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Social Media: How a University's Student Organizations Communicate with Students

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This thesis explored the use of social media at one Midwestern University to understand how student organizations used social media to communicate with students. Through a review of existing research, it was found that past research has focused on how institutions used social media. No studies were identified that examined student organizations' use specifically. The research sought to understand if social media was used to engage more students on the campus. The research is important to understanding strategies to increase student engagement. Data were collected using an online survey that was sent to presidents of student organizations (designed to understand if and how the organizations used social media). Findings indicated the types of social media used, who the student organizations communicated with, how the different social media platforms were used, and reasons for not using the various social media platforms.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Students in 2016 are different from the students of 20 years ago. They have grown up in a world that has always known the internet. They live in a society where they are always connected to the World Wide Web and their friends. College students carry smart phones, laptops, and/or tablets everywhere they go.

With these technological changes, the way higher education institutions communicate with students has changed as well. Institutions use social media, email, websites, and smart phone applications to communicate with current students, prospective students, alumni, faculty, and staff.

For example, each year Beloit College distributes a Mindset list (https://www.beloit.edu/mindset/2019/) to describe the year's incoming freshmen. The 2015 list, for students graduating from college in 2019, provides a perspective on college students. Following are the items on the 2019 Mindset List that relate to the use of technology.

- Google has always been there, in its founding words, "to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible."
- Email has become the new "formal" communication, while texts and tweets remain enclaves for the casual.
- They have grown up treating Wi-Fi as an entitlement.
- Cell phones have become so ubiquitous in class that teachers don't know which students are using them to take notes and which ones are planning a party.

- Their parents have gone from encouraging them to use the internet to begging them to get off it.

- When they were born, cell phone usage was so expensive that families only used their large phones, usually in cars, for emergencies.

- Teachers have always had to insist that term papers employ sources in addition to those found online.

The 2019 Mindset list also includes expressions that the students would understand along with the translations for the "adults."

- "Smartphone shuffles" have always slowed down traffic between classes. (One can avoid all eye contact as one moves through the maddening texting crowd.)

- "Trolling" innocents on social media has always been uncharitable. (Cynical and bullying attacks on happy campers, preserved on the internet, may come back to haunt you.)

- They'll know better than to text their professors "TL DR" about assignments. (…and just hope their professor doesn't scribble back to them, about their own papers: "Too Long: Didn't Read.")

The following literature review includes the ways universities use social media, websites, and smart phone applications to communicate with their members.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The literature provides the context for a study of the use of social media by student organizations at a large Midwestern Research University. The chapter includes research studies that have analyzed the various ways that social media is used by higher education institutions and the individuals that these institutions serve (students, staff, faculty, and alumni). The discussion illustrates how social media is used for connections with friends and family, in the classroom, for communication from institutional offices such as admissions, and for on-going communication with the alumni and the general public.

The literature review has five categories: (1) sources of information, (2) use of social media in adjusting to college, (3) faculty and student use of social media, (4) targeted use of social media by the institution, and (5) social media platforms.

Sources of Information

Individuals seek information in a variety of ways. Printed newspapers, television, communication with friends, on-line newspapers, blogs, wikis, email, targeted websites, Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of social media are all used to obtain the information that an individual seeks. The reasons a person uses one type of media are as unique as the media they use. An individual's personality influences the user's choices. Age can also determine the preferred methods.

Research conducted by Kim, Sin, and Tsai (2014); Wang, Tchernev, and Solloway (2012); and Belangee, Bluvshtein, and Haugen (2015) described the use of social media. These articles along with "The Use of Social Media in Higher Education

for Marketing and Communications: A Guide for Professionals in Higher Education" will be discussed.

The purpose of the study conducted by Kim et al. (2014) was to describe the research gap between user characteristics and type of social media used for information seeking purposes. Kim et al. (2014) posed two main research questions:

RQ1: Which social media platforms are used as information sources? What purpose are they used for?

RQ2: Who is likely to use different social media platforms?

Kim et al. (2014) used the Big 5 Inventory of Personality Traits and both open and closed-ended questions to answer the research questions. Undergraduate students at a public university were recruited though a mass email invitation. Responses were submitted by 845 participants, of which 809 were fully completed (Kim et al., 2014). Respondents were 65% female (525 participants) and 35% male (283 participants). Social science students made up 37% (300 participants) of the respondents and 19% (152 participants) were from the humanities (Kim et al., 2014).

Results indicated 793 students (98%) used wikis, 769 students (95%) used social networking sites, 591 students (73%) used user reviews, 558 students (69%) used media-sharing sites, and 396 students (49%) used social Q & A sites (Kim et al., 2014). Blogs and microblogs were used as a resource as well.

Results showed males using blogs, media-sharing sites, social Q&A, user reviews, and wikis more than females (Kim et al., 2014). No significant gender difference was found for social networking sites and microblog usage. Upperclass students tended to use wikis and blogs more than underclass students who used social Q&A sites more than

upperclass students. However, wikis were popular among all grade levels of students. Also, engineering students were more likely to use wikis than social science and humanities students who used media-sharing more than students in the sciences did (Kim et al., 2014).

Those with high levels of openness and low levels of agreeableness used blogs, user reviews and wikis (Kim et al., 2014). Individuals with high levels of openness and low levels of conscientiousness used media-sharing sites. Individuals with higher levels of extroversion used social networking sites more than other students did.

Kim et al. (2014) recommended that social media sites be treated as important sources of information. The authors also recommended that students be taught how to use wikis appropriately. Social Q & As were used by students. Based on the literature reviewed, there is a need to discover why they are popular and how these sites can be used effectively. The authors suggested that media-sharing sites could be more useful if they were organized by genre, topic, and purpose.

Kim et al. (2014) identified several implications based on their research: (1) more effective information services could be provided; (2) research should be conducted on why upperclassmen use social Q & A sites more frequently than other students; and (3) information literacy programs should include information on how to evaluate the information found on the social media sites.

In research conducted by Wang et al. (2012), social media (SM) use was compared to other media (OM) use (TV and radio). The researchers posed the following hypotheses:

H1: A person's SM use at the present time should be determined by his/her previous SM use (Hypothesis 1a) and his/her needs at the present time (Hypothesis 1b).

R1: Explore whether preceding OM use – specifically lag 1, lag 2, and lag 3 OM use, affect SM use at the present time point.

H2: A person's OM use at the present time should be determined by his/her previous SM use (Hypothesis 2a) and his/her needs at the present time (Hypothesis 2b).

R2: Explore whether preceding SM use, specifically lag 1, lag 2, and lag 3 SM use affect OM use at the present time.

H3a: Needs are expected to be determined by prior needs, which again are tested using autoregressive lag 1, lag 2, lag 3 feedback effects of the needs in the same category.

H3b: Needs are expected to be reduced by the gratifications obtained from preceding activities – SM and OM use.

H4a: Gratifications may be affected by their own feedback effects across time as well.

H4b-d: It is predicted that gratifications are determined by: needs in the same category (Hypothesis 4b), SM use and its interaction with the needs (Hypothesis 4c), and OM use and its interaction with the needs (Hypothesis 4d).

H5: Solitude at a given time is predicted to affect SM and OM use at that time, and to moderate the effects of needs on media use.

H6: This study proposes that perceived interpersonal support affects media use and moderates how needs drive media use.

A convenience sample of students were recruited from a large Midwestern University. Twenty-eight undergraduate student volunteers participated in the study in exchanged for compensation. Respondents were an average of 21.43 years old; 60.7% female; and 71.43% Caucasian. At specific time points, students were asked to submit reports describing the activities they had engaged in during the time frame and to indicate social media and other media they used. Social media included blogs, email, Facebook, IM, LinkedIn, MySpace, online discussion forums, Skype, Twitter, Wikis, and YouTube. Other media included TV, radio, magazines, newspapers, and computer use not related to social media. Class time, hanging out with friends, shopping, and other activities were recorded. Participants were asked to indicate if they were physically alone during the activity. Participants were asked to indicate activity, their needs and gratifications associated with the activities. Activities were reported for 28 days. Gender and race were treated as control variables.

In answer to the question, explore whether preceding other media use affects social media use at the present time, social media use was independent from prior and current other media use. Results supported the hypothesis H1a, a person's social media use at the present time should be determined by his/her previous social media use, indicating a person's current social media use was dependent on prior use. Results also supported H1b, a person's social media use at the present time should be determined by his/her needs at the present time; H2b, a person's OM use at the present time should be determined by his/her needs at the present time; H5, solitude at a given time is predicted

to affect SM and OM use at that time, and to moderate the effects of needs on media use; and H6, proposes that perceived interpersonal support affects media use and moderates how needs drive media use.

A person's needs at a specific time increased both social media and other media use. An increase in a person's need increased social media use, however a person's social needs had the greatest effect. Results indicated that solitude increased an individual's social media use. Emotional and social needs increased other media use. Individuals with higher interpersonal support tended to use social media more except when social or habitual needs were high. There was an increase in other media use for those with lower interpersonal support when there was an increase in emotional and social needs.

Results also supported H3a, needs are expected to be determined by prior needs. A person's needs were reduced by the gratifications they received in prior activities. H4a, gratification may be affected by their own feedback effects across time; H4b-d, gratifications are determined by: needs in the same category, social media use and its interactions with the needs, and other media use and its interaction with the needs, were supported by the results as well. A small increase in need would result in a small increase in gratification from the activity.

The authors examined social media use in the context of other daily activities (Wang et al., 2012). Dynamics of other social media were compared side-by-side to show similarities and differences. Based on the findings, additional studies should be conducted to describe voluntary and non-voluntary solitude to distinguish influences on needs and media choice. Additional research could be beneficial to media campaigns (Wang et al., 2012).

Belangee et al. (2015) conducted a study based on the research question: What are the perceived benefits and disadvantages of using social media in higher education, professional development, and in general human connections?

An email was sent to 1,814 alumni, students, faculty, and prospective students via a listserv used by the Adler Graduate School (AGS) in Richfield, Minnesota. The online survey included items using a Likert type scale. Questions were about the use of social media to reflect on others, benefits of professional development by using sites such as LinkedIn, benefits of online education, connections to the community based on the use of social media, individual responsibility for self and others learning in an online learning environment, and does using professional social media cause the individual to be more concerned with social implications of knowledge? The demographic questions were related to the primary affiliation with AGS, place of residence, gender, age range, use of social media, and whether the respondent had participated in online education.

Of the 1,814 invitations sent, 178 individuals accessed the survey link. One-hundred seventy of those who accessed the link consented to participate. Survey data was collected via SurveyMonkey. Participants were students (82), staff (6), faculty instructors (17), alumni (60), and Alder friends (5). The majority of the participants were from the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area (117). Thirty-one were from the greater Minnesota region, 20 from other states, and 2 were non-U.S. residents. The majority of participants were female (134). There were 32 who identified as male and 4 that skipped the question. The male/female ratio resembled the demographics presented in the AG's SonisWeb database.

Of the participants, 59% indicated they averaged 1-5 hours of social media use weekly. Also, almost 50% had never taken an online course through the college. However those who had taken an online course used social media more. The survey included an optional comment section. The 90 narrative responses were grouped into seven general statements (Belangee et al., 2015):

- Social media inspires people to see with the eyes of the other.

- Online professional activities provide opportunity to benefit or contribute.

- Pooled intelligence of a group is a major benefit of online education.

- Social media instills connection and responsibility toward community.

- Online courses are a reflection of true democracy.

- Professionals who use social media are more concerned.

Social media and other internet activities are true equalizers. Results indicated that it is possible that the theory of Individual Psychology has a role in the person's responses (Belange et al., 2015). Other factors need to be studied for a better understanding of the research implications.

Rueben's (2008) study, *The Use of Social Media in Higher Education for Marketing and Communications: A Guide for Professionals in Higher Education,* provides a report of how social media is used by information seekers.

A survey was conducted in July 2008. One hundred forty-eight colleges and universities were asked the social media they used most; how they used it to reach their target audiences; and, which department(s) maintain the social media accounts.

Social networking is one type of social media. Individuals share ideas, interests, and seek to meet people. According to Noel-Levitz (as cited in Reuben, 2008, p. 3), 55%

of all teenagers who are online use social networks (MySpace, Facebook). Of the 15-17 year olds who access these sites, 64% create online profiles.

In a survey, marketing and communication professionals who subscribed to uweb, HighEdWeb and SUNY CUADnet listservs were asked to respond to the survey. One-hundred seventy-five individuals from four countries responded. There were 148 unique responses. More than half reported having an official Facebook page and 20 had developed a custom Facebook application. Approximately 22% have an official presence on MySpace. Of those responding, 67% do not have an official Twitter account and 64% do not have a Flickr account. However, more than half have YouTube accounts and 60% use a blog. Del.icio.us was used by only 17% of the respondents.

Individuals in the marketing/communications/public relations offices were typically responsible for updating the social media sites for Facebook (48.11%), MySpace (60%), Twitter (50%) and Flicker (43%). For Facebook,13.21% of the sites were maintained by undergraduate admissions offices and 11.32% by a web development office.

Facebook sites were used for communicating with current students and alumni. MySpace was used for recruitment purposes. Twitter accounts were used to communicate with current students or to reach out to alumni.

Respondents indicated spending one to four hours a week updating a Facebook or MySpace page. Twitter accounts were updated one to four times per week by the majority of the respondents. Flicker accounts took one to four hours per week to update photos.

Blogs are used for recruitment purposes (Rueben, 2008). However, the survey respondents were 31.28% students, 23.08% staff, 20% faculty, 20% news reporters, and 5.65% other users. Concerns were identified including loss of control, time commitment, information overload, and the fact that anyone can create an "official" account for the university. Ohio State University's University Relations office has been identified as an office with a "Best Practices" approach for social media use. This includes the use of RSS feeds, videos, and MP3s on Facebook. They have "turned off" the wall feature, which most other colleges/universities have turned off as well.

Reuben (2008) identified several recommendations based on the findings of the study. First, the focus should be on strengthening the experience prospective students have with the institution's office website. Sites provide a way to show real stories of students and alumni of the institutions. Social media sites provide an opportunity for professionals to keep in touch with alumni. According to the E-Expectations Class of 2007 Report, 80% of the high school students surveyed said they had not looked for a school they were considering on MySpace or Facebook. Only 27% reported having read a blog written by a current student and 21% by a faculty member at a college they were considering (Noel-Levitz as cited in Reuben, 2008, p. 11). Institutions need to develop strong and effective policies with designated staff assigned to monitoring the sites and contributions to the sites. The only sites developed should be those that staff have time to create. Solis stated that, "Participation is no longer an option as Social Media isn't a spectator sport" (as cited in Reuben, 2008, p.11).

Reuben (2008) suggested that institutions should open up courses for student reviews on the site. Because whether this feature is enabled or not, the conversations are

happening elsewhere. The conversations are probably occurring on sites that the institution has no control over.

Use of Social Media in Adjusting to College

The second topic identified through the literature review was using social media to adjust to college. DeAndrea, Ellison, LaRose, Steinfield, and Fiore (2012) and Gray, Vitak, Easton, and Ellison (2013) identified ways in which social media is used in the adjustment process.

DeAndrea et al. (2012) studied a targeted social media site in order to examine if the site could affect the intellectual and social lives of students who are moving from high school to college. The authors reported the social media used to develop the site, the importance of influencing the students' self-beliefs prior to coming to campus, discussion of the site's features, context of deployment, and methods used (DeAndrea et al., 2012).

The study was conducted at a large Midwestern University. Students were assigned to three residence halls on campus and were invited to participate via email. The study had a 49% response rate; 1639 first-year students completed the pre-test. The demographic breakdown of the participating students was 70% female and 80% Caucasian, 7% African-American, 6% Asian American, 3% Hispanic, 3% Bi or Multi-Racial, and 1% other (DeAndrea et al., 2012). Students were offered entry into a $100 gift card raffle as an incentive. Non-respondents were sent a mailed invitation, which included a $1 cash incentive.

Prior to the first day of class, the first-year students were notified of the website via housing directors. The pre-test was closed before these individuals could access the site. Prior to the first day of class 1,576 students created an on-line profile. During the

first two weeks of class, all first-year students were sent an invitation to complete an annual survey. The survey included 9 items, with a 5-point Likert scale, about bridging social capital, 4 items, on a 5-point Likert scale, regarding academic expectations, two items about familiarity with the website and use of the website during the summer, and 2 dependent measures regarding students' perceived ability to form helpful social ties on campus. The dependent measures were a bridging self-efficacy measure and an academic self-efficacy scale. The annual survey was conducted by the Department of Residence Life during the first two weeks of classes. Of the 1576 students who created a profile on the website, 1,016 (64%) students completed the post-tests, of whom 265 had also completed the pre-test.

Website use significantly predicted bridging self-efficacy even when other factors were controlled. The number of Facebook friends in the hall and pre-test bridging social capital were significant, independent predictors (DeAndrea et al., 2012). Association between bridging self-efficacy and academic self-efficacy was also significant. Controlling for the pre-test, the results indicated that bridging self-efficacy predicted academic self-efficacy. A student's perceptions of self-efficacy predicted their beliefs in their ability to be successful academically. DeAndrea et al. (2012) indicated there was no relationship between website use and academic self-efficacy. Previous research indicated that perceptions of social support positively influenced many aspects of student adjustment.

DeAndrea et al. (2012) examined content on the site. Students used the site to point others towards useful information such as orientation programs. It was noted that design modifications could be made to highlight connections and diminish barriers to

communication. Asynchronous chats also could foster relationships. More advanced students and residence hall directors should be given access to help build mentoring relationships. The site should be available to all students to allow for a larger network.

The authors suggested that future examination should include validated scales and more refined measures, similar to the pre-survey. Results indicated that mediated interactions with other new comers to the University can be important sources of information. These interactions can make the new users feel like they have access to a larger support network (DeAndrea et al., 2012).

Gray et al. (2013) examined the role that both traditional markers of adjustment and various characteristics of Facebook use play in students' social adjustment to college, and subsequently, their persistence at the institution. Gray et al. (2013) posed one research question with nine hypotheses:

RQ1: What is the relationship between race/ethnicity and social adjustment to college?

H1: First-generation students will report lower levels of social adjustment to college than those who are not first-generation students.

H2: Perceived bonding social capital positively predicts social adjustment to college.

H3: On-campus residency positively predicts perceived levels of bonding social capital at college.

H4: The number of Facebook friends the student reports at the college positively predicts social adjustment to college.

H5:   The number of actual friends on Facebook positively predicts social

adjustment to college.

H6:   The propensity to use Facebook for collaboration positively predicts social

adjustment to college.

H7:   Social adjustment to college positively predicts persistence at the

university.

H8:   On-campus residency positively predicts persistence at the university.

H9:   Students' first-year university GPA positively predicts persistence.

The study was conducted at a 4-year open enrollment, private liberal arts college.

Participant characteristics were representative of the college's population, 56% female

and 42.3% racial minorities. Of the participants, 11% reported neither parent attended

college and 34% reported neither parent finished college. Survey data from first-year

college students and enrollment data from the next academic year were used to measure

retention. Students' first year GPA was also included (Gray et al., 2013).

The survey was distributed to first-year writing classes during March-April of

2011. One-hundred fourteen classes were invited to participate, 28 classes returned

surveys. This resulted in 569 participants to the invitation. Questions were asked, using a

five-point Likert scale, related to students' perceptions of their social adjustments to

college, perceptions of social capital, Facebook use, and demographics. Self-esteem was

also included as it has been linked to Facebook use and student adjustment (Gray et al.,

2013).

The results showed no significant findings across racial minorities or first

generation student status in terms of students' degree of social adjustment. The number of

actual friends on Facebook and use of Facebook for academic collaboration did not significantly predict social adjustment (Gray et al., 2013).

Recommendations based on the study findings include the following. The role of identify information in the student's profile should be further explored to see how it relates to social adjustment to the university. Colleges smaller than the one studied should be examined. Specific behaviors on the site, profile field completion, or more detailed data about interactions with other students at the institution should be included in future research in order to understand the role social media plays in social adjustment (Gray et al., 2013).

Future research could also examine older students, include a longitudinal study to understand adjustment to college and shifting networks. The relationship between living factors and students' social adjustment and persistence could be examined as well (Gray et al., 2013).

Faculty and Student Use of Social Media

The topic of faculty and student use of social media was reported in the literature. Roblyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman, and Witty (2010); Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert (2009); Davis, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar, and Canche (2015); and Mihailidis (2014) all explored the topic. The findings of the studies are presented in the following section.

Roblyer et al. (2010) explored issues related to faculty and student acceptance and use of Facebook. The study was designed to gather preliminary evidence about the adoption of sites such as Facebook by students and faculty, and willingness to move the

use of these tools from social to instructional purposes (Roblyer et al., 2010). The authors

posed the following research questions:

R1:   How does college faculty adoption and uses of social networking sites

(SNS) compare to that of college students?

R2:   Do college students and faculty communicate as much or more using

Facebook than they do with technologies traditionally used in colleges

(e.g., email)?

R3:   What proportion of students and faculty who use social networking sites

use them for communication on instructional matters?

R4:   How do student and faculty perspectives compare on using Facebook to

support classwork?

An online survey was used to gather data from personnel at a mid-sized southern

public university. On-campus student groups were recruited by individuals at the student

union. Students were then invited to complete the survey online. Five department chairs

also agreed to encourage their faculty to complete the survey. The response rate for the

faculty was 41%. The survey examined if each group had a Facebook account and, if so,

how much and for what reason did they use Facebook. Participants also were asked if

they would be open to using their account as a classroom support tool.

Results indicated that students and faculty use of Facebook slightly differed. Of

the students, 95% had a Facebook account while 73% of the faculty had an account.

Based on the results, it was unclear if Facebook and other social media (SM) have a

future as a communication tool in society (Roblyer et al., 2010). The study provided

limited initial support that students see potential use more than the faculty who teach

them do. Unless the faculty accept the use of SM, the potential will be lost (Roblyer et al., 2010).

Pempek et al. (2009) studied how much time college students invest in the use of social networking websites; why they use social media; and, how they use social media. The hypotheses posed were:

H1: Young adults would use Facebook daily.

H2: Young adults would use Facebook primarily for social interaction.

H3: Young adults would interact with their peers that they know offline rather than searching for new friends on Facebook or contacting family members.

H4: Profile information, which is clearly intended for others to read, would be used to express identity.

H5: As these students are young adults, their profile would involve information about religion, political ideology, and work, topics that are germane to identity development during emerging adulthood.

H6: Young adults would interact with one another by posting messages in public forums.

The study included 92 undergraduate students (20.65% freshman, 23.91% sophomores, 35.87% juniors, and 18.48% seniors) from two psychology courses at a private university. Participants were 60 (65%) females with a mean age of 20.50 years. Forty-nine (53.26%) of the respondents created their Facebook account the summer before they started college and 38.04% created their account after they started college.

Once individuals consented to participate in the study, they were asked to complete a diary-like measure and a 7-day activities checklist. One week later, they were asked to complete a survey. Students who participated were given extra credit for their participation.

The diary activity indicated that Facebook usage varied greatly by day. The survey results indicated that a majority (84.78% or 78 students) of students used Facebook to communicate with friends. Younger students used Facebook to communicate with friends off campus more than the older students did. Results showed students using Facebook to take a break and fight boredom. Finding help with schoolwork and finding new friends were also indicated as reasons for use of Facebook; but, these reasons were not common responses.

The student's profile information was requested as part of the survey. Demographic information, such as hometown and birthday, were sought. Students reported favorite books, music, and movies, and included information such as student quotes (Pempek et al., 2008).

Respondents indicated that they could live without Facebook (46.74%). Although most students reported that Facebook had a "somewhat positive" effect on their social lives (82.61%), the majority of students indicated that Facebook had a somewhat negative effect on their academic studies (76.09%) (Pempek et al., 2008).

On the survey, students reported spending much of their time reading and/or viewing information without directly interacting with anyone. The diary activity also reflected this finding. Students were more likely to post on someone's wall instead of via

private message. If students joined groups on Facebook, it was not likely that they would participate in the group.

The study was limited because the researchers focused on one type of social media. Results showed that social networking sites are a new way to communicate with others and to express themselves (Pempek at al. 2008).

A study was conducted by Charles H.F. Davis III et al., (2015) to clarify how colleges and universities use social media technology (SMT). The study also was designed to highlight assumptions that need to be challenged regarding institutional use of SMT and its relationship to academic success. The research included both community colleges and universities. Davis et al. (2015) pointed out that earlier research studies excluded community colleges.

Institutions choose to use SMT in the ways they assumed to be the best way, which was to utilize SMT as a one-way communication tool (Davis et al., 2015). If the attitude is that SMT distracts from academics, the value of SMT in the academic realm is diminished. The findings of this study helped to identify ways to capture the role and impact of SMT, especially for community colleges (Davis et al., 2015). The findings may lead to more attention on identification of best practices that exist in community colleges and universities.

Davis et al. (2015) used existing literature to flag topics related to students, faculty, and staff (ex. social media, social technology, Web 2.0, Facebook, Twitter, social networking sites, and any word otherwise related to the use of technology in higher education). The researchers conducted Google searches to complete a literature review. Searches were for higher education, news, blogs, and online media using previous topics

in conjunction with key words (college, college students, University, faculty, and student

affairs).

Davis et al. (2015) referred to Reuben's (2008) survey that showed social media

use by more than one half of the 148 colleges and universities responding to the survey.

In a study of a national sample of 456 four-year accredited U.S. institutions, 100%

reported using some form of social media, with Facebook used by 98% and Twitter used

by 84% being the most prominent of the social media used (Barnes & Lescault, as cited

in Davis et al, 2015, p. 411).

SMT was most likely to be used by departments, administration offices, and

faculty as an individualized communication tool rather than as a larger institutional tool

(Davis et al., 2015). If institutions use SMT institution-wide, live Twitter feeds of up-to-

the-minute notices of commencement programs, homecoming events, class reunions, and

live chat sessions (Wilburn as cited in Davis et. al, 2015, p. 411) as well as campus

emergency alerts (Swartzfager as cited in Davis et al, 2015, p. 411) can be distributed.

Many NCAA member-institutions have encouraged student athletes, coaches, and athletic

offices to utilize Twitter and Facebook as platforms to engage with fans (Watson as cited

in Davis et al, 2015, p. 412).

SMT is used mostly to communicate from institution-to-student. Admissions

offices use student blogs as recruitment tools to report current student experiences (Davis

et al., 2015). SMTs are effective as public relations strategies because they appeal to

millennial generation students (18-29 years of age) who expect personal, authentic, and

real-time engagement with their institutions (Rudolph as cited in Davis et al, 2015, p.

412). Another study noted that college blogs are deficient. Many institutions do not have

e-mail subscriptions to posts or accept comments from readers, both of which severely limit two-way engagement (Barnes & Lescault as cited in Davis et al., 2015, p. 412). Many colleges and universities assume SMT is best utilized as mostly one-way communications tools, which limits direct interaction between institutions and students online.

Davis et al. (2015) studied the effects of SMT on student's social networks, social capital, academic performance, and student involvement. They found that students' relationships online were diverse. Students who lived in the same dorm, had the same major, and attended the same high school had a greater effect on the students creating online relationships. If the students were involved in online activities, such as direct posts, they were more likely to be connected to the campus and less lonely.

Davis et al. (2015) found that SMT had no effect at all or a positive effect on academic performance. This was contradictory to past research. Also, they quoted a 2007 study conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (2007) at the University of California-Los Angeles. This study found a positive relationship between engagement on campus and social media use.

Also, Davis et al. (2015) indicated that only their study (Rios-Aguilar Canche, Deil-Amen, and Davis, 2012) was conducted at community colleges. Rios-Aguilar at al. (2012) conducted one of the first studies in community colleges regarding social media use. This research focused on college leaders' reports of social media use. The leaders reported using SMT as a one-way tool to provide announcements and deadlines. Community colleges also used SMT as a recruitment tool. However, it was reported that faculty used YouTube and blogs as part of their teaching activities.

Davis et al. (2015) indicated that future research should be conducted to explore the use of social media at two-year institutions as a positive resource for student engagement and social capital. Research should be conducted to see if SMT would have a positive impact on persistence, retention and degree attainment at two-year institutions (Davis et al, 2015).

Mihailidis (2014) explored how young people used social networks to engage in various content, expression of public issues, and topics of interest. Mihailidis (2014) also explored how reliance on social networks influenced perceptions of the value of these networks. Research questions were:

RQ1: How do college students use social media for daily information and communication needs?

RQ2: How do college students perceive social media's role in daily life?

During the 2010-2011 academic year, data was collected using a 57-question survey administered to 873 college students across nine universities. The study was limited by including only college students at four-year credit granting institutions (Mihailidis, 2014). Participants were 63% female and 37% male. Undergraduates from all age levels were included. Participants were 33% seniors, 29% juniors, 28% sophomores, and 9% freshmen. More than 40% were in communication-related majors, 8% were undeclared and the remaining were from other disciplines.

The survey was divided into news, politics, relationships, education, leisure, and privacy. The survey was administered through faculty contacts at the universities. Students were asked if they would participate in 60-minute focus group sessions. Names for the focus groups were chosen at random at each partner university. Eight focus group

discussions, which included a total of 71 students, were conducted at four of the participating universities.

Results indicated that individuals were turning to social media for information and communication (Mihailidis, 2014). Of the respondents, 59% indicated they spent less than 1 hour per day reading the news and 34% indicated they spent 1-2 hours per day reading the news. Forty percent of the respondents indicated they read/watched news online. Facebook (65%) and Twitter (33%) were the most popular news sources. Respondents indicated that blogs were not credible and 72% had never visited blogs for news. Respondents (76%) reported that the most credible way to find particular information was to "Google-It" (Mihailidis, 2014). Specific websites, friends and family, and social media use were reported as resources.

Information related to politics was obtained in other ways. Respondents indicated political information was sought from more traditional news avenues. Fifty-five percent of the respondents indicated they obtained news from online news sites and 44% reported use of word of mouth reports. Eighty-three percent of respondents did not follow political figures on Twitter or YouTube. Fewer than one-third used Facebook to support political parties; however, 64% indicated they had voted before (Mihailidis, 2014).

Even though social media was not used to seek political information, 44% reported social media as the primary way they communicated about politics. More than 55% claimed to use social media to "actively" voice political opinions. Thirty-four percent belonged to at least one political or civic advocacy group on Facebook (Mihailidis, 2014). Nearly half (48%) of the students agreed that social media had made them more aware of politics. Only 15% said that social media had dissuaded or

distracted them from politics in general. The survey results also revealed that 39% of

respondents reported feeling closer to their friends because of social media; and, 26% felt

they had more friends because of social media. Results also showed that fewer than 3%

saw social media as taking time away from friends or making friends. Finally, results

showed that family communication was still anchored by the phone (33%), followed by

text messaging (24%) and Facebook chats and/or messages (21%) (Mihailidis, 2014).

Half of the participants were friends with their parents on Facebook.

Focus group participants questioned the real value of time spent peering into the

lives of acquaintances. Privacy was mentioned as a concern; 86% reported being

somewhat or very concerned about their privacy online. However, 53% reported rarely or

never reading the privacy policies of the social media sites to which they belonged. More

than half of the sample (53%) believed that social media sites did a "fairly" good job of

protecting their privacy; and, 79% believed they had control "for the most part" over their

online identities. More than 80% of the sample reported making most of their Facebook

profiles available to the general public. The concern about privacy was contradicted by

the other responses.

Social media use in the classroom was also studied. Social media was used in less

than 50% of the sample's classes. Approximately one third of the respondents indicated

social media was not used in any of their classes. Approximately 40% reported only one

to two classes using social media in any capacity (Mihailidis, 2014).

Social media was widely used for research. Wikipedia use was reported by 71%

as "always" or "most always" being used. Google use was reported, by 96% of the

respondents, to conduct primary research for class assignments. Facebook was used

during class by 60% and more than 70% used Facebook to connect for group projects or to share course assignments and notes (Mihailidis, 2014).

Mihailidis (2014) found that participants were not using their phones as shopping tools. Results showed that 75% of respondents never used their phones to shop. However, 72% shopped online consistently and reported shopping online more frequently than in person. Respondents reported watching TV shows online for free (88%) and downloading free music online (66%). Participants relied primarily on peer reviews (54%) when deciding what to watch or listen to. A majority, 71%, reported they were very likely to be with friends. Forty-seven percent were very likely to be on social media sites, while 45% were very likely to be browsing the Internet (Mihailidis, 2014).

The survey data revealed a population that is increasingly integrating all facets of daily communication and information habits into social networks. The focus group discussions revealed that the increasing dependence on social networks was perceived in such a negative light that it minimized any acknowledgement of the increasing use of social networks in the daily information and communication needs of college students (Mihailidis, 2014).

During all focus group sessions, a majority of discussions migrated to the relative lack of value participants saw in social media platforms. Two main themes emerged from the focus group data that highlighted the growing disconnect between use and perception of social media (Mihailidis, 2014). Peer-to-peer information resources did not translate to more than checking-in. They criticized Facebook as little more than "looking at people" and "getting connected" with no real inflection on what it meant and why. "For news it's the worst thing that could have happened," said one participant. "You have a whole

bunch of people that are considered news [makers], but, it's all just opinion. It's

dangerous, and spreads misinformation." (Mihailidis, 2014). In contrast to survey data

that showed a positive or neutral disposition toward relationships on social networks, the

focus group participants were quick to note that social networks had not made them

closer to friends, but almost the opposite. Because Facebook, in particular, started as a

student-only platform, many of its early adopters see family as impeding on what was

once sacred space.

Findings addressing the first research question, showed that students, across a

series of categories developed to include facets of daily communication and information

habits, were migrating their habits not just online, but specifically toward social

networks. The findings addressing the second research question highlighted a hesitancy

to embrace social networks as dynamic tools for engagement in daily life (Mihailidis,

2014).

Based on the findings and their implications for young people and social

networks, the author recommended the development of digital and media that reflect

more inclusive, purposeful, and value-driven identification for youth with social media

tools and platforms (Mihailidis, 2014). The more young people can be made aware of the

responsibilities associated with using social networks, the more input they will have in

the direction that these networks take.

On a practical level, developing digital and media competencies in youth starts

with the purposeful integration of social media tools into the classroom, workplace, and

home. Challenging the common, "put it away," culture that exists in most formal settings

can facilitate a more integrated vision for social media as vibrant civic tools. Clarifying

terminology on social networks, specifically the terms, news feed, friend, and follower,

can create more constructive approaches to navigating and contextualizing social media

spaces (Mihailidis, 2014). Creating clear connections among the different types of

information that filter through social networks stands to strengthen these spaces as more

inclusive and diverse information and knowledge centers (Mihailidis, 2014).

The Targeted Use of Social Media by the Institution

Barnes and Mattson (2008) conducted a replication study of Barnes's 2007

research to compare adoption of social media between 2007 and 2008 by the admissions

offices of four-year accredited institutions in the United States. This was the first

longitudinal study of college admissions and the use of these technologies. Both the 2007

and the 2008 study examined the familiarity with, usage of, and attitude towards social

media by the admissions offices at U.S. colleges and universities. The 2008 study

contacted the same institutions as were included in the 2007 study.

The Barnes 2007 study revealed that institutions of higher education were

outpacing the more traditional Fortune 500 companies as well as the innovative Inc. 500

companies in their use of social media to communicate with their customers. At that time,

8% of the Fortune 500 companies were blogging compared with 19% of the Inc. 500 and

32% of colleges and universities. The 2008 study showed that 13% of the Fortune 500

and 39% of the Inc. 500 had a public blog. It is interesting to note that college admissions

departments continued to lead the pack with blogs at 41% of U.S. colleges and

universities.

For the 2007 study, the University of Texas created a directory of all four-year

accredited institutions. For both the 2007 and 2008 studies, a phone survey of those

institutions identified on the University of Texas directory was conducted. The Barnes

and Mattson 2008 study was based on interviews with 536 U.S. colleges and universities

and the 2007 study was based on 453 interviews with U.S. colleges and universities.

Participants were asked to rank their familiarity with blogging, podcasting, social

networking, message boards and wikis from "very familiar" to "very unfamiliar." The

social media most familiar to college admissions departments, both in 2007 and 2008,

was social networking with 55% very familiar in 2007 and 63% in 2008. Forty-four

percent reported they were very familiar with blogging. Even the technology least

familiar to admission officers, wikis, was very familiar to 26% of those surveyed.

Social media use was reported in several areas: usage, importance, student research,

being used effectively, and are institutions listening? These areas are discussed in the

following section.

Usage was up for every area studied. Social networking was most popular with

61% of the departments using it. Social networking was followed by videoblogging

(48%), and blogs (41%). Most of those using blogs were also using other forms of social

media: 36% message boards, 16% podcasts, and 10% wikis. Blogs were more popular

among private than public schools. Chat rooms, instant messaging, and emails were used

to communicate with prospective students and alumni.

The importance of social media was analyzed. Admissions departments indicated

that social media was "very important" to their future strategy. They viewed the

importance as greater than Inc. 500 businesses, 55% compared to 44% (Barnes &

Mattson, 2008). Of the admissions departments surveyed, 89% indicated that social

media was at least "somewhat important" to their future strategy.

Schools continue to research students using search engines (23%) and social networks (17%). These numbers were only slightly lower than those reported in the 2007 study. Online research appeared to be used as a precaution or a source of additional information for critical decision making. Google and Yahoo were the most popular search engines. Facebook and MySpace were the most popular social media networks used.

The next important topic was whether colleges and universities were using social media effectively. Between 2007 and 2008, there was significant improvement in the use of blogs, which was the most popular tool. In 2007, 37% of schools using blogs did not accept comments. This made it difficult to connect with prospective students. By 2008, the figure dropped to 22%. In 2007, 46% of schools had an RSS feed available and 31% allowed email subscriptions. In 2008, this increased to 49% for RSS feeds and 48% for email subscriptions. In 2007, the respondents indicated that there are no future plans for using blogs. In 2008, respondents reported that they planned to expand the use of the blog. Of the schools, 81% said blogs were successful, and, 42% planned to add a blog in 2007 and 40% to add a blog in 2008.

Were the institutions listening to what was being said? In 2007, 53% of the institutions reported that they monitored the internet for buzz, posts, conversations and news about their institutions. In 2008, those numbers rose slightly to 54%. The perceived importance of social media to the school translates into monitoring behavior.

Barnes and Mattson (2008) made recommendations based on the studies and include the following. Colleges and universities used social media to recruit and research prospective students. Online behavior can have important consequences for young people

and that social networking sites can and will be used by others to make decisions about them. Schools that used social media must learn the "rules of engagement" in the online world in order to maximize their effectiveness.

Social Media Platforms

Reuben (2008) described various social media platforms. This section reflects those descriptions.

Facebook was launched in 2004 for Harvard students. It was expanded to other Ivy League universities, then to any university student, then to high school students, and now to anyone over the age of 13. People use Facebook to stay in touch with friends and family, upload photos, share links and videos, and learn more about people. Rueben (2008) described six main aspects of Facebook: personal profiles, status updates, networks, groups, applications, and fan pages. Universities jumped at the chance to have a fan page when they were created in 2007. By January 2008, 420 universities had fan pages. This had a large marketing impact and organizations were able to communicate via direct and targeted messages.

MySpace is a community that allows you to meet your friends' friends, share photos, journals, and interests. In April 2008, Facebook surpassed MySpace as the world's most popular social network (Stevens as cited in Rueben, 2008, p. 3). Other organizations on MySpace with unappealing pages influence a person's overall perception of MySpace, which contributes to its not popular image. MySpace allows users to fully customize their profiles by completely changing the appearance, background and format of their pages (Solis as cited in Rueben, 2008, p. 4).

YouTube is the leader of online video, and the premier destination to watch and share original videos worldwide through the Web (Reuben, 2008). Universities have been making videos for more than 20 years.

Flickr is an online photo site. Users upload photos that can be organized in sets and collections. Universities have found Flickr to be a great tool to easily share photos with students, alumni, faculty, and staff (Rueben, 2008).

Blogs are online journals. Most allow readers to post comments in response to an article or post (Consortium as cited in Rueben, 2008, p. 4). A use of blogs for marketing in higher education is to invite students to blog about their lives on campus, as a recruiting initiative in conjunction with admissions. One-quarter of all college admissions offices use blogs by students or campus personnel (Noel-Levitz as cited in Rueben, 2008, p. 4). Rudolph (cited in Rueben, 2008, p. 4) found that in order for blogs to be effective for universities, those selected must represent a full spectrum of interests and status and that they have a clear understanding of the purpose of recruitment though their blog posts. Blogs are used by colleges to post news articles to open conversation about the topics.

Twitter is a cross between instant messaging and blogging. Users can follow the updates of friends they "follow," send them direct messages, reply publicly to friends, or just post questions or comments about their current status (Consortium as cited in Rueben, 2008, p. 5).

Del.icou.us is a social bookmarking web site. Users can store bookmarks online that allows users to access the same bookmarks from any computer and add bookmarks from anywhere. The user can also see links that friends and other people bookmark.

Although the literature review referenced specific social media platforms, the field of technology is changing. New social media applications are constantly being developed. An article in Study Breaks (Viner, 2014), listed these sites as the most popular used by college students: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Foursquare, Myspace, Tumblr, Instagram, Vine, LinkedIn, and Google+. Based on an article by John L. Robinson (2015), the most popular sites were: Instagram, Snapchat, Youtube, Twitter, Facebook, Vine, Pinterest, Yik Yak, Tumblr, Tinder, and Google+. The eBiz MBA Guide (April 2016) includes a different combination of top sites: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google+, Tumblr, Instagram, VK, Flickr, Vine, Meetup, Tagged, Ask.fm, MeetMe, and ClassMates. Knowing that the field is constantly changing is an important element to understanding social media use by college students and higher education. Equally important when viewing these lists is to understand that the sites have many different purposes and all of them are not applicable to this research (dating sites).

Based on the literature review, there is an absence of studies regarding how student organizations use social media to communicate with other students and alumni. No emphasis has been placed on students using these sites to engage other students in the student organizations.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore how student organizations use social media to communicate with students. The questions that guided the study were:

- Are student organizations using social media to communicate with students? If so, what information are the organizations posting on social media?

- Are student organizations using other means of communication to communicate with students?

- If the students are not using social media, are there reasons why these organizations choose not to use social media? Do the student organizations indicate that social media is an effective means of communication with students?

To answer the questions posed for the study a survey was developed. Following is a step-by-step explanation of the procedures used for the study.

Participant Selection

An email list of student organization presidents was obtained from the student involvement office at a large Midwestern research university. Once duplicated names were removed from the list, 608 presidents' names remained. All 608 individuals, representing 613 organizations, were invited to participate in the study. Participants were both undergraduate and graduate students. Students were told that they must be an adult, 19 years of age or older, in order to participate in the study.

Instrumentation

The survey was developed through the use of the Qualtrics online survey system. The survey was pilot tested by a representative from the student involvement office. The individual completed the survey in order to test how long survey completion would take and to provide input on the content and readability of the survey questions. Based on this pilot, the survey could be completed in less than 5 minutes. The individual indicated the questions were easy to understand. The individual recommended an additional question about whether the frequency of updates was dependent on current events/activities. This information was incorporated into the survey that was then posted on Qualtrics.

The survey was designed to be anonymously completed. Informed consent was obtained online prior to the start of the survey. The first question asked was if the organization used social media. If the person responded "no," the individual was asked why the organization did not use social media. At that point, the individual's participation in the study was complete. If the individual responded "yes," the individual was asked 17 additional questions about the organization's use of social media. The survey, Appendix A, and the IRB approval letter, Appendix B, are attached.

Data Collection

The survey was posted on Qualtrics during the Spring 2016 semester. Student organization presidents were emailed an invitation to participate through Qualtrics. The invitation included an explanation of the study and a link to the survey. Two weeks later, the 608 presidents of student organizations were sent a second email through Qualtrics. This email served as both a thank you to those who had completed the survey and a reminder for those who had not completed the survey.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore how student organizations use social media to communicate with students.

Of 608 individuals invited to participate in the survey, 64 individuals responded after the first email invitation. An additional 26 individuals responded after the second email invitation was sent. Of the 90 respondents, 78 (87%) indicated that social media was used to communicate with the members.

The 12 individuals who indicated that they did not use social media provided the following reasons for not using social media.

- We don't receive much for replies.

- Our club is too small, and is only open to Graduate Students in Animal Science.

- We are a very small organization within a small department so we rely on text messaging, e-mail, and face-to-face discussion.

- Not everyone uses the same social media regularly. We use email to get our notification to members because everyone checks that regularly.

- (We) found other means to suit our purposes.

- It hasn't been used in the past. Our members are graduate students in our academic department. We primarily use an email listserv to communicate with our members.

- We are a fairly new RSO (Recognized Student Organization) and we want to use traditional routes such as flyers and UNL webpages before we transition to social media (if we ever do).

- I don't have enough time to do it.

- (We have a) rapidly changing membership base. No one wants to maintain it.

- The organization is composed entirely of graduate students who are in close contact with one another and mainly communicate via email.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the majority, 32 (41%), of the organizations indicated that the organization has been using social media for 5+ years. The other organizations used social media from 1-4 years.
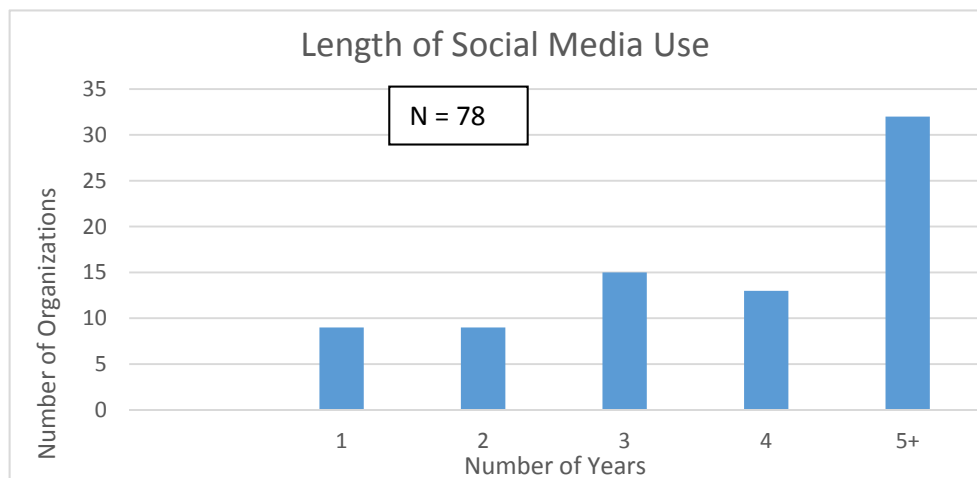
Figure 1: Time Social Media has Been Used by Organization.

Respondents indicated that they do not rely solely on social media to communicate with students and others (Figure 2). They still rely heavily on email and also use text messages and U.S. mail.
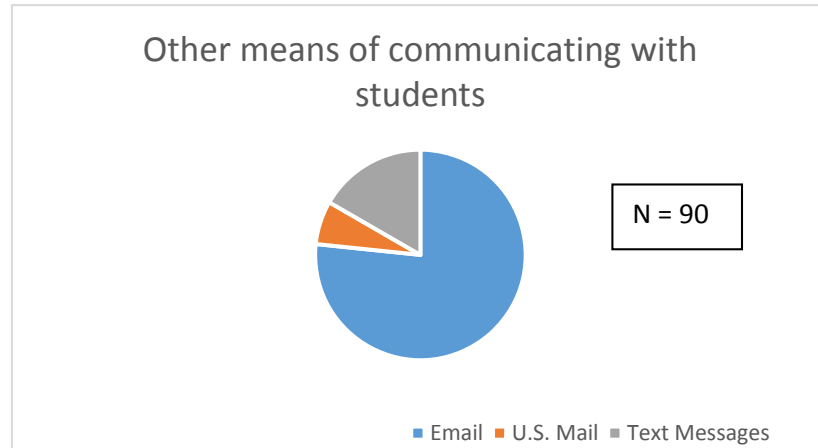
Figure 2: Other Resources Used to Communicate with Students

Social media was used primarily to communicate with current members, 77 respondents (99%). However, as illustrated in Figure 3, social media was commonly used to reach out to potential members, 61 respondents (78%); and alumni, 43 respondents (55%), as well. Social media was also used to communicate with faculty, 23 respondents (29%); and university administrators, 10 respondents (13%).
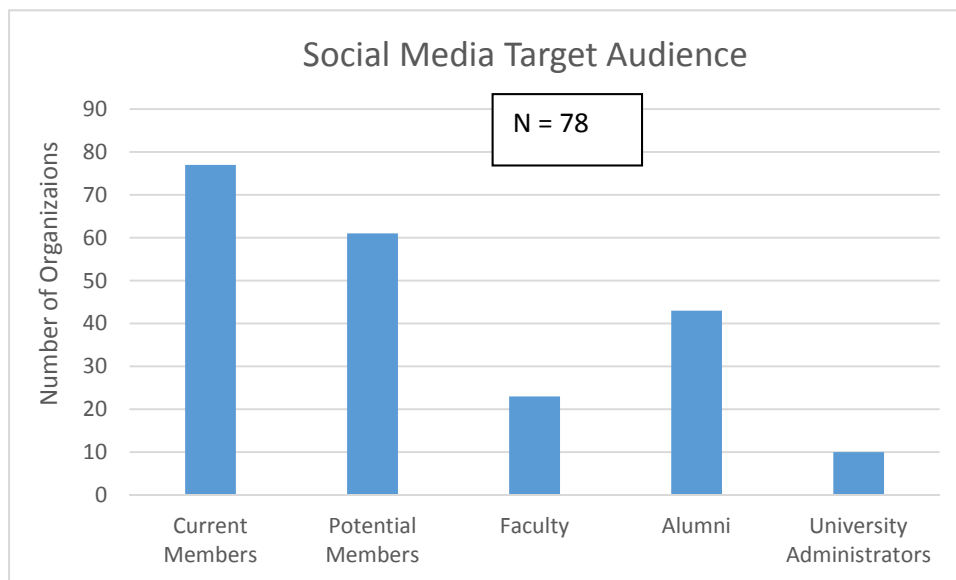

Figure 3: Social Media Target Audience

Respondents indicated the social media platforms used by the student

organizations. Facebook was used by 99% (77) of the organizations. Figure 4 includes

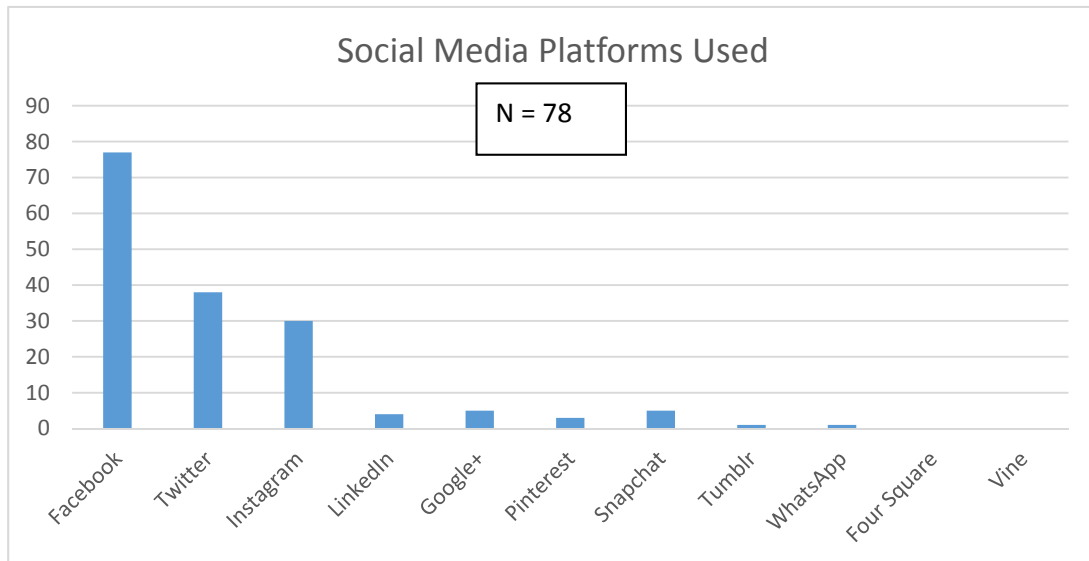the social media platforms used.

Figure 4: Social Media Platforms Used

Most organizations, 51 (65%) indicated they had 250 or fewer "friends" or

"followers." Nineteen (24%) indicated they had 251-500 "friends" or "followers."

Responses showed that 5 (6%) organizations fell within the 1001-2000 range for

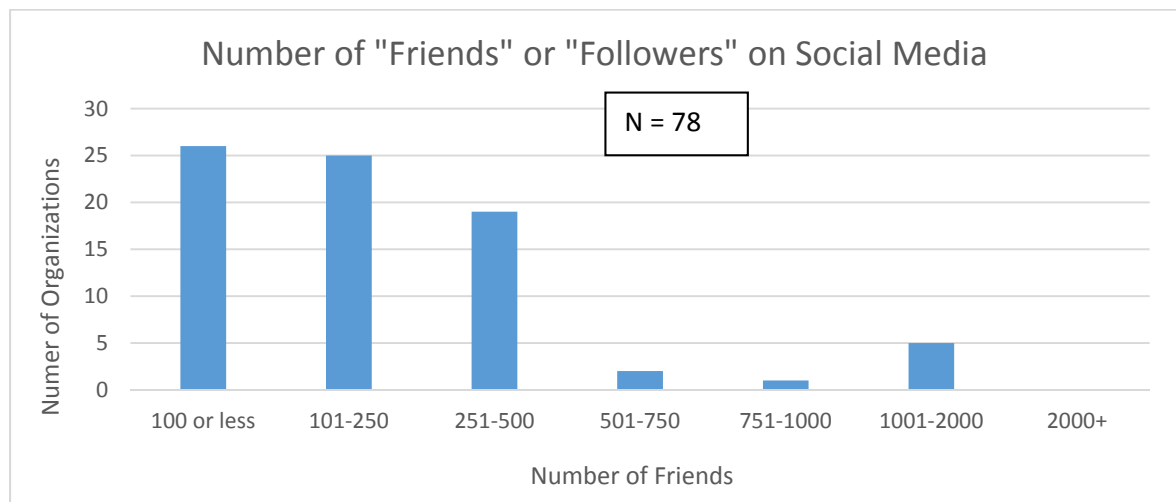followers. However, no one indicated they had 2000 or more followers. (See Figure 5.)

Figure 5: "Friends" or "Followers" on Social Media

Respondents were asked who was responsible for updating the sites. Of the respondents, fifty-six (72%) indicated that the responsibility was shared by multiple individuals. These individuals held various positions; however presidents were responsible in 26 instances. Vice presidents, general members, secretaries, the executive committee members, and social media director were responsible for updating social media sites. Figure 6 includes the most common positions responsible for updating the sites. The "other" category includes public relations, council members, historians, social supervisor, reporter, coordinators, webmasters, vice chairs, coaches, advisors, managers, teaching assistants, and instructors.
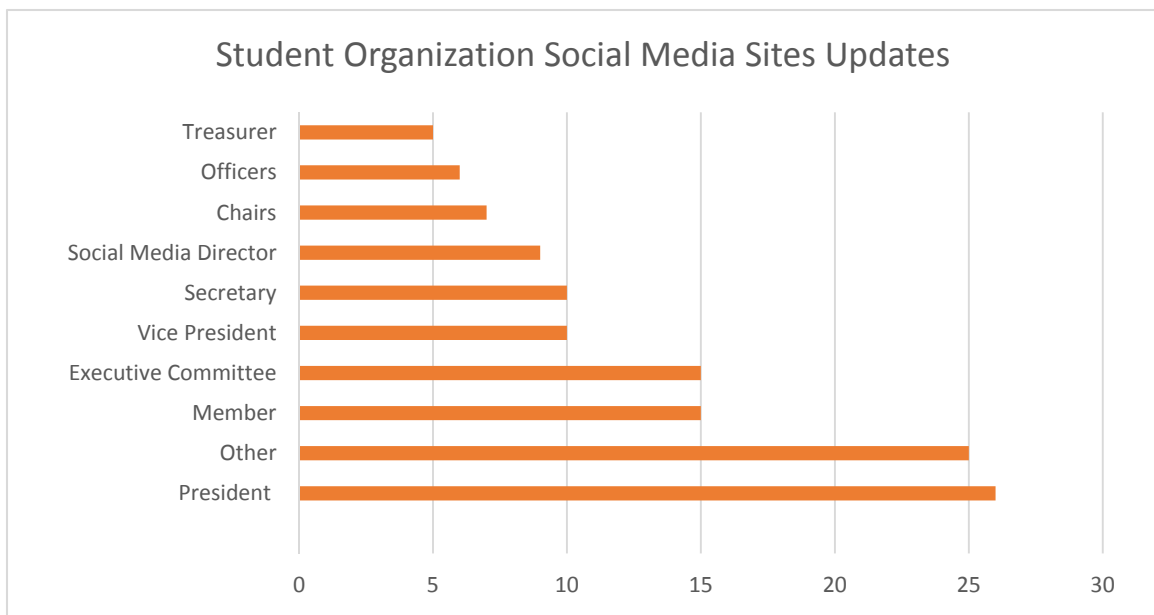

Figure 6: Individuals Who Update Social Media Sites.

The sites were updated weekly by 46 (59%) of the student organizations. Daily and monthly updates were also common. Seventy-three (94%) of respondents indicated that the frequency of updates was dependent on upcoming events.
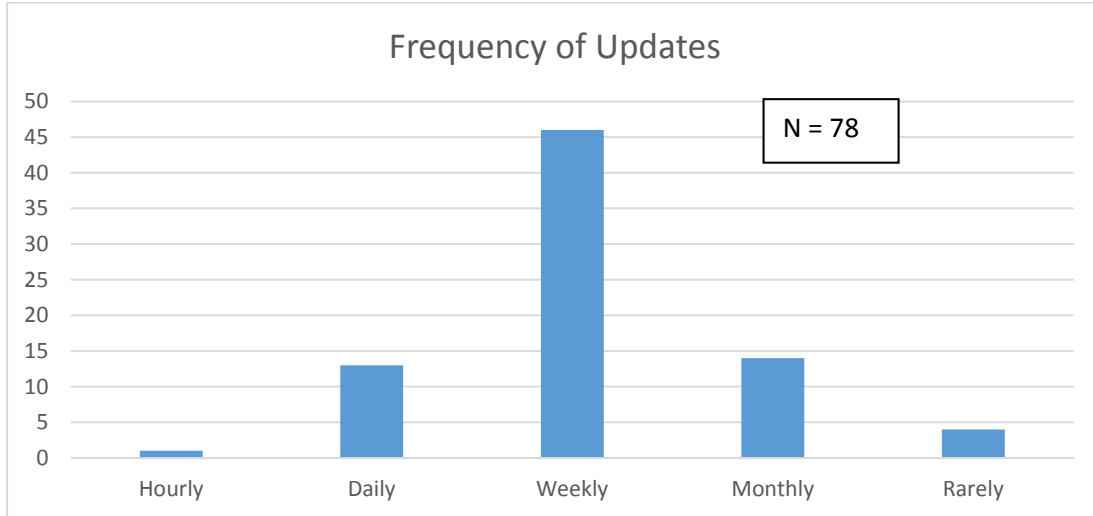
Figure 7: Frequency of Updates to Social Media Sites.

Participants were asked what information was posted online. The responses from the participants indicated that students were more involved and informed due to the use of social media. However, only one participant said that the organization posted information about how to get involved in the organization through social media. The following list includes the participants' responses to the question about the information posted on social media.
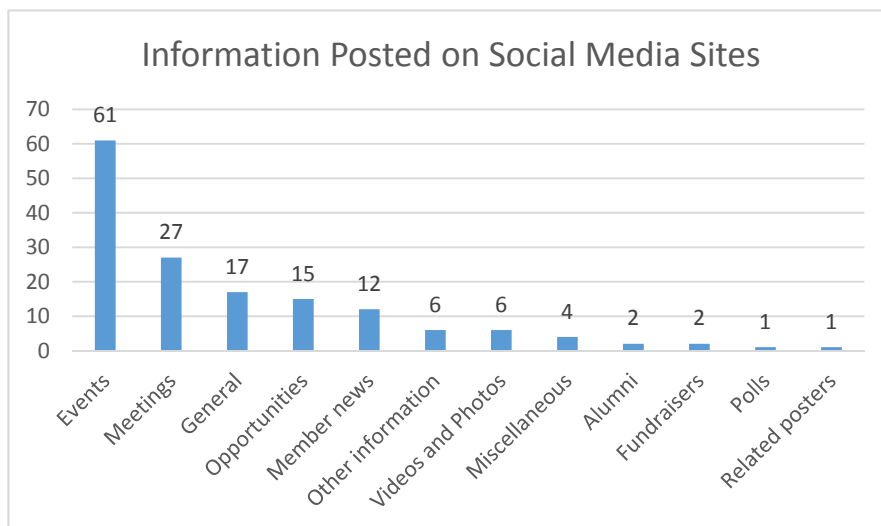

Figure 8: Information Posted on Social Media

In regards to a question about the effectiveness of social media, only 25 (32%) of the respondents had tried to measure its effectiveness. There was a mixture of conducting a more formal evaluation (survey, focus groups, metrics, directly asking) and informal evaluations (looking at on-line responses, comparing number of students attending events when social media notices were used to how many were in attendance when only email communication is used).

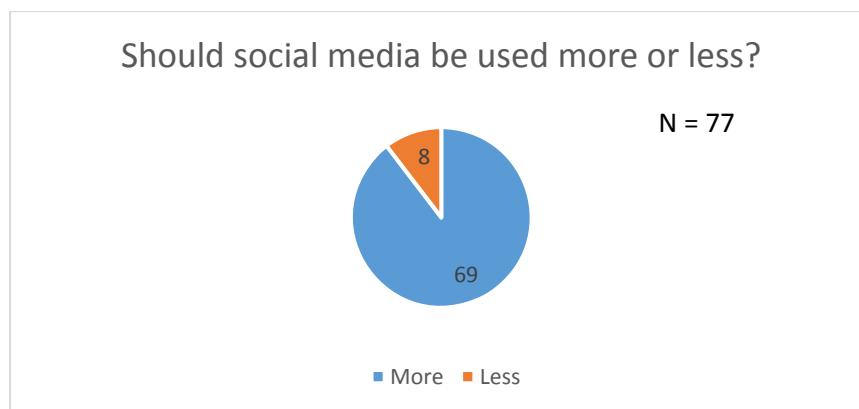The respondents, 90%, indicated that social media should be used more often.

Figure 9: Respondents were asked to indicate if social media should be used more or less.

Of the participants, 59 (76%) reported students were more informed about events through social media. Fourteen (18%) of the respondents indicated that students are maybe more informed. Five respondents (6%) indicated that students are not more informed.
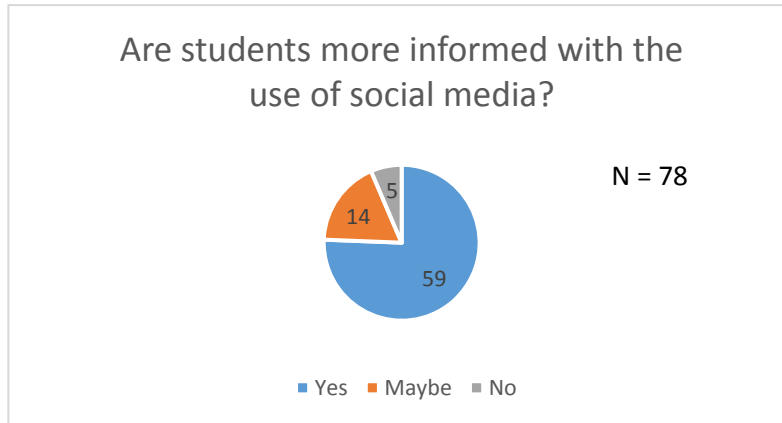
Figure 10: Students Informed with the Use of Social Media.

Participants indicated that the use of social media "Maybe" saves them money.

Responses were 49 (38%) maybe, 30 (38%) no, and 10 (13%) yes.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications, Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore how student organizations use social media to communicate with students. Based on the findings, student organizations are using various social media platforms to communicate with members of the organizations. Although Facebook was the most popular platform used, other social media platforms along with more traditional means of communication are being used. To date, no structured evaluations of the impact of use within the organizations has been conducted. Also, there are mixed responses regarding whether or not implementation of social media use has saved the organization money.

Implications

By understanding how college students communicate with each other, institutions can use this information to enhance communication strategies. If institutional leaders recognize that the most common social media platform used by student organizations is Facebook, then institutions may choose to use Facebook to communicate with students as well. Likewise, if the students continue to use email as a main communication strategy, then institutions may choose to use this media as well.

Student involvement offices may be able to use the results of this survey to engage more students on campus. The information can be used to target the messages they place on sites such as Facebook. Offices can share the findings of the survey with student organizations as well.

Recommendations

In the study conducted by Barnes and Mattson (2008), the authors wanted to know how the institution was using social media. The 2008 study replicated a study conducted in 2007. Their research findings indicated that usage of social media defined in the study as social networking, blogging, message/bulletin boards, podcasting, videoblogging, and wikis, increased during the year of the studies. Social networking was the most common form of media use. The respondents were asked how important they thought these technologies were to the institutions. In both years, more than half of the respondents said they are very important. For those who were not using social media, almost 30% indicated in 2008 that they planned to begin using social media. The results of the Barnes and Mattson (2008) studies are reflected in the responses of the student organization participants reported in the current study. Of the organization presidents who responded, 87% indicated that they used social media and 90% indicated that social media should be used more. A study, including both the student organizations and university administrators, should be conducted to explore if institutions recognize the importance of the use of social media as the student organization leaders reported in this study.

Rueben (2008) indicated that Facebook was a commonly used social media platform for universities, more than half used Facebook. In the current study, 99% of the student organizations indicated that they used Facebook. Rueben (2008) found that individuals in the marketing/communications/public relations offices were typically responsible for updating the social media sites for Facebook. Although student organization presidents were typically responsible for updating the sites for student

organizations, some organizations did indicate that they had a social media coordinator, a VP for marketing or communications, or public relations officer involved in the process. A specific position was responsible for updating the student organization sites.

Based on the low response rate of the student organization presidents, more research should be conducted on this topic. It may be useful to contact faculty advisors of the organizations to obtain additional information about the student organizations. Limited student organization size or level of involvement may have contributed to the low response rate. The study could be expanded to include other institutions to determine if social media use by student organizations is consistent across various institutions.

Also, the social media landscape is constantly changing. Past research shows that institutions are attempting to use social media in a targeted way. Student organizations are also using social media, but use may not be targeted. Further research could explore a more in-depth approach to how student organizations use social media.

Institutions want to make sure the students are engaged on campuses. One way to accomplish this is through student organizations. The organizations need to be using the best tools at their disposal to reach, not only currently enrolled students, but prospective students as well.

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On-line Informed Consent Form

Title: A Midwestern University's Use of Social Media: How Student Organizations Communicate with Students

Purpose: This is a research study designed to understand how student organizations are using social media to communicate with students and to increase their engagement on campus. If the organization is not using social media, what are the reasons for not using this resource? In order to participate you must be 19 years of age or older and be a leader of a UNL student organization.

Procedures: Participation in this study will require less than 5 minutes of your time. You will be asked to complete an on-line survey via Qualtrics.

Risks: There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Benefits: You will not benefit personally from participating in this research. However, your organization and others may benefit by learning how other organizations are communicating with students.

Confidentiality: Your responses to this survey will be submitted anonymously. Data will be reported as part of a thesis and possibly in scientific journals. De-identified data will be kept indefinitely. You will be provided with a copy of the results for your organization. If you would like to read the Qualtrics privacy statement, please visit http://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/.

Opportunity to Ask Questions: You may ask any questions concerning this research at any time by contacting one of the researchers listed below. If you would like to speak to someone else, please call the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

Freedom to Withdraw: Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy: You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. By clicking on the I Accept button below, your consent to

Does your organization use social media to communicate with students?

Yes

No

What are the reasons that the organization has chosen not to use social media?

Approximately how long has your organization been using social media?

1 year

2 years

3 years

4 years

5+ years

Who does your organization communicate with through social media? (check all that apply)

Current Members

Potential Members

Faculty

Alumni

University Administrators

Which social media does your organization use? (check all that apply)

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

LinkedIn

Google+

Pinterest

Snapchat

Tumblr

WhatsApp

Four Square

Vine

How often is the site updated?

Hourly

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

Rarely

Is the frequency of updates dependent on upcoming events?

Yes

No

What information is posted on the social media?

Do you also sent out notices via:

Email

U.S. Mail

Text Messages

Would you consider your organization's use of social media as:

Low

Medium

High

Have you ever tried to measure the effectiveness as perceived by members?

Yes

No

How was the effectiveness measured?

How was the effectiveness measured?

Do you think social media should be used more or less?

More

Less

Who is responsible for updating the social media site?

One Individual

Multiple Individuals

What position(s) does this (these) individuals hold in the organization?

How many friends, followers, etc. are on your page?

100 or less

101-250

251-500

501-750

750-1000

1000-2000

2000+

Has social media saved the organization money?

Yes

Maybe

No

Do you believe students are more informed about events since the organization started using social media?

Yes

Maybe

No

Official Approval Letter for IRB project #15978 - New Project Form

February 19, 2016 - official approval letter

Becky Freeman
Department of Educational Administration
WHIT 275, UNL, 68583-0863

Marilyn Grady
Department of Educational Administration
128 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20160215978EX
Project ID: 15978
Project Title: A Midwestern University's Use of Social Media: How Student Organizations Communicate with Students

Dear Becky:

This letter is to officially notify you of the certification of exemption of your project for the Protection of Human Subjects. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as exempt.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Exemption: 2/19/2016

o Review conducted using exempt category 2 at 45 CFR 46.101
o Funding: N/A

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:
* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 402-472-6965.

Sincerely,

Rachel Wenzl, CIP
for the IRB

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Office of Research and Economic Development
nugrant.unl.edu

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