

WHOM DO YOU FOLLOW?:
EXAMINING SOCIAL DISTANCE IN FACEBOOK FRIENDSHIP AND ITS INFLUENCE
ON BRAND MESSAGE ADOPTION

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ABSTRACT

Hyosun Kim: Whom do you follow?: Examining Social Distance in Facebook Friendship and its Influence on Brand Message Adoption
(Under the direction of Francesca Dillman Carpentier)

With the growing popularity of Facebook among consumers, companies are excited about the promising business potential of the medium as a communication channel, but they are also lukewarm about adopting it in their marketing strategies due to a lack of clear understanding of the communication dynamics that occur on Facebook. Drawing on the recent study by Lipsman et al. (2012), the present study expanded the idea of targeting friends of fans on Facebook by adapting the concept of social distance and applying social identity theory. A 2 (social distance) X 2 (self-brand connection) X 2 (type of branded content) between-subject experiment was designed to understand the different influence of closeness of Facebook friends, the degree to which people feel connections to brands, and the type of branded content as these affect source perceptions, attitudes toward brands, and Facebook engagement. The stimuli consisted of brand fan pages or status updates hypothetically sent by a close friend or acquaintance on Facebook, the featured brand representing a brand with which the receiver liked but either felt or did not feel a close connection. Facebook engagement consisted of intent to “like” the message on Facebook, share the message on Facebook, comment on the message, tag someone with the content, or join the fan page. Results indicated direct influences of the social distance of message senders on source perceptions, as well as an effect of self-brand connection on attitudes toward brands. Results also indicated effects of social distance on liking and commenting, and of self-

brand connections on all Facebook engagement measures. The type of branded content did not have as much of an influence on outcomes as was hypothesized. Findings are discussed with respect to developing strategies for marketing on Facebook.

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Introduction

The current social media era provides everyone with the opportunity to create and publish content about brands, leaving marketers to face many uncontrollable challenges in delivering their marketing messages and representing their brands (Keller, 2007). The advance of media technology has empowered consumers to create and disseminate “many-to-many” brand-related content online (Steyn, Ewing, Heerden, Pitt, & Windisch, 2011, p.152). Consumers take advantage of this empowerment, acting independently of promotion activities supported by marketers and agencies, to talk about brands they love or hate (Steyn et al., 2011). To illustrate, Sonic Drive-In, a fast food restaurant chain, reaped the benefit of a charming YouTube video created by a consumer who identified himself as a Sonic Drive-In fan. Georgio, an indie rocker and also a Sonic Drive-In customer, posted a video of himself sitting in the passenger seat of a car, singing his order to an unseen clerk. This Sonic Drive-In fan said he simply liked to visit the restaurant and posted his charming video just to amuse people. As of fall of 2014, this fan video had received nearly 2 million hits and almost 25,000 thumbs up ratings since it was posted on YouTube, inspiring positive brand appeal (Dumenco, 2012; Paperpassions, 2012).

Such consumer-generated messages, created and shared by fellow consumers, sound more credible and empathetic to most consumers because they are constructed based on the consumers’ point of view (Kucuk, 2010). Casual and non-purposive messages coming from layperson sources are, at times, more effective than those from brand sources; for example, a conversation overheard by chance on the subway and or in a crowd can be appealing in this respect (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Moreover, the realness of user-generated content resonates

with a favorable brand image for fellow consumers (Steyn et al., 2011). This, in turn, may drastically alter the way that consumers perceive brands (Hung & Li, 2007; Urban, 2004). On the other hand, companies can take advantage of brand advocates who volunteer to be brand ambassadors, creating and sharing positive experiences with brands and contributing their knowledge about products and services (Buron & Khammash, 2010).

Brand advocacy has been facilitated by the advances in communication technology. In the early Internet era, online brand communities encouraged people to create content online because they served as venues where admirers of brands who were passionate and committed to the brands could get together to publicly express their experiences with the brands without geographical constraints (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) posited that the brand communities have now switched “from the traditional consumer-brand dyad to the consumer-brand-consumer triad” (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 427); additionally, brand communities have clearly become key contributors for companies to build strong brand equity (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Therefore, consumer-to-consumer relationships have been receiving considerable attention as the online communication environment makes it increasingly easier for consumers to influence each other, recommend brands, contribute their own knowledge about product usage, and advocate brands they like (Keller, 2007).

Now that many consumers use social media, brand admirers have migrated from online brand communities to Facebook (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Over the past few years, the number of Facebook users and their time spent on the site have increased exponentially (Lipsman, Mudd, Rich, & Bruich, 2012). As such, companies are excited about the promising business potential of the medium as a communication channel, but they are also lukewarm about adopting it in their marketing strategies due to a lack of clear understanding of the communication dynamics that

occur on Facebook. The majority of top advertisers have Facebook brand pages; however, a survey shows that only 7% of companies strategically harness social media by integrating them into their marketing activities (Lipsman et al., 2012).

On the consumers' side, however, people are actively creating and sharing branded content, and re-sharing brand-related messages coming through their networks on Facebook. Facebook users become fans of brands by using the "like" button on brand pages. They then make visible their association with the brands on their profile, express their affinity for brands in their posts, and stay in communication with the brands (Lipsman et al., 2012). Facebook allows consumers to become brand advocates without material possessions (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012), and the power of "like" helps companies to deliver their brand impressions to friends of fans (Lipsman et al., 2012). Lipsman et al. (2012) find that friends of fans are more likely to visit companies' websites than non-fans, proposing that influencing friends of fans through the Facebook News Feed, where consumers interact with their friends, might drive critical business value to companies.

Friendship itself indicates an active communication channel, which facilitates the flow of information (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1970). For instance, rumor spreads faster and further in towns with strongly tied neighbors than in towns consisting of mostly acquaintances (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1970). Social networks like Facebook are constructed around people, and therefore friends are the active ingredients of the medium. With respect to the communication process, friends are the sources that send messages on Facebook. According to Katz and Lazarsfeld (1970), however, communication is not only facilitated by networks of friendship, but also the characteristics of the friendships. It is therefore important to have shared experiences and concerns between friends for active communication. Also, friendship literature postulates that

close friends and acquaintances are different, such that we judge their opinions accordingly and they affect us differently (Hays, 1989). Interestingly, it is very common for people to have hundreds of friends on Facebook, and these friendships can differ from the traditional norm of friendships. Therefore, the primary research question raised in the present study was how individuals define their friendships on Facebook, where a person encountered in a hallway can become a “friend” and people often make visible hundreds of connections on their friend list (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2011; Malow, 2009; Manago, Taylor, & Greenfield, 2012). On the basis of this idea, the current study paid particular attention to how Facebook friendships affected consumers’ branded message acceptance.

The present study expanded the ideas of the power of “like,” as proposed by Lipsman et al. (2012), to examine how brands can strategically reach friends of fans. Based on friendship literature (Hays, 1989), this study predicted that not all friends are alike; therefore, persuasive appeal coming through close friends might differ from that coming from acquaintances. To investigate how people define friendships on Facebook, the concept of social distance was adopted. In terms of social connection, previous studies have examined how people use Facebook as a communication channel and how they maintain relationships there. However, little attention has been paid to learning how people define friendships on Facebook and how Facebook friendships influence consumers’ attitude and behavior.

Theories have also been employed to examine how socially close others are different from socially distant others in influencing individuals’ judgment about others, as well as their own behavior. Social identity theory posits that people are more attracted to similar others than dissimilar others, such that people tend to make judgment biases in favor of their in-group people (Turner, 1975; Turner & Tajfel, 1979). Co-orientation theory proposes a similar perspective,

suggesting that friends view the world in the same way (Kenny & Kashy, 1994; Newcomb, 1953). Construal level theory suggests that socially close others and distant others elicit different mental representations, such that people tend to discuss concrete information with similar others and abstract information with dissimilar others (Liviatan, Trope, & Liberman, 2008; Trope, Liberman, & Wakslak, 2007). The current study focuses on the use of social identity theory to understand self-brand connection as an identity cue and the influence of social distance. Therefore, an experiment was conducted to examine the social distance of message sources, closeness of brands, and types of branded content format on brand message acceptance.

Thus, this study aimed to make a scholarly contribution by exploring how the concept of social distance and social identity theory were applied in the Facebook arena and how the self-brand connection served as a social identity on Facebook, as well as to provide managerial implications to practitioners on how to target the promising consumer segment of friends of fans. The following research questions were addressed in this study:

RQ1: Do individuals describe close friends and acquaintances differently on Facebook?

RQ2: Do source perceptions differ by the closeness of the Facebook friend?

RQ3: Upon receiving a branded message on Facebook, to what extent do individuals view the message source and featured brand differently when the message is a brand fan page versus a status update?

The following literature review contains a discussion of social media and use of social media as an advertising platform. This discussion is followed by a review of the literature on social distance, placing the concept of social distance within the context of social identity theory. Social identity is also used as a framework for understanding the use of brand fan pages and,

more generally, self-brand connection. Specific hypotheses are then presented in light of the reviewed literature.

Literature Review

Social Media as a Communication Channel

The online environment has created a communication method that is quite different from a Face-to-Face (FTF) communication environment (DeAndrea, 2011; Metzget, 2009). The nature of electronic media communication allows for greater anonymity and social detachment, which in turn allows individuals to say and do things that they are not likely do in real life (Alonzo & Aiken, 2002). Computer-mediated communication literature suggests that people communicate differently in online environments as opposed to face-to-face settings, in terms of use of language and social interactions, due to the lack of physical presence and flexibility in identity disclosure (DeAndrea, 2011; Metzget, 2009). Because of the lack of physical presence and social cues, people feel less restrained, such that they express themselves more openly, disclose secret emotions, share personal things, and are kind to strangers online (Suler, 2004). On the other hand, reduced social cues in the online environment also allow people to be much more offensive in their use of language, to lash out harshly at others who do not share same opinions, and to easily vent discomforting emotions (Suler, 2004).

Social media are “architected by design to readily support participation, peer-to-peer conversation, collaboration and community” (Meraz, 2009, p. 682). The current dictionary definition of social media is “forms of electronic communication (as web sites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos)” (“social media,” n.d., para. 1). More specifically, social networking sites are defined as “web-based services that allow

individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (boyd & Ellison, p.211). Of the variety of social networking sites available, Facebook is the most widely used service—two-thirds of Americans using social media are on Facebook (Duggan & Brenner, 2013).

Social networking sites are organized around people's personal interests, so, for example, “friending” on Facebook is a representation of interpersonal relationships, and this is what differentiates social networks from traditional online communities. Traditional online communities are based on a shared interest and often formed outside of social networking sites; like-minded people, even if they were otherwise strangers, use these online places as a convenient means to connect (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social networks like Facebook, by contrast, can provide a home for many online communities, but in Facebook communities, people will often interact with each other via connections between their individual online profiles (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Sheldon, 2008a). These social networks are therefore considered egocentric communication channels because the self is the center of one’s own community (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007).

Online social network sites not only help support the maintenance of the individual's existing social ties but also the formation of new connections (Ellison et al., 2007). Interestingly, however, the majority of people use Facebook to interact with their offline contacts, which strengthens their existing connections (Ellison et al., 2007; Marmo & Bryant, 2010). Facebook is a necessary communication method for college students especially, because the service helps students to keep in touch with their high school friends even after they have gone to college (Ellison et al., 2007). In other words, while “networking” denotes relationship initiation per se,

the primary practice of social networking sites is to communicate with existing networks in an online venue (boyd & Ellison, 2007).

However, online social ties can also be quite different from those in offline settings, such that the form of a social tie on Facebook or Twitter can be a latent tie, compared to an offline friendship (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2011; Haythornthwaite, 2005). A latent tie indicates a social connection that is “technically possible but not yet activated socially” (Haythornthwaite, 2005, p.137). Ellison et al. (2011) illustrated that a latent social tie for a college student might be a fellow resident living in the student’s dormitory; the student might recognize this fellow resident, but the student does not talk to this resident face-to-face on a regular basis. As such, the definition of “friends” on Facebook is distinguished from the traditional notion of “friend,” in that they may be more just people one has met at some point in one’s lifetime (Marlow, 2009).

Because it is basically a service for posting and sharing information with others, Facebook allows different types of social connections, which includes making new friends and locating old friends (Ellison et al., 2011). However, social information seeking serves as crucial social capital for using Facebook, in addition to initiating and maintaining relationships. People often use Facebook to learn and discover more information about people with whom they already have some offline connections, and this social information seeking also provides greater benefits to the users (Ellison et al., 2011). In this context, identity information on users’ profiles might prompt further offline interaction.

The Facebook profile is the space where users can publicly display themselves by describing their interests and personal information, and by articulating mutually agreed upon relationships with their friends (Ellison et al., 2011). Notably, because social network sites are established around people, friend connections are the heart of Facebook use, and thereby

individuals make visible their networks as a form of self-display on their profile pages (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Though users can limit the scope of publicity of information by setting privacy conditions, the technology basically allows anyone to see how a user's friends are doing and how friends of a user's friends are doing (Tong & Walther, 2011).

According to data from the Facebook research team, on average, Facebook users have 120 friends in their network (Marlow, 2009). Another study shows that among college students, the average number of people in their network is 440, with a range of between 29 to 1200 connections on Facebook (Manago, Taylor, & Greenfield, 2012). Of these connections, an estimated 21% are considered close friends, whereas 27% are merely acquaintances and 6% are either strangers or online-only connections (Manago et al., 2012). Interestingly, Manago et al. (2012) suggest that a larger network size increases self-esteem, confirming that friends are the influential element of the Facebook service.

There is still ongoing debate about online friendships, as many people migrate to the online setting for social interaction. Some scholars argue that having hundreds of online friends is meaningless and that online communications hinders the development of intimate relationships, in that such online friendships are shallow, often hostile, and lacking in intimacy (McKenna & Bargh, 1999; Tedesco, 2010). By the common definition of friendship, people spend time together and invest emotional and psychological resources in their friends, and therefore friendships are interdependent to some extent (Hays, 1989). However, Tedesco (2010) contends that online friendships are impersonal, transient, require less commitment, and relationships with friends on Facebook are particularly "the friendship that makes no demands" (p.123). Friend requests from complete strangers are particularly questionable, in that it makes it difficult for people to determine how friendship operates on Facebook (Tedesco, 2010).

In contrast, in the early Internet era, a survey reported that 79% of respondents formed genuine and quality friendships online and it helped them to maintain closer relationships with their offline friendships (McKenna & Bargh, 1999). Also, online social contact enabled long-distance relationships, allowing people to interact with friends without geographical and time constraints (McKenna & Bargh, 1999). In today's social media era, college students have 21% close friends on Facebook, as well as using it to maintain some superficial relationships, 27% with acquaintances and 4% with strangers (Manago, Taylor, & Greenfield, 2012), explaining, in part, how people manage social interactions differently on Facebook. Moreover, about 18% of Facebook contacts are maintained connections, often a continuation of the relationships people had in the past, primarily high school friends, such that Facebook is perceived to be a useful tool for social support because it allows users to sustain relationships with people who they are not currently in touch with (Manago et al., 2012). Therefore, social networking sites might arguably have loosened the commitments between friends and blurred the boundaries of friendships. However, online relationships might remain strong, or even be stronger than traditional relationships, because Facebook allows people to stay easily in touch with friends by showing users, via its News Feed, how their hundreds of friends are doing in real time (Ellison et al., 2011).

Tong and Walther (2011) proposed some key technological attributes of Facebook that enhance the effectiveness of communication and social interaction. First, the users have controls for creating and distributing messages. Messages are transmitted or posted only after the users construct them, and therefore asynchronous communication gives individuals time to craft and edit messages, which arguably enhances relational qualities in the electronic communication setting. Facebook also allows for multimedia postings, such that individuals can post video clips,

website links, photos, or polls, which enhances the entertainment elements of social interaction (Tong & Walther, 2011). The status update on Facebook is a venue where users post messages, which are then automatically sent to the News Feeds of all of one's Facebook friends (Manago et al., 2012). This is the feature that users have the most control over. People use the status update feature to keep their friends updated about where they are and what they are doing; however, the dominant communication practice of status updates is expressing their current emotional state, such that Manago et al. (2012) postulated that the most intimate form of social interaction—emotional self-expression—has gone public. Adding additional control, Facebook also offers a variety of privacy settings, which allow individuals to limit the reach of their messages and the access of readers to their postings (Tong & Walther, 2011).

Second, “tagging” and “liking” encourage participation and feedback, which increases the interactivity element in interpersonal communication (Tong & Walther, 2011). “Tagging” allows Facebook users to point to users' friends or anyone else on Facebook by simply including names of friends in their posts (Facebook, 2013). When users tag their friends in their photos or posts, the people tagged can receive a notification alerting them to see the posts. Adding tags allows users to share certain content with specific persons, as opposed to everyone in the users' networks (Facebook, 2013). “Liking” is another key feature of Facebook, where “liking” a post implies positive communication intention and response (Lipsman et al., 2012). Clicking the “like” button on Facebook allows an individual's friends to see what one is interested in. In particular, “liking” a brand page refers to becoming a fan of the brand and demonstrates users' interest in and affiliation with brands (Lipsman et al., 2012).

Third, Facebook provides different ways of social engagement, and people reap the benefit from its direct communication means, such as receiving and responding to wall posts,

messages, and comments as well as tagging friends (Burke, Kraut & Marlow, 2011). In other words, individuals use Facebook and are attracted to this service because it provides mutual social engagement and emotional support from their online social networks. As such, people perceive Facebook as a tool for acquiring social support; they tend to view Facebook as most useful when they receive attention from others as a result of their self-display (Manago et al., 2012).

Social Media as an Advertising Platform

With its large audience size and the variety of social engagements that Facebook provides, corporations are also trying to harness the site as a marketing platform. Approximately 160 million U.S. visitors log on to Facebook each month, and users spend 25% of their time browsing and interacting with content on the News Feed while they are on Facebook (Lipsman et al., 2012). Branded content on Facebook can take a variety of forms and can be created by both companies and consumers, essentially allowing them to co-create brand value together (Lipsman et al., 2012; Wallace, Buil, & De Chernatony, 2012). From the companies' side, they directly send promotional messages through their brand pages and place social ads on the site. From the consumers' side, they post brand mentions—reviews or opinions about brands in their status updates—and re-share branded content from their connections (Lipsman et al., 2012). In the social media environment, consumers are exposed to both commercial messages from companies and non-commercial messages from fellow consumers. The best practice of social media marketing for companies at one time was to have brand pages, such that 100% of top 100 advertisers listed in Advertising Age have established Facebook pages for their brands to engage with their fans and enhance their social media presence (Lipsman et al., 2012).

However, due to the communication dynamics that Facebook features, companies see new market opportunities and are trying to reach new audiences, specifically through consumers' Facebook connections. A recent study from comScore, looking at consumers' site visit behavior, shows that 12.4% of Southwest Airlines Facebook fans and 7.1% of friends of Southwest fans visited the website, while only 2.7% of total internet users visited the site (Lipsman et al., 2012). This study suggests that fans of Facebook brand pages are a valuable consumer segment because they are more likely to visit the brand website and are able to attract their connections to the brand site. This finding suggests important implications for brands like Southwest Airlines, for which many transactions are made online, because they can easily appeal to a new, large body of "possible fans" on the sites where consumers frequently hang out online.

The "like" feature on Facebook allows companies to expose their brand messages to both fans and friends of fans at the same time. For instance, if a user clicks the "like" button of the Southwest fan page, his/her connections on Facebook can see that their friend "liked" the Southwest page and became a fan of Southwest. According to Facebook's worldwide data, the audience size of brand fans is 1.7million and friends of fans are 232MM (Lipsman et al., 2012). Therefore, Lipsman et al. (2012) proposed that companies can take advantage of the power of "like" on Facebook to reach a new consumer segment.

Friends as a Source of Brand Information on Social Media

Friends influence individuals' thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors in many ways; for example, friends influence other friends to practice prosocial behavior (Barry & Wentzel, 2006) and assist people in making purchasing decisions (Gershoff & Johar, 2006). Friends particularly play a vital role in one's purchase decisions by providing advice, giving recommendations, and evaluating shoppers' judgments together, acting as agents (Gershoff & Johar, 2006; Linsdsey-

Mullikin & Munger, 2011). The present study views friends as a source in the communication process because friends can be spokespersons who create and deliver branded content on Facebook. Drawing on source effect literature, this study specifically looks at how social interactions with friends influence individuals' acceptance or rejection of messages.

In the advertising domain, "source" refers to spokespersons or endorsers of brands who are presenting persuasive appeal (Chu & Kim, 2011; Kempf, 2010; Petty & Wegener, 1998; Steyn et al., 2011). Studies have shown that source is a key contributor for opinion change and uncertainty change in the communication process (Woodruff, 1972), and serves as a simple cue for people when they process information heuristically (Dou, Walden, Lee, & Lee, 2012; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). Notably, source serves as an important cue in today's media landscape, where people can be highly selective in source choice and are bombarded with information from anonymous and unidentified sources (Dou et al., 2012). In order to minimize mental effort in this environment, people tend to rely on peripheral cues to evaluate information online (Metzger, 2007).

Source credibility consists of two dimensions of communicators' characteristics: expertness and trustworthiness (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Expertness refers to "the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions," and trustworthiness is "the degree of confidence in the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid" (Hovland & Weiss, 1951, p. 21). Messages created by layperson sources such as fellow consumers and friends resonate with favorable brand images to readers due to their realness (Steyn et al., 2011). Additionally, a layperson source is sometimes perceived as more trustworthy because it implies no intention to influence or persuade recipients (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Trustworthiness in interpersonal communication is "the degree of confidence in

the trusted person or his communication” (Giffin, 1967, p.105), and is therefore basically derived from different types of social interactions that a recipient makes with other communicators.

A recent study shows that earned media, such as online reviews and user-generated content, are perceived as the most credible sources, while trust in paid advertising, like online banner ads and text ads, has declined, such that now the most trustworthy source of message is a recommendation from a person one knows, followed by a fellow consumer’s opinion posted online, and then branded websites (The Nielsen Company, 2012). Therefore, friends on Facebook might be an influential source that critically affects consumers’ attitudes and behaviors.

However, as will be discussed next, interaction with close friends differs from interaction with casual friends, and as such, the role and degree of influence that these types of “friends” wield can differ accordingly (Hays, 1989). Individuals, in general, make strong or weak social ties in dyadic relationships depending on the frequency of contact, degree of intimacy, or duration of the relationships (Haythornthwaite, 2005). Strongly tied connections, like close friends, tend to have strong desire to share resources, high motivation for self-disclosure, and reciprocity in their communication; by contrast, people tend to be less motivated to share information and resources, and are passive in communication with a weak tie, like a hallway acquaintance, because they “travel in different social circles from us” (Haythornthwaite, 2005, p.127). For example, interactions with close friends happen more frequently, are perceived to be more exclusive, and occur in more personal settings than with casual friends (Hays, 1989). More importantly, sharing emotional support and trust differentiates close friends from casual relationships (Hays, 1989). Therefore, the way we define the closeness of our social network connections might impact how susceptible we are to brand messages that these connections send to us. To explore how people define friendships and how types of friends influence individuals’

communication behavior, this study adopts the social distance approach to interpersonal relationships.

The Concept of Social Distance

Park (1924) first introduced the concept of social distance as the “grades and degrees of understanding and intimacy which characterize personal and social relations generally” (p.339). The words used to describe a person, such as “cold,” “easy to meet,” “overly friendly,” “impersonal,” or “warm-hearted,” all refer to social distance to some extent (Park, 1924; Schmitt, 1972). Park (1924) suggested that people naturally desire to interact with others by sharing experiences and sympathizing with their pains and joy; however, these interactions are often blocked by the distance that one feels towards a person in another group. The distance between the self and others is a sense of discrepancy or asymmetry derived from differences one detects about the other person when comparing that person’s appearance, background, or experience with oneself. Social psychologists view the sense of social distance as fundamentally derived from the psychological distance that individuals perceive between the self and others (Trope et al., 2007), which is caused by asymmetry in the relationships, leading to different behaviors and judgments. To illustrate, interpersonal distance occurs when individuals perceive an inequality of power and lack of knowledge about a person in a relationship (Trope & Liberman, 2010).

As a result of social distance, people might feel favoritism toward another person they feel close or similar to, whereas they might express prejudice if that person seems alien to them. Social feel socially distant from others when they perceive differences in social status, cultural background, and physical distance of interactant (Schmitt, 1972), such that the distance increases when lack of identity information about a member of another group increases, too. While lack of identity information is an important factor that increases social distance, closer relationships can

be established when people share common values based on their social identities (Schmitt, 1972). Accordingly, if one has a shared value with another person, it is more likely that they will establish a close relationship regardless of what relatively little identity information they have. In addition, social distance can be an outcome of unfavorable experiences with members of another group or negative information coming from that group. People can feel distance simply because of a lack of common interests or due to individual differences (Banton, 1960).

To continue to develop Park's (1924) work, Bogardus (1925) devised a social distance scale to examine attitudes toward different national and racial groups. Bogardus (1933) defined social distance as "the degree of sympathetic understanding that exists between two persons and a group (personal distance, or personal-group distance)" (p.268). His early work on social distance was designed to increase the understanding of racial problems, which were one of the major issues U.S. society faced in early 1900s (Parrillo & Donoghue, 2005).

Bogardus' (1933) social distance instrument aims to test the distance between two persons or between a person and a group. His initial work surveyed national panels in the U.S. and was replicated with some variations over the next thirty-year period (Banton, 1960; Parrillo & Donoghue, 2005). He then published his social distance scale in 1933 after a series of pilot studies, for which the original sixty items were finally narrowed down to seven. The social distance scale measures the attitudes of respondents about a person in a different group on the following seven statements: "(1) would marry, (2) would have as regular friends, (3) would work beside in an office, (4) would have several families in my neighborhood, (5) would have merely as speaking acquaintances, (6) would have live outside my neighborhood, and (7) would have live outside my country" (Bogardus, 1933, p.270). Many scholars from a wide spectrum of disciplines have utilized this social distance scale in their own studies, and Bogardus' social

distance research spawned numerous studies looking into social class, religion, race, sex, culture, and age in many social contexts (Parrillo & Donoghue, 2005). For example, it has been used to measure the amount of social distance applied to the relationships between doctors and nurses in a mental hospital, among college students towards mentally retarded people, and whites in interracial religious groups towards people of other races (Parrillo & Donoghue, 2005).

The scale has been modified in various ways to be applicable in a variety of situations and social groups. In order to update Bogardus' (1933) social distance scale, Parrillo and Donoghue (2005) recently replicated Bogardus' study with a larger sample to track people's attitudes towards different racial groups. They find that racial attitudes have been greatly improved since 1977, suggesting that people accept more different nationalities than ever before.

The health domain was interested in reducing social distance towards individuals with intellectual disabilities, usually a very negatively stereotyped social group, in an attempt to include mentally disabled people in the community. With some modification of the Bogardus (1933) social distance scale, Ouellette-Kuntz, Burge, Brown, and Arsenault (2010) surveyed community members to measure their attitudes toward mentally disabled groups. The survey found that older and less educated respondents show greater social distance. In addition, individuals with intellectual disabilities in their family feel less distance toward these groups (Ouellette-Kuntz, et al., 2010). They therefore argued that the degree to which people have knowledge of and experience with certain social groups can minimize their social distance towards them.

Going beyond distance as related to race or other overt differences (e.g., physical disabilities), Magee and Smith (2013) have defined social distance as “a subjective perception or experience of distance from another person or other persons” (p.159). In other words, people

might feel distance between self and others due to many factors, including different personal characteristics, social status, or the background that they share in our society, and this asymmetry generally results in greater social distance (Liviatan et al., 2008; Magee & Smith, 2013). Liviatan et al. (2008) adopted the Inclusion of Others in the Self (IOS) scale to measure social distance. In the IOS scale, respondents are asked to choose an answer from a set of Venn-like diagrams representing different degrees of overlap of two circles. One circle represents the self and other circle represents the other person, and thus the more the circles overlap, the closer the relationship is between the two persons (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). In their experiment utilizing a job opportunities situation, Liviatan et al. (2008) found that participants were more interested in receiving information about a job from socially close people than distant others due to interpersonal similarities. In addition, participants were willing to discuss specific information concerning the job, such as dress code, office supplies, and dining options, with similar others, whereas they would want to consult with dissimilar others about general information such as salary, promotion, and job security (Liviatan et al., 2008).

In summary, social distance has received much scholarly attention in many academic disciplines, applying its measurement and predictions to understanding our preferential treatment of close others compared to distant others (e.g., Magee & Smith, 2013; Ouellette-Kuntz et al., 2010). Drawing on the concept of social distance, the present study aims to expand its arena into the online communication environment, exploring how people define social distance among their social networks on social media where hundreds people are listed on one's friend list . As discussed above, scholars have explored social distance from a wide spectrum of perspectives, and therefore the findings have been theorized using different labels, but in general, they all appear to suggest that people behave differently depending upon perceived distance towards

others (Liviatan et al., 2008; Magee & Smith, 2013; Ouellette & Kuntz et al., 2010). The following theoretical frameworks show how social distance has been laid out in the Co-orientation Theory and the Social Identity Theory, which explain the implications and possible effects of social distance on our perceptions and judgments of information quality and agreeableness.

Social Distance in the Communication Process

The co-orientation theory and social identity theory perspectives on the concept of social distance can be summarized as follows: Favoring socially close and similar others to socially distant or dissimilar others is human nature. Thus, people are naturally inclined to agree with close others and listen to them, compared to distal others (Kenny & Kashy, 1994; Turner & Tajfel, 1979). These perspectives differ in that social identity theory focuses generally on how one's own identity is formed as a combination of personal and social inputs, whereas co-orientation theory focuses on the role of interpersonal relationships in the communication process.

Newcomb's (1953) co-orientation approach to communicative acts is based on the assumption that "communication among humans performs the essential function of enabling two or more individuals to maintain simultaneous orientation toward one another" (p.393). Orientation here means "attitude," and co-orientation is therefore analogous to "simultaneous orientation" (p.393). The theory posits that an individual A's orientation towards an interlocutor B and towards a person or an object X is interdependent. Co-orientation, so to speak, indicates that friends view the world in the same fashion (Kenny & Kashy, 1994). In general, friends have the same perspective because they have similar values, interests, and attitudes due to the fact that

they are usually in similar environments (Kenny & Kashy, 1994). Also, they are prone to agree more because they share similar experiences with each other (Hays, 1989).

Stamm and Pearce's (1971) co-orientation approach focuses on congruency in the communication process, in which they suggest that individuals learn or infer agreement between dyadic relations even before beginning interpersonal communication. That is, people can develop expectations and infer whether their friends will have the same opinions about a certain object or event, as they have frequent interactions with one another (Stamm & Pearce, 1971). As a result, the co-orientation theory proposes that friendships may alter the way people view objects, in that the strength of the tie between friends enhances the degree to which they agree about the objects. Taking the co-orientation approach, the present study hypothesizes that individuals would agree more with close friends than acquaintances, and therefore they would be more supportive of branded messages coming from close networks than far networks on their Facebook friend list. This assumption is based on the argument that people tend to interact more often with and share more similar experiences with close friends than acquaintances, which ultimately increases agreeableness in their opinions (Hays, 1989; Stamm & Pearce, 1971).

The idea of co-orientation in friendships is grounded in the assumed similarity in the friend relationships, which is a "false consensus bias," meaning that people are prone to view in-group members as more similar to themselves than out-group members (Kenny & Kashy, 1994; Ross, Amabile, & Steinmetz, 1977). The false consensus bias derives from social identity theory, which explains the underlying reasoning of in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination.

Social identity theory's perspective on the concept of social distance lies in the individuals' perceptions of their identity, in how similar or dissimilar they feel to the members of particular groups. Tajfel (2010) defined social identity as "[a person's] knowledge that he

belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and significance to him of his membership” (p.72). In other words, individuals identify themselves based on their sense of who they are, as derived from their group memberships, such as age, race, social class, organizational affiliation, or the sports teams they support. Social identity is part of self-concept, but it differs from a personal identity that is unique from any other; rather, it is an evaluation of the self, which is derived from identification of the self as a member of one or more groups (Tajfel, 2010). Individuals establish their identities in large part based on their evaluation of and affective attachments toward the groups to which they belong (Brown, 2000).

People are naturally inclined to belong to social groups and they strive to attain and retain positive social identity because positive social identity enhances self-esteem, whereas a feeling of unsatisfactory group identity may lead people to leave a group because it damages their self-concept and eventually lowers their self-esteem (Brown, 2000). In order to maintain positive group identity, the individuals compare their in-group with out-groups. Social identity theory therefore proposes that the consequence of perceived group memberships creates favoritism towards in-groups while forming discrimination towards out-groups (Turner, 1975; Turner & Tajfel, 1979). The focal interest of the present study is to understand how people’s definitions of “in” and “out” within their own online social networks can impact their attitudes about messages. Therefore, the discussion of social identity theory in the present study primarily focused on in-group bias, intergroup relations, and intergroup behavior in the realm of the theory.

Individuals categorize groups in ways that are meaningful to themselves. Based on the social categorization process, individuals determine which group they belong to, who is in the in-group, and who is in the out-group. According to Turner and Tajfel (1979), in-group bias is a laboratory form of real-world ethnocentrism. They also posited that the social climate in which

ethnocentrism is widespread bolsters in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination (Tajfel, 1982; Turner & Tajfel, 1979). In general, however, people do not necessarily form evaluations towards out-groups negatively (Tajfel, 1982). People are merely prone to having a more positive view of themselves than others (Tajfel, 1982). An experiment shows that frivolous and ad hoc social categorization in the laboratory setting leads to in-group favoritism. As such, the mere awareness of belonging to a group and the presence of an out-group triggers in-group bias, encouraging people to make decisions in favor of their group members. Therefore, incompatible interests between groups are not a necessary condition for provoking favoritism. Rather, as experimental evidence shows, “in-group bias is a remarkably omnipresent feature of intergroup relations” (Turner & Tajfel, 1979, p 178).

Mackie, Worth, and Asuncion (1990) find, in their persuasion study examining the influence of in-group messages, that shared group membership is a type of source characteristic that leads to attitude changes and serves as a peripheral cue. Their two experiments showed how opinions from in-group sources have an enormous persuasive effect on people. In the first experiment, participants showed strong attitude changes when the messages were delivered from an in-group source, in this case a delegate from their own university, over an out-group source from a university located in another state. This in-group effect was still pronounced when the messages were not particularly relevant to participants. In addition, participants recalled more messages coming from in-group sources than out-group sources. The study therefore suggests that in-group messages become more influential when the messages convey some aspects of in-group membership, and thus produce persuasive effects regardless of message strength or personal relevance (Mackie et al., 1990).

In a similar vein, people tend to overvalue members in their in-group, and therefore even mere belongingness to self, such as the letters of one's own first and/or last name, serves as a cue for favoritism (Nuttin, 1985). Furthermore, in-group favoritism leads to judgment bias for wrongdoing, such that people tend to relax moral standards for socially close others categorized as in-group members (Tumasjan, Strobel, & Welp, 2011). For example, individuals are more forgiving to socially close leaders, such as middle-level managers, while they evaluate socially distant leaders, such as top-level managers, much more harshly on their moral failures (Tumasjan et al., 2011).

The online community enables people to easily bond together without geographic and time constraints, establishing their own group identity based on their interests (Muniz, Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001). For example, sports fans are a popular form of group membership, and they employ social media to support athletes and sports figures by celebrating and debating athletes' and teams' achievements (Sanderson, 2013). A recent study by Sanderson (2013) examined a Facebook page that University of Cincinnati football fans created to talk about head coach Brian Kelly's leaving the team to accept the head coach position at the University of Notre Dame in order to pursue his own dream. Sports fan group memberships are strengthened through meaningful discussion between fans, as well as between fans and sports figures in the community (Sanderson, 2013).

Social identity threats occur when group members feel that their social identity is devalued or negatively shaped, jeopardizing their social standing (Sanderson, 2013). As a result of social identity threats, group members feel vulnerable, yet they remain strongly tied together, bolstering group belonging (Cohen & Garcia, 2005). Providing evidence of this phenomenon, Sanderson (2013) collected wall postings from the "Get Out of Our City Brian Kelly" Facebook

page and analyzed their content into several themes to investigate the social identity threats that arose from Brian Kelly's leaving the team. The study found that the majority of postings were concerned with themes such as victimization and intimidation. For example, fans accused Brian Kelly of betrayal and determined him to now be an out-group member. Fans also positioned themselves as victims of Brian Kelly's treason, emphasizing their group values of being honest and loyal. In response to social identity threats, highly committed group members engaged in aggressive behavior by overtly denigrating Brian Kelly or distancing their relationships with him. Sanderson (2013) argued that fans engaged in hostile and biased behavior on Facebook because "social media is easily accessible, and therefore people can conveniently and quickly vent and dispense commentary with little filtering" (p.502).

As shown in Sanderson's (2013) study, social media have become a viable channel for people to easily organize groups, promote their own interests, and express group identities. In-group favoritism is also pronounced in the immersive virtual environment, such that individuals even favor avatars that are perceived to be in-group members based merely on the similarity of heuristic cues (Guadagno, Blascovich, Bailenson, & Mccall, 2007). As such, people are attracted to avatars featuring the same gender, even if it is a computer-controlled virtual agent that lacks human behavioral realism (Guadagno et al., 2007).

To summarize social identity theory, people are naturally inclined to belong to social groups. Through these groups, they strive to attain and retain positive social identity because positive social identity enhances self-esteem, whereas a feeling of unsatisfactory group identity can damage their self-esteem and encourage them to leave the group (Brown, 2000). In order to maintain positive group identity, the individuals compare their in-group with other out-groups. Social identity theory therefore proposes that the consequences of perceived group memberships

create favoritism towards in-groups while forming discrimination towards out-groups (Turner, 1975; Turner & Tajfel, 1979).

Drawing on social identity theory, the current study explores brand fans as having a group membership, because Facebook makes it easy for people to showcase their interests in specific brands and make visible their association with those brands. Consumers can demonstrate their brand identification by “liking” a brand page or mentioning something about the brands on Facebook (Lipsman et al., 2012). As “liking” a Facebook brand page is a reflection of one’s inner or social self and an expression of brand advocacy, people are more likely to accept brand messages coming through their “liked” brand and spread positive word of mouth for these brands (Wallace et al., 2012). Correspondingly, online peer-to-peer recommendation is influential in leading product trial and purchase decisions, suggesting that branded content on Facebook, such as a friend “liking” a brand page on Facebook or a Facebook post that mentions the brand or product, encourages consumers to try or buy a brand or product (Dyer, 2013). Therefore, the present study aims to look at how people perceive branded content on Facebook differently when the message is coming from a socially proximal friend versus a socially distal friend. To grasp the phenomenon of brand fanship on Facebook, the next section will discuss how associating oneself with brands may impact an individual’s judgment and behavior toward the brands, and how it influences the companies’ business in turn.

Brand Fan as a Representation of Social Identity

People purchase products or services that are congruent with or enhance their self-concept in some part (Ross, 1971); for instance, “automobiles are often extensions of the owner’s image of self” (Birdwell, 1965, p. 88). It is well recognized that consumers express themselves and reflect their identity through the brands they use, which often leads to a positive purchase

influence (Aaker, 1999; Lee, Motion, & Conroy, 2009). This phenomenon is recognized by many scholars with different terms; for example, “consumer-brand identification” refers to “[a] customer’s psychological state of perceiving, feeling, and valuing his or her belongingness with a brand” (Lam, Ahearne, Hu, & Schillewaert, 2010, p.130). Escalas and Bettman (2003) proposed “self-brand connections” (SBC), defining the concept as “the extent to which individuals incorporated brands into their self-concept” (Escalas & Bettman, 2003, p. 340). That is, consumers create their identity through the brands they use or purchase, and their self-presentation reflects congruency in some aspect of the brand association and self-image (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Escalas & Bettman, 2005). As a result, consumers show higher self-brand connections to the brands that reflect more in-group images than out-group images (Escalas & Bettman; 2005). Furthermore, when consumers strongly identify themselves with a brand, they are more likely to be a brand advocate, spreading positive experiences with the brand (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012).

The idea of associating oneself with a brand often leads to biased judgment and behavior. Also, consumers reflect their identity through brands they favor, purchase, and thus this favoritism towards brands is strongly related to self-esteem (Cheng, White, & Chaplin, 2012). For instance, consumers with high self-brand connections experience low self-esteem when they hear negative information about brands that they associate with (Cheng et al., 2012). Additionally, these consumers remain supportive of their brand to protect their self-identity despite the brand’s failure (Cheng et al., 2012). Similarly, supporters of public figures such as Tiger Woods still favorably evaluate him even after his moral transgressions were revealed, as long as he shows strong performance, because supporters separate judgment of performance from judgment of morality. That is, supporters justify a public figure’s transgression by their

performance (Bhattacharjee, Berman, & Reed II, 2012). Bhattacharjee et al. (2012) suggested that in the business domain, where performance is objectively evaluated, moral decoupling is easy for loyal consumers or supporters because people are emotionally attached to the brand.

In an online communication environment, individuals display their associations with objects, institutions, and people on their personal web space as a means of self-representation (Schau & Gilly, 2003). Furthermore, as indicated above, many people use brands and associate the self with specific brands on their personal website in a way that expresses themselves (Schau & Gilly, 2003). Thus, brands serve as identity cues on Facebook to express both an individual's actual self and ideal self (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). From the social capital perspective, active interaction with other members on fan pages enhances shared value and trust, as these members are indicating shared identity with respect to the brand. Shared value is a key influential element for trusting fan pages, meaning that fans tend to trust fan pages more when the brand communicates and promotes their personal values (Lin & Lu, 2011).

Drawing from the literature on SBC, associating the self with specific brands is another way of representing a person's identity, and thus becoming a fan of brands by "liking" a brand fan page on Facebook is having group membership. Further, in line with the social identity theory, people evaluate the brand positively and feel their self-esteem is enhanced when a Facebook brand page that they "like" reflects some aspects of their values. By applying the social distance frameworks to brand fanship on Facebook, it is therefore logical to assume that individuals are more likely to be supportive of a brand and accept promotional messages coming through the brand when their close friends "like" the brand on Facebook, because close friends on Facebook are considered socially close others and in-group members. That is, individuals would be more likely to associate themselves with the brands that their close friends "like"

because friends view the world in the same way, as per co-orientation theory. Consequently, they would be more agreeable to positive brand mentions about the brands endorsed by their close friends, and are more likely to be persuaded by the brand because positive group membership increases self-esteem, as social identity theory suggests.

Based on the reviewed literature, the present study examined how message acceptance may differ depending on the social distance of an individual's Facebook friends, how different types of branded content through Facebook affect brand attitude formation and behavioral intent to engage in Facebook. The following hypotheses were proposed:

H1: Branded content from a close friend, as opposed to an acquaintance, will result in

(H1a) a more positive perception of the source,

(H1b) a more positive attitude toward the brand, and

(H1c) greater intent to engage in Facebook activities that indicate endorsement of the message (i.e., "liking," sharing, or commenting on the message, tagging someone with the message, or joining the fan page).

Facebook is considered an egocentric communication channel, in that users place the self in the center of communication, broadcasting their interests and relationships with friends on their profile (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ellison et al., 2011; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). In that sense, joining brand pages means displaying users' interests on their profile; therefore, the present study predicted that individuals would be more favorable to closely connected brands, and show greater intent to engage in Facebook when they received messages about brands with which they felt a strong connection.

H2: Branded content coming from strongly connected brands, as opposed to distant brands, will result in

- (H2a) a more positive perception of the source,
- (H2b) a more positive attitude toward the brand, and
- (H2c) greater intent to engage in Facebook activities that indicate endorsement of the message.

Finally, the literature on source effects suggests that, in some circumstances, a layperson source is perceived to be more trustworthy than an expert source because the layperson resonates as real to consumers (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Steyn et al., 2011). For instance, people prone to believe information that they overheard at the bus queue (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Messages coming through a layperson are therefore likely to be influential because people do not think this source carries persuasive intent, compared with sources of messages delivered by corporations. This likely influence is corroborated in studies that attest to the power of word-of-mouth communication in Facebook (e.g., Wallace et al., 2012).

Adding complication to the idea of the layperson spreading brand-relevant messages by word-of-mouth in Facebook, people can send branded messages by creating the content themselves or by merely endorsing a brand using content created by a corporation. Hovland & Weiss (1951) proposed two types of sources—original source and endorser. In Facebook status updates, users create all of the content, and thus they serve as the original source. Often, the status update consists of a text message only, but users can also add hyperlinks and images, including branded information. In any case, the status update can be argued as being a personal communication. However, in Facebook brand fan pages, users serve as endorsers when they “like” a brand on Facebook. In these cases, the users are the sources who send the message, but the message content is ready-made by the corporation; thus, the users are essentially forwarding an advertisement to their Facebook friends. The current study hypothesized that people would

perceive brand-related content in status updates as a message delivered by a layperson source, whereas “liking” a Facebook brand page would be seen as a message delivered from companies, even if it was endorsed by their friends on Facebook, leading to the following hypothesis.

H3: Compared to brand fan page promotions, status updates will result in

(H3a) a more positive perception of the source,

(H3b) a more positive attitude toward the brand, and

(H3c) greater intent to engage in Facebook activities that indicate endorsement of the message.

The last two hypotheses reflect the proposal that social distance and self-brand connection will add to the impact of the type of branded content on outcomes. In other words, improved effectiveness of a status update (versus a brand fan page) will be intensified even more if the status update comes from a close friend rather than an acquaintance. Likewise, improved effectiveness of a status update (versus a brand fan page) will be further improved if the message features a brand with which the receiver feels a close connection rather than a distal connection.

H4: Effects of type of branded content will combine with effects of source, such that a status update by a close friend will yield the highest scores on the outcomes proposed in H1, whereas brand page content by an acquaintance will result in the lowest scores on the outcomes proposed in H1.

H5: Effects of type of branded content will combine with effects of self-brand connection, such that strongly connected brand content in a status update by a close friend will yield the highest scores on the outcomes proposed in H2, whereas fan page promotion by an acquaintance will result in the lowest scores on the outcomes proposed in H2.

Method

Overview

In a 2 (social distance) X 2 (self-brand connection) X 2 (type of branded content) between-subject experiment, participants were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to participate in a research study delivered through Qualtrics, an online survey tool. Qualtrics allows random assignment; thus, each time a participant accessed the link to the study, the survey tool randomly assigned the participant to one of the eight conditions. Then, the Qualtrics survey tool was used for the delivery of stimuli and questions.

Those who self-selected this study on Amazon MTurk completed the procedure at their own pace. After accessing the study, participants completed an online informed consent form and were automatically directed to a preliminary questionnaire, followed by the stimulus material and a final set of questions. The average amount of time participants spent completing the study was 15 minutes.

Participants

MTurk, Amazon's crowdsourcing Internet location used to coordinate people to perform various tasks, was selected for recruitment because the diversity of "Turkers" mirrors the diversity of Internet users in the US (see Ross, Irani, Silberman, Zaldivar, & Tomlinson, 2010 on MTurk demographics: see Duggan & Brenner, 2013 on Internet demographics). Only those Turkers who were aged 18 or over, had a Facebook account, and checked their Facebook at least once a day were eligible to participate in the study. A total of 165 adults from MTurk (52.1% female, 47.3% male, and nine subjects who declined to answer about gender) participated in exchange for monetary compensation. The majority of participants were aged 26 to 34 (43.6%),

followed by 18 to 25 (26.7%), and 35 to 44 (20.6%). The remaining 9% of participants were age 45 or over.

Participants reported having, on average, 243 friends on their Facebook friend list. They spent an average of 19.42 minutes on each Facebook session. The primary device participants used to connect to Facebook was a computer (64.8%), followed by a mobile phone (30.9%). Few participants accessed Facebook on a tablet (4.2%).

Procedure

The opening screen of the survey instrument indicated to participants that the study was concerned with Facebook use. The first section of questions asked about general Facebook use to understand the role of the service in the participant's daily life. The next section focused on sources of Facebook messages. According to their experimental condition, participants were asked to either name a close friend or an acquaintance on Facebook. Participants then completed a thought-listing task about the person they named to help anchor the person in their memory.

Next, according to their experimental condition, participants had to choose a brand from a list of 10 brands that fit the following specific criteria: participants had to both like and feel a close connection with the brand or the participants had to like but not feel a close connection with the brand. Their choice was followed by a self-brand connection scale adopted from Escalas and Bettman (2003) to confirm self-brand connection manipulation.

Next, participants viewed one of eight experimental stimuli, which had a brand-related message in either a status update or Facebook brand page promotional format. The type of stimulus was based on their experimental condition. Participants were asked to imagine that this message had been posted by the contact they mentioned earlier in the study and had appeared in their Facebook News Feed. After stimulus exposure, participants answered the last part of the

questionnaire. The third section was designed to assess sets of dependent measures of Facebook engagement. To remind participants of the imagined source of the message, subjects were instructed to re-type the name of their close friend or acquaintance and to rate social distance and source perceptions again, using different versions of the prior measures. The questionnaire then led them to assess their attitudes toward the brand and their behavioral intentions toward the stimulus. The behavioral intent measures were particularly focused on the participant's willingness to engage in Facebook content using features such as liking, sharing, commenting tagging, and joining brand pages. Finally, participants were thanked and debriefed through the survey instrument.

Social Distance Manipulation

To obtain names of individuals that represent either close or distal social distance, participants were asked to name either one close friend (in the close social distance condition) or one acquaintance (in the distant social distance condition) on their Facebook friend list. To help aid participants in choosing their close friend or acquaintance, they were provided with definitions of what constitutes a close friend or an acquaintance, following Hays' (1989) description of the characteristics of these relationships. Depending on their experimental condition, participants saw one of the following two instructions:

“Please name a close friend whom you are connected on Facebook. This person should be someone you feel close to, someone you communicate with regularly, someone you share interests with, someone you can share your personal thoughts and feelings, and even secrets with, someone who cares how you're doing, as well as what you're doing. This person should be someone you can count on when times are tough. Although you

likely do not need to, you are welcome to view your list of close friends on Facebook, but please do not spend time on Facebook for anything other than retrieving this name.”

Or,

“Please name an acquaintance of yours whom you are connected on Facebook. This person should be someone you only communicate with occasionally or perhaps rarely, someone you don’t really know that much about, someone with whom you would not necessarily share your personal thoughts and feelings. You are welcome to view your list of connections on Facebook if needed, but please do not spend time on Facebook for anything other than retrieving this name.”

The person each participant named was referenced in social distance and Facebook friend rules measures asked immediately after the naming task. The person named was also referenced in later instructions that specified to which source they should attribute Facebook content (the stimuli) they saw in the next part of the survey instrument.

Stimuli

To construct branded content in a Facebook message format, ten brands were selected to provide a variety of brand choice options to participants. Brands were selected based on identity-relevant product domains, where consumers often choose a certain brand to communicate their identity to others. For instance, people might choose a specific car brand and want to diverge from the majority because the car is seen as a symbol of identity that indicates uniqueness of the self. On the other hand, dish soap and toothpaste are not domains that tend to signal one’s identity (Berger & Heath, 2007). In addition, brand lists from the most “liked” brands on Facebook (Bole, 2013), the most engaged brand pages on Facebook (Fox, 2013), and Forbes’ list of America’s favorite brands (Forbes, 2013) were considered. Therefore, branded content was

created for Coca-Cola, BMW, Nike, Toyota, Gap, Walt Disney, Ford, ESPN, Apple, and Starbucks.

Depending on their condition, participants selected the one brand that they liked *and* felt a close personal connection with, or they selected the one brand that they liked but lacked a strong connection. This constituted a manipulation of self-brand connection (close, distant). Specifically, participants saw one of the following instructions prior to choosing a brand from the list:

“Now, please choose one brand below that you like and you feel most connected to. This is the brand that you would want to associate with, often reflects who you are, and mirrors your self-image. Owning this brand helps present yourself to others. This brand also helps you to be the person you want to be.”

Or,

“Now, please choose one brand below that you may like, but do not feel connected to. This is a brand that you may have positive feelings about, but the brand does not exactly represent your identity or reflect your self-image. This brand does not necessarily show who you are, in other words.”

The brand they selected in this segment determined which stimulus they viewed in the next part of the study; the brand featured in their stimulus matched the brand they selected.

In the status update conditions, participants viewed stimulus content with the names, logos, and website links of the brand they chose according to the experimental condition (close brand vs. distant brand). The content was specifically designed to resemble a real status update on Facebook. In the brand fan page conditions, brand names, logos, and website links were

presented in the form of an actual brand fan page on Facebook, and so the message had a “Like Page” button and “sponsored” logo.

At the top of all of the stimuli, sources were presented according to participants’ experimental conditions (close friend vs. acquaintance). In the instructions prior to viewing the stimulus, participants were asked to imagine that the message came through the Facebook contact they had just named earlier in the survey. At the bottom of the stimuli, “like,” “comment,” and “share” logos were presented, but the number of likes, comments, and shares were not presented to avoid a potential bandwagon effect.

Independent Variables and Manipulations

Independent factors. Social distance condition was dummy coded as 0 = close friend and 1 = acquaintance (distant friend). Self-brand connection condition was dummy coded as 0 = close brand connection and 1 = distant brand connection. Type of branded content was dummy coded as 0 = status update posting and 1 = brand fan page posting.

Manipulation check for social distance. A thought-listing task and the IOS scale were used for manipulation check of social distance. First, participants were asked to name their close friend or acquaintance according to their experimental condition. A thought-listing task then followed the selection of the Facebook contact (the close friend or acquaintance), which allowed participants to write descriptions about their close friend or acquaintance. According to construal level theory, socially close others lead to concrete construal, whereas socially distant others lead to abstract construal (Liviatan et al., 2008). In other words, when individuals perceive a target person as psychologically distant and far from the self, this relationship leads to high-level construal, forming abstractive judgments about the person’s behavior, while when personal distance decreases between the self and others, individuals evaluate the others’ actions at a low

level, which leads to concrete construal (Liviatan et al., 2008). In the communication process, perceived distance in dyad relations often causes people to discuss more specific information and details about a topic with socially close other than distant others (Liviatan et al., 2008). Therefore, this thought-listing task aimed to determine whether participants provide specific and concrete information about their socially close friends and less specific and more abstract descriptions about socially distant friends.

The thought-listing task asked participants to write down a few things that came to their minds when think about their chosen friends/acquaintances. The procedure and instructions mirrored the technique used by Cacioppo, Glass, and Merluzzi (1979):

“We are now interested in everything that went through your mind about the person whose name you just wrote down. Please list these thoughts, whether they were about yourself, this person, situations involving this person, whether they were positive, neutral, and/or negative. Any case is fine. Ignore spelling, grammar, and punctuation. You will have 2 ½ minutes to write. We have deliberately provided more space than we think people will need, to ensure that everyone would have plenty of room. Please be completely honest. Your responses will be anonymous. The next screen contains the text box we have prepared for your use to record your thoughts and ideas. Simply write down the first thought you had in the first box, the second in the second box, etc. Please put only one idea or thought in a box. If you finish before the 2 ½ minutes runs out, simply click to continue.” (p. 254)

Two judges, blind to the subjects’ experimental conditions, coded the responses. Drawing upon construal level theory, answers were coded as “low-level (concrete) construal” if participants described a number of specific personality traits about their friend, mentioned

relationships and experiences they had together, expressed feeling about the person, and use “we” when referring their relationships. On the other hand, coders rated answers as “high-level (abstract) construal” when subjects described only a few personality traits, referred to the person as “this person” or “this guy,” and did not mention specific experiences they had together. Prior training and a sample of the responses helped ensure acceptable intercoder reliability, using Krippendorff’s α as the reliability check (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). The Krippendorff’s α for this study was .93. Second, participants then were asked to respond their closeness with the friend using the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) scale to measure social distance. For this pictorial measure, participants were instructed to choose one of the answer choices that showed pairs of overlapping circles; see Appendix) that best represented the relationship between the self and the friend. The degree to which the two circles overlap represented closeness.

Manipulation check for self-brand connection. A brand list was provided for participants to select from, followed by the self-brand connection (SBC) scale. The SBC scale, adopted from Escalas and Bettman (2003), was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, anchored with 1 = “not at all” to 5 = “extremely well” for the following statements: (1) This brand reflects who I am. (2) I can identify with this brand. (3) I feel a personal connection to this brand. (4) I use this brand to communicate who I am to other people. (5) I think this brand helps me become the type of persona I want to be. (6) I consider this brand to be “me” (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others). (7) This brand suits me well. An overall SBC composite measure was created by averaging the seven items together, with higher scores indicating stronger connection to brands, $\alpha = .94$, $M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.0$.

Manipulation check for type of content. After measuring all dependent variables, participants were asked to answer what type of posts the stimuli were supposed to be. This

nominal scale was measured using following three levels of measurement: (1) A status update posting from a friend on Facebook, (2) A brand page posting Liked by a friend on Facebook, (3) Not sure. In addition, to ensure successful manipulation, another nominal scale evaluated who participants considered the sender to be. For this scale, following four answer choices were provided: (1) I am the sender – I am pretending to have sent this post. (2) The Facebook contact I named earlier in the survey is the sender – I am pretending that this post came from my Facebook friend. (3) The brand I chose earlier in the survey is the sender – I am pretending that this post came directly from the company. (4) Not sure.

Dependent Measures

Source perceptions. After stimulus exposure, a variation of McCroskey's (1966) nine items was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, anchored with 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree" for the following statements: (1) I can count on this person, (2) This person is knowledgeable about the things he/she talks about, (3) This person's advice is of great value, (4) I can trust this person, (5) I like this person, (6) This person has a pleasant personality, (7) This person thinks only of him/herself, (8) I think this person is awful (reverse item), and (9) This person has strong ethics. An overall source perception composite measure was created by averaging the nine items together, with higher scores indicating more favorable perceptions, reliability of these nine items were at $\alpha = .89$, $M = 4.00$, $SD = .75$.

Attitudes toward brands. After viewing the stimulus material, participants answered questions about their attitudes toward the brand they chose. Attitudes toward the brand were measured using a 5-point semantic differential scale for following words: (1) Negative-Positive, (2) Bad-Good, and (3) Unfavorable-Favorable. These three items were averaged to create a

composite measure of attitudes toward brand, with higher scores indicating a more favorable attitude, $\alpha = .94$, $M = 4.10$, $SD = .83$.

Facebook engagement. Finally, participants were asked to answer questions about their willingness to “like,” “share,” “comment,” and “tag” in the comments, as well as to “join” the brand fan pages. These items were rated on a 5-point scale, anchored with 1 = “not likely at all” to 5 = “very likely.” Descriptive statistics of liking, sharing, commenting, tagging, and joining brand pages were as follows: $M_s = 3.39, 2.50, 2.41, 1.74, 2.95$, $SD_s = 1.47, 1.39, 1.36, 1.07, 1.34$, respectively.

Table 1 shows means and standard deviations for all dependent measures within each social distance X self-brand connection X type of content condition. Correlations among these variables are shown in Table 2. The correlation analysis indicated that source perceptions were not significantly correlated with other dependent variables, ranging from $r = .06$ to $r = .17$, and attitude toward brands were also not significantly correlated, ranging from $r = .13$ to $r = .56$. Facebook engagement—liking, sharing, commenting, tagging, and joining a fan page—were quite strongly correlated with one another, ranging from $r = .50$ to $r = .79$, although Facebook engagement variables were not significantly correlated with source perceptions and attitudes toward brands. Reliability of Facebook engagement variables was also high, $\alpha = .90$. However, as specific findings with regard to each of these engagement variables is of interest in this study, these items were not combined into a composite measure.

[Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here]

Potential covariates. Initially, self-esteem and need for belonging measures were included in the first part of the survey instrument as potential covariates that might explain intent to engage in Facebook actions, namely liking, sharing, commenting, and tagging. A recent study

found that Facebook use enhances self-esteem, particularly when people browse status updates of their close friends (Willcox & Stephen, 2012). Another study revealed that individuals' self-esteem increases greatly when they update and view their own personal profile because of the capacity of digital media to enable selective self-presentation (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). In a similar vein, the need to belong is a key predictor of willingness to join SNS because interacting with others on Facebook enhances the sense of belonging (Gangadharbatla, 2008). Thus, correlations between these two covariates and the set of dependent variables were initially tested.

Rosenberg's (1989) 10-item global self-esteem scale was used to measure self-esteem. This measure was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1= "strongly disagree" to 5= "strongly agree" for following ten statements: (1) On the whole, I am satisfied with myself (reverse item), (2) At times I think I am no good at all, (3) I feel that I have a number of good qualities (reverse item), (4) I am able to do things as well as most other people, (5) I feel I do not have much to be proud of, (6) I certainly feel useless at times (reverse item), (7) I feel that I'm a person of worth, (8) I wish I could have more respect for myself, (9) All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure, (10) I take a positive attitude toward myself.

The need to belong measure was adopted from the scale devised by Leary, Kelly, Contreall, Schreindorfer (2013). Ten items were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, anchored with 1= "not at all," 2= "slightly," 3= "moderately," 4= "very," and 5 = "extremely" for the following statements: (1) If other people don't seem to accept me, I don't let it bother me (reverse item), (2) I try hard not to do things that will make other people avoid or reject me, (3) I need to feel that there are people I can turn to in times of need (reverse item), (4) I need to feel that there are people I can turn to in times of need, (5) I want other people to accept me, (6) I do not like being alone, (7) Being apart from my friends for long periods of time does not bother me

(reverse item), (8) I have a strong need to belong, (9) It bothers me a great deal when I am not included in other people's plans, (10) My feelings are easily hurt when I feel that others do not accept me.

However, there were no significant correlations between these measures and any other measures in this study. Therefore, these variables were dropped from analysis (see Table 2).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Data were analyzed with the assistance of statistical package, "SPSS 22.0" for Mac OS. Because it took an average of 19.42 minutes for participants to complete the survey, participants who spent less than 5 minutes to complete survey were deleted from the final analysis. To examine how successfully this study manipulated social distance, a chi-square test of independence was performed to see if the results of the thought-listing task supported the assumptions that thinking about a close friend would yield more concrete construals, whereas thinking about an acquaintance would yield more abstract construals, by comparison. Results suggested the social distance manipulation was effective. Perceptions about socially close people led to a concrete level of construal, whereas acquaintances led to an abstract level of construal, $\chi^2(1, N = 156) = 97.42, p < .001$. Additionally, an independent *t*-test on participants' ratings of social distance confirmed that those in the close friend condition ($M = 5.11, SD = 1.33$) felt closeness to the source, compared to participants' feelings in the acquaintance condition ($M = 2.90, SD = 1.61$), $t(163) = 10.97, p < .001$. Levene's test for equality of variance for source distance was not significant; variances of the groups were equivalent. These findings address RQ1 regarding the way individuals define close friends and acquaintances on Facebook.

Another independent *t*-test confirmed that participants in the close self-brand connection condition ($M = 3.80$, $SD = .56$) demonstrated greater connection with the brand, compared with participant reports in the distant self-brand connection condition ($M = 2.44$, $SD = .69$), $t(163) = 15.84$, $p < 001$. Again, Levene's test for equality of variance for self-brand connection tests was not significant; variances of the groups were equivalent.

Finally, a second chi-square test of independence was used to evaluate whether people correctly recognized the type of content (brand fan page versus status update) they viewed. Results revealed that the relationship between type of content and perceived type of posting was significant and in support of the manipulation, $\chi^2(2, N = 165) = 38.00$, $p < .01$. Nearly all of the participants (94.4%) who saw the status update posting correctly identified the content they viewed as a status update. The majority (62.2%) of participants who saw the brand fan page posting also correctly identified their content as a brand page post.

Interestingly, among the participants who correctly perceived that they viewed brand-related content in the Facebook brand page format, 32% of the participants reported that the senders of the messages were the brands they chose, although the message senders were clearly indicated on the stimuli and they were instructed that the content they viewed came from the friends they named in the study. However, 92% of the participants in the status update posting conditions perceived that the branded content they viewed was sent from their friend. Based on these findings, it seems as though branded content in the brand fan page format may be viewed as commercialized promotional content sponsored by brands. These findings address RQ3 regarding the extent to which individuals perceived differences between these categories of branded content.

Hypothesis Tests

In order to address the hypotheses proposed in the study, two ANOVAs and a MANOVA were performed. First, a 2 (social distance) X 2 (self-brand connection) X 2 (type of branded content) three-way ANOVA was performed to test H1a, H2a, and H3a regarding main effects on source perceptions, H4 and H5 regarding interaction effects on source perceptions, and RQ2 regarding how source perceptions differ by social distance. There was a significant main effect of social distance, $F(1, 156) = 55.98, \eta^2 = .25, p < .001$. On average, evaluations of the socially close sources were more favorable than the evaluations of the distant (acquaintance) sources, $M = 4.34, SD = .60$ and $M = 3.89, SD = .83$, respectively (see table 3). Therefore, H1a was supported, and RQ2 was addressed by this main effect. No other main effects were found; thus, H2a and H3a were not supported.

In addition, there was an interaction between self-brand connection and type of branded content on source perception, albeit only approaching significance, $F(1, 156) = 3.32, \eta^2 = .02, p = .07$, although this two-way interaction was not addressed as a hypothesis. A simple effects post-hoc test was performed to interpret the two-way interaction. Within both close and distant brand conditions, main effects of type of content did not emerge; thus, self-brand connection did not moderate any primary effects of content type on source perception. However, post-hoc tests revealed that type of content moderates the primary effect of self-brand connection, because within brand fan page condition, there was a main effect of content, $F(1, 35) = 5.51, \eta^2 = .07, p < .05$ (see Table 4), but no main effect of content was found within status update condition. Specifically, in the brand page conditions, participants who viewed content from distant brands ($M = 4.08, SD = .65$) evaluated sources more favorably than close brands ($M = 3.79, SD = .89$;

see Table 4). No other significant findings emerged. H4 and H5 were not supported with regard to source perceptions.

[Insert Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5 about here]

Next, a 2(social distance) X 2(self-brand connection) X 2(type of branded content) ANOVA was performed on participants' attitudes towards the featured brand to address H1b, H2b, and H3b predicting main effects, H4 and H5 predicting interactions, and RQ3 regarding differences perceived between fan pages and status updates. There was a significant main effect of self-brand connection, $F(1, 156) = 32.48, \eta^2 = .17, p < .001$. This finding suggested that participants had more favorable attitudes toward brands that they feel closely connected to ($M = 4.45, SD = .63$) than distant brands ($M = 3.77, SD = .87$). Thus, H2b was supported, and RQ3 was addressed. No other effects were found (see Table 6). Thus, H1b and H3b were not supported. H4 and H5 were also not supported with respect to attitude toward the brand.

[Insert Table 6 about here]

Finally, a 2 (social distance) X 2 (self-brand connection) X 2 (type of branded content) MANOVA was performed on the set of dependent measures regarding Facebook engagement intent—liking, sharing, commenting, tagging, and joining fan pages. A MANOVA was chosen because these dependent variables were significantly correlated; performing this one test on this group of dependent variables therefore protects against inflation of Type I error, yet also allows for an examination of each individual variable (Hair, Tatham, Anderson, & Black, 2006, see Table 7).

[Insert Table 7 about here]

Results indicated a significant main effect of the social distance condition on sharing intent, $F(1,157) = 5.53, p < .05$. When the message came from a close friend rather than an

acquaintance, participants indicated a greater intent to share the message on Facebook, $M = 2.75$, $SD = 1.44$ and $M = 2.24$, $SD = 1.30$, respectively. Also, there was a main effect of the social distance condition on commenting intent, although the effect was only approaching significance, $F(1,157) = 2.95$, $p < .10$. Participants indicated greater intent to comment on a post when the message was delivered from a close friend ($M = 2.59$, $SD = 1.43$), as opposed to an acquaintance ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.19$). Another main effect, only approaching significance, was found on intent to join fan pages, $F(1,157) = 3.55$, $p < .10$. Individuals had greater intent to join brand fan pages when the messages came from closer friends rather than acquaintances, $M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.38$ and $M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.28$, respectively. The social distance condition, however, did not explain the variance across the body of dependent variables, Pillai's Trace = .04, $F(5, 153) = 1.18$, $p = .33$. Therefore, H1c was partly supported.

The self-brand connection condition had a main effect on all dependent variables, Pillai's Trace = .23, $F(5, 153) = 9.37$, $p < .001$. On average, participants who received a message about a brand with which they had indicated a close connection reported greater intent to like, share, comment on, and tag someone with the message, as well as join the brand fan page, close brand $M_s = 3.99, 3.05, 2.83, 2.05, 3.57$, $SD_s = 1.21, 1.36, 1.27, 1.20, 1.18$; distant brand $M_s = 2.79, 1.94, 1.98, 1.43, 2.33$, $SD_s = 1.48, 1.19, 1.25, .82, 2.33$, respectively. Therefore, H2c was fully supported.

A significant main effect emerged across the body of dependent variables for type of content, Pillai's Trace = .12, $F(5, 153) = 4.13$, $p < .001$. Individual tests indicated this overall main effect was primarily due to the specific main effect of content type on commenting intent, $F(1, 157) = 6.28$, $p = .013$. People reported greater intent to comment on a message if that message was a status update rather than a brand fan page, $M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.35$ and $M = 2.18$, SD

= 1.27, respectively. Content type did not affect intent to engage in other Facebook activities. Therefore, H3c was partly supported (see Table 8).

[Insert Table 8 about here]

Additionally, a two-way interaction—only approaching significance—emerged between social distance and self-brand connection on intent to like and comment, $F(1, 157) = 3.23, p < .10$ and $F(1, 157) = 3.62, p < .10$ respectively. To further examine the effect of independent factors on liking intent, a simple effects post-hoc test was performed to interpret the two-way interaction. A simple effects post-hoc test indicated that a feeling of closeness with a brand moderated the primary effect of social distance on liking intent, because social distance had a main effect in the close brand condition, $F(1, 78) = 6.34, \eta^2 = .07, p < .05$, but did not have a main effect in distance brand condition; thus, self-brand connection moderates the primary effect of social distance on liking intent. That is, participants indicated greater intent to like a post coming through close friends ($M = 4.30, SD = .86$) rather than acquaintances ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.42$) only if the posting was about the brands to which they feel strongly connected.

[Insert Tables 9 and 10 about here]

In a similar vein, results indicated that there was a main effect of social distance in the close brand condition on commenting, $F(1, 79) = 6.56, \eta^2 = .07, p < .05$, but no main effect was found in the distant brand condition. Therefore, feeling of connection to the brand moderates the primary effect of social distance, in that strong connection with brands enhanced intent to comment on the post. That is, people were more likely to comment on a post if the message came through close friends ($M = 3.16, SD = 1.31$), as opposed to distant friends ($M = 2.48, SD = 1.13$) when the post was about the brands they feel closely connected to themselves. Social distance of

the source did not change Facebook liking or commenting intent when the brand featured in the stimulus was a distal brand.

[Insert Tables 11 and 12 about here]

Lastly, there was a three-way interaction among social distance, self-brand connection, and content on commenting, albeit only approaching significance, $F(1, 157) = 2.98, \eta^2 = .02, p < .10$. A final simple effects post-hoc test was performed to interpret this three-way interaction. There was a significant main effect of content on commenting when a close friend was imagined to have sent a message about a distant brand, $F(1, 38) = 5.97, \eta^2 = .13, p < .05$. That is, participants indicated stronger intent to comment on a close friend's status update message ($M = 2.43, SD = 1.40$) than on a close friend's brand fan page content ($M = 1.47, SD = 1.02$) when they felt little connection with the featured brand.

A main effect of content, albeit only approaching significance, was found on commenting when it was an acquaintance sending a message about a closely connected brand, $F(1, 38) = 4.23, \eta^2 = .08, p < .10$. Specifically, participants' intent to comment on a message was greater for an acquaintance's status update format ($M = 2.80, SD = 1.10$) than for an acquaintance's brand fan page ($M = 2.15, SD = 1.1$) when the message was about a brand dear to the participant. No other findings emerged in the post-hoc analyses. Overall, H5 was not supported.

[Insert Tables 13 and 14 about here]

No other significant findings in the multivariate or individual tests of between-subjects emerged in this analysis. No two-way interactions between social distance and type of content were significant. Therefore, H4 was not supported.

Discussion

Consumers create brand-related content, in the form of reviews or opinions, and share them with their fellow consumers every day. Moreover, online communities allow like-minded consumers to gather and talk about brands they like or hate without geographical constraints. This phenomenon has now switched the traditional two-way consumer-brand relationships to triad consumer-brand-consumer relationships, enhancing consumer empowerment for brand messaging (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Facebook has become a locus for consumers to learn about brands by receiving branded content from friends and sponsored message from brands; and thus, companies try to take advantage of this platform to promote their brands.

Recently, much scholarly attention has been paid to social influence caused by consumer-consumer relationships to understand the communication dynamics occurring among consumers (Chu & Kim, 2011; Dou et al., 2012). Brand communication professionals have paid particular attention to the Facebook News Feed, where lots of users spend most of their time, hanging out with their friends while on Facebook; and, more important, the persuasive influence of these friends' networks is of focal interest (Lipsman et al., 2012). Taking these two views from both academia and industry together, the present study examined how the social distance of friends, relationships with brands, and the type of brand content all together affect consumers' attitudes and behavioral intent to engage in Facebook. Drawing on social identity theory, this study looked at the relationship with friends and the self-brand connection as a social identity and how it helped influence people to adopt branded messages on Facebook.

The present study extends the idea of targeting friends of fans on Facebook proposed by Lipsman et al. (2012), suggesting that Facebook users define close friends and acquaintances differently on Facebook, and types of friendship influence consumers differently when they

process brand information on Facebook. This finding further supports the social identity theory, in that individuals practice in-group favoritism on Facebook as they do in offline settings. In addition, people showed greater intent to hit the “like” button when the messages were posted by close friends, supporting co-orientation theory. This study found that friends—even when the relationship was connected to in online setting—viewed the world in much the same way, as the co-orientation theory proposed. Therefore, the current study clearly contributes to the idea of targeting friends of brand fans (see Lipsman et al., 2012); also, it further examined how the closeness of the friendship can affect the way people adopt branded messages on Facebook. Based on this finding from the current study, companies need to strategically target friends of fans. It is recommended that companies first closely target and promote their branded messages to close friends.

One of the focal interests of the current study was to understand whether the concept of self-brand connection could be explained by social identity theory. The psychological feelings of connections with brands lead to positive attitudes toward brands; more important, the feelings of strong connection with brands lead to a variety of Facebook engagement. People tend to engage in propagation of branded messages using features such as liking, sharing, tagging, and commenting on the posts when the messages are about a brand that signals their self-identity. In addition, self-brand connection plays a vital role in Facebook engagement when it combines with source factor, although the interaction effect was only approaching significance. That is, self-brand moderates the primary effect of social distance, such that people indicate greater intent to like and comment when branded messages come from socially close friends rather than distant friends only if the messages were about the brand they feel strongly connected to. Therefore, it appears that the concept of self-brand connection serves as social identity on Facebook. This

study not only extends the idea of targeting friends of fans (see Lipsman et al.'s, 2012), but also explores the critical role of self-brand connection in Facebook marketing.

In terms of type of content, status update is the venue where people express the self's own emotion and ideas, which also allows people to stay updated with their friends (Manago et al., 2012). The findings of the study also indicated that people had greater intent to comment on a branded post in status update format, which also confirms that type of content was successfully manipulated in the study. Though it was not hypothesized in the study, an interesting finding emerged with respect to the type of content. That is, individuals tend to comment on the status update posts coming through a close friend if the posts are about the brands with which they feel little connection. This further suggests that people pay close attention to relationships with friends and practice direct communication when they do not feel strong connection to the brand.

Though this study discovered significant main effects of social distance on source perceptions, self-brand connection on attitudes toward brands, and their main effects on some Facebook engagements, proposed effects dealing with status updates versus brand fan pages largely did not emerge. In particular, type of content did not have a main effect on dependent variables except for intent to comment on the message. That is, participants showed greater intent to comment on status updates rather than comment on brand fan page postings. This finding is in line with what was hypothesized, in that the more personal status updates would yield more desirable outcomes toward brand attitude and propagation than would the less personal brand fan pages. However, more than one statistically significant effect was expected for type of content.

An interaction effect suggested that the intent to comment is strongest for a (personal) status update that comes from a close friend who might be introducing the receiver to a distal

brand. In this case, the motivation to comment might be to support the close friend and acknowledge the friend's endorsement, although the interaction was only approaching significance. The intent to comment is also strong when a brand fan page (impersonal) about a favorite brand (close connection) is received from an acquaintance. This case might suggest a motivation to take the opportunity to endorse the brand and perhaps strengthen the connection with the acquaintance through this brand endorsement. These results should be interpreted with caution, however, as the findings only approached statistical significance.

The manipulation check for type of content did, at least, indicate that participants correctly recognized status updates as status updates and brand fan pages as brand fan pages. Therefore, the lack of significant effects due to type of content does not seem to be due to confusion in what each type of posting was. However, whereas all of the participants who received a status update correctly reported that the posting did not come from a company, 32% of the participants reported that the brand fan page they viewed came from a company. This finding highlights the inherent confusion about how to attribute a brand fan page (does the message really come from the friend or from the company?) and might explain the lack of difference in outcomes between the two types of content, especially if both types of content were interpreted as coming from the Facebook friend.

Additionally, participants perhaps did not pay particular attention to the type of content, because they were not asked to deliberate carefully on what a status update or brand fan page is. In the experiment, participants got involved in choosing the closeness of the brand, as well as the closeness of the Facebook friend. Perhaps if participants were asked to list their thoughts about status updates or brand fan pages, differences in how they perceive these two types of content might have become salient, leading to differences in effects.

Finally, it is possible that the stimuli used in this study to represent status updates and brand fan pages might not have seemed like real branded content the participants might be used to receiving on their own Facebook accounts. This limitation in the ecological validity of the material reflects general limitations of this experiment.

Due to the nature of experimental methods, this study was not able to provide a media use environment where branded messages appeared while people were browsing Facebook. Since this study measured one message only that would have appeared on participants' Facebook News Feed, it can hardly rule out the conditions encountered when a number of messages are flooded in the News Feed. Second, other self-brand connection studies have been conducted under settings where the experimental setting (Visual Basic program) allows participants to type in their own brands with which they feel closely or less connected and stimuli are tailored to each participant and delivered accordingly (see Escalas & Bettman, 2005). However, the current study provided a list of brands to participants and instructed them to choose the brand with which they felt the strongest or least strongest connection; thereby it is possible that, for some participants, there might not have been any brands on the list that fulfilled these instructions.

Nonetheless, the present study expanded the idea of targeting friends of fans in an attempt to address how to strategically attract friends of fans by adopting the concepts of social distance, social identity theory, and co-orientation theory. This study contributes to the exploration of brand fan pages as a social identity on Facebook. That is, associating with a specific brand signals one's identity, and it critically helps engage people in communication on Facebook, propagating branded messages and commenting to give their opinions about the brand.

Close friends serve as key influencers when people consider adopting messages, so companies need to first reach close friends of fans to effectively communicate their messages.

Importantly, ensuring the Facebook friend is truly a close friend is critical to ensuring message adoption, especially if the brand being featured has not already been adopted by the target individual. This study shows that people not only perceive close friends more favorably than acquaintances, they define their friends differently based on the relationships they have built with the individuals. Socially close friends lead to low-level construal, whereas socially distant relationships create high-level and abstract construal. Drawing on these two findings together about social distance, it is important to further investigate how close friends and acquaintance are defined differently based on Facebook activities—for example, frequency of direct communication, type of communication, and number of “likes” the individuals hit on the friends’ posts.

Moreover, social distance of the source significantly affected sharing intent, in that people indicated greater intent to share the content coming through socially close friends, as opposed to socially distant others. Though online communication channels allow people to connect with others from geographically distant locations, or with those they are currently inactively connected or socially inactivated (Ellison et al., 2011; Haythornthwaite, 2005), the relationships they make on Facebook seem very similar to how they connect with their friends in real life. Traditionally, friendship is considered an active communication channel, which expedites the flow of information (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1970). Perhaps this is why the present study notes that messages coming through a close friend source, compared to an acquaintance, led to greater intent to propagate the message.

Another key finding of this study is the impact of the self-brand connection on brand-related message adoption. To summarize the results, people evaluated strongly connected brands more favorably than distant brands. Furthermore, self-brand connection significantly led to

Facebook engagement, such that people had greater intent to like, share, comment, tag, and join brand pages when the message they received was about the brands to which they feel strongly connected. Combining the social distance factor and self-brand connection, people tend to show agreement by hitting “like” on the post and directly communicate with the message by commenting on the post if the message is about a brand they feel strongly connected to and came through close friends. These findings can be explained by the nature of Facebook being a venue where people broadcast their interests and display their friend connections to their networks. In line with these findings, it is worth noting that brand fan pages can serve as effective communication channels to build strong relationships with consumers by connecting with them through shared brand-identity and potentially attracting friends of fans.

Consumers associate themselves with brands on Facebook by following brand pages and displaying their affiliation with the brands on their profile (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012; Schau & Gilly, 2003). By joining a fan page on Facebook and displaying it on their profile, people broadcast their identity and signal their self-image. Group favoritism caused by shared group identity can be pronounced in the virtual environment, where similarity serves as a heuristic cue (Guadagno, et al., 2007), such that it appears that the feelings of similarity with the strongly connected brands lead to greater Facebook engagement. Consequently, consumers are more likely to engage with brand pages when the shared identity becomes more salient and when the brand communicates and promotes consumers’ personal values (Lin & Lu, 2011). This study also supports the importance of psychological connections with brands in brand communication, proposing that companies need to develop brand pages that communicate unique brand personalities that are relatable to their brand followers to build strong relationships with consumers on Facebook.

Lastly, it is worth revisiting the results related to the presentation of branded content as a status update versus a brand fan page. Recall that a status update is merely a piece of user-generated content created by friends, whereas a brand page is branded content originated by the company, yet endorsed by friends on Facebook. The way in which Facebook users understand similarities and differences between these types of branded content, especially with regard to source attribution, warrants further research, as these perceptions might indicate when it is most strategic to promote brand fan pages or when it is more useful to encourage brand fans to create their own posts.

APPENDIX 1

TABLES

Table 1

Means (Standard Deviations in Parentheses) Within Each Social Distance X Self-Brand Connection X Type of Content Condition

			Source Perceptions			Attitudes toward Brands			Liking Intent			Sharing Intent			Commenting Intent			Tagging Intent			Joining Fan Page			
Social Distance	Self-Brand Connection	Type of Content	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	
Close friend	Close	Brand Fan Page	4.26	.47	22	4.56	.59	22	4.32	.84	22	3.59	1.22	22	3.23	1.27	22	2.09	1.38	22	4.09	.92	22	
		Status Update	4.42	.48	21	4.46	.56	21	4.29	.90	21	3.10	1.41	21	3.10	1.37	21	2.33	1.35	21	3.67	1.11	21	
		Total	4.34	.48	43	4.51	.57	43	4.30	.86	43	3.35	1.33	43	3.16	1.31	43	2.21	1.36	43	3.88	1.03	43	
	Distant	Brand Fan Page	4.41	.48	18	3.65	.88	19	2.53	1.26	19	1.95	1.27	19	1.47	1.02	19	1.21	.54	19	2.26	1.19	19	
		Status Update	4.28	.60	21	3.72	.91	20	2.95	1.53	21	2.24	1.30	21	2.43	1.40	21	1.62	.92	21	2.43	1.36	21	
		Total	4.34	.55	39	3.68	.89	39	2.75	1.41	40	2.10	1.28	40	1.98	1.31	40	1.43	.78	40	2.35	1.27	40	
	Total	Brand Fan Page	4.33	.47	40	4.14	.86	41	3.49	1.38	41	2.83	1.48	41	2.41	1.45	41	1.68	1.15	41	3.24	1.39	41	
		Status Update	4.35	.54	42	4.10	.83	41	3.62	1.41	42	2.67	1.41	42	2.76	1.41	42	1.98	1.20	42	3.05	1.38	42	
		Total	4.34	.51	82	4.12	.84	82	3.55	1.39	83	2.75	1.44	83	2.59	1.43	83	1.83	1.18	83	3.14	1.38	83	
	Acquaintance	Close	Brand Fan Page	3.27	.96	20	4.52	.58	20	3.55	1.39	20	2.85	1.46	20	2.15	1.09	20	1.70	.86	20	3.10	1.37	20
			Status Update	3.58	.80	20	4.27	.78	20	3.75	1.48	20	2.60	1.23	20	2.80	1.11	20	2.05	1.10	20	3.35	1.14	20
			Total	3.43	.89	40	4.39	.69	40	3.65	1.42	40	2.73	1.34	40	2.48	1.13	40	1.88	.99	40	3.23	1.25	40
Distant		Brand Fan Page	3.81	.65	22	3.85	.95	22	2.68	1.36	22	1.86	1.13	22	1.77	.97	22	1.59	1.05	22	2.41	1.10	22	
		Status Update	3.68	.55	20	3.85	.79	20	3.00	1.78	20	1.70	1.08	20	2.20	1.40	20	1.25	.55	20	2.20	1.24	20	
		Total	3.75	.60	42	3.85	.87	42	2.83	1.56	42	1.79	1.09	42	1.98	1.20	42	1.43	.86	42	2.31	1.16	42	
Total		Brand Fan Page	3.56	.85	42	4.17	.86	42	3.10	1.43	42	2.33	1.37	42	1.95	1.03	42	1.64	.96	42	2.74	1.27	42	
		Status Update	3.63	.68	40	4.06	.80	40	3.38	1.66	40	2.15	1.23	40	2.50	1.28	40	1.65	.95	40	2.78	1.31	40	
		Total	3.59	.77	82	4.11	.83	82	3.23	1.54	82	2.24	1.30	82	2.22	1.19	82	1.65	.95	82	2.76	1.28	82	
Total		Close	Brand Fan Page	3.79	.89	42	4.54	.58	42	3.95	1.19	42	3.24	1.38	42	2.71	1.29	42	1.90	1.16	42	3.62	1.25	42
			Status Update	4.01	.77	41	4.37	.67	41	4.02	1.23	41	2.85	1.33	41	2.95	1.24	41	2.20	1.23	41	3.51	1.12	41
			Total	3.90	.84	83	4.45	.63	83	3.99	1.20	83	3.05	1.36	83	2.83	1.27	83	2.05	1.20	83	3.57	1.18	83
	Distant	Brand Fan Page	4.08	.65	40	3.76	.91	41	2.61	1.30	41	1.90	1.18	41	1.63	.99	41	1.41	.87	41	2.34	1.13	41	
		Status Update	3.99	.64	41	3.78	.85	40	2.98	1.64	41	1.98	1.21	41	2.32	1.39	41	1.44	.78	41	2.32	1.29	41	
		Total	4.04	.64	81	3.77	.88	81	2.79	1.48	82	1.94	1.19	82	1.98	1.25	82	1.43	.82	82	2.33	1.21	82	
	Total	Brand Fan Page	3.93	.79	82	4.15	.85	83	3.29	1.41	83	2.58	1.44	83	2.18	1.27	83	1.66	1.05	83	2.99	1.35	83	
		Status Update	4.00	.71	82	4.08	.81	81	3.50	1.53	82	2.41	1.34	82	2.63	1.35	82	1.82	1.09	82	2.91	1.34	82	
		Total	3.97	.75	164	4.12	.83	164	3.39	1.47	165	2.50	1.39	165	2.41	1.32	165	1.74	1.07	165	2.95	1.34	165	

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Matrix among Covariates and Dependent Variables

	Self- esteem	Need to belong	Source Perceptions	Attitude toward brand	Liking	Sharing	Commenting	Tagging	Joining brand pages
Self-esteem		-.31**	.17*	.18*	-.03	.04	-.01	-.03	.02
Need to belong			.02	-.10	.20**	.21**	.18*	.14	.21**
Source Perceptions				.13	.17*	.16*	.13	.06	.17*
Attitude toward brand					.47**	.39**	.43**	.18*	.56**
Liking						.66**	.64**	.41**	.79**
Sharing							.69**	.58**	.74**
Commenting								.60**	.68**
Tagging									.50**
Joining brand pages									

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 3

Results of Social Distance (SD) X Self-Brand Connection (SBC) X Type of Content ANOVA on Source Perceptions

	Sum of Squares	<i>F</i> (1,156)	η^2	<i>p</i>
Social distance (SD)	23.25	55.98	.25	<.01
Self-brand connection (SBC)	1.11	2.67	.01	.10
Type of content	.11	0.27	.00	.61
SD * SBC	.99	2.38	.01	.13
SD * Type of content	.06	0.15	.00	.70
SBC * Type of content	1.38	3.32	.02	.07
SD * SBC * Type of content	.06	0.13	.00	.72

Note. Results are from a social distance (close friend, acquaintance) X self-brand connection (close, distant) X type of branded content (status update, brand fan page) ANOVA on a composite source perception measure, with higher scores on source perception indicating more positive attitudes about the source of the branded message.

Table 4

Simple Effects Post-Hoc Tests for Two-Way Interaction—albeit only approaching significance—between Self-Brand Connection (SBC) and Type of Content on Source Perceptions

		Sum of Squares	df	<i>F</i>	η^2	<i>P</i>
Main effect of Content within SBC	Within Close Brand	1.15	(1,39)	2.33	.03	.13
	Within Distant Brand	.35	(1,26)	1.04	.01	.31
Main effect of SBC within Content	Within Brand Fan Page	2.47	(1,35)	5.51	.07	.02
	Within Status Update	.01	(1,30)	.02	.00	.89

Note. Results are interpretations of self-brand connection (close, distant) X type of content (status update, brand fan page) interaction effect on source perceptions, although the effect was only approaching significance, $F(1,156) = 3.32$, $p = .07$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Results from two simple-effects post-hoc one-way ANOVAs on source perceptions, with higher scores on source perception indicating more positive attitudes about the source of the branded message. First post-hoc analyses examine main effect of type of content within levels of self-brand connection. Second post-hoc analyses examine main effect of self-brand connection within levels of type of content.

Table 5

Group Means from Two-Way Interaction—albeit only approaching significance— between Self-Brand Connection (SBC) and Type of Content on Source Perceptions

SBC	Type of Content	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Close Brand	Brand Fan Page	3.79	.89	42
	Status Update	4.01	.77	41
Distant Brand	Brand Fan Page	4.08	.65	40
	Status Update	3.99	.64	41

Note. Results are means and standard deviations from self-brand connection (close, distant) X type of content (status update, brand fan page) interaction effect on source perceptions, although the effect was only approaching significance, $F(1,156) = 3.32, p = .07, \eta^2 = .02$. Higher scores on source perception indicate more positive attitudes about the source of the branded message.

Table 6

Results of Social Distance (SD) X Self-Brand Connection (SBC) X Type of Content ANOVA on Attitude toward Brands

	Sum of Squares	$F(1,156)$	η^2	p
Social distance (SD)	.02	.04	.00	.84
Self-brand connection (SBC)	19.19	32.48	.17	.00
Type of content	.20	.34	.00	.56
SD * SBC	.83	1.41	.01	.24
SD * Type of content	.12	.20	.00	.65
SBC * Type of content	.45	.76	.00	.38
SD * SBC * Type of content	.02	.03	.00	.86

Note. Results are from a social distance (close friend, acquaintance) X self-brand connection (close, distal) X type of branded content (status update, brand fan page) ANOVA on a composite measure of attitude toward the featured brand, with higher scores on attitude toward brand indicating more positive attitudes about the brand in the branded message.

Table 7

Pearson Correlation Matrix among Facebook Engagement Measures

	Sharing	Commenting	Tagging	Joining brand page
Liking	.66*	.64*	.41*	.79*
Sharing		.69*	.58*	.74*
Commenting			.60*	.68*
Tagging				.50*
Joining brand page				

Note. Higher scores for each item indicates greater intent to engage in the Facebook activity, with respect to the stimulus (branded message).

* $p < 0.01$

Table 8

Results of Social Distance (SD) X Self-Brand Connection (SBC) X Type of Content MANOVA on Related Measures of Facebook Engagement

		Sum of Squares	$F(1,157)$	η^2	p
Social Distance (SD)	Liking	3.12	1.72	.01	.19
	Sharing	8.88	5.53	.03	.02
	Commenting	4.36	2.95	.02	.09
	Tagging	1.13	1.08	.01	.30
	Joining brand pages	4.97	3.55	.02	.06
Pillai's Trace = .04, $F(5,153) = 1.18$, $p = .32$					
Self-brand connection (SBC)	Liking	57.87	31.97	.16	.00
	Sharing	49.50	30.84	.16	.00
	Commenting	29.69	20.06	.10	.00
	Tagging	16.12	15.36	.09	.00
	Joining brand pages	61.93	44.16	.21	.00
Pillai's Trace = .23, $F(5,153) = 9.37$, $p < .001$					
Type of content	Liking	2.14	1.18	.01	.28
	Sharing	.98	.61	.00	.44
	Commenting	9.29	6.28	.03	.01
	Tagging	1.12	1.07	.01	.30
	Joining brand pages	.12	.09	.00	.77
Pillai's Trace = .12, $F(5,153) = 4.13$, $p = .002$					
SD * SBC	Liking	5.84	3.23	.02	.07

Sharing	.97	.61	.00	.44
Commenting	5.36	3.62	.02	.06
Tagging	1.21	1.15	.01	.29
Joining brand pages	3.86	2.75	.01	.10

Pillai's Trace = .04, $F(5,153) = 1.11$, $p = .36$

SD * Content	Liking	.04	.02	.00	.88
	Sharing	.11	.07	.00	.79
	Commenting	.17	.11	.00	.74
	Tagging	1.06	1.01	.01	.32
	Joining brand pages	.23	.17	.00	.69

Pillai's Trace = .02, $F(5,153) = .52$, $p = .76$

SBC * Content	Liking	.86	.47	.00	.49
	Sharing	1.96	1.22	.01	.27
	Commenting	1.92	1.30	.01	.26
	Tagging	.71	.68	.00	.41
	Joining brand pages	.04	.03	.00	.86

Pillai's Trace = .04, $F(5,153) = 1.27$, $p = .28$

SD * SBC * Content	Liking	.30	.17	.00	.69
	Sharing	1.26	.79	.00	.38
	Commenting	4.41	2.98	.02	.09
	Tagging	1.89	1.80	.01	.18
	Joining brand pages	2.83	2.02	.01	.16

Pillai's Trace = .03, $F(5,153) = .98$, $p = .43$

Table 9

Simple Effects Post-Hoc Tests for Two-Way Interaction—albeit only approaching significance—between Social Distance (SD) and Self-brand Connection (SBC) on Liking

		Sum of Squares	df	<i>F</i>	η^2	<i>p</i>
Main effect of SD within SBC	Within Close Brand	8.81	(1, 78)	6.34	.07	.01
	Within Distant Brand	.21	(1, 79)	.09	.00	.76
Main effect of SBC within SD	Within Close Friend	50.52	(1, 79)	37.39	.32	.00
	Within Acquaintance	13.40	(1, 78)	5.89	.07	.02

Note. Results are interpretations of social distance (close friend, acquaintance) X self-brand connection (close, distant) interaction effect on intent to like the message, although the effect was only approaching significance, $F(1,157) = 3.23$, $p = .07$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Results from two simple-effects post-hoc one-way ANOVAs on liking, with higher scores on liking indicating greater intent to “like” the branded message on Facebook. First post-hoc analyses examine main effect of social distance within levels of self-brand connection. Second post-hoc analyses examine main effect of self-brand connection within levels of social distance.

Table 10

Group Means from Two-Way Interaction—albeit only approaching significance— between Social Distance (SD) and Self-Brand Connection (SBC) on Liking

Social Distance	SBC	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Close friend	Close Brand	4.30	.86	43
	Distant Brand	2.75	1.41	40
Acquaintance	Close Brand	3.65	1.42	40
	Distant Brand	2.83	1.56	42

Note. Results are means and standard deviations from social distance (close friend, acquaintance) X self-brand connection (close, distant) interaction effect on intent to like the message, although the effect was only approaching significance, $F(1,157) = 3.23, p = .07, \eta^2 = .02$. Higher scores on liking indicate greater intent to “like” the branded message on Facebook.

Table 11

Simple Effects Post-Hoc Tests for Two-Way Interaction—albeit only approaching significance—between Social Distance (SD) and Self-brand Connection (SBC) on Commenting

		Sum of Squares	df	<i>F</i>	η^2	<i>p</i>
Main effect of SD within SBC	Within Close Brand	9.76	(1,78)	6.56	.07	.01
	Within Distant Brand	.03	(1,79)	.02	.00	.90
Main effect of SBC within SD	Within Close Friend	30.30	(1, 79)	18.48	.18	.00
	Within Acquaintance	4.89	(1, 78)	3.71	.04	.05

Note. Results are interpretations of social distance (close friend, acquaintance) X self-brand connection (close, distant) interaction effect on intent to comment on the message, although the effect was only approaching significance, $F(1,157) = 3.62, p = .06, \eta^2 = .02$. Results from two simple-effects post-hoc one-way ANOVAs on commenting, with higher scores on commenting indicating greater intent to comment on the branded message on Facebook. First post-hoc analyses examine main effect of social distance within levels of self-brand connection. Second post-hoc analyses examine main effect of self-brand connection within levels of social distance.

Table 12

Group Means from Two-Way Interaction—albeit only approaching significance— between Social Distance (SD) and Self-Brand Connection (SBC) on Commenting

Social Distance	SBC	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Close friend	Close Brand	3.16	1.31	43
	Distant Brand	1.98	1.31	40
Acquaintance	Close Brand	2.48	1.13	40
	Distant Brand	1.98	1.20	42

Note. Results are interpretations of social distance (close friend, acquaintance) X self-brand connection (close, distant) significant interaction effect on intent to comment on the message, although the effect was only approaching significance, $F(1,157) = 3.62, p = .06, \eta^2 = .02$. Higher scores on commenting indicate greater intent to comment on the branded message on Facebook.

Table 13

Simple Effects Post-Hoc Tests for Three-Way Interaction—albeit only approaching significance— between Social Distance (SD), Self-Brand Connection (SBC), and Type of Content on Commenting

	Social Distance	SBC	Sum of Squares	df	<i>F</i>	η^2	<i>p</i>
Main effect of Type of Content within:	Close Friend	Close Brand	.19	(1, 41)	.11	.00	.75
		Distant Brand	9.10	(1, 38)	5.97	.14	.02
Main effect of Type of Content within:	Acquaintance	Close Brand	4.23	(1, 38)	3.51	.08	.07
		Distant Brand	1.91	(1, 40)	1.34	.03	.25

Note. Results are interpretations of social distance (close friend, acquaintance) X self-brand connection (close, distant) X type of content (status update, brand fan page) interaction effect on intent to comment on the message, although the effect was only approaching significance, $F(1,157) = 2.98, p = .09, \eta^2 = .02$. Results from simple-effects post-hoc one-way ANOVAs on commenting, with higher scores on commenting indicating greater intent to comment on the branded message on Facebook. First two post-hoc analyses examine main effects of type of content within each level of self-brand connection for close friend social distance conditions only. Second two post-hoc analyses examine main effects of type of content within each level of self-brand connection for acquaintance social distance conditions only.

Table 14

Group Means from Three-Way Interaction—albeit only approaching significance— between Social Distance (SD), Self-Brand Connection (SBC), and Type of Content (CONTENT) on Commenting

Social Distance	SBC	Type of Content	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Close Friend	Close Brand	Brand Fan Page	3.23	1.27	22
		Status Update	3.10	1.38	21
	Distant Brand	Brand Fan Page	1.47	1.02	19
		Status Update	2.43	1.40	21
Acquaintance	Close Brand	Brand Fan Page	2.15	1.09	20
		Status Update	2.80	1.11	20
	Distant Brand	Brand Fan Page	1.77	.97	22
		Status Update	2.20	1.40	20

Note. Results are interpretations of significant social distance (close friend, acquaintance) X self-brand connection (close, distant) X type of content (status update, brand fan page) interaction effect on intent to comment on the message, although the effect was only approaching significance, $F(1,157) = 2.98, p = .09, \eta^2 = .02$. Higher scores on commenting indicate greater intent to comment on the branded message on Facebook.

APPENDIX 2
MEASURES

Facebook intensity scale. To understand what Facebook means in people's daily life, the Facebook intensity scale was employed, which was devised by Ellison et al. (2007). Ellison et al. (2007) found this scale to be reliable at $\alpha=.89$. The scale was measured using a 5-point Likert scale anchored with 1= "strongly disagree" to 5= "strongly agree" for the following eight statements:

- (1) Facebook is part of my daily routine.
- (2) I would be sorry if Facebook shut down.
- (3) I feel out of touch when I haven't logged on to Facebook in a while.
- (4) Most of my friends are on Facebook.
- (5) Facebook is important in how I manage my social life
- (6) Facebook is important in how I gain information about campus activities.
- (7) Facebook is important in how I stay in touch with my friends.
- (8) Facebook is an important communication tool for me and my friends.

Self-esteem. Self-esteem serves as a control variable, in that the self-esteem hypothesis in social identity theory posits that a positive attitude towards group membership enhances self-esteem (Turner, 1975; Turner & Tajfel, 1979). Also, Facebook studies have shown different roles of self-esteem in the use of the medium. For example, a larger network size on Facebook is highly correlated with self-esteem (Manago et al., 2012) and viewing one's own profile on Facebook enhances self-esteem (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). However, while the use of Facebook enhances self-esteem, an inflated sense of self leads to poor self-control (Wilcox & Stephen 2012). This variable was measured twice, both before and after the experimental stimulus exposure. However, because respondents might skip the questions if they notice that they are answering same scale again, making it difficult to measure attitude changes in the data

analysis (Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001), different measures were used before and after stimulus exposure.

Rosenberg's (1989) 10-item global self-esteem scale was employed at the beginning of the study. This measure was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1= "strongly disagree" to 5= "strongly agree" for following ten statements:

- (1) On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
- (2) At times I think I am no good at all (reverse item).
- (3) I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
- (4) I am able to do things as well as most other people.
- (5) I feel I do not have much to be proud of (reverse item).
- (6) I certainly feel useless at times (reverse item).
- (7) I feel that I'm a person of worth.
- (8) I wish I could have more respect for myself (reverse item).
- (9) All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure (reverse item).
- (10) I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Robins et al. (2001) tested Rosenberg's 10-item measure against a single-item self-esteem measure to evaluate the possibility of capturing the essence of self-esteem with just one item. Results of these tests were positive, as reliabilities for the Single-Item Self-Esteem measure and Rosenberg's Global Self-Esteem scale ranged from .88 to .90 (Robins et al., 2001).

Therefore, the Single-Item Self-Esteem measure was employed after the experimental stimuli exposure and measured using a 5-point Likert scale, anchored with 1= "not very true of me" to 5= "very true of me" for the statement, "I have high self-esteem."

Need to belong. The measure was adopted from Leary et al. (2013). Following 10-item measure was rated using 1-to-5 response choice scale, anchored with 1= “not at all, ” 2= “slightly, ” 3= “moderately,” 4= “very,” and 5 = “extremely.”

- (1) If other people don't seem to accept me, I don't let it bother me (reverse item).
- (2) I try hard not to do things that will make other people avoid or reject me.
- (3) I seldom worry about whether other people are about me (reverse item).
- (4) I need to feel that there are people I can turn to in times of need.
- (5) I want other people to accept me.
- (6) I do not like being alone.
- (7) Being apart from my friends for long periods of time does not bother me (reverse item).
- (8) I have a strong need to belong.
- (9) It bothers me a great deal when I am not included in other people' plan.
- (10) My feelings are easily hurt when I feel that others do not accept me.

Social distance. Participants were administered the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) scale, adopted from Aeron et al. (1992) to measure social distance. For this scale measure, participants were asked to choose one of the following answer choices (pairs of overlapping circles; see below) that best represents the relationship between the self and the friend. The degree to which the two circles overlap represents closeness. This pictorial measure was used in the first part of the questionnaire prior to stimulus exposure.

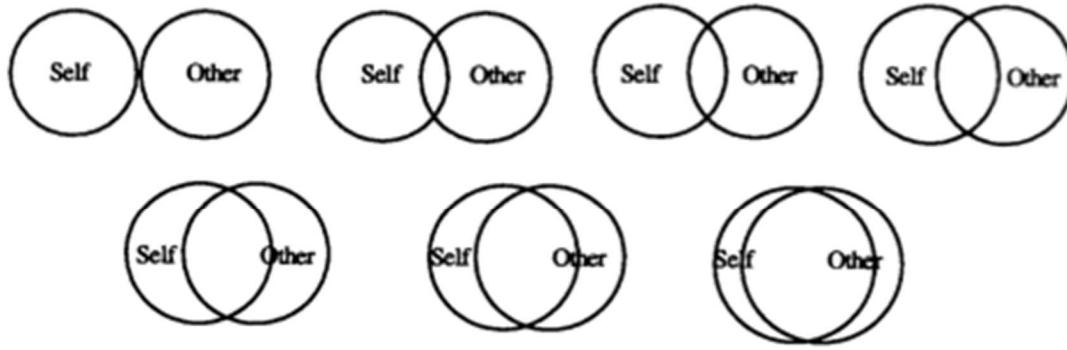


Figure 1. The Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale.

After stimulus exposure, a single-item text version of this measure was used to measure social distance in the second part of the questionnaire. The seven pictorial representations was changed into a 1-to-7 response choice scale, anchored with 1= “not close at all” to 7= “extremely close.”

Source perception. This study used a modification of McCroskey’s (1966) source credibility measure. The scale was measured using a 5-point semantic differential scale for following words: (1) Reliable-Unreliable, (2) Informed-Uninformed, (3) Valuable-Worthless, (4) Honest-Dishonest, (5) Friendly-Unfriendly, (6) Pleasant-Unpleasant, (7) Unselfish-Selfish (reverse item), (8) Nice-Awful, and (9) Virtuous-Sinful. This scale was measured prior to the stimulus exposure.

After the stimulus exposure, to assess attitude change, a variation of McCroskey’s (1966) nine items was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, anchored with 1= “strongly disagree” to 5= “strongly agree” for the following statements:

- (1) I can count on this person.
- (2) This person is knowledgeable about the things he/she talks about.
- (3) This person’s advice is of great value.
- (4) I can trust this person.

- (5) I like this person.
- (6) This person has a pleasant personality.
- (7) This person thinks only of him/herself (reverse item).
- (8) I think this person is awful (reverse item).
- (9) This person has strong ethics.

Facebook friend rules. To understand how individuals make social interactions with their close friends or acquaintances on Facebook, the Facebook friend rules measure was adopted from Ellison et al. (2007). Their measure proposes five relational rules: communication channels, control and deception, relational maintenance, negative self consequences, and negative friend consequences. Among the five dimensions, the present study employed only the three dimensions that are considered to be relevant to the study. The measure was assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, anchored with 1= “strongly disagree” to 5= “strongly agree” for following statements.

Communication channels:

- (1) I should write on this person’s wall.
- (2) I should send this person private messages.
- (3) I should comment on this person’s photos.
- (4) I should use Facebook chat with this person.

Relational maintenance:

- (1) I should use Facebook to maintain my relationship with this person.
- (2) I should use Facebook to communicate happy birthday to this person.

Negative friend consequences:

- (1) I should project myself in a manner with which this person would want to be associate.

- (2) I should project this person's image when I post on his/her profile.
- (3) I should consider how a post might negatively impact this person's career path.
- (4) I should consider how a post might negatively impact this person's relationships.

Self-brand connection. The SBC scale, adopted by Escalas and Bettman (2003), was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, anchored with 1 = "not at all" to 5 = "extremely well" for the following statements:

- (1) This brand reflects who I am.
- (2) I can identify with this brand.
- (3) I feel a personal connection to this brand.
- (4) I use this brand to communicate who I am to other people.
- (5) I think this brand helps me become the type of persona I want to be.
- (6) I consider this brand to be "me" (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others).
- (7) This brand suits me well.

Attitudes toward brand. After viewing a stimulus material, participants answered questions about their attitude toward a brand, followed by interest in the brand and interest in the product. Attitude toward the brand was measured using a 5-point semantic differential scale for following words:

- (1) Negative-Positive
- (2) Bad-Good
- (3) Unfavorable-Favorable.

Behavioral intent. Participants were asked to answer questions about their willingness to engage in Facebook using a 5-point Likert scale, anchored with 1= “not likely at all” to 5= “very likely.” Participants were asked to answer their willingness to engage in the following activities:

- (1) “Like” the message on Facebook
- (2) Share the message on Facebook
- (3) Tag someone with the content
- (4) Comment on the message in Facebook
- (5) Join the fan page.

APPENDIX 3
QUESTIONNAIRE

Informed Consent Form

Welcome! We appreciate your participation in this survey. This survey is being conducted by Hyosun Kim, a doctoral student, under the guidance of Francesca Dillman Carpentier, Ph.D., a professor at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. We are surveying people to understand how they use Facebook. We are very interested in learning about opinions about Facebook, so your participation is very important to us. However, to be eligible to participate, you need to be a user of Facebook, age 18 or over. This is for research purposes only, so your individual responses will not be shared with anyone else. In fact, there is no way to link your responses to your identity. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop your participation at any time without penalty. The questions should take you about 20 minutes to complete. If you have any questions about being a participant in this research, you may contact the University of North Carolina Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email at IRB_subjects@unc.edu. For questions about this specific research project, please contact Hyosun Kim at hyosun@live.unc.edu.

Section 1: Facebook use measure

Q1. Do you have Facebook account?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No → Terminate

Q2. About how often do you check Facebook per day, on a typical weekday?

- 1) 0 to 1 time
- 2) 2 to 4 times
- 3) 5 to 10 times
- 4) More than 10 times, or it's frequently in the background

Q3. How do you usually access Facebook?

- 1) Via my computer (laptop/desktop)
- 2) Via my cellphone
- 3) Via my tablet

Q4. How many friends do you have on Facebook? Please write down the number.

Q5. On average, how much time to you spend on Facebook each time you go there? (e.g., 45 minutes)

--

6. Please indicate how well each statement describes your Facebook use. (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree),

	(1) Strongly Disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neither	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly Agree
Facebook is part of my daily routine.					
I would be sorry if Facebook shut down.					
I feel out of touch when I haven't logged on to Facebook in a while.					
Most of my friends are on Facebook.					
Facebook is important in how I manage my social life.					
Facebook is important in how I gain information about campus activities.					
Facebook is important in how I stay in touch with my friends.					
Facebook is an important communication tool for me and my friends.					

Q7. Please record the appropriate answer for each statement, depending on how well the following statements describe you. (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree)

	(1) Strongly Disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neither	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly Agree
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.					
At times I think I am no good at all.					
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.					
I am able to do things as well as					

most other people.					
I feel I do not have much to be proud of.					
I certainly feel useless at times.					
I feel that I'm a person of worth.					
I wish I could have more respect for myself.					
All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.					
I take a positive attitude toward myself.					

Q8. Please record the appropriate answer for each statement, depending on how well the following statements describe you. (1=Not at all, 2= Slightly, 3= Moderately, 4= Very, 5=Strongly agree)

	(1) Not at all	(2) Slightly	(3) Moderately	(4) Very	(5) Extremely
If other people don't seem to accept me, I don't let it bother me.					
I try hard not to do things that will make other people avoid or reject me.					
I seldom worry about whether other people care about me.					
I need to feel that there are people I can turn to in times of need.					
I want other people to accept me.					
I do not like being alone.					
Being apart from my friends for long periods of time does not bother me.					
I have a strong need to belong.					
It bothers me a great deal when I am not included in other people' plan.					
My feelings are easily hurt when I feel that others do not accept me.					

Q10-1. [Close friend condition] Instruction: Now, we are interested in your connections on Facebook. Please name a close friend who is connected to you on Facebook. Enter only first name and not his/her last name. This person should be someone you feel close to, someone you communicate with regularly, someone you share interests with, someone you can share your personal thoughts, feelings, and even secrets with, someone who cares how you're doing, as well

as what you're doing. This person should be someone you can count on when times are tough. Although you likely do not need to, you are welcome to view your list of close friends on Facebook, but please do not spend time on Facebook for anything other than retrieving this name.

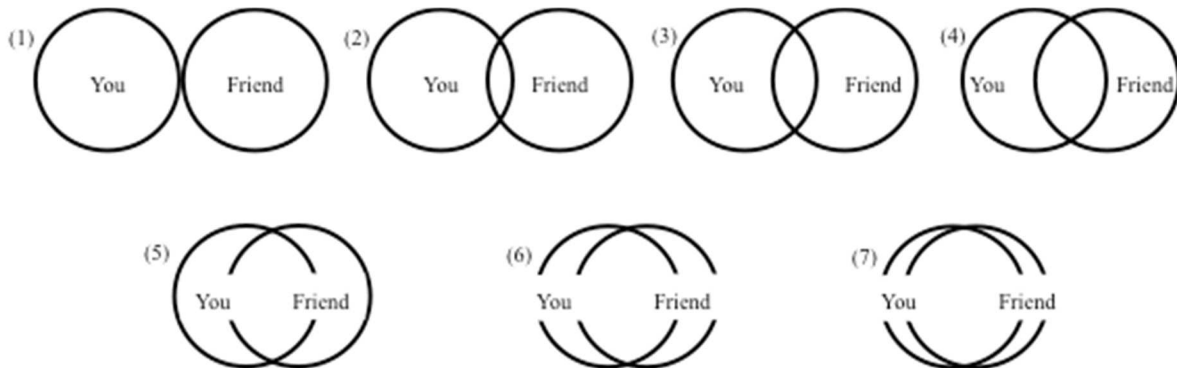
Q10-2. [Acquaintance condition] Instruction: Now, we are interested in your connections on Facebook. Please name an acquaintance of yours who is connected to you on Facebook. Enter only first name and not his/her last name. This person should be someone you only communicate with occasionally or perhaps rarely, someone you don't really know what much about, someone with whom you would not necessarily share your personal thoughts and feelings. You are welcome to view your list of connections on Facebook if needed, but please do not spend time on Facebook for anything other than retrieving this name.

Q11. Now, we are interested in everything that went through your mind about the person whose name you just wrote down. Please list these thoughts, whether they were about yourself, this person, situations involving this person, whether they were positive, neutral, and/or negative. Any case is fine. Ignore spelling, grammar, and punctuation. You will have 2 ½ minutes to write. We have deliberately provided more space than we think people will need, to ensure that everyone would have plenty of room. Please be completely honest. Your responses will be anonymous. The next screen contains the text box we have prepared for your use to record your thoughts and ideas. Simply write down the first thought you had in the first box, the second in the second box, etc. Please put only one idea or thought in a box. If you finish before the 2 ½ minutes runs out, simply click to continue.

Q12. Thinking about the person you just named (your Facebook contact), how much does this person’s opinion matters to you? Please indicate your response using the 7-point scale, ranging from 1= “opinion does not matter at all” to 7= “opinion matters a lot.”

Opinion does not matter at all (1) --- (2) --- (3) --- (4) --- (5) --- (6) --- (7) Opinion matters a lot

Q13. Please choose the picture below which best describes your relationship with the friend you named above. These circles indicate how close you feel with your friend. One of the circles indicates yourself and the other circle represents your friend. The more the circles overlap, the closer the relationship is.



Q14. How would you describe this person for the following characteristics? Please indicate how you feel about the person using the nine scales below. For example, from Reliable to Unreliable, click the appropriate circle along the continuum that best represents how reliable or unreliable you feel this person is.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
Unreliable						Reliable
Uninformed						Informed
Worthless						Valuable
Dishonest						Honest
Unfriendly						Friendly
Unpleasant						Pleasant
Selfish						Unselfish
Awful						Nice
Sinful						Virtuous

Q15. The following statements describe your relationship with the person on Facebook. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree).

	(1) Strongly Disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neither	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly Agree
I should write on this person's wall.					
I should send this person private messages.					
I should comment on this person's photos.					
I should use Facebook chat with this person.					
I should communicate with this person outside of Facebook.					
I should use Facebook to maintain my relationship with this person.					
I should project myself in a manner with which this person would want to be associated.					
I should project this person's image when I post on his/her profile.					
I should consider how a post might negatively impact this person's career path.					
I should consider how a post might negatively impact this person's relationships.					

Instruction: Now, imagine that you opened Facebook between classes today. You then found that your friend, the one you just named above, has updated her/his status, and the following content came through from this person. Please view the content carefully. We will ask questions about the content.

Q16-1. [Close self-brand connection condition] Instruction: Now, please choose one brand below that you like and you feel most connected to. This is the brand that you would want to associate with, often reflects who you are, and mirrors your self-image. Owning this brand helps present yourself to others. This brand also helps you to be the person you want to be.

- 1) Coca Cola
- 2) BMW
- 3) Nike
- 4) Toyota
- 5) Gap
- 6) Disney
- 7) Ford
- 8) ESPN
- 9) Apple
- 10) Starbucks

Q16-2. [Acquaintance condition] Instruction: Now, please choose one brand below that you may like, but do not feel connected to. This is a brand that you have positive feelings about, but the brand does not exactly represent your identity or reflect your self- image. This brand does not necessarily show who you are, in other words.

- 1) Coca Cola
- 2) BMW
- 3) Nike
- 4) Toyota
- 5) Gap
- 6) Disney
- 7) Ford
- 8) ESPN
- 9) Apple
- 10) Starbucks

Q17. Following statements describes how you think and feel about the brand you chose. Please indicate how well each statement describes your relationships with the brand. (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree)

	(1) Strongly Disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neither	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly Agree
This brand reflects who I am.					
I can identify with this brand.					
I feel a person connection to this brand.					
I use this brand to communicate					

who I am to other people.					
I think this brand helps me become the type of person I want to be.					
I consider this brand to be "me" (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others).					
This brand suits me well.					

→ SHOW STIMULUS

Q18. Now, imagine that you just opened Facebook. You see a new post from the person you named above (your Facebook contact). Imagine that the following content has just come through from this person. First, please re-enter the name of your Facebook contact (the person you named earlier and answered questions about) in the space below. Then, click to see their post.

Q19. About the Facebook post you've just seen, how willing are you to hit the “like” button on this content? Please indicate your response using the 5-point scale, ranging from 1= Not likely at all to 5= Very likely.

Not likely at all (1) ----- (2) ----- (3) ----- (4) ----- (5) Very likely

Q20. Also, how willing are you to “share” this content on your Facebook page? Please indicate your response using the 5-point scale, ranging from 1= Not likely at all to 5= Very likely.

Not likely at all (1) ----- (2) ----- (3) ----- (4) ----- (5) Very likely

Q21. How much would you like to respond to the message by commenting on this content? Please indicate your response using the 5-point scale, ranging from 1= Not likely at all to 5= Very likely.

Not likely at all (1) ----- (2) ----- (3) ----- (4) ----- (5) Very likely

Q22. How much would you like to tag anyone on this content? Please indicate your response using the 5-point scale, ranging from 1= Not likely at all to 5= Very likely.

Not likely at all (1) ----- (2) ----- (3) ----- (4) ----- (5) Very likely

Q23. About how many people would you want to tag in this content?

- 1) None
- 2) One

- 3) A few
- 4) A lot

Q24. Thinking about your Facebook contact, whom you named earlier, please indicate how close you feel with this person right now, using the scale below ranging from 1= Not close at all to 7= extremely close.

Not close at all (1) ----- (2) ----- (3) ----- (4) ----- (5) ----- (6) ----- (7) Extremely close

Q25. How would you describe this person on the following scales? Please indicate how you feel about the person using the nine scales below. (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree)

	(1) Strongly Disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Neither	(4) Agree	(5) Strongly Agree
I can count on this person.					
This person is knowledgeable about the things he/she talks about.					
This person’s advice is of great value.					
I can trust this person.					
I like this person.					
This person has a pleasant personality.					
This person thinks only of him/herself.					
I think this person is awful.					
This person has strong ethics.					

Q26. How do you feel about the brand in the post you just saw? Please indicate what you think using the three scales below. For example, from Negative to Positive, click the appropriate circle along the continuum that best represents how bad or good you feel about the brand.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
Negative						Positive
Bad						Good
Unfavorable						Favorable

Q27. How do you feel about the following statement?

“I have high self-esteem.”

Not very true at all (1) ----- (2) ----- (3) ----- (4) ----- (5) Very true

Instruction: We are almost done. Before we end the survey, we have several background questions that will be used for statistical purposes only.

Q28. Please indicate your gender?

- 1) Male
- 2) Female
- 3) Other/ Do not wish to answer

Q29. How old are you?

- 1) 18-25
- 2) 26-34
- 3) 35-44
- 4) 45-54
- 5) 55-64
- 6) 65 or over

Q30. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- 1) Less than High School Sophomore
- 2) High School / GED
- 3) Some College
- 4) 2-year College Degree
- 5) 4-year College Degree
- 6) Master's Degree
- 7) Doctoral Degree
- 8) Professional Degree (JD, MD)

Q31. Please indicate your occupation





- 1) Management, professional, and related
- 2) Service
- 3) Sales and office
- 4) Farming, fishing, and forestry
- 5) Construction, extraction, and maintenance
- 6) Production, transportation, and material moving
- 7) Government
- 8) Retired
- 9) Unemployed
- 10) Other

Thank you for your participation. We are done. These questions were intended to gather opinions that relate to Facebook use and brand information that might come through Facebook. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey or have feelings about the questions that you would like to ask about, please contact Hyosun Kim at hyosun@live.und.edu. If you have any concerns about how participants are being treated in this study, you may contact the UNC Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113.







APPENDIX 4

STIMULI

Coca Cola

Close Friend / Brand Page Condition	Close Friend/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your close friend likes Coca Cola</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> Coca Cola Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.thecoca-colacompany.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your close friend</p> <p>I like Coca Cola! www.thecoca-colacompany.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now · 1</p>
Acquaintance/ Brand Page Condition	Acquaintance/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your acquaintance likes Coca Cola</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> Coca Cola Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.thecoca-colacompany.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your acquaintance</p> <p>I like Coca Cola! www.thecoca-colacompany.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now · 1</p>







BMW

Close Friend / Brand Page Condition	Close Friend/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your close friend likes BMW</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> BMW Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.bmw.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your close friend</p> <p>I like BMW! www.bmw.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now</p>
Acquaintance/ Brand Page Condition	Acquaintance/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your acquaintance likes BMW</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> BMW Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.bmw.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your acquaintance</p> <p>I like BMW! www.bmw.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now</p>








Nike

Close Friend / Brand Page Condition	Close Friend/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your close friend likes Nike</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> Nike Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.nike.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your close friend</p> <p>I like Nike! www.nike.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now</p>
Acquaintance/ Brand Page Condition	Acquaintance/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your acquaintance likes Nike</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> Nike Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.nike.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your acquaintance</p> <p>I like Nike! www.nike.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now</p>







Toyota

Close Friend / Brand Page Condition	Close Friend/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your close friend likes TOYOTA</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> TOYOTA Like Page</p> <p>TOYOTA Let's Go Places</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.toyota.com</p> <p> TOYOTA <i>Let's Go Places</i></p> <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your close friend</p> <p>I like TOYOTA! www.toyota.com</p> <p> TOYOTA <i>Let's Go Places</i></p> <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now · 2</p>
Acquaintance/ Brand Page Condition	Acquaintance/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your acquaintance likes TOYOTA</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> TOYOTA Like Page</p> <p>TOYOTA Let's Go Places</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.toyota.com</p> <p> TOYOTA <i>Let's Go Places</i></p> <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your acquaintance</p> <p>I like TOYOTA! www.toyota.com</p> <p> TOYOTA <i>Let's Go Places</i></p> <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now · 2</p>







GAP







Close Friend / Brand Page Condition	Close Friend/ Status Update Condition
 <p>Your close friend likes Gap</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> Gap Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.gap.com</p> <p> </p> <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	 <p>Your close friend</p> <p>I like Gap! www.gap.com</p> <p> </p> <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now</p>
Acquaintance/ Brand Page Condition	Acquaintance/ Status Update Condition
 <p>Your acquaintance likes Gap</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> Gap Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.gap.com</p> <p> </p> <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	 <p>Your acquaintance</p> <p>I like Gap! www.gap.com</p> <p> </p> <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now</p>

Disney




Close Friend / Brand Page Condition	Close Friend/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your close friend likes Disney</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> Disney Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.disney.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your close friend</p> <p>I like Disney! www.disney.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now</p>
Acquaintance/ Brand Page Condition	Acquaintance/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your acquaintance likes Disney</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> Disney Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.disney.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your acquaintance</p> <p>I like Disney! www.disney.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now</p>

Ford







Close Friend / Brand Page Condition	Close Friend/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your close friend likes Ford Motor Company</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> Ford Motor Company Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.ford.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your close friend</p> <p>I like Ford! www.ford.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now · 2</p>
Acquaintance/ Brand Page Condition	Acquaintance/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your acquaintance likes Ford Motor Company</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> Ford Motor Company Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.ford.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your acquaintance</p> <p>I like Ford! www.ford.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now · 2</p>

Close Friend / Brand Page Condition	Close Friend/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your close friend likes ESPN</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> ESPN Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. http://espn.go.com</p> <p></p> <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your close friend</p> <p>I like ESPN! http://espn.go.com</p> <p></p> <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now</p>
Acquaintance/ Brand Page Condition	Acquaintance/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your acquaintance likes ESPN</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> ESPN Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. http://espn.go.com</p> <p></p> <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your acquaintance</p> <p>I like ESPN! http://espn.go.com</p> <p></p> <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now</p>

Apple

Close Friend / Brand Page Condition	Close Friend/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your close friend likes Apple</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> Apple Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.apple.com</p>  <p>Apple Computer, Inc.</p> <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your close friend</p> <p>I like Apple! www.apple.com</p>  <p>Apple Computer, Inc.</p> <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now ·</p>
Acquaintance/ Brand Page Condition	Acquaintance/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your acquaintance likes Apple</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> Apple Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.apple.com</p>  <p>Apple Computer, Inc.</p> <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your acquaintance</p> <p>I like Apple! www.apple.com</p>  <p>Apple Computer, Inc.</p> <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now ·</p>

Starbucks

Close Friend / Brand Page Condition	Close Friend/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your close friend likes Starbucks</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> Starbucks Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.starbucks.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your close friend</p> <p>I like Starbucks! www.starbucks.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now ·</p>
Acquaintance/ Brand Page Condition	Acquaintance/ Status Update Condition
<p>Your acquaintance likes Starbucks</p> <p>RELATED POST</p> <p> Starbucks Like Page</p> <p>We are on Facebook. www.starbucks.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share · Sponsored</p>	<p>Your acquaintance</p> <p>I like Starbucks! www.starbucks.com</p>  <p>Like · Comment · Share Just now ·</p>

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