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Life Beyond the Like: Uses & Gratifications of Sharing Business Facebook Page Content

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by

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One of the main reasons businesses create a Facebook Page is to solidify relationships with existing customers who are Facebook users and to leverage those relationships to gain new customers. Many studies have asked Facebook users to articulate the gratifications they receive when "liking" a business Facebook Page. These studies help explain what gratifications users gain by connecting to businesses via Facebook. To expand on these findings, the current pilot study applied the uses and gratifications theory to identify Facebook users' motivations to "share" business Facebook content within their own personal network. Understanding users' reasons for "sharing" will help businesses better engage and encourage "friends" to spread messages; this act of sharing pushes brand messages outside the business's immediate network where new potential brand "friends" and potential message sharers reside. The results of the pilot study suggested that users "share" business Facebook content in order to gratify the primary needs of diversion, information, and personal identity. The need for relationships, however, was such a strong driver it functioned within these gratifications rather than independently when "sharing" business Facebook content.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LISTS OF MULTIMEDIA OBJECTS

I. Introduction

In 2010, a study concluded that social network sites such as Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, and Twitter produce positive brand associations, and business brands affiliated with these popular social media platforms boost their own brand recognition (Borges 2010). Additionally, brands like Sharper Image see social media as a way to be heard through advertising clutter; for Sharper Image's 2013 Christmas season campaign, chief marketing officer Dari Marder said, "we want something that has the opportunity to go viral, to be shared" on social media (Elliott 2013).

In current times, there is not a question of why social media platforms should be a part of a business's marketing/advertising strategy, but how to use them more effectively. Many businesses benefit from being actively involved in the social media arenas where their target audiences are located. Facebook, for instance, provides a popular platform where consumers can become a part of a business's network by "liking" the business's Facebook Page. Once the "like" button is clicked, the business has a special opportunity to connect to its Facebook "fan" or "friend," and that connection hopefully leads to stronger brand loyalty, more brand purchases, and a brand champion who actively shares brand messages inside his or her own personal network. However, the major question is how do businesses engage their fans, seize the opportunity to connect, and stay relevant after the "like" button is clicked.

A. Statement of Problem

There are many reasons why businesses want to connect with consumers via Facebook, a social media platform that serves 1.39 billion monthly active users (Facebook.com Key Facts). A recent Pew Research Center report confirms that Facebook is still the most popular social media networking site with 58% of the entire adult population accessing it, but if focusing on the population of adult internet users, then the percentage increases to 71% likelihood of usage (Duggan, et al. 2015). In 2012, Facebook was the number one internet platform for acquiring new customers using business-to-consumer marketing, beating Twitter and LinkedIn (Volpe & Miller 2012). With numbers like these, it is no wonder that millions of local businesses have Facebook Pages and 42% of marketers claim that Facebook is critical to their business (Noyes 2015).

One of the main reasons businesses create a Facebook Page is to solidify relationships with existing customers that lead to continued brand loyalty and to leverage those relationships to gain new customers. Facebook provides a cost effective environment to communicate, add value, and provide brand awareness ("The Business of Social Media: How to Plunder the Treasure Trove" 2011).

Since Facebook launched Facebook Pages in November of 2007, 50 million business, brand, organization, non-profit, and public figure pages have been created (Smith 2013). Facebook states, "Pages are public profiles that … create a presence on Facebook and connect with the Facebook community. When someone likes a page, they will see updates from that page in news feed. When someone likes or comments on a

page post, that activity may be shared with their friends, increasing the page's exposure and reach" (Facebook.com Products).

Facebook users understand that businesses use social media to advertise and solicit their business, so it is no secret that businesses are trying to benefit financially from the Facebook relationship. Yet, 80% of United States social network users enjoy connecting to brands through Facebook (Eridon 2012). The average Facebook account holder "likes" about 40 Facebook Pages, meaning the competition between business Facebook Pages is steep, hence the prevalence of studies focused page "liking" (Smith 2013).

There are many ways users can interface with the brand through the Facebook Page. Once a user is a fan (fan status granted by "liking" the business Facebook Page), the fan can interact with the brand and other fans: posting user-generated content to the business's wall, suggesting others become fans, and reading, liking, commenting, or sharing other fans' posts or the business's posts. Having these different options to interact with the brand and through the brand is helpful in serving different fans' needs. "Sharing" branded content, however, may be the most visible therefore desired fan action from the business's standpoint. As many case studies point out, social media consumers like to make purchases based on recommendations/referrals from friends (Nyekwere, et al. 2013). When a user "shares" a post, the post is publicized to the user's Facebook wall; the act of commenting or liking a post is not. All actions (commenting, liking, and sharing) are recorded in Facebook's ever-updating newsfeed but a "share" has a more permanent existence.

Herein inlays the problem: it is difficult to get fans to "share" a post. Browse any business Facebook Page, access the business's Facebook Page wall to view its posts, and a post's "likes" usually out number its "shares." Research supports this observation. During the fourth quarter of 2013, the distribution of user engagement with brand posts was split between 82%, 10%, and 8% for content liking, commenting, and sharing, respectively (Statista, 2014). A 2012 poll concluded that for every nine views a business Facebook Page post receives, only one share is generated (Eridon 2012). Why do fans not share?

Or to approach this problem differently: Why *do* fans share? What benefits are consumers getting when they share? In the past, many studies have asked Facebook fans to articulate the gratifications obtained from initially becoming a part of branded Facebook Page (i.e "liking" a business Facebook Page). This pilot study took this approach one step further and applied the uses and gratifications theory to "sharing" business Facebook content. By understanding the most common gratifications obtained from sharing businesses' Facebook posts, it may be possible for businesses to more effectively create content that fans will share. This information will be of value to businesses, advertisers, and marketers who are trying to spread their Facebook content further than their immediate "fans." Understanding what triggers a fan to "share" business content with their personal network of Facebook friends is essential to tapping into Facebook's global reach and capacity to pass messages from person to person to person.

II. Literature Review

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The basic premise of the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory is that people use media to gratify psychological and social needs. A common question that connects most U&G theory is: what motivates a media consumer to choose a specific medium to satisfy a specific need? Searching for the answer moves the mass communications field forward to serve media consumers better and aid businesses that advertise through those media.

In 1973, Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch's research outlined five U&G assumptions that create a solid foundation for U&G theory; however, it should be noted these assumptions are continually being challenged or clarified: (1) the audience is active; (2) the consumer chooses media to satisfy needs; (3) media have competition with other sources of gratification; (4) consumers are aware and can testify about media use; and (5) audience orientations should be considered (Katz et al. 1973). Given the thesis topic at hand, these five assumptions were used when measuring users' gratifications to share branded content.

The number of gratification dimensions that researchers have used has been categorized from two to sixteen (Katz et al., 1973; Lin, 1996). However, there are four primary gratifications that have a deep history in U&G literature:

1. Diversion (escape/entertainment);

2. Relationships (with medium or people/society);

3. Personal Identity (reinforcement/exploration); and

4. Information (surveillance/knowledge) (Katz et al., 1973).

These four gratification dimensions were measured in the current thesis research. Categorizing these psychological drivers into four main categories streamlined organization and analysis, especially when the topic of business Facebook content sharing was being explored for the first time. It made sense to start with broad categories and consider narrower, more discerning categories for future research. As McGuire writes, "The vastness of our linguistic wealth in describing human motivation is intimidating…an unabridged English dictionary, found in the neighborhood of 18,000 words that described personality trait names" (1976).

McGuire's 16 gratification dimensions are compromised of eight cognitive motives and eight affective motives. For this research, the eight cognitive motives (Utilitarian, Consistency, Attribution, Categorization, Objectification, Autonomy, Stimulation, and Teleological) were represented through the broad category of information gratification. McGuire's eight affective (Tension-Reduction, Expressive, Ego-Defensive, Reinforcement, Assertion, Affiliation, Identification, and Modeling) motives were represented through Katz et al.'s remaining broad categories of personal identity, diversion, and relationships. It would appear that some of McGuire's 16 motives could be attributed to business Facebook content sharing; until more is understood, this research did not dig into these intricacies except when specific motives surfaced in the study results.

Given the social nature of social media, the current research subdivided its measurement of the relationships gratification. The research posed questions that separately evaluated motivations for relationships with others and motivations for relationships with the business/brand.

Passing It On

Sharing Facebook content of any kind, whether created by a business or a friend, has the potential to "go viral" if enough people also share it and it keeps getting passed around. In the communications field of study, this passing of content goes by many names: electronic word of mouth (eWOM), pass along, or it could even be considered a quasi-version of testimony sharing. As consumers usually create their own testimonials, this comparison does not exactly fit (sharing business Facebook posts does not require content creation). However, if considering a testimonial as a form of self-generated advertisement, it could be argued that sharing a business Facebook post is self-generated if not at least self-promulgated advertising. For simplicity, only eWOM and pass along were reviewed.

eWOM extends from traditional WOM advertising but evolves the one-to-one communication about a product or company into a one-to-many communication. Most eWOM literature focuses on the consumer's own feedback/experience; however, to better relate to the topic at hand only eWOM literature that examined messages that marketers create for consumers to pass along was examined.

One study found that product knowledge and relationship gratifications were significant predictors of eWOM behaviors for both informational eWOM and entertaining eWOM sharing (Soyoen 2010). When it came to consumers' email pass along behavior, the individuals' need to belong was positively associated with the individuals' pass along intentions. The consumer's attitude toward eWOM was also positively associated with this pass along behavior (Gangadharbatla & Lisa 2007).

It is unrealistic for a business to expect every Facebook post to go viral. Viral messages can be seen as eWOMs on steroids, deriving value from number of shares, with originators of each branch of the virus having a vested interest in promulgation (Grimwood & Ozanne 2015). However, something can be learned from this special breed of eWOM.

Jonah Berger, much like the questions posed in this thesis work, was interested in understanding why people choose to talk about some things and not others (2010). In his book "Contagious," Berger outlined six common attributes or principles that viral messages all seem to share: Social Currency, Triggers, Emotion, Public, Practical Value, and Stories (the mnemonic abbreviation is STEPPS). These STEPPS provide similar justifications to content sharing as the U&G theory.

The social currency principle can be compared to the gratification of relationships as viral content is used as a means to achieve positive social impressions. Triggers, on the other hand, do not fit nicely into the U&G psychological gratification categories but rather describe the goal of the message: to be a trigger. A successful viral message is one that is easily recalled, or is a trigger, through everyday living.

Emotion draws strong parallels to the gratification of personal identity. For instance, if a consumer shares a Facebook post because it stirred his/her heart with love or hatred, his/her psychological use for sharing would likely be for others to know his/her personal feelings. Berger's public principle has ties to the gratifications of personal identity and relationships. When messages or ideas become public, the social proof of existence make it more appealing to imitate. In other words, if people can observe it, they

are more likely to do it because it appears to be socially acceptable. Whether that fulfills someone's need to express personal identity or socialize is up to the individual person.

The fifth principle, practical value, most closely aligns with the information gratification. However, passing along helpful information can also serve a person's social and identity needs. Lastly, the principle of stories serves the need for diversion. With these STEPPS in mind, it would appear that any one of the four U&Gs could inspire Facebook fans to share business content at the viral level.

Facebook Engagement Statistics

Studying Facebook is a worthwhile endeavor. This is indicated by the amount of research and statistics already gathered about it and that will continue to be gathered. The reason why so many people are interested in Facebook is because it the most popular social networking site the world has ever seen. With so many people gathered online, in one place, there are bound to be studies that measure how Facebook users engage in the site. Most interesting to businesses is how users engage with branded Facebook pages. If businesses are going to pour time and money into a business profile on Facebook, they want the investment to be worth it and they want the most premium engagement. However, in this researcher's perspective, the most premium type of engagement, content sharing, has not received the research attention it deservers. When listing "24 Facebook Statistics Every Marketer Should Know," number three on the list was that 4.5 billion "likes" occur everyday (Shahari 2014). That is an impressive amount of "likes," but as mentioned previously, a "like" is not as powerful as a "share." This gap in the research literature is most apparent when discussing branded Facebook Page engagement. There

are some very useful statistics that prove Facebook fans engage most often with business posts when published 1-2 times a day, 1-4 times per week, and when 80 characters or less in length are used (Shahari 2014). However, in this research, "engagement" was defined and measured through amount of post "likes" and comments. Given the pass along potential with the act of "sharing," it is time for business Facebook content sharing to garner some attention.

Facebook was chosen as the social media platform for examination because it is, "the social network preferred by most businesses when planning and implementing their social media marketing strategy… Facebook provides a marketing ecosystem that is multi-media rich and broad" (Bullas 2012). Being over ten years old, Facebook is an established social media platform with a remarkable track record for remaining relevant (Facebook.com Key Facts). Many other social media platforms are currently growing with more speed than Facebook, but no one has topped the giant. With 20% of all page views in the United States occurring on Facebook, this social media platform provides a prime market for advertising businesses to connect with potential customers (Noyes 2015).

A student sample was chosen as the population under examination for this study for a number of reasons. According to a 2014 Pew Research Center telephone survey on social media use among internet users, Facebook usage was more common than all other social media web sites (Instagram, Twitter, Linkedin, and Pintrest) among college-aged users 18 to 29 years old. Though businesses most commonly target the 25 to 34 year old age demographic and the largest percent of Facebook account holders fall into the 35 to 54 age demographic, the age group that reported actually using Facebook most often was

the college age demographic (Shahari 2014) . This means that in 2014, 87% of all 18 to

29 year olds used Facebook (Duggan et al. 2015). Lastly, it has been stated that "viral

marketing is much more widespread amongst digital native Millennials than it is amongst

Baby-Boomers" (Nelson 2014). For this reason, surveying university students is useful to

the research community, as the results uncover the most active user group's opinions

about business content sharing on Facebook and shed light on motivations most likely to

inspire pass along.

U&G Theory Applied to "Liking" a Business Facebook Page

For as simply as U&G theory can be explained, its application to understanding

Facebook business pages is varied and unorganized. The major criticism from this

researcher's perspective is that the gratification dimensions are inconsistent between

studies. Ruggiero (2000) stated, "some studies are too compartmentalized, producing

separate typologies of motives." However, there does seem to be a prevailing pattern of

users "liking" business Facebook Pages to satisfy the need for information.

In 2009, a study found that of Facebook users who accessed branded Facebook

Pages, nearly 50% joined with the motive to discover sales, new product releases, or

customer feedback (Ramsaran-Fowdar & Fowdar 2013). A 2010 study also supported

those findings, stating, "49% of customers join to find out about special offers or

promotions, while 45% would like more product information" (Ramsaran-Fowdar &

Fowdar 2013). These studies do not categorize the Facebook users' gratifications into the

typical U&G dimensions, but it can be inferred that wanting knowledge about sales,

products, or reviews can all be lumped under the information gratification. Some may

argue utilitarianism would be a better way to describe this gratification because of the overt and specific desire to find sales (not just any piece of information), but for this research the general category of information gratification includes utilitarian goals. Yumni (2013) specifically concluded that "liking" a company Facebook Page was most commonly associated with the desire to obtain information.

Though multiple studies conclude that information is the dominant use for "liking" a business Facebook Page, there have been other studies that contradict this. One study found entertainment (or as this study would define it, diversion), information and supporting the brand to be key but entertainment had by far the highest impact (Kleine-Kalmer and Burmann 2013). A different study found "in order of importance, the most influential motives for user communication on business-related Facebook Pages were social, entertainment, and informational" (Hong 2011). Hong defined "communication" as use of business Facebook pages and described usage in terms of liking or commenting on posts. Lastly and most recently, a 2014 study found the prevailing motivation for joining and participating in a branded Facebook Page is the construction of one's digital identity (Song 2014).

All of this research proves that users "like" business Facebook Pages for various gratifications, but the prevalent finding is that users join for information-seeking motivations. It will be interesting to see how the motivation for information is represented when users discuss their motivations to share business Facebook posts.

U&G Theory Applied to "Sharing" Business Facebook Page Content

Limited research exists regarding "sharing" business Facebook content. One study claimed fans "share Facebook content primarily if this content gratifies their need for entertainment" (Hong 2011). Hong's study, though focused primarily on overall usage of business Facebook pages, included a handful of questions that addressed sharing content. One survey question asked participants to rank five categories that influenced their choice to share. In order of most preferred gratification, survey respondents ranked entertainment, information, social interaction, multimedia, and promotions.

In a different study, due to a fan's desire to present his/her best possible self, the investigator said "many informants expressed hesitance and wariness in deciding what kind of information they shared in public, including the various actions that comprise community participation like commenting on or sharing a post" (Song 2014). It is interesting to note that Song's study was the same one that credited "online persona" as the main gratification for "liking" a page, yet that same gratification stops a person from sharing content.

Lacking empirical evidence, a different author presented an analytical framework and argued that individuals deal with user-generated media like Facebook in three ways: by consuming, by participating, and by producing (Shao 2009). Each use is driven by a different motivation: consuming fulfills information and entertainment gratifications, participating satisfies social gratifications, and producing is used for self-expression. For this research topic, sharing a business Facebook post would fall under participating. Therefore, using Shao's framework, the most common gratification for sharing business Facebook content would likely be the gratification of relationships.

One last piece of literature that should be mentioned is an article by Park et al. (2009) titled, "Being Immersed in Social Networking Environment: Facebook groups, uses and gratifications, and social outcomes." Though this article's focus examined the relationship between Facebook group users' gratifications and their political participation offline, its approach and methodology is most closely aligned to this thesis project, as it examined Katz et al.'s four main gratifications, considered demographics, and applied factor analysis and correlational analysis to explore user action after joining a Facebook group.

III. Study

A. Research Question

Many studies have researched the reasons Facebook users "like" a business Facebook Page. To expand on these findings, the current thesis project identified survey participants' motivations to "share" business Facebook posts. Audience orientations were be considered, as each gratification was likely to vary depending on demographic characteristics. The following research question was asked:

> *RQ1: What gratifications are satisfied by "sharing" a business Facebook Page post?*

B. Method

A survey was distributed among students ages 19-24 at a Midwestern university. Participants were sent an email with a link to an online survey designed in Qualtrics (Appendix A). Any surveys submitted in less than one minute were removed from the final sample because adequate time was not spent reading the survey questions or

submitting answers. The final sample resulted in 65 students completing the survey from
April 19 to June 4, 2015.

Survey measures included demographics, frequency of Facebook use,
participation in "liking" business Facebook Pages, gratifications satisfied by sharing
business Facebook Page content, and reasons not to "share" posts created by businesses.
The entire survey can be viewed in Appendix B.

Participants were given a list of statements regarding business Facebook Page
content sharing. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement using a 5-point
Likert Scale (1, agree; 5, disagree) with statements that tested Katz et al.'s (1973) four
gratification dimensions. The gratification dimension of "relationships" was divided into
two separate dimensions: "relationship with business/brand" and "relationship with
people." The survey had three different statements to represent each gratification
dimension. To prevent biased rankings, the gratification statements were ordered
randomly. The survey statements were adapted from the surveys administered by Park et
al. (2009) and Song (2014).

C. Analytical Strategy and Results

To investigate the research question, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was
conducted using promax rotation with Kaiser normalization and maximum likelihood
extraction. The results showed four factors that explained 58.74% of the total variance.
Table 1 displays the factor loadings of each item.

Factor 1 comprises six items that tap into the **personal identity gratification**
satisfied by sharing a business Facebook Page post ($\alpha = .84$). These items were averaged
to create an index ($M = 2.94$, $SD = .75$). The second factor captures **information-seeking**

gratifications with four items ($\alpha = .75$). These items were averaged to create an index ($M = 3.38$, $SD= .70$). The third factor shows the **diversion gratification** ($r = .73$). These two items were averaged to create an index ($M = 3.50$, $SD= .93$). The last factor was more complicated. This factor includes three items, two of which display significant cross loadings. The only item that shows significant loading on this factor shows a **utilitarian gratification** ($M = 3.20$, $SD= 1.07$).

Table 1. Results from an Exploratory Factor Analysis

Results from an exploratory factor analysis show four factors of gratifications satisfied by sharing a business Facebook Page post

I share a business Facebook post…	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
F1: *Personal identity*				
1. in order to get peer support from others	.884			
2. when it will make me look cool	.778			
3. because I want others to know I support that business	.677			
4. because it is in line with the identity I portray online	.635			
5. when I think my Facebook friends will like it	.545			
6. because the posting provides me a good distraction	.517			
F2: *Information-seeking*				
1. because I want to spread the word about new information.		.892		
2. in order to support the business		.712		
3. when I learn useful information about product/services		.641		
4. in order to connect with like-minded people		.585		
F3: *Diversion*				
1. when it provides me humor.			.818	
2. because the post provided me entertainment			.892	
F4: *Utilitarian*				
1. to feel like I belong to the business's community.*	.587*	.667*		.797*
2. in order to strengthen my relationship with the business.*	.686*	.637*		.690*
3. to gain access to special promotions/deals/discounts.				.512

Note: Entries are coefficients from the structure matrix that holds the correlations between the variables and the factors.

* designates that F4 Item 1 and 2 are excluded from the factor

Items are color coded to represent the following original gratifications:

Blue=Personal Identity;

Pink=Relationship with people;

Green=Diversion;

Red=Relationship with business;

Purple=Information-Seeking

How each factor correlates with demographic information was also investigated. Participants were 63% female and the majority grew up in the Midwest/central region of the United States. Table 2 reports the results of a series of Pearson product-moment

correlational analyses. Only one statistically significant result emerged: females were likely to share a Facebook Business Page post for diversion ($r = .27$, $p < .05$). Year in school or regions where respondents grew up[1] were not related to their gratifications for sharing business Facebook content.

Table 2. Correlations Between Demographics and U&G Factors of Sharing a Facebook Business Page

How uses and gratifications satisfied by sharing a business Facebook Page post correlate with demographic information.

Demographics	Uses and Gratifications of Sharing a Business Facebook Page Post			
	F1: Personal identity	*F2: Information-seeking*	*F3: Diversion*	*F4: Utilitarian*
Sex (Female)	.20	.20	.27*	.02
Year in school	-.11	-.20	-.04	-.135
Region				
Northwest	-.00	-.10	-.05	.24
Midwest	.07	.18	.09	-.14
Northeast	-.05	-.04	.11	.06
Southeast	.01	-.07	-.07	-.02

Note. * $p < .05$.

It should also be noted that 88% of survey participants use Facebook on a daily basis and 84% have "liked" or "fanned" a business Facebook page, but 34% indicated to have never "shared" content created by a business (Figure 1). Of those 22 participants who have never shared a business Facebook post, none of them cited user/media complications as their reasoning for not sharing: "I do not know how to share," "It takes too long to share," or "I do not see content that businesses post."

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[1] Southwest was not included here because no respondents in this sample grew up in that area.

Figure 1. Facebook Usage
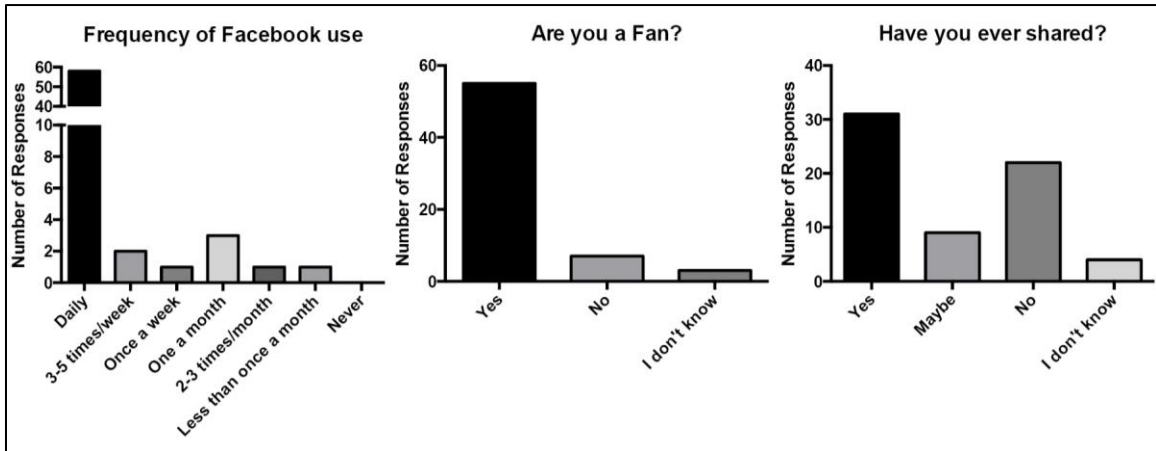
Lastly, to help validate the EFA findings, three survey questions asked participants to rank the four primary U&G motivations for sharing business Facebook content, against each other (Figure 1). The primary difference between these two survey instruments was that the EFA measured participants' feelings toward gratification indicators and these questions measured participants' feelings towards the gratifications themselves.

Figure 2: Order of Importance – Ranking Gratifications
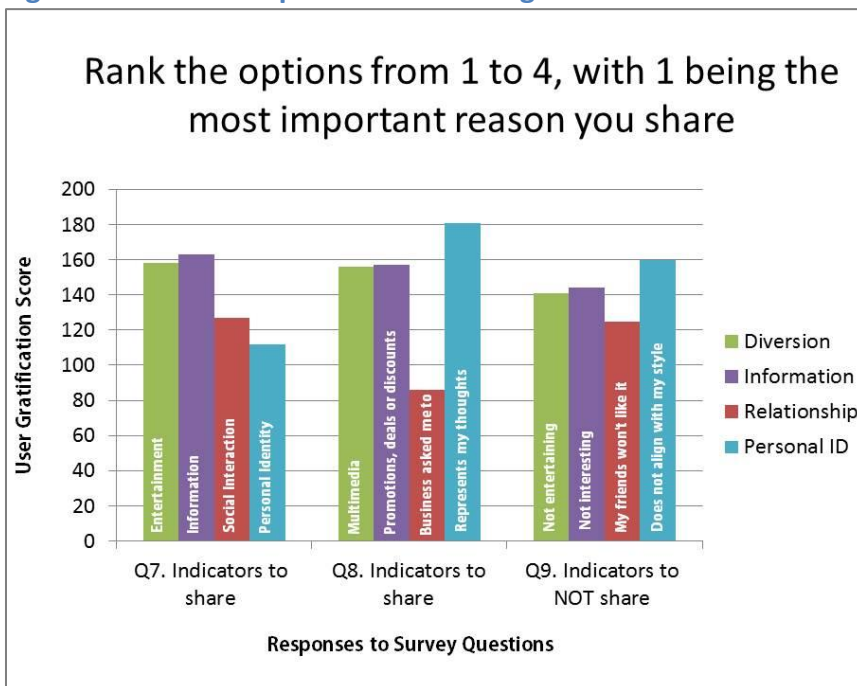
D. Discussion

Many studies have asked Facebook users to articulate the gratifications they receive when "liking" a business Facebook Page. To expand on these findings, the current project applied the uses and gratifications theory to identify gratifications satisfied by "sharing" a business Facebook Page post. The results suggest that users "share" business Facebook content to gratify the primary needs, in order of preference, of diversion, information-seeking, and personal identity. The need for relationships was such a strong gratification driver it appears to function as a companion component to the gratifications.

In the Literature Review section, a major criticism was noted: gratification dimensions were inconsistent between studies. This observation seems to be more acceptable upon first glance at Table 1. Though efforts were made to separately evaluate gratifications in five separate categories, the EFA results group the gratification indicators into four factors.

The factor titles were assigned in a manner to label each factor by a dominate theme, distinguish it from the other factors, and evaluate the original gratifications this research set out to do. This was accomplished by using three of the original gratifications, shifting the understanding of relationship gratification, and adding in a utilization gratification to distinguish it from the information-seeking gratification.

Relationships

The first observation that needs to be discussed from Table 1 is that the gratification of "relationships" is spread throughout all factors except "diversion."

Originally, in order to measure the relationship gratification closely, six questions were dedicated to relationship motivations, three evaluating interpersonal relationships and three evaluating business relationships. Interestingly enough, these six indicators did not cluster to predict one unified "relationship" motivation but instead spread across the other motivations, playing an intrinsic part in overall sharing behavior.   Factor 1 Personal Identity claims two "interpersonal relationship" measures, Factor 4 Utilitarian clusters with two "business relationship" measures, and Factor 2 Information-Seeking has one of each, interpersonal and business. Because of its expansive reach, none of the factors can solely claim "relationship." This observation is incongruent with prior research which categorizes the relationship gratification as its own factor in U&G theory (Katz et al. 1973).

Lee et al. (2011) said, "The studies commonly revealed that the relationship maintenance or socializing motives accounted for the most variance of Facebook uses among other motives. These findings make sense in that social networking sites are, at its inception, designed to foster social interaction in a virtual environment." Lee et al. scratched the surface of this manifestation. The current research provides preliminary evidence that the relationship motivation in U&G theory cannot be examined independently when analyzing Facebook business content sharing behavior. Social media, at its core, provides a communal environment, and "sharing" on social media, at its core, is an action motivated by relationships.

Shao's (2009) framework supports this view as well. Shao argued that participating in social media platforms satisfied social gratifications, while acts of consuming or producing in social media platforms satisfied different gratifications.

"Sharing" business content is an act of participation; therefore, Shao would agree that sharing satisfies the gratification of relationship.

It makes sense to consider "relationship" an overall, assumed driver attributed to sharing business content. This holistic approach to understanding the relationship gratification is further verified when viewing the significant cross loadings demonstrated in participants' responses to, "I share a business Facebook post to feel like I belong to the business's community" and "I share a business Facebook post in order to strengthen my relationship with the business." These two statements, though falling into Factor 4, have the same predictive power to Factors 1 and 2.

Personal Identity

Berger's (2010) STEPPS principles include "P" for public. The public principle assumes that the primary fact of being public makes an idea more appealing. A very fine line separates the motivation of "everyone is doing it" (relationship) and "I want everyone to know I am doing it" (personal identity). Berger's public principle supports the relationship/personal identify mix found in **Factor 1 Personal Identity**. All 3 measures for personal identity fall into this factor, for so it was named. But, it cannot be ignored that the highest indicator of .884 was originally designed to measure relationship gratifications. This strong relationship indicator (in order to get peer support from others) in addition to another relationship indicator (when I think my Facebook friends will like it) within Factor 1 Personal Identity supports the proposed new concept: relationship gratifications will always be at the root of sharing behavior.

In the EFA, Factor 1 Personal Identity is comprised of the most items, which to its discredit, helps account for the fact that it is the factor with the lowest mean, 2.94. Backing up this low ranking, the literature review cited very few studies that gave Personal Identity high rankings. Song (2014) was the only one who credited "persona" as the main gratification for "liking" a Facebook page and the main reason to not share content. Song did not comment about users' reasons *to* share.

There is some evidence, however, in the current research that supports Song rather than the EFA findings. The patterns in Figure 2 are identical between Q8 and Q9, which rank "personal identity" first. Figure 2 shows that the sample ranked "personal identity" as the number one reason to *not share* (Q9). This supports Song's findings. What is interesting, however, is that when participants were asked which gratification *inspired sharing*, in two different questions, Q8 ranked it first but Q7 resulted in personal identity ranking last, which supports the EFA results. What looks like an outlier ranking in Q7 is actually on par for the EFA results.

There is likely an explanation for these polar sentiments about personal identity. The findings in Figure 2 most likely indicate that students do not relate to the term "personal identity," explaining the number four ranking in Q7. For the number one ranking it received in Q8, however, the term "thoughts/attitudes" was used. In the survey, there was one open-ended question that was asked, "What additional thoughts or opinions do you have about sharing or not sharing business Facebook posts?" Two answers referenced personal identity gratification indicators but did not use the term "personal identity":

1. "It has to be something <u>I feel really passionate</u> about for me to share it with Facebook friends."

2. "My Facebook page is a profile for me to use and <u>express myself</u>."

With the disparities evident between the EFA and Figure 2 findings, more research needs to be conducted when it comes to the gratification of personal identity. Personal identity is a complex gratification with many considerations that influence how it gets satisfied. Other researchers have observed this and respect the gratification's constant negotiation between public and private presentation (Papacharissi 2011) and strategic manipulation to manage impressions (Goffman 1959). Michael Eldred is credited with forwarding the notion that, "individual identity does not innately come from the person's internal self, rather it is built through a process of external identification with the world around the person" (Song 2014).

Information-Seeking

Prior research suggested that users "like" business Facebook Pages for the predominant gratification of information (Ramsaran-Fowdar & Fowdar 2013; Yumni 2013). With the research at hand, however, **Factor 2 Information-Seeking Gratification** ranked second, with a mean of 3.38, for explaining business Facebook content "sharing" behavior. Diversion was found to be the most popular gratification Factor because its averaged items create the highest mean, 3.50. At face value, this suggests that businesses should keep updating their Facebook pages with information to attract fans and keep them engaged (Yumni 2013), but if they want posts to circulate

outside the fan network, their best bet is to also create content that is entertaining or humorous (Hong 2011).

What makes Factor 2 so special is its multifaceted social items: support the business (a survey indicator created to measure business relationship gratifications) and connect with like-minded people (a survey indicator created to measure human relationship gratifications). One way to explain this phenomenon is to assume people who share based on Factor 2 Information-Seeking Gratifications become inspired through their surveillance. Compelling information makes users want to support the business by content sharing; compelling information also makes them want to connect with others who will appreciate the quality information, so they share. Impressive information is the common catalyst. This inference is not a big stretch if viewing this type of information gathering and sharing as a way to connect through interest. This not only supports the preliminary findings that "relationship" gratifications are interwoven into business content sharing behavior on Facebook but also echoes Soyoen's (2010) findings that product knowledge and relationship gratifications were significant predictors of eWOM behaviors for informational eWOM (2010).

Diversion

Though little research has been done on "sharing" business Facebook content, the one study that explored it most cited entertainment as the primary gratification for sharing Facebook content (Hong 2011). Hong's research is validated with the current findings of this study. With high indicator loadings and the highest mean, the gratification of diversion appears to be the most reliable motivator for sharing business

Facebook content. With this knowledge, it may be possible for businesses to more effectively create content that fans will share. **Factor 3 Diversion** is characterized by "entertainment" and "humor" not "distraction." One open-ended survey response stated, "Sharing on Facebook has become more of a *humorous entertainment*. The only posts I really pay attention to that are shared are the ones that are videos, or 'buzzfeed' like posts." Hong would agree as his research noted, "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."

If sharing a business Facebook post provides a good distraction, then Factor 1 Personal Identity comes into play. Though historically connected to diversion (Katz et al 1973; Papacharissi & Mendelson 2010), this could mean that distracting content or finding distraction in sharing, connects personally to a user's sense of self. By relating to this type of content on a personal level, the user shares it to express identity.

To draw one last parallel to Hong's (2011) observations, he said, "in order of importance, the most influential motives for user communication on business-related Facebook Pages were social, entertainment, and informational." This trio of motives is the foundation in the current research findings as well: A basic understanding that relationships drive sharing behavior with entertainment and information as the most prominent gratifications obtained.

Utilitarian

The last factor, **Factor 4 Utilitarian**, is named after its strongest indicator which was a survey question originally developed to test the information gratification. However, the indicator's specific motive of utility sets it apart from the other information indicators that surfaced in Factor 2. Though broad examination of the information gratification was conducted to mirror Katz et al.'s categories, Factor 4 separated itself from Factor 2 as it's own gratification and supports McGuire's 1976 study which included a Utilitarian motive.

Factor 4 will not be analyzed. Given its weak and solitary coefficient (.512), "gaining access to special deals/discounts" is too unique to cluster with the other Factor 4 indicators. The two other indicators that do fall under Factor 4 have equivalent connections to Factors 1 and 2; so in reality, their strong cross loadings prove they are not indicators at all. Instead, "to feel like I belong to the business's community" and "in order to strengthen my relationship with the business" cross loadings support the theory that business content sharing is driven by the underlying motive for relationships.

E. Limitations

There were specific reasons why this project focused on surveying students. In particular, surveying students provided consistency among other similar thesis projects, the population was somewhat accessible, and the college age demographic reported using Facebook most often (Shahari 2014). However, surveying students provided a very narrow demographic, therefore, the findings of this pilot study cannot be generalized to all Facebook users.   Future research could examine populations who are older, younger,

or less educated, as they may prove to have different motivations than the university sample. Additionally, the demographics of Facebook are in constant flux, so to really understand why business content is being shared, future studies need to examine the behaviors of the 35 to 54 age demographic, currently the largest percent of Facebook account holders (Shahari 2014).

This particular project garnered a small sample size. If a larger sample would have been collected, the data analysis could have been more discerning and the EFA could have focused on a data subset that only included responses from those with a history of sharing business Facebook page posts. Instead, the EFA in this pilot study included data from all 65 study participants (those with and without experience in sharing business Facebook content). Looking into the motivations for sharing business Facebook posts amongst those who have not done it before limits this pilot study; however, there is still value in this particular study. Including all survey participants' motivations to share offers insight into why Facebook users might share in the future. It also eliminates rejecting responses from people who share business Facebook content but don't realize it.

F. Next Steps

Future research should continue to validate the Factor groupings by further testing the indicator statements. In addition, though likely a more time-intensive data collection process, the survey could be administered to participants right after a real-life "share" occurs, or example posts could be created to test sharing motivations. This type of actual or simulated method could provide key insights into sharing behavior.

Finally, other social media types could be researched. Facebook may be the largest social media site, but it is not the fastest growing (Duggan et al. 2015). Applying

this framework to social media like Pinterest, LinkedIn, Twitter, or YouTube will add to the U&G body of literature and keep current sharing habits in sight for businesses wanting to make sure their content is hitting the gratifications that trigger sharing.

IV. Conclusion

As a pilot research project exploring uses and gratifications that drive business content "sharing" behavior on Facebook, this study was a success. Three main motivational factors were identified: diversion, information-seeking, and personal identification. One motivation, relationships, though historically tested as its own gratification, presented itself across multiple factors. With this initial observation, it appears that the motivation of relationship may function as an overall, assumed driver attributed to sharing business content. This holistic view of relationship motivations needs to be explored, but from this initial study it demonstrated to be interrelated rather than independent from the gratifications satisfied by "sharing" a business Facebook Page post.

By understanding the most common gratifications obtained from sharing businesses' Facebook posts (diversion being the most reliable motivation), it may be possible for businesses to more effectively create content that fans will share with their Facebook friends. Though much insight was gained through this study, the gratification indicators and motivational factors need more testing. Different audience orientations will likely affect how the indicators load into the factors. This particular sample consisted of one age group with similar background history; therefore the conclusions made throughout the discussion describe theories and ideas that may only pertain to the 65 people surveyed. In order to gain more generalizable data and analysis, further research

needs to be conducted. Understanding what triggers a fan to "share" business content is essential to tapping into Facebook's global reach and capacity to pass messages from person to person. Now, the next step is to identify a new target audience and continue to study life beyond the "like."

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Participant Recruitment Letter

IRB# 20150415258EX
Date Approved: 04/09/2015
Valid Until: 04/09/2016

Attachment A
Recruitment Email/Announcement

Dear Student,

This is Sara Nash, a graduate student from the College of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I am conducting a research project on why individuals "share" Facebook content created by businesses. If you are 19 or older, I would appreciate your participation. Simply click on the URL below and you will be directed to the survey. This link will be active until the end of the day on **May 1**.

(link goes here).

This study can be completed online at a time and location of your convenience. Your participation in the survey should take no longer than 10 minutes of your time. Please read the attached Informational Consent Form. It further explains the project and during the survey you will be asked to submit your consent to participate. All of the information you provide will be kept completely confidential. You can stop filling out the survey at any time, if you want.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me at Nash.saramarie@gmail.com.

Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,
Sara Nash

Appendix B: Survey

Q qualtrics

Consent Form
IRB Approval #20150415258EX
Thank you for your interest in this research project conducted by a graduate student at UNL's College of Journalism and Mass Communications. You must be 19 or older to participate in this study. To be a qualified participant, you must be a Facebook account holder and have experience with business Facebook pages. Here is more information about this study.

1. By clicking the 'I agree' button, you certify that you are 19 or older and have given your consent to participate, having read and understood the informational consent form presented.

Purpose:
This research project aims to investigate the social and psychological benefits individuals gain from interacting with content created and posted by businesses.

Procedures:
This questionnaire can be completed online on any computer with an internet connection at a time and location of your convenience. Time to complete the survey is approximately 10 minutes.

Benefits:
There are no direct benefits to you as a research participant.

Risks and/or Discomforts:
There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. However, you have the right to skip any questions or stop at any time.

Confidentiality:
Any information which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. Every possible measure will be taken to protect your privacy, including storing your responses on a secure server. The information obtained in this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as aggregated data.

Compensation:
You will not receive anything for participating.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:
You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. You may contact the investigator at the email provided below. You are also free to contact the Institutional Review Board of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln at (402) 472-6965 to voice concerns about this research or if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant.

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. Clicking the 'I agree' button on the survey certifies that you are 19 or older, given your consent to participate, read and understood the information presented, and have saved a copy of this informed consent form.

Name and Email of Investigators:
Sara Nash, Principal Investigator | nash.saramarie@gmail.com
Dr. Bryan Wang, Co-Investigator | mwang10@unl.edu

○ I agree.

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"Sharing" a Business Facebook Post

Definition: A Business Facebook Post is content originally created and posted by a business. The content is posted on the business's Facebook Page (wall), and those who are friends of the business will get notified about the post in their own newsfeed. Usually the business is trying to post content that others will "like", "share" or "comment" on.

When a post is "shared," the content is then posted to the individual's wall or the wall of a selected friend. The act of "sharing" is also recorded on newsfeed.

For the questions that follow, feel free to reference your own Facebook account. Open a separate web browser to access your Facebook account (do not close this survey page).

1. How frequently do you use Facebook?

○ Daily

○ A few times a week (3-5 times/week)

○ Once a Week

○ A few times a month (2-3 times/month)

○ Once a Month

○ Less than Once a Month

○ Never

2. Are you a fan/friend of any businesses/companies on Facebook?
(i.e. you have "Liked" or "Friended" a business's Facebook page)

○ Yes

○ No

○ I don't know

3.
Have you ever "shared" a post that originated from a business?
(i.e. you saw content posted by a company and clicked the "share" button so that the content got posted to your own wall or someone else's wall)

○ Yes

○ Maybe

○ No

○ I don't know

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4. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

I "share" a business Facebook post...

...when I think my Facebook friends will like it.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

...to gain access to special promotions/deals/discounts.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

...in order to support the business.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

...because the posting provides me a good distraction.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

...when it will make me look cool.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

5. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

I "share" a business Facebook post...

. ...to feel like I belong to the business's community.

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

. ...when it provides me humor.

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

. ...because it is in line with the identity I portray online.

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

. ...in order to get peer support from others.

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

. ...when I learn useful information about product/services.

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

6. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

I "share" a business Facebook post...

. ...because I want others to know that I support that business.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

. ...because the post provided me entertainment.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

. ...in order to connect with like-minded people.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

. ...because I want to spread the word about new information.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

. ...in order to strengthen my relationship with the business.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

7.

Please rank the following options from 1 to 4, with 1 being the most important reason you share a business Facebook post. Drag and drop each answer to place it in the order that reflects your preference.

Entertainment

Information

Social Interaction/Discussion

Personal Identity

8.

Please rank the following options from 1 to 4, with 1 being the most important reason you share a business Facebook post. Drag and drop each answer to place it in the order that reflects your preference.

Multimedia (games, video, or photos)

Promotions, deals, or discounts

The business asked me to re-post it

Represents my thoughts/attitudes

9.

Please rank the following options from 1 to 4, with 1 being the most important reason you don't share a business Facebook post. Drag and drop each answer to place it in the order that reflects your preference.

Business posts are not entertaining

Business posts are not interesting

My Facebook friends won't appreciate it

It does not align with my personality/style/identity

10.

What are some reasons you don't share a business Facebook post?
(Please check all that apply.)

☐ I don't get any emotional rewards for doing it

☐ I don't get any monetary rewards for doing it

☐ I have better things to do

☐ I don't know how to "share" a post

☐ It takes too long to "share"

☐ I don't see content that businesses post

☐ Posts by businesses annoy me

☐ I never "share" posts

☐ I have a negative attitude about "sharing" others' posts

☐ Businesses don't need my help to advertise

☐ I don't want to spread sales pitches

☐ I don't know

☐ Other (please specify)

11.
What additional thoughts or opinions do you have about "sharing" or "not sharing" business Facebook posts?

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12. What year in school are you?

○ Freshman
○ Sophomore
○ Junior
○ Senior
○ Graduate student

13. What is your sex?

○ Male
○ Female

14.
What part of the country did you grow up in?

○ Northwest
○ Southwest
○ Midwest/Central U.S.
○ Northeast
○ Southeast
○ Other

End. This is the end of the survey. Once you click the "next" button, all of your answers will be submitted and you will NOT be able to revise your answers. If you believe you have successfully completed this survey, please hit the "next" button.

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0% [====] 100%

Q qualtrics

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.

0% [====] 100%