participate in a sweepstakes on their page
- d. I dislike the product and wanted to comment or complain on their page
- e. I do not “Follow” or “Like” pages.

(8) I am more likely to “Follow” or “Like” a brand of a non-profit organization over a for-profit organization.

- a. True.
- b. False.

Please explain why: _____

(9) Will you “Follow” or “Like” brands social media pages even if you aren’t a consumer of its products?

- a. Yes, because I like their products even if I don’t buy them.
- b. Yes, but only because there was a special offer available
- c. No
- d. Other: _____

(10) If you have ever “Followed” or “Liked” brand’s social media pages for a special offer (contest, sweepstake, etc.), do you remove your affiliation after the promotional period ends?

- a. Yes, I do not want to be connected to the brand.
- b. No, I am now more aware or interested in the brand.
- c. No, but only because I forget to remove it.
- d. No, but only because I do not care about it.
- e. Other, please specify.

Thank you so much for your participation.

For making it to the end of the survey, please fill in your F & L Name and Email address to participate in a drawing. Your answers will remain anonymous and will not be linked to your identity in any way.

APPENDIX B

Content Analysis

X Indicates a “yes” from both coders
(X) Indicates a “yes” from only one coder.

Website Analysis– Non Profit Organizations

	American Museum of Natural History	Feed the Children	National Public Radio	The Red Cross	Wildlife Conservation Society
Social media links on homepage	X	X	X	X	X
Social media links on contact page	X	X		X	
Social media content page			X	X	
Online media news room (releases, archive)		X	X	X	X
Engages in Facebook (indicated on website)	X	X	X	X	X
Engages in Twitter (indicated on website)	X	X	X	X	
Engages in photo sharing (indicated on website)	X		X	X	
Engages in video sharing (indicated on website)	X	X	X	X	X
Engages in location based media (indicated on website)					

Facebook Page Analysis – Non Profit Organizations

	American Museum of Natural History	Feed the Children	National Public Radio	The Red Cross	Wildlife Conservation Society
Links to main website	X	X	X	X	X
Links to other social media pages		X			
Brand posts it its own wall	X	(X)	X	X	X
Brand uses event page	X	(X)	X		
Brand uploads pictures	X	(X)	X	X	X
Brand uploads videos	X	X		X	X
Posting/Sharing rules available					
Displays where/how to download phone app					
Displays store locations	X	(X)	X	X	X
Displays featured services	X	X		X	
Promotes contests/sweepstakes					
Shares coupons/discounts					
Engages with users (positive experience)	X	X			
Engages with users (negative experience)					

Twitter Analysis – Non Profit Organizations

	American Museum of Natural History	Feed the Children	National Public Radio	The Red Cross	Wildlife Conservation Society
Links to main website	X	X	X	X	X
Background represents the brand	X	X	X	X	X
User pic represents the brand	X	X	X	X	X
At least 5 Tweets/Week (roughly 1/Day)	X	X	X	X	X
At least 15 Tweets/Month (roughly 3-5/Week)	(X)	X	X	(X)	
Tweets include hashtags (posts, not replies)		X			
Brand retweets followers (other users)	X	X		X	X
Brand replies to followers	X	X		X	X
Has more following than followers					
Follows users (non-promotional / celebrity / verified)	X	X	X	X	X
Tweets topics unrelated to themselves / non-promotional	X	X		X	X
Engages with users (positive experience)	X	(X)		X	
Engages with users (negative experience)				X	(X)

Website Analysis – For-Profit Organizations

	Apple	Staples	Nike	GameStop	Bed, Bath, & Beyond
Social media links on homepage			X	X	X
Social media links on contact page		X	X		X
Social media content page			X		
Online media news room (releases, archive)	X	X		X	
Engages in Facebook (indicated on website)			X	X	X
Engages in Twitter (indicated on website)		X	X	X	X
Engages in photo sharing (indicated on website)			X		
Engages in video sharing (indicated on website)				X	
Engages in location based media (indicated on website)					

Facebook Page Analysis – For-Profit Organizations

	Apple	Staples	Nike	GameStop	Bed, Bath, & Beyond
Links to main website		X	X	X	X
Links to other social media pages		X	X	X	
Brand posts it its own wall		X	X	X	X
Brand uses event page			X	X	X
Brand uploads pictures		X	X	X	X
Brand uploads videos		X	X	X	X
Posting/Sharing rules available					
Displays where/how to download phone app		X			
Displaces store locations		X		X	X
Displays featured services		X	X	X	X
Promotes contests/sweepstakes		X	X		
Shares coupons/discounts		X			X
Engages with users (positive experience)		X	X		X
Engages with users (negative experience)		(X)	X	X	X

Twitter Analysis – For-Profit Organizations

	Apple	Staples	Nike	GameStop	Bed, Bath, & Beyond
Links to main website	X	X	X	X	X
Background represents the brand	X	X	X	X	X
User pic represents the brand	X	X	X	X	X
At least 5 Tweets/Week (roughly 1/Day)	X	(X)	X	X	X
At least 15 Tweets/Month (roughly 3-5/Week)	X	X	X	X	X
Tweets include hashtags (posts, not replies)			X	X	X
Brand retweets followers (other users)					
Brand replies to followers		X	X	X	X
Has more following than followers					
Follows users (non-promotional / celebrity / verified)		X			X
Tweets topics unrelated to themselves / non-promotional					X
Engages with users (positive experience)		X	X		X
Engages with users (negative experience)		X	X	(X)	X

APPENDIX C

Interview Transcripts

Date of Interview: 4/20/2012

Name of Interviewee: Harry Bosk

Title & Organization: Director of Communications for UMD Center for Integrated Medicine / Bosk Communication / Harry Bosk Photography

Years in the Field: 30+

Gender/Age Range: Male / late fifties

Educational Degrees: B.A English / M.A. Publication & Design

-
- 1.) *What type of digital communication techniques (examples include website, email blasts, phone apps, text message, social media sites, etc.) do you use as part of your advertising, marketing, or public relations campaign?*
 - We use websites and social media (mostly Facebook and Twitter)
 - I also use a little bit of Pinterest and FourSquare for my own photography and communication company.
 - 2.) *How often do you implement these various techniques per week?*
 - Every day. I use Facebook multiple times a day for both the university and my clients.
 - I use Twitter a few times a week
 - 3.) *Which kinds of social media sites (blogging, microblogging, photo sharing, video sharing, social bookmarking, networking, location, rating, etc.) do you use to reach loyal consumers, and do you believe these techniques are effective?*
 - We mostly use Facebook and our electronic newsletter
 - We use email blasts for events, like promoting a conference.
 - 4.) *Which kinds of social media sites do you use to reach potential consumers, and do you believe these techniques are effective?*
 - At the university, we have several unique audiences of potential 'consumers' (med students, people working at the hospital, people with a natural interest in wellness, and people who've attended events).
 - For these audiences we use external press, recruit participants for research studies to get them involved, and ask our Facebook & Twitter friends to share our online news and updates
 - 5.) *Does your organization use Twitter and Facebook, and how often are they updated?*
 - We use Twitter multiple times a week and Facebook daily
 - 6.) *Do you use these social media sites (specifically Twitter and Facebook) to engage in conversation with your consumers? Please describe your engagement strategy.*
 - Our strategy is part information/promotion and part social engagement.

- The main priority is to promote content that users will want to read and share, and come back for more. I call it having a content rich approach.
- 7.) *How do you integrate your different forms of social media into one cohesive communication plan?*
- We just started using Twitter, so it's not as cohesive as we'd like it to be. However, the messaging is always consistent – what we say is what we practice, our philosophy and the expression of our values.
 - We may Retweet others with similar interests.
 - We use Google Alerts to zero in on key holistic medicine terms to share important posts with our users.
- 8.) *What type of image do you try to represent on your social media platforms?*
- See above: philosophy and organizational values
- 9.) *How many employees work on social media communication in your organization?*
- At the university it's a team, and because it's a university there is even a bigger team that we are part of
 - For Bosk Communication, it's just me helping my clients.
- 10.) *What type of problems do you run into through your social media communication practices?*
- When you're working with a team, sometimes people post something you wouldn't post or something you'd say differently. You have to shrug it off and just accept that we each are going to say something slightly differently.
 - However, it's never been anything we couldn't share or didn't approve of – just different approaches.
- 11.) *What do you feel are the greatest benefits of using social media for your organization?*
- You're not dependent on someone else to deliver your message. You have complete control.
 - The greatest benefit is when it goes VIRAL!
- 12.) *How do you believe your social media efforts are being received/interpreted by the consumers? Are they responsive to these efforts?*
- Definitely responsive. We have a big group of nurses who follow us and they have told us in person that they enjoy our page and our content.
 - When we view the metrics, we look to see what type of comments or impressions we're getting and we check to see where our spikes are.
- 13.) *How effective or what kind of ROI has your social media communication efforts been for your organization?*

- We just had a conference, and we immediately got a lot of new people following us. Since then, we've had a strong, steady. That's the slight viral aspect – everyone is sharing our information and more and more people are learning about us.
- People always want more PR – more likes, more shares. Our higher-ups want more numbers, but social media doesn't always translate that same way. However, higher ups are catching on.

14.) *How do you hope to use social media to market to and communicate with consumers in the future?*

- Enhancements [for the most popular social media, i.e. Facebook]. We're having a promo video and photos made from our conference and we're posting it on Facebook, but I'd like more enhancements for those lines.

Date of Interview: 4/20/2012

Name of Interviewee: Stephanie Colao

*Title & Organization: Marketing Communications Coordinator for
Father Martin's Ashley (non-profit drug and alcohol treatment center)*

Years in the Field: 3

Gender/Age Range: Female / 18-24

*Educational Degrees: B.S. Mass Communications/PR/Advertising from
Towson University*

1.) What type of digital communication techniques (examples include website, email blasts, phone apps, text message, social media sites, etc.) do you use as part of your advertising, marketing, or public relations campaign?

- I updated and write content for our company's website (CMS)
- Write content and create email blasts, newsletter different constituents (alumni, donors, professionals)
- Post content to Facebook/Twitter. (Designed and launched in Oct 2010)
- Use keywords for search engine optimization
- Post events to online community calendars

2.) How often do you implement these various techniques per week?

- Gather content from internal departments for e-newsletters
- Maintain a calendar of communications for email blasts (don't want to send too many and risk unsubscribes)
- Try to post content to Facebook/Twitter daily, never miss more than a day.
- Update the website as needed

3.) Which kinds of social media sites (blogging, microblogging, photo sharing, video sharing, social bookmarking, networking, location, rating, etc.) do you use to reach loyal consumers, and do you believe these techniques are effective?

- Facebook, Twitter, YouTube
- HootSuite to schedule tweets/posts
- Our organization is unique because we're providing recovery support and trying to stay connected with people who have been through the program.
- Our audience responds most to fresh content such as pictures or things specifically relevant to our campus.

4.) Which kinds of social media sites do you use to reach potential consumers, and do you believe these techniques are effective?

- We use Facebook/Twitter to provide recovery support or assist anyone who may be seeking help

- 5.) *Does your organization use Twitter and Facebook, and how often are they updated?*
- Yes, almost daily.
- 6.) *Do you use these social media sites (specifically Twitter and Facebook) to engage in conversation with your consumers? Please describe your engagement strategy.*
- Yes – will post article, ask ‘What do you think?’ or ‘Share your thoughts on the topic’
 - During Recovery Month, did a campaign on “What recovery means to me..” A different quote was posted daily—a lot of feedback
- 7.) *How do you integrate your different forms of social media into one cohesive communication plan?*
- Always post events and news of what is happening on campus to Facebook/Twitter.
 - Try to link back to the website, drive more hits to the website
- 8.) *What type of image do you try to represent on your social media platforms?*
- Supportive, credible, positive, spiritual
- 9.) *How many employees work on social media communication in your organization?*
- I am responsible for the social media, but gather content from internal departments
- 10.) *What type of problems do you run into through your social media communication practices?*
- Trying to get credible comments for articles and other staff members to participate (clinicians)
 - Finding relevant, fresh content
- 11.) *What do you feel are the greatest benefits of using social media for your organization?*
- Stay connected with alumni
 - Share photos and events
 - Engage in two-way conversation
- 12.) *How do you believe your social media efforts are being received/interpreted by the consumers? Are they responsive to these efforts?*
- Positive – people ‘like’ posts and leave comments sharing their thoughts and feelings

13.) *How effective or what kind of ROI has your social media communication efforts been for your organization?*

- Increased website activity and brand awareness

14.) *How do you hope to use social media to market to and communicate with consumers in the future?*

- We'd like to develop an app, blog, and vlog (video blog)

Date of Interview: 4/22/2012

Name of Interviewee: Jennifer Curran

Title & Organization: Marketing Representative at C-SPAN Networks

Years in the Field: 6 years

Gender/Age Range: Female / late twenties

Educational Degrees: Bachelors of Science

- 1) *What type of digital communication techniques (examples include website, email blasts, phone apps, text message, social media sites, etc.) do you use as part of your advertising, marketing, or public relations campaign?*
 - We use email blasts with Constant Contact to our cable affiliates, as well as twitter and Facebook to promote our programs and bus visits. Additionally, we use Flickr to share photos from our community relations (CR)/ bus trips. C-SPAN's marketing department operates both CR and Campaign 2012 Bus trips across the country 10 months a year, so we are using social media regularly.

- 2) *How often do you implement these various techniques per week?*
 - We tweet daily and upload Flickr photos weekly. C-SPAN's main Facebook page is updated daily as well.

- 3) *Which kinds of social media sites (blogging, microblogging, photo sharing, video sharing, social bookmarking, networking, location, rating, etc.) do you use to reach loyal consumers, and do you believe these techniques are effective?*
 - We are a non-profit, so we don't have 'customers' per say, however we do use twitter and Facebook to keep our audience engaged. With the bus, twitter and four square are also used to share our location, so that if someone is following us and in the area they can come out to see the bus. We use TwitPic to share photos of visitors on the Bus. We think these techniques are very effective to share information about our programs.

- 4) *Which kinds of social media sites do you use to reach potential consumers, and do you believe these techniques are effective?*
 - Facebook is the most effective for reaching a potential audience as well as YouTube, because often we will create 'clips' of our video and post it on YouTube and someone who doesn't have time to watch the full program can just watch a shortened version and still find out what is going on.

- 5) *Does your organization use Twitter and Facebook, and how often are they updated?*
- As I mentioned, yes we do and they are updated several times daily. We will tweet out YouTube clips as well so there is a lot of cross platform marketing.
- 6) *Do you use these social media sites (specifically Twitter and Facebook) to engage in conversation with your consumers? Please describe your engagement strategy.*
- On Facebook, we post a “question of the day” and allow viewers from across the country to participate in a national discussion without editing (with the exception of pejoratives or profanity). We also use twitter to allow viewers to ‘tweet’ in questions to our guests on our morning show, Washington Journal.
- 7) *How do you integrate your different forms of social media into one cohesive communication plan?*
- For our marketing efforts with the bus, there is a “connect to C-SPAN” area that allows visitors to login to their Facebook, twitter or YouTube accounts to follow C-SPAN and subscribe to our YouTube. It is a major part of our outreach because we are aware that teenagers and the public aren’t just watching TV to gather information, so we want them to know they can connect with us and find out what is going on their own way.
- 8) *What type of image do you try to represent on your social media platforms?*
- We present a fly-on-the wall perspective, and it is also very important for us to maintain our non-partisan approach. It is important that if we post a link to a republican event, we also post a link or clip of a democratic event to maintain balance.
- 9.) *How many employees work on social media communication in your organization?*
- There are 10 of us in the marketing department who tweet regularly and one social media specialists who maintain the Twitter and Facebook page for the entire organization, so approximately 11.
- 10.) *What type of problems do you run into through your social media communication practices?*
- One of our biggest challenges with Twitter/TwitPic is making it interesting for someone who is following us but might not be in the same area as the bus. We are always thinking of creative ways to promote our presence.

11.) *What do you feel are the greatest benefits of using social media for your organization?*

➤ The greatest benefits are that we can engage the public in national discussions about major issues while also promoting our resources and programs. We are commercial free, so during our morning show, it's also a great advantage to take tweets in addition to the phone calls from viewers.

12.) *How do you believe your social media efforts are being received/interpreted by the consumers? Are they responsive to these efforts?*

➤ People are very responsive and comment freely on Facebook, YouTube and Retweet on twitter.

13.) *How effective or what kind of ROI has your social media communication efforts been for your organization?*

➤ The question of the day on FB is very effective to connect with our viewers and if there is a major event that occurred in a committee meeting of the House or Senate and no one else has covered it, we find that the ROI is tremendous because we see a major spike of views on our FB and YouTube pages.

14.) *How do you hope to use social media to market to and communicate with consumers in the future?*

➤ Going forward our plan is to continue using twitter and QR codes, hashtags and the any means necessary to promote our events, coverage and programs. We have also recently started using Tout to promote our events. And we are in the process of expanding our foursquare tips beyond DC so that when visitors check-in to historical places they can receive a 'tip' from C-SPAN.

Date of Interview: 4/23/2012

Name of Interviewee: Michael Gross

Title & Organization: Senior VP of Public Relations at HornerCom

Years in the field: roughly 9 years

Gender / Age Range: Male / early thirties

Educational Degree: B.S. Public Relations from Rowan

1.) What type of digital communication techniques (examples include website, email blasts, phone apps, text message, social media sites, etc.) do you use as part of your advertising, marketing, or public relations campaign?

- Lots of clients in lots of industry, so we do not use formats “x,” “y,” and “z” all the time. I have used every type digital communication techniques at one time and managed pressrooms for each client, but not every campaign requires every entity.
- If the audience is too limited or targeted, we have to evaluate if social media is necessary, and, if so, what kind.

2.) How often do you implement these various techniques per week?

- The campaigns with social media are active. We use them all the time and someone is always monitoring it. We encourage community and dialog.
- Sometimes we create a schedule, but that is half the battle. We always need to monitor in order to respond in a timely manner
- Our campaign may call for new content 3 times a week, but we update more often for engagement and monitoring purposes.

3.) Which kinds of social media sites (blogging, microblogging, photo sharing, video sharing, social bookmarking, networking, location, rating, etc.) do you use to reach loyal consumers, and do you believe these techniques are effective?

- Social media has the ability to reach both loyal and potential consumers.
- You still want to find the place where your target group is gathering already. We will go out of our way to go after that forum, but every social media has the potential to reach that audience
- It’s not always going to work, but it’s a pretty
- Get a follower to post / share content. This engagement strategy engages the loyal consumer but attracts potentials.

4.) Which kinds of social media sites do you use to reach potential consumers, and do you believe these techniques are effective?

- See above (#3) - “Engages the loyal consumer, but attracts potentials”

5.) Does your organization use Twitter and Facebook, and how often are they updated

- Yes, and daily (and as often as needed).

6.) Do you use these social media sites (specifically Twitter and Facebook) to engage in conversation with your consumers? Please describe your engagement strategy.

- See above (#2, #3)

7.) *How do you integrate your different forms of social media into one cohesive communication plan?*

- Realistically, a lot of the information is reposted on multiple platforms because there is only so much time in a day.
- Twitter mostly allows for shorter comments with links, while Facebook can post longer comments with complementary media.

8.) *What type of image do you try to represent on your social media platforms?*

- This is dependent on the client and the campaign.
- The objective is to promote awareness and change a behavior to have more call to action. Goal and message are the most important.
- Ideally, it should be an interactive experience.

9.) *How many employees work on social media communication in your organization?*

- We have a dedicated PR team and some graphic designers.
- All the PR people are involved in social media. Depends on campaign.

10.) *What type of problems do you run into through your social media communication practices?*

- Something we thought was a positive, feel-good piece had a negative reaction from the comments. We were surprised and had to make changes in our approach. We apologized for offending people and pulled it.
- Your options are to remove the post or address the community, sometimes both. If you cut the conversation off, start a new one and move on. Ultimately, you are consulting the client, and it is up to them.
- Another example – Our client's Facebook brand page was copied. It was made by someone trying to demote the brand. It eventually went away, but there was a big debate about what to do. It was a few years ago before a lot of brands were using pages, so it was very new – we notified Facebook and did our best to avoid giving the other page steam. Eventually they went away. We got lucky.

11.) *What do you feel are the greatest benefits of using social media for your organization?*

- Great way to get immediate feedback. We can bounce off ideas, get suggestions, promote... it's a great way to gain real fast reactions to what's happening in your organizations

12.) *How do you believe your social media efforts are being received/interpreted by the consumers? Are they responsive to these efforts?*

- Of the brands we support, Facebook has more reactions than Twitter.
- With FB, perhaps it's just the platform, but we can get a more personal reaction. We get likes, responses, and shares. We always make a post that

encourages feedback. We are very careful with the wording so as to encourage this.

13.) *How effective or what kind of ROI has your social media communication efforts been for your organization?*

- ROI is hard with social media. People are always asking what the dollar value is. The real benefit of social media is seeing what the general feel is. Whether you have 400 or 40,000 consumers, it doesn't matter if you're not interacting with or learning from these consumers.
- Promoting people to come in w/ printouts helps us see how many people are actually using

14.) *How do you hope to use social media to market to and communicate with consumers in the future?*

- Oh, gosh, who knows! Facebook, Twitter, all those social media tools are helpful. But so are newsletters and mailers. It is important to use the right tool effectively depending on the campaign. Only use the interactive tools that are going to help your organization grow. It'll be exciting to see what happens, but I do not think it will change our practices. .

Date of Interview: 4/22/2012

Name of Interviewee: Shanna Liberman

Title & Organization: Ketchum

Years in the Field: 3

Gender/Age Range: Female / early twenties

Educational Degrees: Double major: Advertising and PR/ B.S.

- 1.) *What type of digital communication techniques (examples include website, email blasts, phone apps, text message, social media sites, etc.) do you use as part of your advertising, marketing, or public relations campaign?*
 - We actually use each of the different methods you mentioned and quite often. It obviously depends on the clients who of course all have different needs. I would say our top 3 would be websites, e-blasts and social sites. Because we are a global company and our clients differ, one day I can be working on a blog for the Russian Government and the next be working on a Facebook tab for a commercial client.
 - The goal of my department is to hear the clients needs and determine a solution that is best for them. We are responsible for staying ahead of the trends; even though most clients don't often want to push the envelope that far. For example: we had a team of about 15-20 people attend SXSW this year. If you are unfamiliar with this event it's essentially a time for some of the greatest minds in the industry to get together and influence the Digital trends for the upcoming year.

- 2.) *How often do you implement these various techniques per week?*
 - Our department as a whole has a few launches a week. I personally do not have launches, as frequently as there is a level of effort for every project that takes time. I can tell you since the beginning of the year I have launched 2 website refreshes (design and content updated but keep existing website framework) and a Facebook tab as my own, and helped numerous other Producers in my department launch other projects.

- 3.) *Which kinds of social media sites (blogging, microblogging, photo sharing, video sharing, social bookmarking, networking, location, rating, etc.) do you use to reach loyal consumers, and do you believe these techniques are effective?*
 - Loyal customers are easy to reach is social media settings as they have already decided to engage in the conversation. That being said, we don't necessarily say to clients, "if you want users to stay engaged, use this platform." It once again depends on their needs, which could potentially be any range of social site.
 - The most popular and longest time running would obviously be Facebook and Twitter or blog sites, but those don't necessarily make for "better" platform to engage "loyal" customers.

- 4.) *Which kinds of social media sites do you use to reach potential consumers, and do you believe these techniques are effective?*
- My answer would essentially be the same for this as was #3.
 - But I will add, when new social platforms are introduced and take off, such as Pinterest, we automatically review their pros and cons and start adding into the mix for pitching to clients. From our standpoint, because the platform is new, all users are “potential” consumers. Even if these same consumers are on Facebook and Twitter, we still want to reach and engage them in conversation.
- 5.) *Does your organization use Twitter and Facebook, and how often are they updated?*
- My company 100% uses Twitter and Facebook. They are updated regularly as we need to present ourselves as practicing what we preach. Don’t get me wrong, there are internal benefits, but we actually have Ketchum private pages.
 - On Facebook we have a private Ketchum Digital page you must be approved to join. This is a fun think-tank for all Ketchum Digital staff to throw in ideas or ask questions or even share something interesting they found that day.
- 6.) *Do you use these social media sites (specifically Twitter and Facebook) to engage in conversation with your consumers?
Please describe your engagement strategy.*
- Engagement strategies have definitely changed since Timeline was introduced. I am not sure if you have reviewed from a business standpoint the new pros and cons. There are actually a lot of cons businesses are facing, which is making it more difficult for business to get Fans to where they want on the page.
 - Our engagement strategy is most often to follow these simple guidelines:
 - Post interesting and conversational topics your users will be interested in talking about or hearing about
 - Launch promotions to reward them for these conversations
 - Post when you know users most often are on Facebook
 - typically lunch time during the week they will Share or engage with a post
 - typically sat. at noon users will engage with promotions
 - It’s equally important to engage the Fans you have, but also continue to reach out for new ones using Facebook ads, etc.
- 7.) *How do you integrate your different forms of social media into one cohesive communication plan?*

- From a Digital standpoint easily. We simply determine your goal for the communications plan then select the social platforms that support that. Might be one or it might be a handful.
- Our biggest challenge is having clients take our advice! Most often clients come to us and say I want x, y, and z. In our minds it maybe only makes sense to have x and y. So we talk clients through why z might be a waste of their time and energy, but at the end of the day clients are always right.

8.) *What type of image do you try to represent on your social media platforms?*

- The impression I give on my social platforms are simply who I am. I never go over the top with anything really. I post for users to check out my blog or upload a status about being at a ball game or post a question about something I need help with. I really use my social sites as a way to show off my work and chat with friends and family.
- On a work note, when I post to a work social site I am very professional, but always add some humor or lighten it up, because that is who I am.

9.) *How many employees work on social media communication in your organization?*

- I would say every employee in the company works on social media. The account teams and I have to help sell the ideas to the clients and most often update the social account and Digital most often does the same. You cannot be in any PR or advertising industry at this point in time and not touch social.

10.) *What type of problems do you run into through your social media communication practices?*

- Most often clients don't take our advice so their communication plans aren't affective as they could have been. Or sometimes we simply implement something that didn't work the way we planned and have to tweak. That is after all the beauty of social; nothing is set in stone.
- The other issue is Facebook changes their rules and requirements so often it's hard to keep up with!

11.) *What do you feel are the greatest benefits of using social media for your organization?*

- It allows outsiders to our organization see who we are, what jobs we have available and open the door to their questions and comments. It facilitates a conversation that wouldn't have happened otherwise (or it would have taken a lot more effort on the outsidess part otherwise).

12.) *How do you believe your social media efforts are being received/interpreted by the consumers? Are they responsive to these efforts?*

- Social media is so open and honest; you will know instantly what people think because they will tell you.

13.) *How effective or what kind of ROI has your social media communication efforts been for your organization?*

➤ The strategy teams handle ROI and analyzing Facebook reports and deliver that information to the client. Digital is mostly for developing the campaign idea and implementation. I don't have specific information on this.

14.) *How do you hope to use social media to market to and communicate with consumers in the future?*

➤ I think a lot of changes are coming down the pipe for social. After all, nothing in Digital every stays the same for too long. And honestly, I am not sure I have an answer for this. I know things will become easier for everyone, especially with Homeless Hotspots being introduced. People are going to continue to push the envelope until more is socially acceptable making everything more accessible and acceptable.

Date of Interview: 4/20/2012

Name of Interviewee: Sedonia Martin

Title & Organization: Public Relations Manger, Arts & Culture

Years in the Field: around thirty years

Gender/Age Range: Female / mid-fifties

Education Degrees: B.S. Corporate Communication & M.S. Professional Studies

- 1.) *What type of digital communication techniques (examples include website, email blasts, phone apps, text message, social media sites, etc.) do you use as part of your advertising, marketing, or public relations campaign?*
 - We use Twitter, ConstantContact, and email
- 2.) *How often do you implement these various techniques per week?*
 - Once a day to post my client's information.
- 3.) *Which kinds of social media sites (blogging, microblogging, photo sharing, video sharing, social bookmarking, networking, location, rating, etc.) do you use to reach loyal consumers, and do you believe these techniques are effective?*
 - Arts & Culture Facebook page, Constant Contact (indicated an interest in the university), and email
 - We still use print mail/postcards, as well as advertising in local publications
- 4.) *Which kinds of social media sites do you use to reach potential consumers, and do you believe these techniques are effective?*
 - Use traditional techniques – lots of print!
- 5.) *Does your organization use Twitter and Facebook, and how often are they updated?*
 - Yes – the interns monitor Facebook daily and I post updates on Twitter.
- 6.) *Do you use these social media sites (specifically Twitter and Facebook) to engage in conversation with your consumers? Please describe your engagement strategy.*
 - Our student interns engage with social media, which is actually successful as our 'target' are the university's students.
- 7.) *How do you integrate your different forms of social media into one cohesive communication plan?*
 - Sometimes. We use our Facebook for engagement and our Twitter for updates, generally. There is some overlap.
- 8.) *What type of image do you try to represent on your social media platforms?*
 - Twitter is strictly for promoting the events on the college of fine arts. I try to make it fun in those 140 characters and get creative.

- Facebook is much more engaging, entertaining, and inviting.
- Twitter deals a lot with the media, as it's usually general updates. Facebook has younger audience (students, current alumni, local families in the community) so we have more of an image, or personality for the Towson Arts and Cultures brand.

9.) *How many employees work on social media communication in your organization?*

- In university marketing: me & my interns (about 4 people who have access)
- Throughout the university they are trying to “coral” all of the various departments twitter feeds.

10.) *What type of problems do you run into through your social media communication practices?*

- None, luckily.

11.) *What do you feel are the greatest benefits of using social media for your organization?*

- The reach. Our Twitter feed gives us the opportunity to Retweet or share.
- You can have a really wide audience. Though the reaction is hard to tell and difficult to measure, the message is still being shared.

12.) *How do you believe your social media efforts are being received/interpreted by the consumers? Are they responsive to these efforts?*

- Positively. We do a lot of sweepstakes and our main target are the university's students. They are always excited to win things.
- You can debate would they be generally be interested w/o the prizes, but as we are for the students and we're on campus we do get a lot more attention and recognition this way.
- Overall, what benefit is it to us to drive the brand? Are the students really brand interested or are they just excited to win something for nothing? We're not sure, but while they are students it is effective.

13.) *How effective or what kind of ROI has your social media communication efforts been for your organization?*

- I don't know. We can look at the analytics, but we don't have their 'tone'. What is their attitude toward us? Are they now loyal or are they just in it for the prizes (trial consumer). The next day, the next week, are they coming back to learn more about us or have they moved on to the next offer? The impression of their experience, we don't have any way of recording because we are not in their head. It is hard to calculate that kind of psychological experience. The analytics gives us numbers but not emotional experience.
- So, we can tell we are successful per campaign, but we don't know about their overall experience. This would be determining their loyalty to us –

their emotional connection. It even changes for current students vs. recent alum.

14.) *How do you hope to use social media to market to and communicate with consumers in the future?*

- Awareness is the biggest virtue that I see in social media. It is a way to inform a lot of people very quickly and inexpensively. I can have the same reach without buying a billboard or filming a commercial.
- Personal relationships are always better.

Date of Interview: 4/19/2012

Name of Interviewee: Annie Sullivan

Title & Organization: Manager of Corporate Public Relations at MetImmune; specifically on digital and social aspects (external communication); previously at IMRE.

Years in the Field: almost four years

Gender/Age Range: Female / early twenties

Educational Degrees: B.S. Mass Communication from Towson University

- 1.) *What type of digital communication techniques (examples include website, email blasts, phone apps, text message, social media sites, etc.) do you use as part of your advertising, marketing, or public relations campaign?*
 - Building and managing FB pages & Twitter feeds for brands and products, blogs, social PR/outreach.
 - Social PR - create a list and reach out to them via email and give them the opportunity for them to participate in a program or try a brand, and if you want to show this on our behalf we'll give you a gift and give you a gift to raffle off to your followers. On top of commenting to participate, gain extra entries by Tweeting about us, etc. These blogs gets 100,000s participants and impressions.
 - Create an internal employee forum to send information around about the company, answer questions. It's important with big companies.
 - Lots of research – social scanning to figure out what's going on in the industry, w/ specific brands, how they're using the products.. Who's winning in the online forums?
 - Info is passed on and used throughout the marketing process (brand teams, marketing, etc.)
 - SEO
 - It all translates into a lot more than posting it.

- 2.) *How often do you implement these various techniques per week?*
 - Daily. We have built in notifications so I can respond and monitor - sometimes nonstop. We call it being "wired in."

- 3.) *Which kinds of social media sites (blogging, microblogging, photo sharing, video sharing, social bookmarking, networking, location, rating, etc.) do you use to reach loyal consumers, and do you believe these techniques are effective?*
 - Facebook is for loyal consumers. As a brand page, it's hard for someone to stumble upon you. The users choose you, and it's all very personal.
 - You can try "fun" polls or ask questions to get users involved (sneak research questions for you!) and share, which may recruit.

- 4.) *Which kinds of social media sites do you use to reach potential consumers, and do you believe these techniques are effective?*
 - Pitch to bloggers, it makes them feel special.

- Twitter is easier to connect to many people you don't know. You're more likely to follow on Twitter than like on Facebook.
- 5.) *Does your organization use Twitter and Facebook, and how often are they updated?*
- Yes, they are updated and monitored daily. Usually more often than not.
- 6.) *Do you use these social media sites (specifically Twitter and Facebook) to engage in conversation with your consumers? Please describe your engagement strategy.*
- Yes, daily or a few times a week – we don't want to seem like we're spamming them.
 - Example from IMRE - John Deere: Asking what products they favored showed us which target groups were most prominent online and allowed users to interact with us and feel connected
 - I check constantly for questions and concerns that I can help with. I locate the right person in the company that can answer the question and I get back to the user as quickly as possible with the correct information.
- 7.) *How do you integrate your different forms of social media into one cohesive communication plan?*
- Sweepstakes – gain entries by adding more.
 - It depends on what the brand wants – it may require web services, graphic design, marketers, etc.
 - It's important to know what your consumers say about your brand BEFORE you start all these social media pages. Only integrate what you NEED and what you can USE. You can't delete it/the comments later if you don't like what's going on.
 - If the organization is really "Hip" with social media, we may make a micro page to add to their website.
- 8.) *What type of image do you try to represent on your social media platforms?*
- Engage or provide Info – depends on the industry.
 - Product used daily vs. b2b or highly regulated industries (healthcare).
 - But posting questions real time can help you communicate with your users regardless. Raising awareness about issues is important
- 9.) *How many employees work on social media communication in your organization?*
- Varies for agency (team) vs. corporate (few people).
- 10.) *What type of problems do you run into through your social media communication practices?*
- Depends on the industry. In healthcare, specifically, you can easily get a lot of backlash about a drug's side effect or not working. They are the least desirable online response. It's a huge risk because everything needs to be reported. HPPA can't be violated, and people sign into forums discussing

what's wrong w/ them when a brand owns the product and the page, they are helping to promote this violation. It can get very messy.

- If it doesn't work or there aren't responses, you may need to shut it down. You can't predict how everyone is going to act and you use trial and error. (Do not confuse this with deleting posting!)

11.) *What do you feel are the greatest benefits of using social media for your organization?*

- I always examine what I'm doing and what other companies are doing. Ultimately, we're always looking for sales. We can track and encourage engagement and these drive sales.
- It's not always easy to determine ROI, but you can notice trends and the information that comes from it is important. Consumers feel connected to the brand and like they're part of something bigger.
- Value changes all the time, different for brands and different per consumer

12.) *How do you believe your social media efforts are being received/interpreted by the consumers? Are they responsive to these efforts?*

- Positively, but that doesn't mean every user is happy and has something positive to say. Overall our engagement strategy is effective and we start conversations with users who are excited to discuss and rally behind the brands.

13.) *How effective or what kind of ROI has your social media communication efforts been for your organization?*

- The biggest ROI you can have are the discussions and instant research you gain from listening to the users.
- We also use analytics and such to monitor numbers, but social media provides more "ROI" than that.
- Obviously ROI is difficult to measure, but I believe it's positive and effective

14.) *How do you hope to use social media to market to and communicate with consumers in the future?*

- Who knows what the future holds! That's another great thing about the industry, there are new social start-ups every day. Some last a few months, some like Instagram start as fun apps and then are bought by Facebook for \$1billion. I'm at mercy of the future. But I get to have fun and grow with it. No matter what I have to research, learn, and adapt with each change.
- I think in the future
- Healthcare and pharmaceutical companies need to connect doctors and meds with consumers with REAL INFORMATION. Googling side effects lead to sharing wrong information and drawing the wrong conclusions. I hope to be able to use social media to prevent this in the future.

Date of Interview: 4/20/2012

Name of Interviewee: Michelle Vroom

Title & Organization: Account Executive at TonicLife Communications

Gender/Age Range: Female / 25-29

- 15.) *What type of digital communication techniques (examples include website, email blasts, phone apps, text message, social media sites, etc.) do you use as part of your advertising, marketing, or public relations campaign?*
- Websites and email blasts are our biggest tactic
 - Work with partner agencies to get CRM databases for leads
- 16.) *How often do you implement these various techniques per week?*
- When it comes to a website, we draft content and put together the creative and then work with a team to get it up and running. There are daily updates. Also use Google Analytics (reporting coverage to clients)
 - Daily, multiple times a week
- 17.) *Which kinds of social media sites (blogging, microblogging, photo sharing, video sharing, social bookmarking, networking, location, rating, etc.) do you use to reach loyal consumers, and do you believe these techniques are effective?*
- I work in healthcare and pharmaceuticals. We try to express opinions in real time, but when you have to get comments. etc. approved it is a difficult, slow process moving forward. We have lots of counsel with comments due to the nature of the industry
 - There is some use with Facebook brand pages.
 - Utilize spokesperson: their Facebook & Twitter. Do not create, but go to where people are talking
 - PRSA Philly – lots of official media: Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn
- 18.) *Which kinds of social media sites do you use to reach potential consumers, and do you believe these techniques are effective?*
- We use the same strategy
- 19.) *Does your organization use Twitter and Facebook, and how often are they updated?*
- In Healthcare, not so much.
 - But my other positions, like with PRSA Philly, we do lots of updates on both Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.
- 20.) *Do you use these social media sites (specifically Twitter and Facebook) to engage in conversation with your consumers? Please describe your engagement strategy.*
- It's important to first listen and understand what people are looking for and talking about. That way what you propose useful information

- It should not be self-serving. Have dialogue! It's a huge turn-off when there is not engagement.
- 21.) *How do you integrate your different forms of social media into one cohesive communication plan?*
- More with PRSA Philly – look at each channel and integrate when we can.
 - You do not need to be in everything – pick a few that you will do well in
 - Same information is circulated, but there is a different approach because the channels are different. How will the message conveyed into each channel work in an overall strategy?
- 22.) *What type of image do you try to represent on your social media platforms?*
- Professional, at all times – because of the healthcare industry it is a must.
- 23.) *How many employees work on social media communication in your organization?*
- Everyone has an expertise in social media, but a smaller subset will work on certain projects.
 - It should always be someone who has a passion for it and researching it.
- 24.) *What type of problems do you run into through your social media communication practices?*
- None, personally.
 - I have heard stories about inappropriate Twitter use – you can delete and remove, but people have probably already seen it.
 - Always have a social media policy – we just created one for PRSA Philly and we're making one for my agency as well.
- 25.) *What do you feel are the greatest benefits of using social media for your organization?*
- People can get a different view of the organization and put a face to it.
 - You can reach so many people all at once, and build trust and loyalty with more natural dialogue.
- 26.) *How do you believe your social media efforts are being received/interpreted by the consumers? Are they responsive to these efforts?*
- In Pharma, things are still unsure, but with the PRSA Philly chapter everyone is really receptive. They want the dialogue; they want advice/counsel/feedback/conversation.
- 27.) *How effective or what kind of ROI has your social media communication efforts been for your organization?*
- With PRSA Philly, our brand consumer awareness programs have been very effective over issues. It always increases during an event, where people are ACTUALLY engaging
 - ROI is still being developed for social media

28.) *How do you hope to use social media to market to and communicate with consumers in the future?*

- It's constantly changing with new Apps/Social Media sites. It's important to constantly adapt
- So much to learn and do.
- There are always a way to build trust and loyalty to gain value.