USER MOTIVATIONS FOR USING BUSINESS FACEBOOK PAGES

by

Malcolm Lee Hong

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Communication

Boise State University

August 2011
BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COLLEGE

DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND FINAL READING APPROVALS

of the thesis submitted by

Malcolm Lee Hong

Thesis Title: User Motivations for Using Business Facebook Pages

Date of Final Oral Examination: 25 May 2011

The following individuals read and discussed the thesis submitted by student Malcolm Lee Hong, and they evaluated his presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination.

Mary Frances Casper, Ph.D. Chair, Supervisory Committee
Natalie Nelson-Marsh, Ph.D. Member, Supervisory Committee
Trevor Hall, Ph.D. Member, Supervisory Committee
Chris Blanchard, M.A. Member, Supervisory Committee

The final reading approval of the thesis was granted by Mary Frances Casper, Ph.D., Chair of the Supervisory Committee. The thesis was approved for the Graduate College by John R. Pelton, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate College.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance and help of several individuals who contributed or extended their valuable assistance.

First and foremost, my sincere gratitude to Dr. Mary Frances Casper for acting as my guide and mentor. Her patience and encouragement has greatly contributed to my ability to complete this thesis. I’d also like to thank the other three members of my committee for their generous contribution to my study, Dr. Natalie Nelson-March, Dr. Chris Blanchard, and Dr. Trevor Hall.

I’d also like to express my appreciation to faculty from the Communication Department at Boise State University who forwarded my survey to their students, and to the many users on Facebook who volunteered their time to take my survey. I am grateful to my family, McKay Graybill, and Toby Borup for helping me distribute my online survey to their contacts on Facebook.

I am especially grateful for the help of the following individuals who assisted me with statistical procedures: Dr. Blanchard, Dr. Steve Patrick, Laura Bond and Josue Gomez.

Last, but not least, a huge thank you to Jonathon Lundy for helping me edit my thesis!
ABSTRACT

Although user motives for personal use of Facebook has been frequently researched, literature that describes user motives for business communication purposes is limited. To understand this process, this study employed uses and gratifications theory to interpret users’ motivations for communicating and using business Facebook Pages. An online survey was distributed and completed by 345 participants. This survey asked participants about their personal use of Facebook, their use of business Facebook Pages, and what type of content on Facebook they found gratifying. Content analysis was also utilized to observe users’ communicative patterns on business Facebook Pages.

It was found that, in order of importance, the most influential motives for user communication on business-related Facebook Pages were social, entertainment, and informational. Other notable findings indicated that users prefer communicating with other followers of the business Facebook Page over the business represented on Facebook, that users find following conversations on business Facebook Pages more entertaining than participating in these conversations, and that users share Facebook content primarily if this content gratifies their need for entertainment. Additional research on how communicative acts on a business Facebook Page can create social influence in the Facebook community is suggested. Implications of findings for uses and gratifications theory are discussed and recommendations for effective use of business Facebook Pages follow.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ........................................................................................................ iv  
ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... v  
LIST OF FIGURES .............................................................................................................. ix  
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .................................................................................. 1  
REVIEW OF LITERATURE ............................................................................................... 5  
  Social Networking Sites .................................................................................................. 5  
  Overview of Facebook ..................................................................................................... 6  
  Business Facebook Pages ............................................................................................... 8  
  Communicative Intent of Business Facebook Pages ..................................................... 10  
  Communication on Business Facebook Pages .............................................................. 11  
  Uses and Gratifications Theory ...................................................................................... 13  
  Assumptions of Uses and Gratifications Theory ............................................................. 15  
  Criticism of Uses and Gratifications Theory .................................................................. 16  
  Uses and Gratifications Theory and Online Communication ......................................... 17  
  Uses and Gratifications of the Internet ........................................................................... 21  
CHAPTER 2: METHODS .................................................................................................. 25  
  Hypotheses .................................................................................................................... 26  
  Participants .................................................................................................................... 26  
    Demographic Information .......................................................................................... 27
Data Collection Through Survey ................................................................. 29
Data Analysis of Survey Results................................................................. 30
Content Analysis of Business Facebook Pages ........................................ 31

CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS........................................................................ 36
H1: Personal Use of Facebook Will Be Related to Use of Business Facebook Pages .............................................................................................................. 36
H2: Users Prefer Interaction with Other Users to Interaction with the Business Represented by the Business Facebook Page ......................................................... 37
H3: Communication Strategies That Ask for User Participation Will Be More Effective in Obtaining User Feedback Than Other Engagement Strategies .......... 38
H4: Users Will Prefer to Communicate with Businesses Through Business Facebook Pages Over Other Forms of Communication ................................................. 39
H5: Entertainment Motives Are a Stronger Predictor of Business Facebook Page Use Than Informational Motives................................................................. 42

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION...................................................................... 44
Relationship Between Personal Use of Facebook and Facebook Pages........... 44
Gratifications That Encourage Communication on Facebook Pages .............. 45
Gratifications That Influence Sharing Content from Facebook Pages .............. 47
Gratifications of Business Facebook Pages Compared to Other Media .......... 48
Main Gratifications Sought from Business Facebook Pages ......................... 50
Implications for Business Communication.................................................. 50
Communication Helps Users Relate to Facebook Pages .............................. 50
Communication Style on Facebook as a Reflection of Brand Personality ....... 52
Phatic Culture.................................................................................................. 52
Recommendations for Business Communication ......................................... 54
Develop a Distinct Personality Separate from Brand ................................... 55
Facilitate the Development of a Unique Phatic Culture ........................................ 55
Focus on Quasi-Two Way Communication, Not Just Views ......................... 56
Reward User Engagement, Even If It Is Only Phatic Exchanges ................. 57
Present Relevant Information as Interactive Formats ................................ 57
Broader Implications ....................................................................................... 58
Businesses ........................................................................................................ 58
Public Relations ............................................................................................... 59
Society as a Whole ........................................................................................... 60
Implications for Uses and gratifications Theory ........................................... 61
Active Audience .............................................................................................. 64
Transparency ..................................................................................................... 67
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION ........................................................................ 68
Limitations ......................................................................................................... 70
REFERENCES ..................................................................................................... 72
APPENDIX A ..................................................................................................... 76
Hypotheses Results ......................................................................................... 76
APPENDIX B ..................................................................................................... 78
Survey Results ................................................................................................. 78
APPENDIX C ..................................................................................................... 102
Content Analysis .............................................................................................. 102
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1  I Log Into Facebook ........................................................................................................ 79
Figure 2  Average Time Spent in a Facebook Session ................................................................. 79
Figure 3  My Facebook Friends List has: ...................................................................................... 80
Figure 4  Facebook Is Part of My Daily Routine ......................................................................... 80
Figure 5  I Feel Out of Touch When I Haven’t Logged onto Facebook ....................................... 81
Figure 6  I Enjoy Using Facebook to Communicate with Friends ............................................... 81
Figure 7  I Participate in the Facebook Community .................................................................... 82
Figure 8  Reasons for ”liking” Business Pages on Facebook ....................................................... 82
Figure 9  How Often Do You Look at Business Facebook Pages? ............................................. 83
Figure 10 Enjoyment of Business Facebook Pages over Business Websites ............................. 83
Figure 11 I Communicate on a Business Facebook Page If It Offers Exclusive Content, Such as Promotions or Videos ................................................................. 84
Figure 12 I Communicate on a Business Facebook Page if Posted Content Asks Users a Question or Asks for Feedback .............................................................................. 84
Figure 13 Categories That Influences Use of Business Facebook Pages ................................. 85
Figure 14 I Find Facebook Pages More Entertaining Than Business Websites ......................... 86
Figure 15 I Find It Entertaining to Read Conversations on Facebook Walls and/or Discussion Boards ........................................................................................................... 86
Figure 16 I Find It Entertaining to Participate in Conversations on Facebook Walls and/or Discussion Boards ........................................................................................................ 87
Figure 17 I Find It Entertaining to Watch videos or Listen to Audio Files (i.e., Music or Podcasts) ......................................................................................................................... 87
Figure 18  I find It Entertaining to Look at Photos .......................................................... 88
Figure 19  I Find It Entertaining to Play Facebook Games ............................................. 88
Figure 20  It Is Easier to Get Information About a Business on Their Facebook Page Than on Their Website ................................................................. 89
Figure 21  It Is More Convenient to Get Information About a Business on Their Facebook Page Than on Their Website ................................................................. 89
Figure 22  I Find It Helpful to Gather Information by Reading Facebook Posts by the Business ................................................................. 90
Figure 23  I Find It Helpful to Gather Information by Reading Conversations on Facebook Walls and/or Discussion Boards ................................................................. 90
Figure 24  I Find It Helpful to Gather Information by Watching Videos or Listening to Audio Files (i.e., Music or Podcasts) ................................................................. 91
Figure 25  I Find It Helpful to Gather Information by Reading Facebook Notes Posted by the Business ................................................................. 91
Figure 26  I Find It Helpful to Gather Information by Looking at and Responding to Facebook Events ................................................................. 92
Figure 27  I Find It Helpful to Gather Information by Reading Reviews of Products Posted by Other Users ................................................................. 92
Figure 28  I Enjoy Communicating with Other Users More Than the Actual Business ................................................................. 93
Figure 29  I Feel Socially Connected by Following Conversations on Facebook Walls and/or Discussion Boards ................................................................. 93
Figure 30  I Feel Socially Connected By Participating in Conversations on Facebook Walls and/or Discussion Boards ................................................................. 94
Figure 31  I Feel Socially Connected by Playing Facebook Games That Involve Other Users ................................................................. 94
Figure 32  I Feel Socially Connected by Looking at and Responding to Facebook Events ................................................................. 95
Figure 33  When I Contact Businesses Through Their Facebook Pages, I Am More Likely to Receive a Timely Response Compared to Using Letters and Email ................................................................. 95
Figure 34  I Find It More Convenient to Contact Businesses Through Their Facebook Pages Compared to Using Letters, Email, and the Phone .......................... 96

Figure 35  I Like Business Facebook Pages That Makes Me Feel Like Part of a Larger Online Community ................................................................. 96

Figure 36  I Am Likely to Share Content from Business Facebook Pages with Friends If Posted Content Asks Users a Question or Asks For Feedback .......... 97

Figure 37  I Am Likely to Share Content from Business Facebook Pages with Friends If Posted Content Is Controversial ......................................................... 97

Figure 38  I Am Likely to Share Content from Business Facebook Pages with Friends If Posted Content Comes Across As Authoritative Information .......... 98

Figure 39  I Am Likely to Share Content from Business Facebook Pages with Friends If Posted Content Is Entertaining or Humorous ........................................ 98

Figure 40  I Am Likely to Share Content from Business Facebook Pages with Friends If These Pages Offer Content Only Available Through Facebook ....... 99

Figure 41  Please Number the Following Categories That Influences Your Choice to Share Content with Friends Using Facebook ........................................ 99

Figure 42  Are You Male Or Female? ................................................................. 100

Figure 43  What Is Your Current Age? ............................................................. 100

Figure 44  What Is the Highest Level of Education You Have Completed? ......... 101

Figure 45  What Is Your Yearly Income? .......................................................... 101
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of social media has changed the dynamics of interpersonal and mass communication. Unlike traditional marketing and communication platforms, social media is a two-way asymmetrical communication channel between an organization and the public, in which users are active participants instead of a passive audience. The nature of social media has greatly facilitated opportunities for users to collaborate and interact as individuals and as organizations. Social media’s ability to quickly connect with people and share information brings exciting possibilities for communication with a wide variety of stakeholders, particularly businesses and organizations (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Although businesses have sought to use many different social media channels, Facebook has emerged as one of the leading social media platforms. According to statistics from their website, Facebook has over 400 million active users, with about half of those users logging onto Facebook daily. There are also over 1.5 million businesses that maintain an active presence through a Facebook page, and over 20 million users become fans of Facebook pages each day (Facebook.com, 2010).

From an advertising perspective, Facebook represents an opportunity for businesses to create cost-effective promotional communication for their services, products, and organization through posting pictures, videos, and other content-rich information and encouraging users to share their content with friends. From a marketing perspective, businesses seek to persuade their users to become involved in their
organizations and purchase their products through strategic online branding. A presence on Facebook is valuable in reaching consumers because a Facebook page can be linked from other websites or even advertised through Facebook itself. This makes a presence on Facebook valuable in reaching consumers (Threatt, 2009). From a public relations perspective, the focus for this study, it is critical to understand how to build and maintain relationships through strategic communication. Understanding the motivations that drive user communicative behavior on business Facebook Pages will help organizations facilitate this process.

Facebook has transformed the communication process by giving individuals, not businesses or organizations, more control over the access and distribution of information. Although user-to-user communication has always been present, it has become more widespread as consumers interact with each other to gain information rather than primarily relying on messages from organizations and businesses (Threatt, 2009). The empowerment of users through Facebook has caused a shift in the dynamics of user-to-business communication (Cavanaugh, 2009).

Understanding why users communicate with businesses and organizations through Facebook will create insights about how businesses can further encourage user participation and communicate more effectively with their audiences. This study is relevant for the communication field because Facebook demonstrates a change in how users communicate with businesses and how users find, create, and share information.

Previous literature has discussed communication processes among Facebook users and has examined general communication strategies for organizations on Facebook. While existing literature have explained which needs and desires users seek to gratify by
using Facebook, they have focused on Facebook as a general social utility site (Foregger, 2008). Other studies examining user-to-business communication have only focused on communication from the perspective of businesses and organizations. This approach overlooks a fundamental part of the process: how user gratifications sought on business Facebook Pages motivate their communicative behavior (Threatt, 2009).

To gain a better understanding of user motivations to communicate on business Facebook Pages, this study will employ uses and gratifications theory. Uses and gratifications theory assumes that people are active in choosing media content and will choose communication mediums that best gratify their needs. This theory is commonly used to explain what motivates people to use specific types of media content and mediums, therefore making it appropriate to explore use of business Facebook Pages (Bryant & Zillmann, 1994).

For the purposes of this study, interaction is defined as communication on Facebook. Because Facebook allows for two-way quasi communication, conceptualizing communication as interaction can account for the variety of ways users can participate on Facebook, recognizing that user intents and outcomes may vary. Examples of communication on Facebook include interactions on a business’s Facebook page, such as writing on the Facebook Page’s wall, starting conversations on discussion boards, and other communicative acts, including user-to-business and user-to-user interaction.

Quantitative data collected through surveys distributed to consumers who use business Facebook Pages will be combined with content analysis of business Facebook Pages to answer the following research question: How does a user’s desired gratifications influence user communication on business Facebook Pages?
Findings from this thesis support the relevance of uses and gratifications theory in studying new media and demonstrate how user communicative patterns on Facebook are influenced by desired gratifications. Findings show which desired gratifications are the most influential in shaping user behavior and also reveal what type of communication strategies are the most effective in driving active user participation. Recommendations for communication strategies for businesses on Facebook are also discussed.

Broader implications for this study support the importance of niche markets and using mass media to target select individuals, rather than broadcasting messages to the general public. Findings show that strategic communication on Facebook fosters relationship building and humanizes organizations.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following section will discuss relevant literature that lay a foundation for understanding Facebook, how Facebook changes the communicative process, and also explains why uses and gratifications theory is an appropriate theory used to guide this study. Following this chapter, the methods employed in this study will be described.

Social media is a broad term used to describe services and web-based platforms that give users the ability to connect online and exchange knowledge and content (Sarkkinen, 2009). As its name implies, sociality is the key element that social media platforms have in common, as they thrive when members actively participate and invite others to join their community. Interaction with social media can involve text, video, audio, images, or nearly any form of media (Sarkkinen, 2009).

**Social Networking Sites**

Although there are many different social media platforms, such as MySpace, Twitter, and YouTube, social networking sites have become especially popular. Social networking sites are platforms that are user-centric, or in other words, focus primarily on the user. They do so through allowing users to build personal profiles and connect with other friends on the social network (Papacharissi, 2009). Users can message other people on the network, join groups, causes, share content with others, and generally engage in social behavior. The popularity of social networks is attributed to the ability to easily connect with friends and effortlessly communicate to a large network (Cavanaugh, 2009).
Social networking sites are especially relevant today because individuals may have limited physical contact with others and increased time using technological devices. Social networks have carved a niche with users by providing an online environment that meets the need for socialization while simultaneously allowing entertainment and information sharing (Papacharissi, 2009). Perhaps for these reasons, social networking sites rank among the most rapidly growing and frequented sites online. Out of the many social networking sites online, Facebook has become a dominant player because of its incredible growth and because of how quickly its audience has become diversified (Cavanaugh, 2009).

**Overview of Facebook**

Facebook was launched on February 4, 2004 by Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg. Facebook was originally intended to become a digital replacement for Harvard’s paper face books that allowed students to create new social connections and identify other students. Facebook rapidly grew in popularity and 650 Harvard undergraduates registered within the first four days of launch. In the first month, Facebook expanded to encompass other universities around Boston, eventually including many other Ivy League schools within the network. Within that year, over 1 million active users were on Facebook, and by May 2005, Facebook had expanded to include over 800 college networks. Facebook became available for high school and workplace networks in May 2006. In September 2006, Facebook membership became open to anyone, not just those who belonged to a school or workplace network (Foregger, 2008).

As of 2010, Facebook had more than 400 million active users, with about 70% of these users, or roughly 280 million, from outside the United States. More than 5 billion
pieces of content, such as web links, blog posts, news stories, or photo albums, are shared each week. Facebook has more than 3 million active pages which have attracted more than 5.3 billion fans (Facebook.com, 2010).

Facebook allows users to create and maintain a personal profile that represents his or her online identity on the network. A user’s profile includes pictures, contact information, and personal information, such as relationship status, political affiliation, and hobbies and interests. A profile includes a “wall,” which is a public space for other users to post comments. Users can send private emails to other users and engage in other social behavior. A user can also add other Facebook profiles to his or her personal network, which are known as Facebook friends. These connections must be mutually approved by both parties (Facebook.com, 2010).

Facebook users have the ability to join Facebook Groups, which offer features similar to a user profile for all members of the group. A group page includes group information, a wall for group members to post comments, and a section to post pictures and videos. Facebook groups have several features that improve the communication process for all members of the group, including a discussion board, the ability to create events and invite members, and the ability to message all members of the group simultaneously. Groups are managed by group administrators, which have the power to manage the group through inviting users, removing other users from the group, and deleting posts by other users on the group page (Facebook.com, 2010).

Facebook Pages are similar to Facebook Groups in the sense that they offer nearly all of the same communication features, such as a wall, discussion board, and the ability to post pictures and videos. However, because Facebook Pages were specifically created
for organizations, Facebook Pages provide information on how Facebook users are interacting with the page and gives demographic information about their users.

Additionally, Facebook Pages, unlike Group Pages, can host applications, programs that interact with Facebook, and make the website more personalized for its users (Facebook.com, 2010).

Privacy settings are different for Facebook users, Group Pages, and Facebook Pages. An individual Facebook user has several options available to control who has access to their information on their account. First, a user’s profile can be set to private, which means that only that user’s Facebook friends may view that user’s full profile (Foregger, 2008). Additionally, users can also restrict the information that is shared among their Facebook friends by hiding information on their profile from specific users. Users can also adjust their privacy settings to control what personal information is shared with Facebook applications and websites (Facebook.com, 2010).

Facebook Groups are more limited in terms of privacy. There are two types of Facebook Groups, open and closed. Content available on open Facebook Group pages can be viewed by anyone on Facebook. Closed Facebook Groups can only be viewed by members of the group. A user must be approved by the group administrator before he or she can join a closed Group Page. Once a user gains access to a Facebook Group page, there are no restrictions on the information he or she can view on the Group page (Facebook.com, 2010).

**Business Facebook Pages**

Business Facebook Pages, in contrast to individual profiles and Group pages, are the least private because their content is visible to anyone on the Facebook network. If
users choose to connect to a company’s page, they can do so automatically without a friend request being accepted by the company. The only exception to this is a Facebook Page with potentially sensitive content, which can be restricted to users who are not a certain age. Followers of a company’s page are known as “fans” (*Facebook.com*, 2010).

The communicative intent for Facebook users, Facebook Groups, and Facebook Pages widely vary. Facebook users generally use the social network as a communication tool to connect with other users and fulfill informational, social, and entertainment needs (Sheldon, 2008). Previous research has suggested that user communication on social networks often follows what is referred to as phatic culture—communication intended to maintain social connections rather than exchange meaningful information (Miller, 2008). In terms of using Facebook as a social utility site, phatic culture can easily be seen through various communicative acts. One example is promiscuous friending, which is adding Facebook Friends, but not actively communicating with them. Another example is how users can select friends from their network to “poke” using Facebook. Friends who are poked receive a notification from Facebook that they’ve been poked and receive the option to “poke” back. These content-less forms of communication allow users to easily maintain social connections without a more substantial exchange of information (Foregger, 2008).

Facebook Group pages are intended to create group interaction around a specific topic. Facebook Groups encourage personal interaction and are typically less formal than Facebook Pages, which represent an official channel of communication for businesses and organizations. The communicative intent for Facebook Groups is different based on the group’s purpose. For example, some groups are intended to advocate a particular
cause or point of view, while other groups are devoted to communicating about shared hobbies or interests (Facebook.com, 2010).

**Communicative Intent of Business Facebook Pages**

Business Facebook Pages have a communicative intent different from individual users and Facebook Groups. Businesses seek to move beyond phatic culture to influence users through content-rich information. As Facebook Pages represent an official channel of communication for businesses, they seek to use Facebook as a medium for advertising, marketing, and public relations purposes (Facebook.com, 2010). Each perspective has a different communicative intent.

From an advertising perspective, businesses seek to use Facebook as a cost-effective way to promote themselves. Facebook provides an easy way for businesses to distribute content and messages to their target audience through having an online presence through a Facebook Page. Because Facebook allows information to spread quickly over the network, businesses hope to use Facebook as a tool to encourage users to help promote their messages to other consumers (Tuten, 2008). Besides using Facebook Pages, businesses can also create advertisements specifically targeted to groups of Facebook users. These ads are shown to Facebook users whose personal profile matches demographic information that is preset by the advertiser. Although these advertisements require payment in the form of pay per click (CPC) or pay per impression (CPM), many businesses consider this a good investment to reach specific Facebook users who may be interested in their products (Facebook.com, 2010).

From a marketing perspective, businesses hope to use Facebook to brand their organizations and products and create sales. This is commonly done through Facebook
using the concept known as “friendvertising”—leveraging the power of social influence to build momentum in promoting a company and its unique brand (Ryan & Jones, 2009). This form of endorsement from other users has more credibility in the online community compared to direct communication from the business on Facebook. Despite the anonymous nature of the Internet, users see each other as reliable information sources when it comes to making consumer decisions. Because other users are members of the same community, apparently not affiliated with any companies, their opinions are regarded to be more credible (Cavanaugh, 2009). Businesses ultimately hope to drive sales by leveraging the power of social influence and in so doing, putting their best face forward.

From a public relations perspective, Facebook has importance because it represents an opportunity for businesses to communicate with users and build relationships (Cavanaugh, 2009). Encouraging conversations on Facebook, both user-to-user and user-to-business, is seen as a valuable opportunity to help individuals feel more connected to a business through strategic communication. This study examined user communication on business Facebook Pages from a public relations perspective.

**Communication on Business Facebook Pages**

Facebook users frequently chat with each other online about topics relevant for businesses. Besides engaging in conversations with other Facebook users, many users also utilize Facebook as a direct communication tool to contact the organization. Users can post questions or concerns on the business Facebook Page’s wall and the business has the opportunity to respond to these posts on Facebook. This is similar to the communication process on discussion boards of traditional websites; however, Facebook
facilitates this process. Facebook notifies users and businesses when their posts are responded to. Other users can also see this activity and easily join the existing conversation (Facebook.com, 2010).

Creating conversations on Facebook, both between user-to-user and between user-to-business, presents an extraordinary opportunity for businesses to gain insights about consumers and understand their needs and wants. If a company uses Facebook reflectively, it can help the organization better understand users and adapt their communication to more effectively meet their needs.

The ease of use and openness of communication of Facebook has changed the dynamics of business communication. Unlike traditional business-to-consumer communication, such as letters or email, communication on Facebook can be transparent. Interaction on Facebook, in the form of wall posts or discussion board posts, is visible to all users. Because communication is visible to everyone on the network, anyone can freely participate and add to the conversation. Although it is possible for businesses to moderate communication by removing wall posts and discussion boards posts, many businesses avoid censorship unless the posts contains offensive content. This openness of communication represents a significant change in traditional communication between users and businesses (Cavanaugh, 2009).

The ease of use and the possibility of instantaneous communication through Facebook business pages influence the communication process. Facebook may be perceived as an easy way for users to communicate with businesses. Also noteworthy, users may communicate differently with businesses because of how businesses represent themselves on Facebook. The dynamics of social media place a stronger emphasis on
interpersonal communication, which is further emphasized through the nature of Facebook, a social network designed specifically to facilitate user interaction (Threatt, 2009).

Understanding how user motivations are shaped through computer-mediated communication will create new insights about how new media is changing the communication process. To interpret user motivations, use of business Facebook Pages will be examined through uses and gratifications theory.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) described the basic goals of uses and gratifications theory as: "(a) to explain how people use media to gratify their needs, (b) to understand motives for media behavior, and (c) to identify functions or consequences that follow from needs, motives, and behavior" (cited in Bryant & Zillmann, 1994, p. 419).

Uses and gratifications theory originated from communication studies of media effects. Some communication scholars theorized that media effects involve more than a direct relationship between sender and receiver. For instance, Klapper (1960) asserted that multiple elements may intervene between a message and the response of an audience. One of these elements was an individual’s uses and gratifications of the media.

Early scholars who studied uses and gratifications had two purposes in mind. First, these researchers argued that studying uses and gratifications addressed a gap in existing research by studying audience needs instead of examining communication effects from the perspective of the sender. Second, uses and gratifications research was intended to treat an audience’s needs as intervening variables in traditional
communication effects, which was not addressed in previous media effects studies (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974).

Scholars who argued that uses and gratifications were important disagreed about how audiences were influenced by the media. Previous media effect theories claimed that audience members were reactive and passively influenced by the media. Scholars who believe in a passive audience asserted that there is little intervention between a message and its receivers (Klapper, 1960).

In contrast, uses and gratifications theory heavily posits an active audience that participates in media consumption. Blumler (1979) explained four characteristics that define an active audience: 1) Utility, which is how individuals can use the media; 2) Intentionality, media use influenced by an individual’s perceived motivations; 3) Selectivity, choosing specific media content and channels to best gratify needs; and 4) Imperviousness to influence, meaning that individuals are resistant to the effects of the media. Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) went on to explain that as an active audience chooses and uses specific media, they first determine specific communication goals, evaluate possible gratifications received from different communication mediums, and then choose channels that meet their communicative needs. The concept of an active audience is a critical part in building a framework for uses and gratifications theory.

Concepts of an active audience include assumptions of personal agency. Agency, in the content of uses and gratifications, means that individuals are rational agents capable of selecting media content that best meets their needs and desires. Individuals determine whether or not to consume media, the extent of their media consumption, and
their choices are driven by desired outcomes. Individuals are able to determine their needs and determine what media channels will best gratify them.

Because this theory asserts that an active audience chooses the communication medium that best gratifies audience member’s needs, uses and gratifications theory is commonly used to explain why people consume media and what motivates them to use a specific type of media content (Bryant & Zillmann, 1994). This theory asserts that an individual’s media choice is based on a combination of sociological and psychological factors. Some of these factors may include group norms, opinion leadership, message dissemination through interpersonal channels, and individual predispositions. Because audiences are active agents, individuals may utilize the media differently based on the needs they are seeking to gratify (Klapper, 1960). Uses and gratifications theory is grounded in five assumptions.

**Assumptions of Uses and Gratifications Theory**

There are five main assumptions of uses and gratifications theory: 1) Communication behavior is intentional, goal directed, and motivated. People are active participants who choose media content. 2) Rather than being used by the media, people use media to fulfill their needs and wants. People take initiative in choosing these communication mediums. 3) People’s communication behavior is influenced by numerous psychological and social variables. Expectations about media are filtered through psychological and social characteristics such as a user’s personality and need for interaction. 4) Media compete with other forms of communication for use to gratify our needs or wants. The extent that media fulfills a user’s need depends on his or her social
and psychological circumstances. 5) People generally have more influence than the media in the relationship (Bryant & Zillmann, 1994).

Studies involving uses and gratifications theory focus on gratifications sought and gratifications obtained. Gratifications sought are motivations that drive media behavior, and gratifications obtained are “perceived personal outcomes” from an individual’s use of media (Rubin et al., 1994). Satisfaction is defined as the extent that an individual perceives that a media channel is fulfilling his or her needs. Although individuals seek to use the media to meet their needs, these needs are not always satisfied. If users are not able to successfully satisfy their needs with their choice of media, they will likely seek alternative mediums of communication (Rosengren & Windahl, 1972). Because today’s contemporary media environment is oversaturated with numerous media channels and competing messages, understanding how to meet user gratifications takes on greater importance.

**Criticism of Uses and Gratifications Theory**

Common criticisms against uses and gratifications theory are that: 1) It is too dependent on user self-reports. 2) Concepts of the theory are too ill-defined with scholars defining concepts differently. 3) Studies are too compartmentalized, because of its many separate typologies that lacked sufficient synthesis. 4) It cannot create generalizability beyond the sample. 4) Finally, many critics of uses and gratifications theory argued against the idea that an audience could be active and capable of selecting media (Ruggiero, 2000).

Some of these main concerns have been addressed through clarifying major concepts and creating a paradigm for uses and gratifications theory. The concept of a
rational, active audience was revised, and audience choice was structured to exist on a continuum. Additionally, this paradigm addressed replication and secondary analysis of data and also compared motives across a variety of media channels (Rosengren, 1974). Other scholars have also refined key elements of uses and gratifications theory, such as gratifications, motives, and other social and psychological variables (Bryant & Zillmann, 1994; Rubin, et al. 1994; Ruggiero, 2000).

Uses and gratifications theory has been frequently utilized to create understanding about how audiences seek different gratifications from mass media. The most common categories are diversion (emotional release, escape from problems), personal relationship (substitute of the media for companionship, social utility of information in conversation), personal identity (self-understanding, value reinforcement), and surveillance (McQuail, Blumler, & Brown, 1972). Studies have demonstrated that different motivations for using media are connected to a user’s media preferences, which lead to different patterns of being exposed to the media and to different outcomes (Haridakis & Rubin, 2003).

**Uses and Gratifications Theory and Online Communication**

Although uses and gratifications theory was originally intended to understand the use of static mass media, because of its approach in understanding communication phenomena on a user level, it is also appropriate to utilize it in understanding Internet use. Starting in the mid 1980’s, scholars utilized the uses and gratifications framework to understand the use of the Internet (Ruggiero, 2000). Because uses and gratifications theory assumes an active audience, it helps scholars understand a goal-oriented, gratification-seeking audience. Additionally, the conceptual and methodological
openness of uses and gratifications theory is valuable in understanding user motivations for new media platforms (Morris & Ogan, 1996).

Scholars Newhagen and Rafaeli (1996) asserted that uses and gratifications theory holds promise for understanding online communication because it takes into account how the Internet gives users a wide range of communication opportunities. Through the Internet, users can network with others, find information, and engage in numerous other activities. Uses and gratifications theory provides an effective framework to understand a user’s online communication processes and explain user motivations for using the Internet. It is especially relevant that the dynamics of the Internet allow the role of an active audience to take on greater importance compared to previous mass media channels.

In the era dominated by conventional media, audience activity was constrained by media resources that were controlled by the ruling class. Although the audience had personal choice, such as the ability to choose what programs to watch, their activity was limited by the inability to control the content, values, and ideology of the available media channels (Li, 2005). Additionally, in order to actively respond to traditional media, such as radio and television, audience members must utilize mediums of interpersonal communication, such as mail and telephone. Because conventional media lacks an inherent feedback mechanism, interaction was limited to interpersonal means of communication. In this sense, the one-way communication of traditional media has limited audience activity (Li, 2005). In comparison, the rise of the Internet has changed the one-way communication process from focusing on the media to the audience.
The Internet makes two-way interaction between media and audience possible through combining the characteristics of mass communication and interpersonal communication in a single channel. Although the Internet is ideal for mass communication, users can also use the Internet to communicate with other users on an interpersonal level. Two-way interaction can take place instantly, which contributes to promoting audience activity at a higher level than previously seen in other media channels (Stafford & Stafford, 2004). Ruggerio (2000) similarly asserted that the Internet possesses three characteristics that sets it apart from traditional media and promotes the concept of an active audience: Interactivity, demassification, and asynchronicity.

Interactivity is defined as the “the degree to which participants in the communication process have control over, and can exchange roles in their mutual discourse” (Williams, Rice, & Rogers, 1988, p. 10). Interactivity is a multidimensional concept because it involves the number of choices given to users, the degree of effort users must use to gain information, the degree a communication medium is actively responsive to users, and the extent that a communication medium allows interpersonal communication among users. Interactivity on the Internet allow users a greater ability to develop new communication means and increases user activity (Ruggerio, 2000). Interactivity is relevant to uses and gratifications theory because, as these depictions suggest, users are active participants who intentionally use media to fulfill their communication needs.

Demassification is defined as an individual’s control over a communication medium and the ability of a user to choose from a wide selection of media. Because of advances in technology, users have a greater ability to personalize new media to meet
their needs. For example, in the past, users who subscribed to newspapers such as *The New York Times* were forced to pay for the entire edition, but in contrast, users who receive the electronic edition may only select and pay for specific articles (Ruggerio, 2000). Because the Internet has characteristics that give users the ability to personalize message to meet their needs, it supports uses and gratifications theory’s conceptualization that, rather than being used by the media, people actively utilize media to fulfill their needs.

Asynchronicity represents the ability to stagger messages in time. For example, regarding television, asynchronicity is represented by how VCR users can record programs to view later. Asynchronicity on the Internet is represented through email, as users have the ability to receive, send, save, and retrieve messages at their convenience. The Internet also gives users the power to copy, store, and duplicate graphics and text to save for further use. The digitization of messages gives users a greater capacity to manipulate media, giving users significantly more control (Ruggerio, 2000). From a uses and gratifications perspective, this demonstrates how people can have more influence than the media in the relationship. Taken together, these characteristics foster a continuum of communication behavior that makes uses and gratifications a valuable perspective to examine user behavior.

Uses and gratifications researchers regarded these aspects of the Internet as a significant factor in creating a wide range of new communication behavior to study. Researchers were also specifically interested in understanding how the new dynamics of online communication changed user motivations for using the Internet.
Uses and Gratifications of the Internet

Research has demonstrated that the Internet can meet interpersonal and mediated needs (Rosengren, 1974). Researchers have found that with the exception of interpersonal needs, people use the Internet to gratify needs typically met by traditional media, such as passing time and information and entertainment. Mediated interpersonal needs are user gratifications such as using the Internet to feel less lonely, maintain relationships, and solve problems. Charney and Greenberg (2001) found eight primary gratification motives for Internet use: to keep informed, diversion and entertainment, good feelings, peer identity, communication, sights and sounds, career, and coolness.

Stafford and Stafford (2004) expanded on these findings on Internet uses and gratifications. Through an online survey of American Online (AOL) users, Stafford and Stafford attempted to determine gratifications specific to the Internet that were not identified in previous research. They gathered their data through asking open-ended questions to obtain an inventory of Internet use, which was followed by a survey with factor analysis. Their findings led Stafford and Stafford to find three new factors of Internet gratifications: Process gratifications, items related to navigating the Internet, such as searching or clicking; content gratifications, items that include user’s obtaining information from the Internet; and, social gratifications, items that showed interest in other people through Internet use. These set of gratifications were different from previous research because they could be viewed as a macro-level of Internet gratifications. However, their overall conclusions of a user’s socialization online are similar to current studies about uses and gratifications of social networks (Foregger, 2008).
Researchers have also studied Internet gratifications between consumers and product websites. Eighmey and McCord (1998) conducted a study in which they asked their subjects to view product websites and respond to pre-test interviews and also respond to statements based on previous uses and gratifications studies. Through factor analysis, it was demonstrated that most variance occurred in the factors of personal relevance, information involvement, and entertainment value. These researchers also asserted that the way information is presented on a website demonstrates a blend of information and entertainment, which may also be strongly applicable to a social network such as Facebook.

Hanjun Ko (2000) expanded on this study through examining the relationship between consumer motives and interactivity on a product website. Their findings revealed three primary motives of consumer use of product websites, information, social interaction, and convenience, which were shown to influence the time spent on the website. This study demonstrated that respondents are likely to report motives, such as the need for information, entertainment, and social interaction.

The primarily limitations of these studies were that the websites examined were simply commercial websites designed to promote a product, and consequently had a limited range of interactive features intended to promote two-way communication. Facebook, in contrast, is a social networked intended to promote human interaction and provide a medium for businesses to present information. Studying user motives for communication with business pages on Facebook is a worthwhile study because the dynamics of a social network, such as an enhanced focus on human interaction, may change the communication motives and processes for users (Foregger, 2008).
Researchers who have studied user motivations for using Facebook have approached their studies by building on existing research on user motivation for using the Internet. There have been several studies conducted to determine common user motivations in utilizing Facebook as a social utility site. One study specifically studied the uses and gratifications of students using Facebook (Foregger, 2008). In order of the most prominent uses, results were passing time, utilities and upkeep, maintaining/establishing old ties, accumulation, social information, interconnectedness, sexual attraction, channel use, and social comparison (Foregger, 2008).

Passing time was defined as using Facebook as an enjoyable way to spend time and as a diversion from other tasks, such as studying. Utilities and upkeep was activities such as updating one’s profile, posting photos in albums, and seeing photo comments. Establishing and maintaining old ties were defined as efforts to contact old friends or keeping in touch with geographically distant friends. Accumulation was using Facebook for business purposes, such as buying or selling used textbooks, looking for a place to live, and looking at classified ads. Social information was behavior such as comparing to see if others are more attractive or having more fun than the user. Interconnectedness was described as getting to know people better, such as using Facebook to determine mutual friends shared between another user, to learn more about people, and to identify faces with names. Sexual attraction was activities such as looking at profiles of romantic interests, looking at attractive people, and to look at the profile of a new boyfriend or girlfriend. Channel use was simply using Facebook as a substitute for others forms of communication, such as the phone, email, and face-to-face communication (Foregger, 2008).
These studies are consistent with previous findings on user motivations for using Facebook (Sheldon, 2008). However, it is important to note that all of these motivations are only applicable to using Facebook as a social utility site. Users may have a different communicative intent for communicating on business Facebook Pages compared to communicating with friends for social utility. Most relevant, the uses and gratifications of Facebook are different from previous uses and gratifications of mass media because of how an active audience changes the communication process. The convergence of media and digital technology has altered the extent that individuals can actively interact with a media or content.

Specific uses and gratifications that emerge from an active audience include social gratifications, which arise from use of the Internet as a social environment. Because Facebook’s communication dynamics are an extension of the Internet, uses and gratifications is an appropriate theory to use in exploring user motivations for communicating with businesses in the online social environment of Facebook (Stafford & Stafford, 2004). Additionally, because of new communication technologies, individuals have a greater choice of media channels. Therefore, understanding what motivates individuals to utilize specific media channels takes on greater importance.

Currently, there is limited academic research that has focused on understanding user motivations in using business Facebook Pages from a communication perspective. The following chapter will discuss what methods were employed to gather data to answer the research question. Specific motivations for using business Facebook Pages will be determined by answering the following question: How does a user’s desired gratifications influence user communication on business Facebook Pages?
CHAPTER 2: METHODS

This study employed uses and gratifications theory and content analysis to interpret how user motivations for business Facebook use influenced their behavior. User behavior can be explained through media use fulfilling particular needs from varied origins. An individual’s media consumption can be seen as behavior predicated by an interaction of psychological and sociological factors (Blumler, 1979). User needs, motivations, actions, and gratifications are linked in sequence and are predictive (Blumler, 1979), making quantitative methodology appropriate for examining user motives for participation on business Facebook Pages. Uses and gratifications theory assumes that people have social and psychological traits that influence their communication behavior. Therefore, examining relationships between variables is essential in understanding phenomena (Bryant & Zillmann, 1994).

Previous research has suggested that user communication with businesses on Facebook is influenced by informational, social, and entertainment needs (Ruggiero, 2000). However, it is unclear which motives are the most prominent and the extent that these motives influence the communication process. To gain greater understanding of why users communicate on business Facebook Pages, the following hypotheses were created to provide direction towards gathering data to describe user motivations and user behavior and describe user motivations to use Facebook as opposed to traditional forms
of communication, which this study defines as communication through letters, email, and the phone.

**Hypotheses**

H1: Personal use of Facebook will be related to use of business Facebook Pages.

H2: Users prefer interaction with other users to interaction with the business represented by the business Facebook Page.

H3: Communication strategies that ask for user participation will be more effective in obtaining user feedback than other engagement strategies.

H4: Users will prefer to communicate with businesses through business Facebook Pages over other forms of communication.

H5: Entertainment motives are a stronger predictor of business Facebook Page use than informational motives.

**Participants**

Participants were 345 Facebook users who reported following business Facebook Pages. Participants were recruited through a snowball sample initiated through the Facebook friends list of students from all sections of a general education communication course offered at a mid-sized Northwestern university. For this study, traditional college students were an ideal population for snowball sampling because previous research strongly suggests that this population is highly active on Facebook with a broad social network (Foregger, 2008). A population highly active on Facebook made it more likely that surveyed participants would view business Facebook Pages and thus meet this requirement to participate in the survey.
The unique structure of Facebook made snowball sampling a logical choice for soliciting participation. Facebook users are connected to each other through personal networks, rather than a directory. Snowball sampling accounted for Facebook’s design and gathered data from third and fourth-party connections. The sample gathered may not be representative of Facebook as a whole, but is representative of an extended person-to-person network. Currently, each person on Facebook has an average of 130 friends, meaning that this sample potentially represents 44,850 Facebook users (Facebook.com, 2010).

Students were contacted by their course instructors via email to solicit participation. To act as an incentive to encourage student participation, at the discretion of their instructors, students were offered extra credit for their participation. Thirty students responded, which was not sufficient for the purposes of this study. Therefore, the researcher also distributed the survey to his extended Facebook Network using a Facebook Note. The Facebook Note explained the purpose of the study and invited people in the researcher’s network to distribute the survey link through their Facebook Status and by creating Facebook Notes and tagging friends in their Facebook network.

Demographic Information

Men made up 31% (107) and women made up 69% (238) of participants. Participants ranged in age from 18-68. 83% of all participants were between the ages of 18-30. The most frequent age bracket of the men was between the ages of 22-25, which

---

1 A Facebook Note is a written entry that is posted on Facebook, which is visible on a user’s personal profile and can be shared with other. Users can be tagged in a published Facebook Note, meaning that they will receive a Facebook notification and that the Note will become visible on their personal Facebook Profile.
accounted for 40.95% of all the men who participated in the survey. The most frequent age bracket of the women was also between the ages of 22-25, which accounted for 32.07% of all the women who participated in the survey. These users are representative of age brackets commonly found on Facebook. As of 2011, 25.3% of total Facebook users were between the age 18-24 and 24.8% of total Facebook users were between the age of 25-34 (Facebook.com, 2011).

The education level of participants ranged from “Less than High School” to “Master’s Degree.” The most frequent educational bracket levels was “Some College” (44.48%) and “4-Year College Degree” (26.74%). The income level of participants ranged from “Under $15,000” to “$100,000 or more.” The most frequent income level reported was “Under $15,000,” which accounted for 51.79% of all participants.

In order to determine if demographic characteristics influenced user’s attitudes and use of Facebook, demographic information from users was cross-tabulated with survey questions. The following section will briefly summarize the demographic trends from each category on the survey.

Specific questions in each category that do not follow the general demographic trend are noted in this section. Because the vast majority of participants (83%) fell into the 18-30 year old bracket, the general bracket for young adults, age will not be included in demographic information in each survey category.

Sex

With a few exceptions, there was not a substantial difference between male and female use of Facebook and business Facebook Pages. A slightly higher proportion of
males had negative attitudes about entertainment and information features of business Facebook Pages. Females are more likely to share content from business Facebook Pages if the content is entertaining or humorous.

**Income Level**

Participants with lower incomes, particularly the bracket of “Less than $15,000 a year,” were more likely to view business Facebook Pages, have positive attitudes about Facebook use, and engage in activities on Facebook. In contrast, most participants with a higher income range viewed business Facebook Pages less, had negative attitudes about Facebook use, and were less likely to engage in activities on Facebook. However, because most of the participants surveyed were in lower income brackets, these results cannot be generalized to a larger population.

**Educational Level**

Participants who fell into the college-level education brackets, particularly “Some College” were more likely to view business Facebook Pages, have positive attitudes about Facebook use, and engage in activities on Facebook. In contrast, most participants with a higher educational level, starting at “Four-Year College Degree” and higher viewed business Facebook Pages less, had negative attitudes about Facebook use, and were less likely to engage in activities on Facebook.

**Data Collection Through Survey**

The survey contained a combination of closed-ended, Likert-scale, and rank order questions. A total of 345 completed surveys were collected. Survey respondents were
asked to cite the top three pages they followed, which were then described through content analysis (Appendix A).

The first part of the survey asked users about their personal use of Facebook. These questions were modeled after Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe’s (2007) Facebook Intensity Scale, a questionnaire intended to create understanding of the frequency and depth of user involvement on Facebook. Following this section, the survey asked questions about user motivations for using Facebook, which fell into the following categories based on uses and gratifications theory:

1. User gratifications from Facebook as a social utility site with a focus on time committed to usage and levels of enjoyment, satisfaction, emotional connection, interaction, and stimulation.

2. Need for social interaction as indicated by social motivations, levels of interaction, fulfillment, and satisfaction with communication methods and responses.

3. Entertainment motives through questions that determine need for entertainment, levels of perceived entertainment, frustration, pleasure, engagement, and stimulation.

4. Information motives will be determined by asking users what information they find relevant and trustworthy, which Facebook Page features are the most helpful, and where they go for information about businesses, products, and services.

**Data Analysis of Survey Results**

After collecting completed surveys, the data was analyzed with the program SPSS. Because the survey employed Likert-scale questions, which are ordinal scales,
Spearman’s correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength of relationships between variables such as frequency of business Facebook use and user entertainment, social, and informational motives. Cross-tabulation was used to answer two hypotheses because it allowed the researcher to categorize two different groups of Facebook users for comparison. Chi-squared tests were also used to test results analyzed from specific Likert-scale survey questions to see if the distribution of frequencies that occurred were statistically significant.

**Content Analysis of Business Facebook Pages**

Content analysis was also used to describe user behavior on business Facebook Pages. Because uses and gratifications theory has been criticized for over reliance on self-reported data, content analysis was used to provide context and comparative data for compiled reports of user behaviors. Places where content analysis strongly supported or did not support the hypotheses are noted; however, the content analysis was not intended to be a direct comparison to individual survey data.

The number of participants made it infeasible to examine individual use of particular business Facebook pages. Instead, the three business Facebook Pages cited most frequently by the 345 participants were chosen for content analysis. The top three business Facebook Pages that users followed were Starbucks, Redbox, and Boise State University.

Each page was examined to note its number of followers, the special features offered for users, and which Facebook tools were used to communicate with users. Each Facebook Page organizes its different features through separate pages called “Application Tabs,” which work in a similar way to tabs in Internet browsers such as Firefox, Google
Chrome, and Internet Explorer. Business Facebook Pages have the option to organize their content using different application tabs, which were noted during this general overview of each business Facebook Page. Following this general overview of each page, content analysis was conducted.

Because of the high volume of activity on these business pages, the time frame for this analysis was limited to January 25, 2011 to January 31, 2011. The data examined for the content analysis were comments that users posted on the Facebook Wall for these business Facebook Pages. There were two different ways that users participated on these business Facebook Pages: First, through responding to posts published by business Facebook Pages; and second, through writing on the wall of business Facebook Pages.

For the purposes of this study, these two different types of user activity will be referred to as user responses and self-initiated posts. User activity on business Facebook Pages were broken into five categories: Non-directional postings, postings directed to a business, questions directed to users, conversations with a business, and conversations with other users.

Non-directional posting are postings from users that are not specifically directed towards a business or towards other users. An example of this category are users posting pictures related to the business Facebook Page or making comments that do not ask a question or for feedback. Posts from users expressing their love for a business or its products also fall into this category.

Postings directed to a business are individual postings that asked a question or gave direct feedback to the business without receiving a response. Examples of posts
meeting this category are users posting direct feedback to a business or offering suggestions for the business.

*Questions directed to users* are individual postings that asked a question or asked for direct feedback from other users without receiving a response. Examples of this category are posts asking for the opinion of other users on a business or its products.

*Conversations with a business* are conversations with a business that were operationalized as an exchange of at least two postings between a user and a business on the same subject.

*Conversations with other users* were operationalized as an exchange of at least two postings between two different users on the same subject.

To help gain a better understanding of what type of business postings encouraged user participation, each posting was categorized into one of four different categories: Entertainment, Information, Promotional, and Social.

*Entertainment* postings are primarily intended to amuse Facebook users. While these postings may provide information, if postings seemed to provide information primarily as a way to entertain or amuse Facebook users, it fell into the entertainment category. Examples of this category include posts that link to multimedia, Facebook Games, or posts that provide fun trivia about a business or its products.

*Information* postings are primarily intended to provide information to the user. An example of a posting in this category is a business page publishing its news releases or other official announcements.
Promotional postings highlight a contest, promotion, coupon, or any type of offer intended to attract attention from Facebook followers and encourage them to participate in some way. Examples of postings that fall under this category are a business posting coupons or codes for its followers.

Social postings are primarily intended to foster user participation, usually by asking a question or for direct feedback from users. Social postings are limited in terms of informational or entertainment, but instead simply provide enough background information on a subject to solicit user feedback. Examples of postings that fall under this category are a business page asking followers for their opinion on a product or asking users what they did last weekend.

Besides categorizing postings by business Facebook Pages, it was also noted how many users used the Facebook Like button on these postings. Using the Like button enables the user to show his or her approval of the published post without having to actually type a comment. When users “like” a post, a story appears in their Facebook Friend’s News Feed. Anyone can view what Facebook users “like.”

In addition to these posts, 10 followers from each business page were randomly selected to track individual activity. The time frame used for this analysis was the month of January, 2011. To obtain random users, the total number of users who posted on a business Facebook Page on January 1st were totaled and divided by 10. This number was taken and used to select users from the first day of the month of January to track throughout the month. For example, if 100 users posted on January 1st, each 10th person was selected to track his or her monthly activity on the business Facebook Page. To protect the privacy of Facebook users, each user will be referred to only by first name.
The next chapter presents findings from the survey results and content analysis that support or do not support the hypotheses. After these findings, discussions and implications will follow.
CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS

The following section uses data from the survey and content analysis to support or dispute the hypotheses discussed in the Methods chapter.

**H1: Personal Use of Facebook Will Be Related to Use of Business Facebook Pages**

This hypothesis was not supported by the findings.

Correlating data from the survey question, “I enjoy using Facebook to communicate with friends,” to responses from the question, “How often do you look at business Facebook Pages?,” revealed that the extent users enjoy using Facebook to communicate with friends has little influence over the extent to which they view business Facebook Pages ($r_s = .159, p = .002$).

Users who frequently use Facebook as a personal networking site are not substantially more likely to use business Facebook Pages. This was shown through cross-tabulating the Likert-scale questions, “I log into Facebook at least” and “How often do you look at business Facebook Pages?” Although users who log into Facebook at least once a day view business Facebook Pages more often than users who log into Facebook less frequently, there was no significant difference between the frequency that business Facebook Pages are viewed between these two groups.

Correlating data from the survey question, “I enjoy using Facebook to communicate with friends,” to the question, “I find it more convenient to contact
businesses through their Facebook Pages compared to using letters, email, and the phone, revealed the extent to which users who enjoy using Facebook for personal communication with friends has a weak correlation with their preference to use business Facebook Pages over alternative media platforms ($r_s = .132, p = .007$).

**H2: Users Prefer Interaction with Other Users to Interaction with the Business Represented by the Business Facebook Page**

This hypothesis was supported. To answer this hypothesis, data from two survey questions were examined and content analysis was also used to observe the users’ communication patterns on business Facebook Pages.

In response to the survey question, “I enjoy communicating with other users more than the actual business,” 19% strongly agreed, 38% agreed, 30% were neutral, 12% disagreed, and 1% strongly disagreed. This clearly showed a strong preference towards communicating with other users, not the business represented on Facebook.

Content analysis demonstrated that users communicate with each other more frequently compared to how often they communicate with the business represented on the Facebook Page. For Starbucks, 94% of all self-initiated conversations were among users and 6% were conversations between users and Starbucks. For Redbox, 43% of all self-initiated conversations were among users and 57% were conversations between users and Redbox. For Boise State University, 66.67% of all self-initiated conversations were among users and 33.33% were conversations between users and Boise State University. Although Redbox is the notable exception in which conversations between the business and users outnumber conversations among users, this could be explained by how Redbox
proactively responds to a large number of self-initiated posts that do not ask a direct question or give feedback.

**H3: Communication Strategies That Ask for User Participation Will Be More Effective in Obtaining User Feedback Than Other Engagement Strategies**

This hypothesis was confirmed through content analysis, but not supported by self-reported data on the survey \( (X^2 = 98.058, \text{df} = 4, p < .001) \). To answer this hypothesis, results were analyzed from the question, “I communicate on a business Facebook Page if posted content asks users a question or asks for feedback.” Results from this question were compared to a content analysis of Facebook Pages to determine the frequency of users who communicate on a business Facebook Page in response to postings that asked a question or for user feedback.

In response to the Likert-scale question, “I communicate on a business Facebook Page if posted content asks users a question or asks for feedback,” 2% of users selected “Always” and 17% of users selected “Usually.” 29% of users selected “Sometimes,” 32% selected rarely, and 20% selected “Never.”

Redbox was the only business Facebook Page that had postings that asked a question or for direct feedback between the dates of January 25 – 31, 2011. The average number of likes and comments for postings that asked a question or for direct feedback was compared to the average number of likes and comments for postings that did not ask a question or for direct feedback.

The average number of likes for postings on Redbox that asked users a question or for direct feedback was 521 and the average number of comments was 500. The
average number of likes for postings on Redbox that did not ask users a question or for direct feedback was 214 and the average number of comments was 101.

The higher frequency of user feedback to posts that asked users a question or for direct feedback supports this engagement strategy for business Facebook Pages. Although survey data does not support this, a possible explanation is that this hypothesis is true for participants who do not fall into the 18-30 year old age bracket, which made up 83% of all participants who took the survey.

**H4: Users Will Prefer to Communicate with Businesses Through Business Facebook Pages Over Other Forms of Communication**

This hypothesis was not supported through survey data and content analysis.

Two Likert-scale survey questions asked users to compare their use of business Facebook Pages to other forms of communication, such as letters, email, and the phone. Because the intent of business Facebook Pages is similar to business websites, two survey questions also asked users to specifically compare their use of business Facebook Pages to business websites.

In response to the survey question, “When I Contact Businesses Through Their Facebook Pages, I Am More Likely to Receive a Timely Response Compared to Using Letters and Email, 5% of users strongly agreed, 20% agreed, 63% were neutral, 9% disagreed, and 3% strongly disagreed.

In response to the survey question, “I Find It More to Convenient to Contact Businesses Through Their Facebook Pages Compared to Using Letters, Email, and the
Phone,” 4.83% of users strongly agreed, 23.01% agreed, 44.60% were neutral, 21.88% disagreed, and 5.68% strongly disagreed.

In response to the survey question, “It Is Easier to Get Information About a Business On Their Facebook Page Than on Their Website,” 4.21% of users strongly agreed, 18.62% agreed, 43.82% were neutral, 28.09% disagreed, and 5.06% strongly disagreed.

In response to the survey question, “It Is More Convenient to Get Information About a Business on Their Facebook Page Than on Their Website,” 7.58% of users strongly agreed, 28.09% agreed, 35.96% were neutral, 24.16% disagreed, and 4.21% strongly disagreed.

To understand how data reported by the survey was represented by user activity on business Facebook Pages, content analysis was used to observe how often users attempted to contact businesses on their Facebook Page, the frequency that businesses responded to these posts, and the average response time that the business took to respond.

For Starbucks, between January 25 to January 31, 2011, there were a total of 2,407 self-initiated posts on the wall of the Starbuck’s Facebook Page. Out of these posts, 122 posts were directed to Starbucks, making up about 5% of all total postings. About 30% of all posts directed towards Starbucks received a response from the business. On average, each post directed towards Starbucks received a response time of between several days to a week.

For Redbox, between January 25 to January 31, 2011, there were a total of 434 self-initiated posts on the wall of Redbox’s Facebook Page. Out of these posts, there were
182 posts directed to Redbox, which made up about 42% of all total postings. Of these 184 postings, 104 posts, or about 57% of all posts directed towards Redbox, received a response from the business. On average, each post directed towards Redbox received a response time of between half-an-hour and several hours.

For Boise State University’s Facebook page, there were a total of 8 self-initiated posts between January 25 to January 31, 2011. Out of these posts, there were 3 posts directed to Boise State University, which made up 38% of all total postings. 33.33% of all posts directed to Boise State University received a response from the business. Their posts directed towards Boise State University received a response time of about an hour.

It is noteworthy that users who engaged in self-initiated postings were only a small percentage of the total users that followed these business Facebook Pages. In proportion to the total number of followers of these business Facebook Pages, the individuals who engaged in self-initiated posts accounted for less than .001% of total followers of Starbucks, .0002% of total followers at Redbox, and .0014% of total followers at Boise State University.

Because the majority of users were neutral in responding to survey questions that asked them to rank their preference in using Facebook compared to other communication channels, this indicates that despite the popularity of Facebook, it is not necessarily perceived as a superior media platform. This is supported by data from content analysis, which shows that only a small percentage of users initiate conversations with a business through their Facebook pages. This suggests that despite the popularity of Facebook as a personal communication tool, users do not necessarily perceive Facebook as a better choice of media to gratify specific needs.
**H5: Entertainment Motives Are a Stronger Predictor of Business Facebook Page Use Than Informational Motives**

This hypothesis was confirmed through survey data and content analysis. A rank-order question asked survey respondents to rank the types of Facebook content, in order of importance, that influenced them to use business Facebook Pages. Categories from this rank-order question that indicated entertainment motives were compared to categories that indicated information motives. In addition to data from this question, content analysis was used to observe how often users communicated on postings published by business Facebook Pages that fell into the entertainment category compared to how often users communicated on postings that fell into the information category.

The category that represented entertainment motives, “Entertain myself” (2,157 points), ranked higher than the category that represented informational motives, “Search for information” (1,873 points).

Content analysis of business Facebook Pages reveals additional data helpful for comparison. Starbucks and Redbox had postings between the dates of January 25 – 31, 2011, that fell into the categories of “entertainment” and “information.” The average number of likes and comments for postings that fell into the “entertainment” category was compared to the average number of likes and comments for postings that fell into the “information” category.

Between January 25 – 31, 2011, Starbucks published two posts. The first post published by Starbucks was categorized as “entertainment” and was “liked” by 10,417 people and 519 users commented on the post. The second post published by Starbucks was categorized as “information” and was “liked” by 7,365 people and 345 people
commented on the post. Of these postings by other users, 331 comments were directed towards Starbucks and 14 comments were directed to other users who commented on the post.

Between January 25 – 31, 2011, Redbox published twelve posts. Two posts were categorized as “information” postings and five posts fell into the “entertainment” category. The average number of likes for postings on Redbox categorized as “entertainment” was 448 and the average number of comments was 213. The average number of likes for postings on Redbox categorized as “information” was 263 and the average number of comments was 86.

Although the rankings were fairly close on the survey, the category that represented entertainment motives, “Entertain myself,” still ranked higher than the category that represented informational motives, “Search for information.” The content analysis of postings on business Facebook Pages revealed findings consistent with the survey—that users seem to engage more frequently on entertainment-related content rather than with information-related content.
CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss practical implications for public relations use of Facebook and also explain how findings support and extend several key assumptions of the uses and gratifications theory. Key communication concepts discussed in the review of literature are discussed in the context of this study with focus on support and extension of these concepts, followed by discussion of limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

**Relationship Between Personal Use of Facebook and Facebook Pages**

Findings suggest that for most active users of Facebook, viewing or communicating with business Facebook Pages seems to be largely peripheral. On average, even among users who log into Facebook several times a day, users mainly view business Facebook Pages between several times a month to several times a year. The frequency of personal communication on Facebook does not predict frequency of activity on business Facebook Pages. While users who view business Facebook Pages once a day or more enjoy Facebook use, it does not necessarily follow that users who enjoy Facebook are also active on business Facebook Pages.

Also relevant, the vast majority of users who view business Facebook Pages do so because they see something of interest in a posting published by a business Facebook Page, not because they actively visit these business Facebook Pages. This places greater
importance on businesses ensuring that posted content can quickly attract interest from their audience.

Survey results also indicated that, in general, users defined as having an active social community, view business Facebook Pages more often. Although this result may seem obvious, having statistics to confirm this is helpful in supporting previous Facebook public relations strategies that were largely based on anecdotal evidence. In the past, individuals seeking to use Facebook for public relations use have asserted that rather than targeting a large number of casual Facebook users, businesses should seek to target users who have an active social community and can create positive social influence on the business Facebook Page. These statistics support this general strategy, but if businesses want to encourage Facebook users to communicate with them, they will likely have the most success talking to users highly active on Facebook instead of trying to start conversations with users who use Facebook less frequently.

**Gratifications That Encourage Communication on Facebook Pages**

Users seem to be primarily motivated by the general need to communicate with other Facebook users rather than a need to have specific conversations on business Facebook Pages. Findings suggest that followers of business Facebook Pages are more interesting in having conversations about topics they find relevant rather than keeping their conversations strictly focused on a business or its products. Although users may not be motivated to participate in ongoing conversations, if there is a topic they feel strongly about, they will engage in conversations with other Facebook users.

Findings revealed that the majority of users find features of business Facebook Pages, such as discussion boards and Facebook Events, socially engaging. Despite this,
statistics suggest the need for social interaction, as fulfilled by these features of business Facebook Pages, does not appear to be a strong predictor of how often business Facebook Pages are viewed. However, as noted in the literature review, this could possibly be explained through the personal use of Facebook being sufficient to gratify user needs for social interaction. These findings could also be attributed to the fact that the majority of users surveyed did not view business Facebook Pages frequently.

It was noteworthy that the survey data suggests that users seem to feel more socially connected and entertained by following conversations than from actively participating in them. If this represents a majority of other Facebook users, it would explain why some business Facebook Pages have many followers, yet still have relatively few conversations on their page by users. Anecdotally, many advocates of social media marketing advocate that creating dialogue through general user participation is key in the successful promotion of a business Facebook Page. However, if Facebook users feel equally entertained and socially connected through following conversations as well as participating in them, business Facebook Pages can have success through focusing on engaging the most active users who will engage in dialogue instead of trying to persuade the Facebook Page’s more general fan base to also participate in conversations. This also places an increased importance on ensuring that conversations on business Facebook Pages are fresh, engaging, and relevant.

Findings also revealed that although offering exclusive content, such as special promotions or coupons, may encourage users to participate, it does not seem to be a significant motivation for users to communicate on a business Facebook Page. This is relevant knowledge because user participation is considered important for many business
pages, as increased participation among users can lead to increased visibility for the business Facebook Page. In light of this, it makes sense for businesses to adapt other tactics to encourage user participation, such as offering contests, promotions, or other rewards for users that actively communicate on the business Facebook Page.

It was also hypothesized that users would be more likely to communicate on Business Facebook Pages if shared content asks a question or for feedback, which was confirmed through content analysis, but not supported by survey data. A possible explanation is that for Facebook users between 18-30 years old, which consisted of a significant number of survey respondents, asking a question or for direct feedback does not significantly influence them to communicate on business Facebook Pages.

If results from the survey represent the majority of other Facebook users in the 18-30 age bracket, this is a significant finding because anecdotally, many public relations strategies for use of Facebook and other social media platforms have asserted that asking users on Facebook for their input would make them more inclined to participate. This suggests that there are other unknown motivations that compel young adults to participate in conversations on Facebook, such as a user’s desire to make his or her opinion known or the desire to build social capital in the Facebook community.

**Gratifications That Influence Sharing Content from Facebook Pages**

Survey data confirmed, as hypothesized, that the vast majority of users share content they find entertaining or humorous with other users. It is noteworthy that entertainment is a frequent motivation for users to share content with other people through Facebook. Content that users find entertaining often has the potential to go “viral” through social networking. The results from the survey confirm the anecdotal
belief in the literature that a user’s desire for entertaining content influences whether they share content from business Facebook Pages.

It was also hypothesized that users would be substantially influenced to share Facebook Pages with their friends based on content asking users questions or for feedback, but findings demonstrated this was not the case. Although connecting with users through asking questions or for feedback may offer benefits to business Facebook Pages, it seems that users are not significantly influenced to promote business Facebook Pages based on this tactic.

It was notable that survey data reported that multimedia content was second to last among categories of Facebook content shared. Anecdotally, many practitioners of social media have advocated that multimedia content are ideal forms of content to be shared with Facebook because of the interactive nature of the social network. However, these results suggest that even if a company has a flashy video, unless users find it entertaining or informative, it won’t necessarily be shared with other users on Facebook. To this end, if businesses hope to persuade their users to share content with others, it would be wiser to focus on creating content that meets a user’s need for entertainment or information instead of being more concerned with how this content is packaged.

**Gratifications of Business Facebook Pages Compared to Other Media**

Survey results indicated that users seem to primarily see Facebook as a personal communication tool, not as a communication medium to directly contact businesses. This was supported by findings from content analysis, which demonstrated that only a relatively small percentage of all users that follow a business initiated conversations with a business through Facebook. This possibly explains why the majority of survey
participants were neutral in their views about contacting businesses through Facebook, as perhaps most users who took the survey have never attempted to use Facebook as a tool to reach businesses.

It could also be because business Facebook Pages are perceived as more of a source of entertainment rather than as a serious communication tool that can be utilized just as readily as letters or email, which are possibly viewed by many users as being a more “legitimate” method of contacting a business with a question or concern. These findings also suggest that users who have a large social network and are active in using Facebook as a personal communication tool are not substantially more likely to employ Facebook as a communication tool to reach businesses. This is a significant finding because many businesses seek to encourage users to communicate with them openly on their Facebook Pages. If businesses would like to encourage a greater frequency of user to business communication, it is critical to understand how to change perceptions of the legitimacy of Facebook as a user-to-business communication tool.

In comparing motivations for using business Facebook Pages to motivations for using business websites, the findings suggest that the capability for business Facebook Pages to entertain users are a significant element that differentiates business Facebook Pages from business websites. It is also significant that information-seeking motives are the second and third strongest predicting factors that influence the extent that users prefer using business Facebook Pages over business websites. These findings suggest the importance of designing business Facebook Pages with clear information architecture and page navigation. In light of this, businesses may have success through designing their
Facebook Pages in a way that makes it easy and efficient for users to find valuable information they seek.

It is also noteworthy that the extent that business Facebook Pages ask users questions or for direct feedback has a substantial correlation with the extent that users enjoy using business Facebook Pages over using business websites. This may suggest that social gratifications, as represented through businesses creating opportunities for conversations, may be an important element that encourages users to use business Facebook Pages instead of business websites.

**Main Gratifications Sought from Business Facebook Pages**

Findings indicated that users social and entertainment gratifications for using business Facebook Pages rank higher than information gratifications. Survey results also indicated that the majority of users did not find it easier to obtain information on a business from their Facebook Pages than on their business website. In light of this, it may not be as effective to use business Facebook Pages primarily as a source of information, as users may perceive other media channels as a better source to gratify information needs.

**Implications for Business Communication**

**Communication Helps Users Relate to Facebook Pages**

Communication on business Facebook Pages helps users relate to the represented business. Similar to how users view Facebook profiles of other users to gain information, viewing past interactions on the Facebook Page provides valuable social content cues that allow users to find common ground with the business and feel better connected.
Viewing past interactions helps users to understand how to interact on the business Facebook Page, which may encourage them to actively participate. Similar to how individuals may not enter a conversation until they understand its context, users may not have the desire to participate on business Facebook Pages unless they understand what communicative acts are socially acceptable by the business Facebook Page community. Through examining content on the Facebook Page, users gain valuable social context that helps them enter the conversation and cultivate socially relevant interactions that go beyond phatic culture.

This is particularly emphasized through the dynamics of Facebook, which emphasizes communication behavior through making them easily visible, transparent, and accessible. Creating conversations among users and facilitating conversations through relevant postings acts as a form of social lubricant that helps Facebook users relate to businesses, which in turn encourage relationship building.

This represents a change from business websites, where user-to-user and user-to-business communication is handled differently. Although business websites may have features that allow users to communicate, such as discussion boards, these features are regarded as only a small part of the business website. Interaction, both between user-to-user and user-to-business, is the most important element of a Facebook Page, not merely an additional feature or component. Almost every feature of a business Facebook Page inherently allows users to interact with other users or the business represented on Facebook. This represents a shift from traditional business websites, which in turn changes a user’s expectations of perceived gratifications available through Facebook Pages.
Communication Style on Facebook as a Reflection of Brand Personality

Content analysis revealed that different business Facebook Pages have different communication styles and strategies in order to reflect their distinct brand personality and characteristics of their business. For example, Redbox, an entertainment-driven business, seemed to focus on creating posts that entertained users with relevant information. In contrast, Boise State University, a metropolitan research university of distinction, primarily focused on posting information-rich content. Although these communication styles effectively reflected their distinct identity, they did not create an equal level of user participation and engagement.

Out of the three Facebook Pages studied for content analysis, Boise State University had the lowest number of followers and lowest level of participation compared to Redbox and Starbucks. A uses and gratifications perspective explains how specific gratifications sought through Facebook direct user behavior on business Facebook Pages. Findings from this study indicated that social and entertainment gratifications are stronger predictors of the use of business Facebook Pages compared to information gratifications, which may explain the varied level of user participation on these business Facebook Pages.

Phatic Culture

Examples of phatic culture were easily seen through user activity on the business Facebook Pages. Many postings were communicative acts that maintain social connections. For example, on Starbucks, it was common for many users to post that they were at their local Starbucks or make comments regarding their favorite types of drinks. The same pattern repeated itself on Redbox and Boise State University, such as Facebook
users making comments about the movies they were planning to watch or making comments supporting the Bronco’s sports team.

It is interesting that so many postings on the Facebook Walls of business Facebook Pages would fall into the category of phatic culture, which is generally seen on an interpersonal level with user-to-user communication on Facebook. The high volume of communication on business Facebook Pages that fall into the category of phatic culture implies that to a certain extent, Facebook users treat a business represented on Facebook as a person, not an organization. Phatic culture has significance because these communicative acts may be indicators that Facebook users feel a social connection with the business. If this is correct, businesses may have some success measuring their efforts to create relationships with their followers based on the frequency and depth of phatic culture in user-to-business communication.

Findings confirm that business page users prefer to communicate with other users over the business itself. Content analysis revealed a greater frequency of self-initiated conversations between Facebook Users than between Facebook Users and businesses. Phatic culture becomes a persuasive component of business page content, helping users to identify themselves as part of a social community under the umbrella of the business page.

This represents an interesting shift from previous forms of user-to-business communication. In the past, business communication, either through letters, email, or the phone, represented a more formal, narrative form of communication. However, in the world of Facebook, business communication has shifted towards informal, non-linear communication.
Instead of exchanging substantial information with businesses on their Facebook Pages, users seem content with phatic exchanges—communicative gestures that do not exchange any meaningful information, but rather, express sociability and maintain connections. In the world of Facebook, there are many sources that compete for a user’s attention. The fact that Facebook users would engage in phatic communication with businesses, essentially treating them as a person instead of an organization, is noteworthy. Businesses can use this to their advantage through shifting to a more personable style of communication, allowing users to better relate to them and facilitating relationship building.

Although these forms of communication seem ephemeral, the communication implications are important. Phatic culture on business Facebook Pages seem to demonstrate that users have the desire to socially connect with the business and build a relationship. Businesses need to recognize that these interactions maintain existing relationships, which helps them build social capital and provides credibility. This may increase the likelihood that users will respond to occasional content-rich messages, just as casual acquaintances sometimes share meaningful information.

Looking at this phenomenon from a public relations perspective, phatic culture is important because it helps identify audience members who may be more receptive to an organization’s messages. Through leveraging existing relationships, organizations can draw upon public support from individuals who are receptive to their message.

**Recommendations for Business Communication**

Businesses have a variety of communicative goals. Some are simply to maintain visibility and existing relationships, others are to directly influence the public in some
way. Facebook lends itself to the first goal: It makes an organization visible, approachable, and personable. This helps to create a public that is open and receptive to other, more strategic and intentional forms of communication. Some recommendations for businesses include the following.

**Develop a Distinct Personality Separate from Brand**

Results from this study suggested that users relate to businesses represented on Facebook as a person, not an organization. With this in mind, it makes sense for businesses to communicate in a way that will help users better relate to them, which can facilitate the relationship building process. On business Facebook Pages, users do not appear to be interested in a traditional brand experience. Because of how the business is represented on a social network, users are interested in creating and maintaining relationships. Using communication to highlight a businesses’ unique personality, rather than overtly promoting a brand, may help users feel better socially connected to the business on Facebook.

**Facilitate the Development of a Unique Phatic Culture**

Finding from this study suggest the phatic culture plays an important role in helping users relate to businesses and feel socially connected through their business Facebook Page. With this mind, businesses may benefit from encouraging a distinct phatic culture that enhances a business Facebook Page’s sense of community. Businesses can do this through proactively acknowledging and responding to phatic exchanges by users. Through showing users that they are interested in their attempts to maintain social
connections, businesses can help encourage users to develop an online community on their Facebook Page.

Businesses can also facilitate development of phatic culture through occasionally posting content intended to maintain relationships with followers, rather than only posting content-rich postings. Through doing these things, businesses can facilitate building relationships with their followers through phatic exchanges, which will help users become more receptive to content-rich postings in the future.

**Focus on Quasi-Two Way Communication, Not Just Views**

Although previous media channels, such as business websites, measure success through the frequency of views, this criteria does not account for the utility of Facebook. Users can use business Facebook Pages not only to find relevant information, but also connect with similar users and feel part of a larger community. Because social gratifications are correlated with the use of business Facebook Pages, organizations need to focus on using quasi-two way communication strategies to generate user participation and activity.

There are several advantages for using communication strategies that invite participation on Facebook. First, creating active participation demonstrates that the business Facebook Page easily allows individuals to connect with other users and gratify their social needs. Second, facilitating conversations on business Facebook Pages makes it easier for new users to learn about the organization and obtain information that makes it easier for them to join existing conversations.
Reward User Engagement, Even If It Is Only Phatic Exchanges

User communication on business Facebook Pages, even phatic exchanges, is important because it demonstrates that users relate to the organization and are open to forming a relationship with the business. Organizations would facilitate the relationship building process through rewarding user engagement and demonstrating interest in followers who communicate on their Facebook Pages.

Businesses may benefit from providing incentives to users who actively participate on their Facebook Pages. For example, perhaps businesses could offer random gifts or prizes to active users, or offer occasional promotions specifically designed to encourage user participation. For example, some business Facebook Pages have promotions in which users simply have to write a comment about a post published by the organization to receive an entry for a prize drawing.

Businesses should also identify users who are consistently active on their business Facebook Page and demonstrate that their participation in the community is valued. This can be done through proactively commenting on these user’s posts, which shows both interest and appreciation in a user’s communicative acts on the business Facebook Page. Taking the time to acknowledge and reward users who are active participants on Facebook will encourage user advocacy and strengthen existing relationships.

Present Relevant Information as Interactive Formats

Because informational motives are not as important as social or entertainment motives for using business Facebook Pages, it is important to present information in a way that encourages user participation. This takes on greater emphasis in a social network like Facebook, where participation is expected and perceived as representing the
business Facebook Page’s user community. Although some businesses may be more information oriented, they can still benefit from presenting information in a way that encourages users to actively respond to their published content. For example, simply posting a news release may work on a business website, but may not create user excitement on Facebook. However, if the same information was posted on Facebook through first asking a question to users or highlighting something entertaining about the story, rather than simply posting the information, it may create a more desirable outcome.

**Broader Implications**

**Businesses**

Business Facebook Pages represent a shift in how businesses utilize media channels. In the past, businesses would use media channels, such as television or radio, to simply blast out messages to the general public. Businesses had to target a general audience in hopes that their messages would resonate with a much smaller group of people who would show interest in their message. However, with the emergence of Facebook, businesses can use mass media channels to specifically target individuals who are already interested in their organization. Instead of spending effort dispersing messages to a broad audience, businesses can narrow down the scope of their efforts to a select group of people that are more receptive to their message. If previous mass media efforts to a general audience is like using a shotgun, communication through business Facebook Pages is akin to using a sniper rifle.

Facebook also allows businesses to personalize themselves by adding a human element to their company. Content analysis of business Facebook Pages shows that each
business has a distinct communication strategy that reflects the business’s personality. Postings by users, including phatic communication, suggest that users perceive and relate to business Facebook Pages as a person, not as an organization. This may facilitate relationship building between users and the business.

Public Relations

Results from this study support existing literature that discuss niche markets and the importance of using targeted approaches to communicating with the public. Business Facebook Pages are a powerful communication tool that can be used to facilitate this process. Organizations have the opportunity to use Facebook to attract users who are interested in their business and communicate to a select group of individuals rather than the general public. Unlike other forms of mass media, such as television or radio, mass messages sent out through business Facebook Pages only go to people who already relate to their business. Because messages on Facebook are specifically targeted to a select group, it is especially important to ensure that messages and content published meet user expectations and gratifications.

Also important, Facebook changes the dynamics of how individuals shape public discourse through computer-mediated communication. A common public relations strategy is to recruit opinion leaders, individuals such as celebrities or professionals, that can create social influence among the public. However, through Facebook, every follower of a business Facebook Page has the potential to become an opinion leader on their own personal network. Businesses recognize this and seek to encourage user advocacy of their organization through strategic communication. Understanding more
about user motivations and gratifications sought through business Facebook Pages will help organizations better use communication to facilitate this process.

**Society as a Whole**

Business Facebook Pages demonstrate how mass media has changed its approach from dispersing information to the broad public to specifically targeting groups of people. With the proliferation of different media platforms, this model may become more common as businesses seek to make their messages heard in a society in which many different sources of media compete for a user’s attention.

This study also highlighted how leveraging individual relationships through a social network shapes public communication. Because social gratifications is a strong predictor of user business Facebook Pages, user behavior on business Facebook Pages is influenced by the relationship they build with the organization and with other users in the business Facebook community. In turn, these relationships shape the extent that users involve themselves in both user-to-user and user-to-business communication.

Although the concept of relationships encouraging user advocacy and participation has been observed in the past, the dynamics of Facebook makes this process easier. As a social network, Facebook facilitates relationship building through its potential for two-way instantaneous communication, transparency, and ease of use. Business Facebook Pages make it easier for individuals to connect with other users and create relationships. With this in mind, using strategic communication to foster these relationships takes on more importance in the dynamics of a social network.
Implications for Uses and gratifications Theory

Results from this study support the five assumptions of the uses and gratifications theory discussed in the review of literature.

1) Communication behavior is intentional, goal directed, and motivated. This is demonstrated on business Facebook Pages as users engage in specific goal-directed communicative behavior. For example, users on Facebook choose to participate actively in the communication process through initiating conversations with businesses and other users and through sharing published content on Facebook with other users. Results from this study confirm that different motivations influence communicative behavior on business Facebook as users attempt to gratify specific needs.

Sought gratifications are influenced by user expectations of particular media types. An individual may not associate a business website with social interaction; therefore, this need is not a primary motivation for using business websites. However, on Facebook, a social network primarily designed to encourage interpersonal communication, social behavior is expected. It is important for businesses to understand how to provide gratifications that encourage users to connect with them and actively communicate on Facebook.

2) Rather than being used by the media, people use media to fulfill their needs and wants. This study shows that regarding media consumption, Facebook users are not passive bystanders; they are active agents who choose what communication channels best meet their needs. Compared to other media channels such as television and radio, Facebook Users have a greater degree of freedom to seek out communication channels that meets specific needs and wants.
In the online environment of Facebook, this can be observed through Facebook users actively choosing to follow businesses and communicate with them through Facebook. Users choose and regulate the extent of their use of business Facebook Pages. If Facebook users feel that a business Facebook Page is not meeting their needs, they can choose not to view these pages or to block communication from these pages from entering their news feeds. Users can even choose to stop following businesses on Facebook, which will stop these businesses from contacting them altogether. Users do not aimlessly follow business Facebook Pages, they follow and engage with these businesses through Facebook in order to fulfill specific needs and wants.

3) People’s communication behavior is influenced by numerous variables and media expectations are filtered through psychological and social characteristics. Findings demonstrate that psychological and social variables, such as a user’s varying need for entertainment or social interaction, influence the extent to which they use business Facebook Pages and engage in communicative behavior. This survey showed that users are capable of recognizing and ranking these needs that influences their use of business Facebook Pages. Findings also suggested that Facebook users have different media expectations based on gratifications they perceive business Facebook Pages capable of fulfilling. For example, on the survey, many users indicated that they do not perceive Facebook as being a more convenient or effective way to contact businesses compared to traditional means of communication. Because of this expectation, relatively few followers of business Facebook Pages attempt to contact businesses through Facebook, as noted during content analysis.
4) Media compete with other forms of communication to gratify our needs or wants. Several survey questions asked users to compare use of business Facebook Pages to business websites and traditional forms of media. Results from the survey demonstrated that user media preference varies depending on which media platform best gratifies specific needs. For example, findings demonstrate that there are users who enjoy using business Facebook Pages more than business websites because of specific needs that are better gratified through Facebook, such as the need for entertainment or the need for information. Survey results also showed that users are still not predominantly using Facebook as a communication tool to contact businesses because many users still feel that traditional forms of media better meets their needs. These findings suggest that the use of business Facebook Pages over other media platforms is dependent on the extent that business Facebook Pages can more effectively gratify user needs compared to alternative forms of communication.

5) Users have more influence than the media in the relationship. This study demonstrated that user behavior on business Facebook Pages is primarily influenced by gratifications sought by users, not by the media predicating user behavior. Rather than being equally affected by posted content from business Facebook Pages, users selectively respond to content that gratifies specific needs. Users also take the initiative by starting conversations on business Facebook Pages, sharing content with other users, and engaging in other goal-oriented communicative acts. Communication on business Facebook Pages is driven by the extent that users feel that this media channel best gratifies their needs.
Active Audience

The concept of an active audience, a key element of uses and gratifications theory, is evident in how user’s can interact on business Facebook Pages. Blumler (1979) described four characteristics of an active audience: utility, intentionality, selectivity, and imperviousness to influence. These four traits can be seen in user behavior on business Facebook Pages.

In terms of utility, which is how individuals can use the media, users have many different ways to use and communicate on business Facebook Pages. They can write a comment on a Facebook Wall, start a discussion in the Facebook Discussion Board, or write a comment on all postings published by the business Facebook Page. These means of communication are different than traditional means of communication because it combines mass communication with interpersonal communication. Facebook makes it easy for users to find conversations and quickly become involved in the communication process with businesses or other Facebook Users.

In terms of intentionality, media use influenced by an individual’s perceived motivations, the results from this study demonstrate that users have specific gratifications that influence their use of business Facebook Pages. Results from the survey and content analysis suggest that in order of influence, social, entertainment, and information motives drive user behavior on business Facebook Pages.

Because Facebook’s design is inherently social, it is logical that users would use business Facebook Pages to meet their need for social gratification. Similarly, because entertainment motives rank higher than information motives, it makes sense that users would find Facebook a better communication tool to find and share entertaining content
compared to information content. For example, if Facebook users want information on a business or its products, perhaps users feel that their gratification for information can be better fulfilled through the Internet or through business websites.

Content analysis revealed that postings published from business Facebook Pages that fall into the social and entertainment category receive an average greater number of likes and comments compared to posts in the information category. This indicates that social and entertainment content better resonates with Facebook users compared to information content. If this holds true for the majority of users, business Facebook Pages could have greater success at attracting positive publicity from users through attempting to gratify their social and entertainment needs, rather than information needs.

These findings confirm current literature that asserts public relations use of Facebook should focus on creating social interaction among Facebook users. It is particularly noteworthy that Facebook users prefer communicating with other users to businesses represented on Facebook. In light of this, businesses may find success facilitating conversations among users in order to help their users meet their social gratifications and feel better connected to their organization.

Businesses need to rethink their role in administering their business Facebook Pages. Previous mass media channels placed an organization’s approach to communication as being similar to a keynote speaker, with users focused on the organization and its message. However, businesses need to move away from this model and adapt their role on Facebook to have more in common with a facilitator at a discussion panel. Instead of dominating the conversation, businesses need to facilitate and guide it appropriately. Through placing the focus of their business Facebook Pages
around their users, businesses may have more success at creating user engagement and meeting their communicative goals.

In terms of selectivity, choosing specific media content and channels to best gratify needs, it is clear that Facebook Users are selective about using and communicating on business Facebook Pages that meet their needs. The business Facebook Pages chosen for content analysis had thousands of followers, yet only a relatively small percentage of users actively communicated on business Facebook Pages. This suggests that users who follow business Facebook Pages are highly selective in their behavior and that they will only utilize business Facebook Pages they perceive as gratifying their needs. In a high-tech era that has many media choices, in order for business Facebook Pages to have success, they must discern their audience’s needs and respond accordingly.

In terms of imperviousness to media influence, it is clear that users can be resistant to the messages promoted through business Facebook Pages. As noted above, only a relatively small percentage of users actively communicate on business Facebook Pages. Besides simply choosing not to interact with business Facebook Pages, users have the option to hide the postings from business Facebook Pages from their Facebook News Feed, or even remove themselves as a follower of these Facebook Pages. Because individuals on Facebook can choose the extent that business Facebook Pages can connect with them, it makes it vital for businesses to understand and meet a user’s gratifications for content on their business Facebook Pages.

Because an active audience takes on greater importance in computer-mediated communication on Facebook, it makes it critical for businesses to recognize that their
audience has changed from passive consumers of the media to agents that actively choose their media content. It is therefore imperative for businesses to understand how to gratify the communicative needs of their audience on Facebook.

Results from this study also suggested user motivations for using business Facebook Pages are more similar to motivations for using the Internet, than motivations for personal Facebook use. However, this could possibly be explained by business Facebook Pages having more in common with business websites than with personal Facebook Profiles.

**Transparency**

The transparency of communication on Facebook is also a significant factor in several ways. Results from the survey indicated that Facebook users communicate on business Facebook Pages based on their desire to connect with other Facebook Users. The survey also indicated that users find a slightly greater gratification simply by following conversations on business Facebook Pages instead of participating in them. Thus, transparency on Facebook is important to the communication process because it demonstrates to users that there is a thriving community that allows them to easily make social connections.

Also important, transparency of communication easily allows users to follow conversations on business Facebook Pages, which is a source of social gratification. This transparency of communication gives businesses a valuable opportunity to present themselves in the best possible light through facilitating meaningful conversations among users. Doing so allows businesses to gratify their audience’s need for social interaction while attracting positive attention from Facebook users.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Findings from this study have importance because in today’s saturated media environment, there are many channels vying for a user’s attention. It is critical for businesses to meet the communications gratifications of their users in order to successfully get their message across. As demonstrated in this study’s findings, despite the popularity of Facebook, business Facebook Pages still have to strategically compete with other forms of media. In regards to fulfilling certain types of needs, the Internet and other traditional media channels are still perceived as viable alternatives to Facebook.

If business Facebook Pages fail to gratify the wants of their audience, it is likely that users will simply ignore the communicative acts of these businesses and turn to another media channel to meet their needs. By creating content that gratifies the needs of Facebook users, business Facebook Pages can encourage meaningful participation and create public awareness of their organization.

This study revealed several notable findings that create new understanding about the communication process on Facebook and the different types of gratification that influence user behavior on business Facebook Pages. Because Facebook has several characteristics that set it apart from traditional media channels, such as transparency, immediacy, and possibility of two-way communication, it was hypothesized that these factors would influence user communication on business Facebook Pages and their motives for engaging in communicative behavior.
Although these factors distinguish business Facebook Pages from other media platforms, users do not strongly favor using business Facebook Pages compared to other communication alternatives. However, these factors may explain why users expect business Facebook Pages to provide a social experience and opportunities to easily connect with other users. This underscores the importance of ensuring that content available on business Facebook Pages matches user expectations of gratifications accessible on Facebook.

This study revealed that although many users are highly active in their personal use of Facebook, it does not strongly predict their behavior on business Facebook Pages. Users still primarily want to connect with and communicate with other Facebook users, not organizations on Facebook. Although Facebook may change the communication process between users and businesses, findings revealed that this does not play a major factor in their frequency of communication. Instead, users communicate on business Facebook Pages if specific needs are gratified.

In terms of uses and gratifications, the findings confirm that users who follow business Facebook Pages are primarily seeking to gratify their social needs. Users want business Facebook Pages to provide the ability to easily connect with other users and present opportunities to communicate on topics important to them. It is also significant to find that a user’s entertainment motives are more influential than information motives in affecting their use of business Facebook Pages. If organizations structure a business Facebook Pages to be information heavy, similar to a business website, their results could
fail to meet user expectations and fail to create user engagement. This study also noted what features and communication strategies on business Facebook Pages are successful in meeting a user’s social, entertainment, and informational needs.

**Limitations**

Because the majority of participants fell inside the demographics of 18-30 year olds with a lower income range, this study lacked sufficient representation from other demographic brackets. Consequently, it is difficult to say to what extent the findings from the survey describe the motives, uses, and gratifications for users outside of the 18-30 year old age bracket.

Because this study employed content analysis to analyze business Facebook Pages, additional insights could be gained through doing a thematic analysis of postings on business Facebook Pages. Although content analysis was sufficient to answer the hypotheses posed in this study, a thematic analysis of postings on business Facebook Pages could create new understanding of patterns that emerge from user-to-user and user-to-business communication.

**Areas for Future Research**

This study focused on user motivations for using and communicating on business Facebook Pages. In this study, communication concepts were explored in the computer-mediated world of Facebook, creating new questions for future in-depth research.

This study noted that phatic culture, as expressed through postings by users on business Facebook Pages, seemed to be a key communicative act that indicated a user’s willingness to identify themselves as part of a business Facebook Page’s community. One
area for future study is to explore how the frequency and depth of phatic culture reflects identification with a business Facebook Page or other organizations represented on Facebook.

Another interesting area for study is how users of business Facebook Pages use communication to create social influence in the Facebook community. While some followers of business Facebook Pages are highly active and respected in their community, it is unclear what communicative patterns create social capital among other users and how the perception of social capital affects a user’s willingness to communicate. More specifically, are individuals who perceive themselves as having high social capital on a business Facebook Page more willing to engage in communicative acts?

These findings would have relevance to the communication field because of how the dynamics of Facebook, such as transparency, speed of communication, and possibility of two-way communication, change the communication process. These findings would have practical implications, as it is important for businesses to cultivate users who can be advocates of their organization on Facebook. An in-depth examination to better understand the relationship between social capital and communicative behavior on business Facebook Pages would have merit.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Hypotheses Results
## Appendix A: Hypotheses Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis Tested</th>
<th>Supported by Survey Data?</th>
<th>Supported by Content Analysis?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1: Personal use of Facebook will be related to use of business Facebook Pages.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: Users prefer interaction with other users to interaction with the business represented by the business Facebook Page.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3: Communication strategies that specifically ask for user participation will be more effective in obtaining user feedback than other engagement strategies.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4: Users will prefer to communicate with businesses through business Facebook Pages over other forms of communication.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5: Entertainment motives are a stronger predictor of business Facebook Page use than informational motives.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

Survey Results
Appendix B: Survey Results

The following section reports participant responses to questions on the survey presented in a series of graphs, followed by an overview of how demographic segments of participants responded to questions presented on the survey.

**Figure 1**  I Log Into Facebook

**Figure 2**  Average Time Spent in a Facebook Session
Figure 3  My Facebook Friends List has:

Figure 4  Facebook Is Part of My Daily Routine
Figure 5  I Feel Out of Touch When I Haven’t Logged onto Facebook

Figure 6  I Enjoy Using Facebook to Communicate with Friends
Figure 7  I Participate in the Facebook Community

Figure 8  Reasons for "liking" Business Pages on Facebook
Figure 9  How Often Do You Look at Business Facebook Pages?

Figure 10  Enjoyment of Business Facebook Pages over Business Websites
Figure 11  I Communicate on a Business Facebook Page If It Offers Exclusive Content, Such as Promotions or Videos

Figure 12  I Communicate on a Business Facebook Page if Posted Content Asks Users a Question or Asks for Feedback
Figure 13  Categories That Influences Use of Business Facebook Pages

User responses were analyzed through using a scoring system that assigned a point value to each category depending on the order that the category was selected. Because these eight categories were sorted in the order of importance to the user, it was possible for each category to receive a maximum of 8 points and a minimum of 1 point. Points were totaled through determining the frequency that each category was ranked in order of importance. For example, if a user selected a category first, that category would receive 8 points, but if that category was picked last, it would receive 1 point. After results were tallied, it revealed which types of content were shared the most frequently by users on Facebook.

“Connect with other Facebook users” was ranked highest, receiving 2,200 points, or 80% of the possible number of points. After this category was “Entertain myself” (2,157 points or 78%), “Search for information” (1,873 points or 68%), “Discuss topics
important to me” (1,672 or 61% points), “Watch online videos or listen to audio files, such as music or podcasts” (1,515 points or 55%), “Discuss businesses or products” (1,406 points or 51%), “Participate in group discussions” (1,209 points or 44%), and “Play games (1,180 points or 43%).

Figure 14  I Find Facebook Pages More Entertaining Than Business Websites

Figure 15  I Find It Entertaining to Read Conversations on Facebook Walls and/or Discussion Boards
Figure 16  I Find It Entertaining to Participate in Conversations on Facebook Walls and/or Discussion Boards

Figure 17  I Find It Entertaining to Watch videos or Listen to Audio Files (i.e., Music or Podcasts)
Figure 18  I find It Entertaining to Look at Photos

Figure 19  I Find It Entertaining to Play Facebook Games
Figure 20  It Is Easier to Get Information About a Business on Their Facebook Page Than on Their Website

Figure 21  It Is More Convenient to Get Information About a Business on Their Facebook Page Than on Their Website
Figure 22  I Find It Helpful to Gather Information by Reading Facebook Posts by the Business

Figure 23  I Find It Helpful to Gather Information by Reading Conversations on Facebook Walls and/or Discussion Boards
Figure 24  I Find It Helpful to Gather Information by Watching Videos or Listening to Audio Files (i.e., Music or Podcasts)

Figure 25  I Find It Helpful to Gather Information by Reading Facebook Notes Posted by the Business
Figure 26  I Find It Helpful to Gather Information by Looking at and Responding to Facebook Events

Figure 27  I Find It Helpful to Gather Information by Reading Reviews of Products Posted by Other Users
Figure 28  I Enjoy Communicating with Other Users More Than the Actual Business

Figure 29  I Feel Socially Connected by Following Conversations on Facebook Walls and/or Discussion Boards
Figure 30  I Feel Socially Connected By Participating in Conversations on Facebook Walls and/or Discussion Boards

Figure 31  I Feel Socially Connected by Playing Facebook Games That Involve Other Users
Figure 32  
I Feel Socially Connected by Looking at and Responding to Facebook Events

Figure 33  
When I Contact Businesses Through Their Facebook Pages, I Am More Likely to Receive a Timely Response Compared to Using Letters and Email
Figure 34  I Find It More Convenient to Contact Businesses Through Their Facebook Pages Compared to Using Letters, Email, and the Phone

Figure 35  I Like Business Facebook Pages That Makes Me Feel Like Part of a Larger Online Community
Figure 36  I Am Likely to Share Content from Business Facebook Pages with Friends If Posted Content Asks Users a Question or Asks For Feedback

Figure 37  I Am Likely to Share Content from Business Facebook Pages with Friends If Posted Content Is Controversial
Figure 38  I Am Likely to Share Content from Business Facebook Pages with Friends If Posted Content Comes Across As Authoritative Information

Figure 39  I Am Likely to Share Content from Business Facebook Pages with Friends If Posted Content Is Entertaining or Humorous
Please number the following categories, with 1 being the most important category that influences your choice to share content with friends using Facebook and 5 being the least important category. 

I share the following content with friends on Facebook based on:

- Entertainment
- Information
- Multimedia
- Promotions
- Social interaction

Results were analyzed with a scoring system that assigned a point value to each category depending on the order that the category was selected. Because these five categories were sorted in order of importance to the user, it was possible for each category to receive a maximum of 5 points to a minimum of 1 point. Points were totaled through determining the frequency that each category was ranked in order of importance. For example, if a user selected a category first, that category would receive 5 points, but
if that category was picked last, it would receive 1 point. The highest number of points that a category could receive was 1,725. After results from all users were analyzed and tallied, it revealed which types of content were shared the most frequently by users on Facebook.

From highest to lowest, Entertainment came first, receiving 1,423 points, or 82% of the highest number of points possible. Following Entertainment (1,423 points) was Information (1,186 points or 69%), Social Interaction (992 points or 58%), Multimedia (820 points or 48%), and Promotions (748 points or 43%).

Figure 42  Are You Male Or Female?

Figure 43  What Is Your Current Age?
**Figure 44**  What Is the Highest Level of Education You Have Completed?

**Figure 45**  What Is Your Yearly Income?
APPENDIX C

Content Analysis
Appendix C: Content Analysis

Overview of Content Analysis Procedure

Following conducting a general overview of each business Facebook Page, content analysis was used for each Facebook Page. All postings published by the business were categorized into one of the categories discussed in the Methods chapter and the number of user responses was noted. Counting the frequencies of user responses to each post published by the business demonstrated what types of published content and communications strategies received active participation from users.

The number of self-initiated postings by users was also noted and categorized into predefined categories. The frequency of posts in each category was noted in order to compare different types of user communicative behavior on business Facebook Pages.

Finally, 10 followers of each business Facebook Page were randomly chosen and their activity on these Pages was tracked during the month of January 2011. Observing all activity by specific users showed whether users consistently communicate on business Facebook Pages and provided examples of Facebook behavior to compare to self-reported data from the survey.

Overview of Starbucks’s Facebook Page

General Overview

As of February 06, 2011, Starbucks has 19,495,281 followers on its Facebook Page. The sidebar has links for followers to follow Starbucks on Twitter, buy Starbucks Coffee online, or submit suggestions to Starbucks. Below this sidebar there is a listing of which
Facebook friends are already following Starbucks and a total listing of how many people follow Starbucks on Facebook.

The Starbucks Page has several different features that can be accessed through tabs on the top of the Facebook Page. There are 13 different tabs that can be accessed: Facebook Wall, Info, Starbucks Card, Starbucks Jobs, Starbucks Around the World, Events, Video, Photos, Notes, Links, Discussion, Polls, and Reviews.

The “Facebook Wall” tab allows users to sort between the postings from other users and the postings from Starbucks.

The “Info” tab repeats the links from the sidebar and also includes some basic information about the company, such as a company overview and description of mission and products.

The “Starbucks Card” tab allows users to manage their Starbucks Card on Facebook or to even reload a friend’s Starbucks Card.

The “Starbucks Jobs” tab allows users to install a Facebook Application that allows users to look for career opportunities from local Starbucks in their area.

The “Starbucks Around the World” tab allows users to change their default Starbucks Page to one of 26 different countries from North America, South America, Europe, and Asia. Changing to a different country allows users to connect with community members from that country.

The “Events” tab lists all Starbucks events taking place in the user’s home country. For the American Starbucks Page, there are 26 different events between March 19, 2009 to December 1, 2010.
The “Videos” tab features videos published by Starbucks and by other users. Starbucks published 31 videos between the dates of November 05, 2008 to January 21, 2011. There are 62 videos published by users between the dates of June 2010 to February 2011.

The “Photos” tab also includes pictures published by Starbucks and other users. Starbucks has five photo albums, under the categories “Wall Photos” (36 photos), “Tazo Tea buyers travel the world” (18 photos), “The Avett Brothers play Starbucks” (19 photos), “Howard Schultz’s trip to Rwanda” (47 photos), and “Profile Pictures” (8 photos). As of February 06, 2011, there are 7,818 photos published by users.

The “Notes” tab has four published notes from Starbucks between the dates of November 26, 2008 to January 09, 2009. Three of these notes are regarding Starbucks philanthropy efforts and the other note introduces Starbucks new TeaTime products. These notes have an average of 89 comments from users.

The “Links” tab has a listing of all Starbucks postings that have a link to an external website. There is also a RSS feed available that allows users to subscribe to Starbucks’ published links.

The “Discussions” tab is the discussion board hosted by Facebook. As of February 06, 2011, there were 1,389 topics from between the dates of November 28, 2008 to February 06, 2011. The Starbucks Page allows users to browse between “All topics,” which is all topics by all users; “My topics,” which is posts that the user has personally commented on; and “My friend’s topics,” which is posts that the user’s Facebook friends have commented on.
The “Polls” tab is a listing of all polls that have been distributed to Facebook users from Starbucks. There are 17 polls from the dates of July 06, 2009 to October 11, 2010. This tab also gives a listing of a user’s Facebook Friends who have participated in these polls.

The “Reviews” tab allows users to post their reviews of Starbucks’s product or services and give it a rating of between one to five stars. As of February 06, 2011, there are 333 reviews between the dates of August 22, 2008 to February 06, 2011.

**Starbucks Postings Analysis**

Between January 25 to January 31, 2011, there were two official posts published by Starbucks. The first post published by Starbucks was categorized as “entertainment” and was “liked” by 10,417 people and 519 users commented on the post. Of these postings by other users, 512 comments were directed towards Starbucks and 7 comments were directed to other users who commented on the post. This posting did not ask users a question or for direct feedback.

The second post published by Starbucks was categorized as “information” and was “liked” by 7,365 people and 345 people commented on the post. Of these postings by other users, 331 comments were directed towards Starbucks and 14 comments were directed to other users who commented on the post. This posting did not ask users a question or for direct feedback.

**Self-Initiated Postings By Users**

Between January 25 to January 31, 2011, there were a total of 2,407 self-initiated posts on the wall of the Starbucks’s Facebook Page. There were 724 non-directional posts,
37 conversations with Starbucks, 600 conversations with other users, 85 postings directed to Starbucks, and 11 questions directed to other users.

**Monthly Activity for Followers Chosen at Random**

Because of the high volume of posts on Starbucks’ Facebook Page, the Facebook Page was unable to display individual postings beyond the date of January 12th. To obtain as much data as possible, 10 users were chosen at random on January 12th and their activity was tracked until February 05, 2011. Out of these, only one user displayed activity past their initial post on January 12th. This user, Dawn, posted two other comments, one the same day on January 12th, and the other the following day. Her comments were directed specifically at Starbucks, asking them to deliver its products and to continue to stock a product generally only sold during the Holiday season.

**Overview of Redbox’s Facebook Page**

**General Overview**

As on February 06, 2011, there are 1,803,882 fans for the Redbox Facebook Page. The sidebar simply has Redbox’s Facebook Tagline, “The Official Redbox Facebook Page: Your Entertainment Destination!” Below this sidebar is a listing of what Facebook friends are already following Redbox and a total listing of how many people follow Redbox on Facebook.

The Redbox Page has several different features that can be accessed through tabs on the top of the Facebook Page. There are six different tabs: Facebook Wall, Info, Redbox, Awards Show, Valentine, and Notes.
The “Facebook Wall” tab allows users to sort between the postings from other users and the postings from Redbox. Wall posts can be categorized through “Redbox + Others,” which displays posts by users and by Redbox; “Just Redbox,” which only displays posts published by the business; and “Just Others,” which only displays posts created by Facebook users.

The “Info” tab displays links to the Redbox main website, blog, and twitter feed. The Company Overview gives some brief information on the company and also provides a main phone number and email to contact the business.

The “Redbox” tab has a promotional code for new followers of Redbox. This tab also has an embedded video player that plays previews for new video releases. There are also links that allow users to find a Redbox near them and reserve videos online. There is also a weekly poll related to recently released movies. Following this, users have the option to invite their Facebook friends to a movie night and post what movie they’re planning to watch, which can be sent directly to a user’s personal Facebook Profile. This tab also has a link for user’s to follow Redbox on Twitter and join the Redbox email list. Finally, this tab links to the top posts from the Redbox blog.

The “Award Show” tab is a Facebook game on movie trivia, which also gives users the option to invite their Facebook friends to play along.

The “Valentine” tab allows users to create virtual valentines to send to Facebook friends, which will include a promo code for a free Valentine’s Day DVD rental in each card sent. This tab also allows users to view valentines received by other Facebook users.
The “Notes” tab has 104 published notes from Redbox between the dates of June 01, 2009 to August 17, 2010. All of these notes list new weekly video releases along with a brief description of each release.

**Redbox Postings Analysis**

Between January 25 to January 31, 2011, there were twelve official posts published by Redbox. Five postings were categorized as entertainment, three as social, two as information, and two as promotional.

Entertainment postings were published twice on January 25, once on January 28, and twice on January 31. These postings, in respective order, were liked by 117, 117, 1040, 278, and 692 people. The two postings on January 25 generated 90 and 48 comments, respectively. The posting on January 28 generated 561 comments and the two postings on January 31 generated 142 and 269 comments, respectively.

Regarding the content of these postings, the first posting published on January 25 had 77 comments directed towards the business and 13 comments directed to other users who commented on the post. The second posting published on January 25 had 46 comments directed towards the business and 2 comments directed to other users who commented on the post. The posting on January 28 had 556 comments directed towards the business and 5 comments directed to other users who commented on the post. The posting on January 31 had 138 comments directed towards the business and 4 comments directed to other users who commented on the post. The second posting on January 31 had 265 comments directed towards the business and 5 comments directed to other users who commented on the post. Examples of these messages were users responding to
questions asking about movie trivia and users agreeing or disagreeing with feedback posted from other users.

Out of these 5 postings, there were three postings published that asked users a question or for direct feedback. These postings were published on January 28 and twice on January 31.

Social postings were published on January 26, January 27, and January 30. These postings, in respective order, were liked by 536, 325, and 538 people. The posting on January 26 generated 347 comments, the posting on January 27 generated 217 comments, and the posting on January 31 generated 1,932 comments.

Regarding the content of these postings, the posting published on January 26 had 343 comments directed towards the business and 4 comments directed to other users who commented on the post. The posting published on January 27 had 217 comments directed towards the business and 2 comments directed to other users who commented on the post. The posting published on January 30 had 1,932 comments directed towards the business and 10 comments directed to other users who commented on the post. All postings published asked users a question or for direct feedback.

Information postings were published on January 26 and January 29. These postings, in respective order, were liked by 238 and 287 people. The posting on January 26 generated 65 comments and the posting on January 29 generated 107 comments.

Regarding the content of these postings, the posting on January 26 had 63 comments directed towards the business and 2 comments directed to other users who commented on the post. The posting on January 29 had 88 comments directed towards
the business and 19 comments directed to other users who commented on the post. Out of these two postings, the posting on January 26 asked users a question or for direct feedback.

Promotional postings were published on January 27 and January 28. The postings, in respective order, were liked by 356 and 192 people. The posting on January 27 generated 122 comments and the posting on January 28 generated 140 comments.

Regarding the content of these postings, the posting on January 27 had 113 comments directed towards the business and 9 comments directed to other users who commented on the post. The posting on January 29 had 135 comments directed towards the business and 5 comments directed to other users who commented on the post. None of these postings asked users a question or for direct feedback.

Self-Initiated Postings by Users

Between January 25 to January 31, 2011, there were a total of 434 self-initiated posts on the wall of Redbox’s Facebook Page. There were 124 non-directional posts, 104 conversations with Redbox, 78 conversations with other users, 46 postings directed to Redbox, and 13 questions directed to other users.

Monthly Activity for Followers Chosen at Random

Ten users were chosen at random on January 01, 2011, and their activity was tracked until January 31, 2011. Out of these 10 users chosen at random, 3 users displayed activity past their initial post on January 12th.
The first user, Debbie, posted later on January 01, 2011. She responded to a post from Redbox’s news feed, complaining about the same subject from her earlier post on that day.

The second user, Lance, posted six times during the month of January. All of his posts were self-initiated. Three of his posts expressed positive feedback to Redbox and one of his posts offered a suggestion to the business. His last 2 posts discussed what movies he was planning to rent. Redbox commented on 4 of his posts.

The third user, Michael, posted eight times during the month of January. Four of his posts were questions directed towards Redbox, 2 posts of which were answered by the business. Three of his posts were in response to postings by other Facebook users and one posts was a non-directional postings on Redbox’s Facebook Wall.

**Overview of Boise State University’s Facebook Page**

**General Overview**

As on February 06, 2011, there are 5,441 fans for the Boise State University Facebook Page. The sidebar simply has the address for Boise State University. Below this sidebar is a listing of what Facebook friends are already following Boise State University and a total listing of how many people follow Boise State University on Facebook.

The Boise State University Page has several different features that can be accessed through tabs on the top of the Facebook Page. There are six different tabs: Facebook Wall, Info, Photos, Notes, YouTube, and Links.
The Facebook Wall tab allows users to sort between the postings from other users and the postings from Starbucks. Wall posts can be categorized through “Boise State University. + Others,” which displays posts by users and by Boise State University; “Boise State University,” which only displays posts published by the business; and “Just Others,” which only displays posts created by Facebook users.

The “Info” tab displays links to Boise State University main website. This tab also gives a brief description of Boise State University and also includes a paragraph of legal information related to the Facebook Page.

The “Photos” tab includes pictures published by Boise State University. Boise State University has 5 photo albums, under the categories “Wall Photos” (19 photos), “Tag, You’re It!” (2 photos), “Photo of the Week: July 02” (1 photo), “Photo of the Week: June 25” (1 photo), and “Profile Pictures” (5 photos). As of February 06, 2011, there are 100 photos published by users.

The “Notes” tab has 309 published notes from Boise State University between the dates of March 06, 2009 to December 23, 2010. These notes announce information on Boise State events, services relevant to Boise State students, and occasionally has promotions distributed from Boise State’s affiliates.

The “YouTube” channel allows users set up a Facebook application to display YouTube favorites on Boise State University’s Facebook Page.

The “Links” tab has a listing of all Boise State University postings that have a link to an external website. There is also a RSS feed available that allows users to subscribe to Boise State University’s published links.
Boise State University Postings Analysis

Between January 25 to January 31, 2011, there were 12 official posts published by Boise State University. All of these posts that were published fell under the “information” category.

Information postings were published on January 24, twice on January 25, twice on January 26, three times on January 27, twice on January 28, and on January 31. These postings, in respective order, were liked by 4, 7, 8, 4, 7, 5, 3, 8, 12, 11, 8, and 8 people. The second posting on January 25 generated 9 comments, the first posting on January 27 generated 2 comments, and both postings published on January 28 received 1 comment on each post.

Regarding the content of these postings, the second posting on January 25 had all comments directed towards Boise State University, the first posting on January 27 had all comments directed towards Boise State University, and both postings on January 28 had all comments directed towards Boise State University.

None of these postings asked users a question or for direct feedback.

Self-Initiated Postings by Users

Between January 25 to January 31, 2011, there were a total of 8 self-initiated posts on the wall of Boise State University Facebook Page. There was 1 conversation with Boise State University, 2 conversations with other users, 2 postings directed to Boise State University, and 3 questions directed to other users. There were no comments from the non-directional posts category.
**Monthly Activity for Followers Chosen at Random**

Because there were no posts on January 01, 2011, users were chosen from the earliest day on the month that had posts from followers of Boise State University’s Facebook Page, which was January 03, 2011. Because there were less than 10 users who commented, all users who posted on January 03, 2011 were chosen and their activity was tracked until January 31, 2011. Out of these five users who posted on January 3rd, one user, Nicholas, displayed activity past his initial post on January 3, 2011. On the same day he first posted, he left a comment on a post published by Boise State University that fell under the “Information” category.